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THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

THE Ubuntu Practitioner: Social Work Perspectives

EDITED BY BERNARD MAYAKA, CONSOLÉE UWIHANGANA,
& ADRIAN D. VAN BREDA

www.ifsw.org

The Ubuntu Practitioner:
Social Work Perspectives

Edited by Bernard Mayaka, Consolée Uwihangana and Adrian D. van Breda

The International Federation of Social Workers

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Disclaimer

This book contains a blend of academic and practice-oriented contributions. Readers will see different styles and approaches to writing. This has intentionally been adopted to maximise contributions.

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Forward

"This Book is a Collection of Lived Experiences and Evidence of 'Good Practices' Across the World"

Joachim Cuthbert Mumba

I spent the first part of my career working as community development officer with one of the local Non-Governmental Organisations in Zambia. During this time, I learnt that when local communities drive their own development agenda through meaningful participation, there is sustainability and ownership of the development gains. Under the interventions I led as community development practitioner, we promoted community self-help initiatives where community members were mobilised and helped to identify community resources. I have learnt that the Ubuntu philosophy inspired all community development interventions I was involved in, as community members were mobilised to work as a collective addressing local problems with locally generated solutions. Ubuntu does therefore not mean that people should not address themselves to a problem, but it does imply that they should look at whether what they are doing will enable or empower the community around them and help it improve. It expresses the interconnectedness, common humanity, and the responsibility of individuals to each other.

In most communities and countries in sub-Saharan Africa, ubuntu has been and is being practiced as part of African ethics. In a significant number of literature, African ethics is described as a set of values distinctively associated with largely black African people residing in sub-Saharan Africa. These values are based on ethical beliefs, moral judgements, or ideas such as prioritising communal relationships, rather than individualism prevalent in the West. In other words, while notions such as a sense of community may also be found

in Western societies, the salient philosophies in the West do not conceive of such ideas as core in prescribing duties in the way societies south of the Sahara do. Ubuntu includes the values of communality, respect, dignity, acceptance, sharing, co-responsibility, humaneness, social justice, fairness, personhood, morality, group solidarity, compassion, joy, love, fulfilment, and conciliation. Ubuntu was widely popularised by the likes of President Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Demond Tutu. The philosophy has over the years influenced the way communities in Africa have resolved problems affecting both individuals and the community as a collective. In 2020, ubuntu was brought into the social work discourse through the IFSW and IASSW Global Agenda Theme for 2021: *Ubuntu: I am because we are: Strengthening social solidarity and global connectedness*.

This book is a collection of lived experiences and evidence of "good practices" across the world. I am grateful to all that took their time to share their practice stories in the form of book chapters. To prospective readers, I say Life is always evolving and lessons are ever being generated for purposes of continuous sharing and learning. Possessing a copy of this book will add value not only to your being but to your professional life too. You can read it from the beginning till the end, or you can commence reading it from a chapter that appeals to you most. You can potentially find the exact lesson or thought you might be looking for or need in this moment in your career. If this book has found you, it was probably looking for you for a purpose.

In conclusion, I would like to offer all the authors and editors my heartiest congratulations and deepest respect for the great efforts that have been expended in the making of this book.

Joachim Cuthbert Mumba
IFSW Global President

SECTION I

UBUNTU FROM PRACTITIONERS IN AFRICA

Chapter 1

The Ubuntu Practitioner in Historical and Contemporary Contexts

Bernard Mayaka, Adrian D. van Breda, Consolée Uwihangana and Rugare Mugumbate

Biographies

Bernard Mayaka is the Administrator of the International Federation of Social Workers, a lecturer at the HAN University of Applied Sciences, a member of the Ubuntu research group, a member of the Kenya National Association of Social Workers, and a seasonal project management consultant at Co-parenting Matter. As an indigenous Kenyan, Mayaka has worked with different organisations on community programmes that facilitate inclusive sustainable development based on indigenous knowledge, resources, and skills. Growing and working in this environment influenced Mayaka to understand the indigenous philosophies, theories, practices, and techniques advancing professional social work for effective and reliable service delivery and sustainable communities and development. Having lived and experienced Ubuntu values and principles, he's keen to share this among other indigenous knowledge contributing to social work development from an Afrocentric lens.

Adrian D. van Breda is a professor of social work at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. Adrian is also an Anglican priest. Adrian's research centres on resilience – the interactional processes that enable individuals, families, organisations, and communities to navigate through and challenge or dismantle adversities and vulnerability. His current research focuses on young people, raised in the child welfare system, transitioning out of care towards young adulthood. Adrian is interested in cultural and

indigenous resilience processes, of which Ubuntu is a central example. He has written on how Ubuntu strengthens social systems to deal with adversity and how Ubuntu provides a rich and varied framework for integrated social work practice in Africa. In countries outside of Africa, Adrian sees Ubuntu as expressed in 'interdependence' and believes that most societies, including those in the West, have a long but largely lost tradition of interdependence that needs to be revitalised.

Consolée Uwihangana is an Assistant Lecturer and researcher in social work at the University of Rwanda. Her research interests are gender/gender equality, family, human/women's rights, indigenous practices, and social work. Consolée is a holder of "Ubuntu Social Work Award" from IFSW-Africa Region in recognition of her role in fighting against gender-based violence. Consolée is interested in Ubuntu theory and practice as they are in line with her research on empowering community members in finding solutions. Consolée has contributed to publications on social work in East Africa and Rwanda, especially on Indigenous and Innovative Models of Problem Solving. Consolée is now undertaking PhD studies in the Social Work Department at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, focusing on culture, Rwandan family, and the contemporary gender equality agenda.

Rugare Mugumbate is a Zimbabwean social worker who trained at the School of Social Work, University of Zimbabwe and worked at the Epilepsy Support Foundation and the Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE) in Zimbabwe between 2003 and 2015. He has a PhD awarded in 2017 from the University of Newcastle, Australia. Among other study areas, his work centres on valuing and using African knowledge such as Ubuntu philosophy in teaching, learning, practice, and research. Rugare is the convenor of the Africa Social Work Network (ASWNet), organiser of the Annual Ubuntu Lecture, and a member of the Ubuntu Research Group. He is an Associate Editor of the African Journal of Social Work published by the National Association of Social Workers Zimbabwe (NASWZ). Presently, Rugare is a

lecturer in the School of Health and Society, University of Wollongong, Australia, and a Senior Research Associate with the Department of Social Work & Community Development, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Overview

In this chapter we trace the origin of Africa's philosophy and how it looks like in contemporary society. We start by telling a story of Giringa as an illustration of Ubuntu. We then trace the history of Ubuntu back to about 4000 years, though it goes beyond this. Ubuntu has existed for all these years. We have called the first stage in that history Sankofa, which simply means 'looking back and valuing to our history'. This was followed by the Tu, Shosholoza, Ubuntu and Umoja stages. After the stages, we present the practice of Ubuntu by Social Workers globally. At the end, an overview of the book is provided.

Translation of overview into Swahili

Katika Sura hii, tunabaini chimbuko la falsafa ya Afrika na inayodhihirika katika jamii ya sasa. Tunaanza kwa kusimulia giringa kama kielelezo cha Ubuntu ama Utu. Kisha tutabaini historia ya Ubuntu kwa takriban miaka 4,000 iliyopita ijapo inazidi kipindi hiki. Utu umekuwepo muda wote huu. Tumeirejelea hatua ya kwanza katika historia hiyo Sankofa, ambayo kimsingi inamaanisha kutazama nyuma na kuthamini historia yetu. Hii ilifuatuwa nah atua zetu, Shosholoza, Ubuntu na Umoja. Baada ya hatua hizi, tunawasilisha utekelezwaji/ utendaji wa Ubuntu na wanataaluma ya Ustawi wa Jamii ulimwenguni. Hatimaye, muhtasari wa kitabu umetolewa.

Translation of overview into Shona

Muchikamu chekutanga tinotarisa mavambo emuono weAfrica nemamiriro ahwo mazuva ano. Tinotanga nenyaya yeGirinka inotsigira kushandiswa kweUnhu. Tinotarisawo nhoroondo yeUnhu tichidzoka makore anosvika zviuru zvina kunyange zvavo nhoroondo ichipfuura apa. Kubva makare iwayo, Unhu hwaivako. Kutanga kwenhoroondo iyi takupa zita rinoti Sankofa

zvichireva ‘kutarisa shure nekuremekedza nhoroondo’. Pakazotevera nguva yeTu, Shosholoza, Ubuntu neUmoja. Kana nhoroondo iyi yapiwa, panotevera kushanda kweUnhu mumabasa anoitwa neVatsigiri veMagariro evanhu pasi rose. Pokupedzisira, panopiwa zviri muchinyorwa muchidimbu.

Translation of overview into Kinyarwanda

Muri iki gice, turagaragaza inkomoko y’iyi Filozofiya Nyafurika n’uburyo ihagaze muri iki gihe. Turahera ku nkuru ivuga kuri Girinka nk’urugero rwa Filozofiya y’Ubuntu. Turakurikizaho kugaragaza amateka ya Filozofiya y’Ubuntu kuva ahagana mu myaka 4000, nubwo yatangiye mbere yaho. Filozofiya y’Ubuntu yabayeho muri iyi myaka yose. Icyiciro cya mbere cy’aya mateka cyiswe Sankofa, bishatse kuvuga 'gusubiza amaso inyuma no guha agaciro amateka yacu'. Ibyo byakurikiwe n’ibyiciro bizwi nka Tu, Shosholoza, Ubuntu na Umoja. Nyuma yo kuvuga kuri ibi byiciro, turerekana uburyo Abanyamwuga mu Ivugururamibeho ku isi hose bifashisha Filozofiya y’Ubuntu mu kazi kabo ka buri munsi. Mu gusoza, haratangwa incamake y’igitabo.

Girinka: A story of reciprocity and communality

This is a story about a person who has benefited from one of the community self-help practices that sustain solidarity and resilience among community members with the utilisation of Ubuntu philosophy values. It is a story about how community members unite, work together, and support each other to bring change into individual, family, and community lives. The person is a woman whom we will call Nyiramwungeri Karolina, a pseudonym. Karolina lives in the Southern Province of Rwanda and is a member of a very active Umugoroba W'ababyeyi [parents' evening] forum in the area. Below is a brief conversation with Karolina:

Interviewer: Could you please, introduce yourself and briefly share with us your story?

NK: My name is Nyiramwungeri Karolina (NK). I am a mother and wife. I am a member of this parents' evening forum and live in this neighbourhood. As you may know, neighbours form a forum, where they meet to share about their everyday lives and support each other. I found myself in this forum, I am happy to have friends I can rely on, we work together, and we are a family.

Interviewer: What have you benefited from membership in this forum?

NK: Members of this forum have chosen my family to receive a cow through girinka (one cow per poor family program). It was obvious that if given a kind of start-up, we could overcome our problems [with poverty]. That is how, when there was a call to nominate a family for girinka, this forum advocated for us. The cow has for the first time produced a bull that we sold. For the second time, it produced a calf that was passed on to another poor family.

Figure 1: Family benefit from the cows' project

Interviewer: What are your achievements after getting the cow? How has your life changed?

NK: [smile] We benefited a lot: As I told you above, the bull was sold. We have bought the necessary family materials, such as clothes and food items, enrolled ourselves in the community health insurance scheme, etc. We paid for school materials for our children, our diet has improved with milk, we get manure from the cow dung and our agriculture production had increased.

Besides this, our ties with members of this forum were strengthened since we realised that they are good people who support each other, and we built a relationship with the family to whom we passed the calf. Furthermore, with the improved lifestyle, we feel self-confident and more integrated into the community where we work with others for socio-economic development. As a family, we work together to take care of the cows (after passing the calf, the following calves belong to us now), which has strengthened our ties. Finally, since I was trained in tailoring, through selling milk production, we decided to buy a tailoring machine to increase family income.

Figure 2: One of the interviewed beneficiaries

This story about Karolina features community approaches and initiatives that focus on sustaining solidarity and resilience among its members. Umugoroba w'ababyeyi is one of the home-grown and innovative solutions initiated by the Government of Rwanda to find local solutions to several social problems. The forum derived, on one side, from the motivation to fight domestic violence and try to resolve family conflicts at the grassroots level and to improve the education of family values, hygiene, family planning, children's rights, and gender equality at the community level. On the other side, the forum derived from wanting to protect the family as the primary institution of society (Uwihangana et al., 2019). This features Ubuntu values of solidarity, interdependence, interconnectedness, and participation in the form of mutual responsibility.

Figure 3: Farming project

As stated by Kayigema and Rugege (2014) and the Rwanda Governance Board (2014), the girinka programme is another government-led creativity aimed at

fighting rural poverty in Rwanda, reducing child malnutrition, as well as help poor families get out of extreme poverty (Uwihangana et al., 2020). Through Umugoroba w'ababyeyi, the members discuss different problems hindering their wellbeing and find solutions together. That is how they choose who can benefit from the available resources, such as the girinka programme, since they know each other and work for the improvement of every member's wellbeing (Uwihangana et al., 2019).

The girinka welfare and development model is grounded in African philosophy whose values are collectivity and communality. This African philosophy is known as Ubuntu. The first chapter of this book – "The Ubuntu practitioner" – introduces the African philosophy of Ubuntu through both contemporary and historical lenses. The following section sets out the premise of this book, arguing the need for Ubuntu practice in present times. This is followed by a history of African philosophy, going back more than 4000 years. The history is presented in five stages for clarity, viz. Sankofa, Tu, Shosholoza, Ubuntu and Umoja. Thereafter, the practice of Ubuntu in social work, and its positive impact globally, is explored. Finally, an overview of the book is provided.

The premise of this book

The term Ubuntu, once known only in certain regions of Southern Africa, has become widely used, not only across Africa, but also across the globe. It was perhaps first popularised by people like President Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Demond Tutu. And more recently, entrenched into social work discourse through the IFSW and IASSW Global Agenda Theme for 2021: Ubuntu: I am because we are: Strengthening social solidarity and global connectedness.

This ancient African philosophy, which goes by various names (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013), has at its heart the sense of personhood – what it means to be human. In contrast to many western notions of personhood, which view

a person as a separate individual centred on reason or choice, Ubuntu constructs a person as a social being, defined by the quality of their relations to other persons. Thus, Ubuntu is both social (the connections between people that constitute community and shared humanity) and ethical (the quality of our interactions with others, such as respect and care). Hence the well-known phrase umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu (in isiZulu) – a person is a person through other persons.

As familiarity with the term Ubuntu has grown, so too has the body of academic literature, across multiple fields. For example, drawing on the Scopus database, in five-year intervals between 2002 and 2021, the number of publications with 'Ubuntu' in the title has increased from 10 (from 2002 to 2006), to 61 (2007-2011), to 187 (2012-2016) and now to 268 (2017-2021). The term has thus become familiar to scholars and practitioners across much of the world and is shaping global understandings of what it means to be human.

Social work also has been drawing increasingly on Ubuntu as an organising concept for social work theory and practice (Chigangaidze, 2022b) and is often the first term to be used when constructing an African approach to social work. This claim of Ubuntu for social work in Africa has been an important part of decolonising social work in Africa (Mugumbate, 2020). Much of the social work taught and practiced in Africa has drawn on European and American theories and methods of social work, which are infused with Western notions of personhood. Social work's construction of the human (notwithstanding the environment of which we're part) significantly dictates the approach to social work practice.

For example, when a person is constructed primarily as a unitary individual, emphasising reason, volition or choice, and morality, social work practice will likely personalise and moralise individual behaviour, responsibilise individuals for their life challenges (such as poverty and unemployment),

with little consideration of the responsibility of the social environment, and emphasise change at an individual level (van Breda, 2018).

Decoloniality in social work in Africa has thus emphasised the importance of challenging not so much the methods of social work as the underlying ontologies (the ways we make sense of humans, humanity, the world, the earth, and so on) and epistemologies (the sources of knowledge and knowing that we value) (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Ubuntu has become a strong rallying point of commonality among social work academics, scholars, and practitioners in Africa because it fundamentally shifts our construction of humanity towards the social and ethical. Consequently, there is a growing body of literature and current oral tradition that centres social work practice on Ubuntu.

However, we believe that much of this written and oral discourse has been rather shallow, reducing Ubuntu to little more than, for example, sharing sugar with one's neighbour. There is, we believe, a far richer and more nuanced, and comprehensive conceptualisation or theorisation of Ubuntu that should be tapped into and explored (e.g., Mugumbate, 2020; Van Breda, 2019). Some scholars in social work and other disciplines have been working on teasing out the concept of Ubuntu and showing the rich potential it must inform all facets of human life in space and time. We appreciate these efforts, though they are not the focus of this book.

What also remains underdeveloped is the translation of Ubuntu into practice for social work. Here again, much literature and dialogue have spoken of Ubuntu-informed social work practice in rather superficial ways – emphasising collectivity and mutual care, for example. Such implications are not wrong; indeed, they are central and valid implications of Ubuntu. But we believe that there is a far richer set of implications of Ubuntu for social work that needs to be teased out, implemented, experienced, spoken about, and written up. This book aims to contribute to this practicalisation of Ubuntu.

Furthermore, we believe that Africans, including African social workers, should lay claim to the concept of Ubuntu and export it to other communities in the Global South and the Global North (van Breda & Pinkerton, 2020). For too long, the Global North has exported its ideas about the world, including about social work, to the South, as part of a long process of colonisation and imperialism. It is time to centre the world, even if just for a while, on Africa, rather than on the North. This implies that Africa exports its indigenous and ancient wisdom to the North, in a way that inspires those working in the Global North to reflect on alternative ways of constructing what it means to be human. We suspect that this will lead to the realisation that ancient understandings of being human to have more in common globally than modern understandings, and we may all begin to return to the wisdom of our ancestors. This book is thus written not only by Africans but also by social workers from around the globe, often translating Ubuntu into concepts and language familiar to their contexts.

"The Ubuntu Practitioner" thus aims to stimulate global thinking about Ubuntu, enabling social workers around the world to take on and perhaps also translate the term into their cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts. This book aims also to translate the concept of Ubuntu into practice – to show what Ubuntu social work practice does or could look like in contemporary society. We hope that this will transform social work practice into something that cherishes the deep and shared humanity of all people.

A five-stage history, present and future of Ubuntu

Developing Ubuntu practice requires us to recognise the deep historical roots of Ubuntu in African society, the ways this continues to resonate in the contemporary world and the potential future of Ubuntu globally. This section provides a brief background to indigenous Africans before presenting the history of Ubuntu in five stages. Native Africans are mainly classified based on language groups and their historical livelihoods and migration patterns (Katanekwa, 2021). The large language group – the Bantu languages group –

is estimated to have 240 to 350 million people speaking over 500 different languages (Koile et al., 2022). They are historically livestock keepers and crop planters, and this is their main form of livelihood today (Katanekwa, 2021). Their first known settlements were at Mambilla, in West Africa at the border of present-day Nigeria and Cameroon, where they stayed in large numbers over 4000 years ago (Katanekwa, 2021).

The Kush languages group speaks languages classified as Kush, so at times they are referred to as Kushites, and they speak Afroasian languages, which means their languages are a mix of languages from Africa and Asia (Katanekwa, 2021). The exact number of this group is not known but runs into tens of millions. In terms of livelihoods, this group is livestock keepers, crop growers, and fishermen (Katanekwa, 2021). Values of collectivity and communality are prominent in this group too.

The Nile-Sahara (sometimes called Nilo-Saharan) people are so-called because the Nile River is important to many of them, and some are found in the Sahara Desert area (Katanekwa, 2021). The population of this group is estimated to be between 50 to 60 million. In terms of livelihoods, this group keeps livestock and grows crops (Katanekwa, 2021). Values of collectivity and communality are prominent in this group too.

The fourth largest group of about half a million people is made up of the Pygmies (meaning short people). The Pygmies historically survived on the bush (Koile et al., 2022). They consist of the Bambenga (Mbenga), Bambuti (Mbuti) and Batwa (Twa) (Katanekwa, 2021). Presently, they are found in the Congo rainforest in larger numbers, but also other countries.
The clicking sound languages group has about 130,000 and is made up of people whose language has clicking sounds. These include the San, the Khoi Khoi, the Hadzabe (Hadza, singular), and the Sandawe. Although their languages have commonalities and they are all found in Southern Africa, research has not shown that these were originally the same people. The San

and Khoi are spread across Southern African countries, while the Hadza and Sandawe are found in Tanzania (also classified as East Africa). These groups historically survived on the bush, moving frequently from place to place in small groups (Kusimba & Kusimba, 2011). The San, Khoi, Hadza, and Sandawe are all highly collective and communal people. Child rearing is a responsibility of everyone; it is a cooperative affair.

Common among all these groups are values of collectivity, communality, the environment, and spirituality. These groups have worked together for many years to build and develop the Ubuntu philosophy. The development of Ubuntu can be traced to five stages: Sankofa, Tu, Shosholoza, Ubuntu, and Umoja.

The Sankofa stage. While each of the five African language groups has distinctive livelihoods, languages, and geographical places, they share a common philosophy (Diop, 1974; Mbiti, 1969). They have common ideas about creation, the universe, relations, the environment, and spirituality. The name given to their common philosophy at the beginning is not known. The name sankofa has been used for this stage to emphasise the importance of continuously looking back to inform the future. Sankofa means returning to the source, looking back to inform the future, and reflecting on or valuing history (Hervie, 2013; Kissi, 2018). At this sankofa stage, African values collectivity, communality, dialogue, and ethics were created and strengthened.

The Tu stage. This stage was mainly characterised by the expansion of communities and their languages. About 4000 – 5000 years ago, the Bantu people increased in population and started expanding their communities in different directions away from Mambilla, but mainly eastwards and westwards (Katanekwa, 2021; Koile et al., 2022). Those who migrated from Mambilla in the eastern direction created a large settlement at Urewe in East Africa about 2000 years after leaving Mambilla. They interacted with the

Kush and Hadza in the east and the Pygmies in the central part of Africa. Those who went westwards from Mambilla kept going, forming settlements as they went and interacting with the Pygmies when they reached the Congo area. The Kush spread along the Nile and many migrated East and South (Katanekwa, 2021). About 2000 years ago, some people of this great migration reached present-day South Africa, although some small groups are known to have arrived earlier and assimilated with the San (Koile et al., 2022). Throughout this migration, the different groups interacted, and some assimilated (Katanekwa, 2021). They shared languages, art, rituals, philosophies, and cultural values. For example, the strengthening of African philosophy in Southern Africa could be attributed to this interaction. Aspects that could have been strengthened in this interaction included collectivity, sharing, environmental and spiritual values. These interactions resulted in different names for African philosophy. Most of these names are derived from the root word tu (sometimes ntu), which refers to humans (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020). Some of these names are:

- Angola (gimuntu)
- Botswana (muthu)
- Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leonne and Mali (maaya)
- Burundi (ubuntu)
- Cameroon (bato)
- Congo (bantu)
- Democratic Republic of Congo (bomoto or bantu)
- Ethiopia (medemer)
- Ghana (biako ye)
- Kenya (utu, munto or mondo)
- Malawi (umunthu)
- Mozambique (vumuntu)
- Namibia (omundu)
- Nigeria (mutunchi, iwa, agwa or omwayaonyamo)

- Rwanda (ubuntu)
- South Africa (ubuntu or botho)
- South Sudan (nhiar-baai)
- Tanzania (utu, obuntu or bumuntu)
- Uganda (obuntu)
- Zambia (umunthu)
- Zimbabwe (unhu, hunhu, ibuntu or ubuntu)

The Shosholoza stage. This stage is about resisting colonisation of African people by the zungu (White) people whose philosophy differs from that of Africans. The colonisers denied Africans their philosophy and sought to replace it with theirs. They said Africa was "philosophyless and religionless" (Achebe, 1958; Mbiti, 1969). In spite of the numerous threats to African philosophy, because of the new languages, religions, cultures, politics, professions, environments, and spirituality (Mbiti, 1969), it survived because of shosholoza, meaning unparalleled resilience and resistance.

The Ubuntu stage. There is no definite start for this stage, but it can be put in 1950 to align with the early works to achieve independence leading to liberation for the first African country, Ghana in 1957 and the formation of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963 (African Union, 2022). The word bantu from where ubuntu comes from was very much in use, to refer to Black Africans and as a personal name, for example Bantu Steve Biko, a political activist born in 1946. At this stage, the word 'Ubuntu' became more dominant as the name of African philosophy and it was promoted in literature and politics as Africa's dominant philosophy (Gade, 2011; Kaunda, 1966; Nyerere, 1968). Ubuntu's use in modern-day disciplines and professions has increased. These include social work, management, psychology, environment, education, and theology. In education, social work, development, and human services, there are numerous works and models based on Ubuntu philosophy, including:

- Unhu ethical model (Council of Social Workers Zimbabwe, 2012; Mabvurira, 2020)
- Ubuntu as a philosophical framework for African social work (Mugumbate, 2020; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013)
- Ubuntu as a pan-African philosophical framework for social work in Africa (Mupedziswa, 2006; Mupedziswa, Rankopo, & Mwansa, 2019)
- The Tswana Kagisano framework (Government of Botswana, 2016; Rankopo & Diraditsile, 2021)
- Anti-poverty and social protection model of Ubuntu (Metz, 2016)
- Ubuntu ecological and eco-spiritual perspective (van Breda, 2019)
- The decolonial framework of Ubuntu (several authors)
- An integrated framework of Ubuntu (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019)
- Nyanguru model of ageing (Nyanguru et al., 1994)
- Ubuntu educational model (Bangura, 2005, 2012; Nabudere, 2005; Nziramasanga, 1999)
- The human factor in development theory (Mararike, 1998)
- Indigenous research model (Chilisa, 2020)
- Ubuntu political philosophy (Ramose, 1999; Samkange & Samkange, 1980)

More recent contributions have focused on Ubuntu's role in environmental social work(Chigangaidze, 2022a), international social work (International Federation of Social Workers, 2020; Mayaka & Truell, 2021), governance (Dudzai, 2021), psychology (Chigangaidze, 2022b), school social work in the United States of America (Lim et al., 2022), rural development in China (Xiang & Leung, 2022), lived experiences and diaspora social work (Abur & Mugumbate, 2022; Tusasiirwe et al., 2021) and feminism (Gatwiri & Tusasiirwe, 2022).

The Umoja stage. Umoja means oneness. This is the renaissance stage where Ubuntu takes a central role as the major undivided philosophy of Africa (Ramose, 1999). The renaissance is a stage where African worldviews

reawaken and become the pillars of African society again (Bongmba, 2004). As Mbeki (2004) said, the renaissance is about a revival of African identity; regeneration of self-confidence; reconfiguration of governance and global engagement and development to end poverty; the rebirth of African politics and conflict resolution; revitalisation of culture; and replacement of unjust systems and arrangements and reimagining a democracy that is still representative and maintains accountability but is suited to Africa (Ajulu, 2001; Bongmba, 2004).

Practice of Ubuntu

Social work is globally defined as 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 knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (International Federation of Social Workers, IFSW and International Association of Schools of Social Work, IASSW, 2014).

This definition emphasises many values that are also deeply held in Ubuntu philosophy and practice. It further names 'indigenous knowledge', thereby including Ubuntu as a way for social workers to work with people directly in the community, enabling them to rediscover themselves and achieve their full potential. Ubuntu social work practice helps us all to more fully comprehend the professional approach to addressing people's physical, social, economic, environmental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. By taking into consideration the person's humanity, values, norms, and culture, the Ubuntu approach supports people's wellbeing and helps achieves tangible results in their social environment.

Ubuntu social work practice is therefore a professional indigenous practice, based on the core values of respecting humanness, equity, social justice, human rights, environmental rights, and spiritual rights among others, while emphasising human responsibilities. In order to enhance the quality of life in the world, each individual, group, and community must be kind and caring towards fellow humans as well as nature. Nature is often considered a source of livelihood and a curse if not respected, protected, or cared for. These all-inclusive principles for the wellbeing of the individual, family, community, and environment, inherently highlight that life is interconnected and interdependent.

Ubuntu practice is more evident when one immerses oneself in the community, as it applies to and depends on evidence-based, relational, and participatory practices for reliability and sustainability. This takes different shapes and forms, correlating with differing indigenous practices that must be respected, as they define people. Yet in all instances, Ubuntu practice works to shape and promote development, inclusion, and sustainability. Other factors that characterise Ubuntu practice are the socio-economic and political needs of a community. For example, a low-income society will focus on economic support for development, while a high-income society may focus on promoting inclusive care in solidarity with all members of the community. In either case, Ubuntu practice concentrates on reciprocity, leading to fair wealth redistribution and thus equity in development and sustainable wellbeing while advancing an eco-social life.

Ubuntu social work practitioners, working with and in communities, always sense the centrality of togetherness, belonging, and nurturing, and work to promote and expand these communal qualities in their projects and programmes. Every individual is invited to participate and contribute, in whatever way possible, because Ubuntu guides us to understand that the process is as important as the product in building a sense of common ownership. With communal ownership of change comes individual

responsibility. This is to treat each person with dignity and act with commitment to co-building positive change. With that responsibility comes social protection and sustainability as others commit to your respecting your own dignity and worth.

Building on pillars of Ubuntu philosophy, we must also consider the importance of spirituality, social connections and relations, economic growth, quality education, and health, as well as shared governance. Ubuntu social work practice is premised on the understanding that community members have a solution for every challenge they face, and that relationships and networks serve as a means to such solutions. In working together, Ubuntu practices serve to facilitate and nurture values of integrity, accountability, participation, and reciprocity, as well as skills like group work, adaptability, and resilience, as well as enhance social protection (Mayaka & Truell, 2021). This is well instructed in childcare, elderly care, care for the vulnerable, and contribution to community development programmes in the community as a collective responsibility. For example, every member of the community plays a role in caring for children: adults provide and protect, young people serve as examples and protect, while older persons teach and transfer traditional values through storytelling and the use of art. But the reverse is also true: children visit the elderly regularly, offering companionship and preventing loneliness, assuring them that they are valued and carrying forward their values and oral traditions.

The professional role of Ubuntu social workers is to support individuals in developing their roles and purpose in a reciprocal community. They work with (and not for) the individuals and people in their community, supporting them to rediscover the richness of relationships and the pride one can find when acting with responsibility and reliability for the wellbeing of others. Professionals always have a double role (facilitator and team member) and must be smart enough to recognise and differentiate them accordingly.

Overview of the book

This chapter has endeavoured to show the embodiment of Ubuntu in an authentic narrative, to argue the global importance of the concept of Ubuntu for effective, indigenous, and decolonial social work, to set out the deep historical roots and meanings of Ubuntu in African society, and to suggest the ways in which Ubuntu resonates with contemporary and future social work practice globally.

This book provides a collection of accounts of Ubuntu in practice, to remind us of the rewards of co-building connections with our communities and our environments advancing an eco-social world. The examples in the chapters remind us that we must be creative, innovative, understanding, and knowledgeable of the community's social and cultural norms. We must respect life and unite in our diversity through the interconnectedness to promote, protect and care for ourselves, and peacefully co-exist with nature for the earth's wellbeing. They show us the importance of facing challenges together and that when we do so a solution will always be found.

This book has been divided into two main sections: contributions from Africa and contributions from the rest of the world. This division is motivated by an ideology of centring Africa and decentring the Global North (and, in this instance, other parts of the Global South). The justification for this prioritisation of chapters from Africa over chapters from elsewhere in the world is because the term Ubuntu is African. The concept of Ubuntu resonates with many cultures around the globe, but the term Ubuntu, which has become widely used outside of Africa, is African. In practice, however, this has been difficult, as some 'non-African' chapters come from authors who explicitly place themselves as part of the African diaspora – Africans regard them as family. And some authors have written as Indigenous peoples – in many ways they are pockets of the Global South embedded within Global North countries. Notwithstanding these challenges, we believe that

foregrounding chapters written by Africans living in Africa is an important principle for a book about an African concept and term.

The 16 chapters in this first section come from authors in Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, though some are studying or working abroad. We open this section with chapters that focus on broad conceptualisations of Ubuntu, such as care democracy, social justice, and decoloniality. We then move on to macro applications of Ubuntu in community work regarding homelessness and poverty, and Ubuntu's relevance for the environment and Ecosocial work. We reflect on what Ubuntu means for the helping relationship and then focus on specific groups of people or issues: children, disabilities, families, violence, health care, sex work, refugees, and older persons. Together, these 16 chapters provide an insider view of Ubuntu practice in social work in Africa.

The second section comprises 10 chapters from authors in China, England, Jamaica, Norway, Portugal, Scotland, Sierra Leone, Turkey, and the USA, though some authors identify as part of the African diaspora or have roots in other countries. This second section follows a similar format to the first, starting with attention to conceptual issues of Ubuntu as communalism and as incorporating self-care within a collective, decoloniality, community development, ecology, trauma-informed practice, children, migration, and health care.

Readers will notice that abstracts are provided in English and in the home languages or mother tongues of the authors. In some chapters, abstracts are provided in multiple languages, if the authors have different home languages. The intention is to celebrate and foreground the importance of language in a decolonial, diverse, and inclusive society, values that are central to social work and Ubuntu.

In conclusion, this chapter has aimed to provide a conceptual and historical foundation for the centrality of Ubuntu in contemporary and future social

work, not only for Africa but for the world. As much as Ubuntu goes under different names in Africa, it may be present in many, most, or even all societies globally, even if part of forgotten or marginalised folklore and now-outdated ways of being human in the community. Our collective hope as editors and authors is that The Ubuntu Practitioner will help to stimulate deeper thinking about and appreciation of Ubuntu for this present and our future world.

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Chapter 2

'Care Democracy' in Social Work Practice: The Novel Contribution of Ubuntu

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Biography
Overson Musopero is a Zimbabwean Social Worker who is a current PhD candidate majoring in Public Administration at Korea University and a recent graduate of Erasmus Mundus MA in Advanced Development in Social Work (July 2022). Major areas of interest are Public Policy Analysis, Welfare and Care Policies, Social Work Entrepreneurship, Social Work Ethics, and Disability Issues. In relation to Ubuntu Theory and Practice, I am interested in the current adoption and utilisation of this philosophy in social work education and practice. These developments influence my personal and professional desire to put Ubuntu at the centre of my practice and research in social work as an Ubuntu practitioner.

Abstract
Care has gained unprecedented importance in various disciplines, especially in social work. Globally, there is an increasing acknowledgment that care is an inevitable aspect of humankind as all individuals (dependency workers/care providers and dependents/care recipients) need care at some point in their life course (Eichner, 2015). Traditionally, attention was given to care as a private, individual, or family responsibility but recently there is a visible consideration of care as a necessary public good that should be

universalised (White, 2020). This is credited to the realisation that care democracy (universal and equal access to care) by both the dependents and the dependency workers like social workers is critical to shaping behaviour, thinking, and performance of humans in any form of development (Kittay, 2001). Ubuntu practice thus has the potential to ensure the universal provision of care. This chapter provides reflections on the significance of Ubuntu practice and its sense of humanity and togetherness in achieving care democracy in social work practice. Some key concepts to be discussed include defining care, understanding care democracy, Ubuntu-based social work practice as an approach to care democracy, and critical reflections.

Abstract Translation into Shona

Rubatsiro runopihwa vanhu rwatinoti 'care' pachirungu runowedzera kukosheswa zvisati zvakamboitika muzvidzidzo nemabasa akasiyana siyana kunyanya kune avo vanoita basa resocial work. Pasi rese pane kubvumirana kunoramba kuchiwedzera mayererano nekuti rubatsiro chinhu chisingadziviririke muhupenyu hwevanhu vese (vanopa rubatsiro nevanopihwa rubatsiro) sezvo rubatsiro urwu rwuchidiwa pane imwe nguva yehupenyu hwavo. Makare kare rubatsiro rwaisaonekwa sechinhu cheruzhinji, rwaionekwa semutoro wedungamunhu kana mhuri asi mazuvano zvajeka kuti rubatsiro rwave kuonekwa sechinhu chinodiwa neveruzhinji uye chinofanirwa kuwanikwa nemunhu wese panguva dzakafanira. Izvi zvinoitika mushure mekunge vabatsirwi nevabatsiri vakaita semasocial worker vaziva kuti rubatsiro rwakasununguka (kuwanikwa kwerubatsiro nevanhu vese zvakaenzana) rwakakosha pakuumba maitiro, mafungiro uye mashandiro evanhu munzira dzese dzekukura. Nekudaro Hunhu hune mukana wekuita kuti rubatsiro rwupiwe kumunhu wese. Chitsauko ichi chinotaridza kukosha kweHunhu senzira yekuti rubatsiro rwakasununguka rwubudirire mubasa resocial work. Mamwe madingindira akakosha achataurwa nezvawo anosanganisira: kutsanangura zvinoreva rubatsiro, kunzwisisa rubatsiro rwakasununguka, Hunhu mubasa resocial

work senzira yekuvaka rubatsiro rwakasununguka uye kutsoropodza kana kufungisisa kwakadzama.

Introduction

The global rates of people in need of care are rising among children, the elderly, those with illnesses, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups (United Nations, 2019). This is attributed to issues like globalisation, natural disasters, climate change, forced migration, the outbreak of diseases, and mental health issues among other global uncertainties (Zapf, 2009). As a result, care is emerging as an important aspect of humankind. With the ever-changing societies, new challenges and social issues are rising thereby affecting the wellbeing of people (Tan, 2004). In this case, care became an integral component of social work practice to achieve its goal of improving the wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities (Ife, 2001). This implies that social work is among the professions that are responsible for providing and maintaining care that is universal and accessed by all. Following a high demand for care, inequalities, and power imbalances are existing in the care provision (Tronto, 2010). This has resulted in a new movement of 'care democracy' that advocates for equality, freedom of choice, transparency, justice, and universal care access. As a helping and caring profession based on human rights and relationships (Lishman et al, 2018), social work is also mandated to promote democracy in care. This comes at a time when there are massive calls for the adoption and utilisation of Ubuntu in social work practice. In this respect, this chapter intends to discuss the importance of Ubuntu-based social work practice in promoting care democracy.

Just like other helping professions, social work is adopting and utilising Ubuntu in both practice and education. The main argument of this chapter is that the adoption of Ubuntu practice in social work has great potential of achieving the much-needed care democracy. Ubuntu as an African philosophy is based on humanness, kindness, communality, and social-

cultural issues such as social justice and human rights. With these principles and characteristics, Ubuntu practice is well placed as the best approach in social work to bring care democracy whose goals are to ensure equality, freedom of choice, and justice in care. This chapter is organised as follows: section 1, introduction, section 2, the definition of care, section 3, dependents and dependency workers in care, section 4, understanding care democracy, section 5, Ubuntu practice as an approach to caring democracy in social work, section 6, Conclusion.

Defining Care

Clarity is essential when discussing terms or concepts like care to understand their meaning because there is care an activity of looking after someone and caring about how we feel about certain issues (Ash, 2010). Drawing from other literature, care is an elusive concept to define and it has been understood in various dimensions. Therefore, it is important to look at all the dimensions of care, phases of care, and ethics of care to have diverse and comprehensive perspectives of care.

Dimensions of Care

There are several dimensions of care among scholars. Care has been defined from different dimensions as an activity, attitude, responsibility, political issue, public good, and a private commodity (Cohen, 2012). This section focuses on these multiple dimensions of care.

Care as an Activity- In this dimension, care is defined as a form of labour that involves some perfumed activities to meet the needs of the care recipients. Noddings (2015) defines care as an activity of paying close attention to the feelings, needs, desires, and thoughts of those cared for. This denotes that care can be broadly defined as an activity that involves looking after the physical, social, psychological, emotional, and developmental needs of one or more people. As an activity, (White, 2020) stated that care involves language, thoughts, and an empathetic understanding of others to meet

their individual needs. Bubeck (1995) defined care as an activity or series of activities done to meet the needs of one person by another person. It is an activity that responds to a subset of basic human needs and it does not require any emotional bond between the care provider and the care recipient. However, Ruddick (1990) had a different perspective on the emotional bond part by defining care as an activity that encompasses some work or labour that is intrinsically emotional based on mutual relations between the carer and the cared-for. Care shows how to respond to the needs, why we should respond, and the standards by which it can be practiced. In a broader sense, care is defined as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our world so that we may live in it as well as possible (meeting as many needs as possible) (Tronto, 1993: 103). All these definitions indicate that care can be understood as an activity without which humanity as a species could not survive.

Care as an attitude- Several scholars like (Tronto, 1993; Bubeck, 1995; Kittay, 1999) have pointed out that rather than being an activity, care is also an attitude. This means that in the process of caring for others care providers act to meet their needs in a way that involves an attitude of concern and love. Blum (2004) stated that care as an attitude involves compassion, concern, kindness, thoughtfulness, and generosity. Held (2006) also buttressed that care is an attitude and an ideal manifest in activity. As an attitude based on values, care has the ability to pick out the appropriate cluster of moral considerations such as sensitivity, trust, and moral concern to meet the needs of others. This brings out the notion of promiscuous care which means that we must not discriminate when we care. From these definitions, it can be depicted that care is an attitude that can be possessed and manifested or expressed as a real activity through actions.

Care as a responsibility- Care is famously known as a responsibility especially parental responsibility to take care of their children. But care as responsibility goes beyond that. It means that everyone including the care recipients has a

responsibility to take care of others in some way. Care as a responsibility means that individuals, families, kinships, communities, organisations, markets, or the state are responsible for care (The Collective Care, 2020). When care is regarded as a responsibility it determines who is supposed to provide it and using what strategies and channels (Tronto, 2013). Based on these definitions of care as a responsibility, it can be deduced that everyone has a responsibility of care, what only differ is the magnitude. It is also important to note that when care is defined as a responsibility it is crucial to be clear on who is responsible to avoid clashes and to promote collaborations among the agents of care provision.

Care as a political issue- White (2020) alluded that care is a political issue in the sense that it shapes what we pay attention to, how we think about responsibility, what we do, how responsive we are to the world around us, and what we think as the important and first priority in life. Care is a political issue as there is always politics on who is supposed to provide care between the families, communities, the market, or the state. Nowadays as care is moving away from home where it was traditionally provided by the family, there are debates on whether it should be privatised and allocated in the market or remain a public good provided by the state. The political nature of care also manifests in the political ideologies that determine its importance to the government and the budget to be allocated for it.

Care as a public good- In simple terms a public good is a commodity or service that is provided without profit to all members of society. Normally this is provided by the government or the voluntary sector. In this regard, care as a public good means that it is supposed to be accessed by all members of society without any form of exclusion, especially based on the ability to pay for it (Tronto, 2013). Care is defined as a public good in the sense that it should be free as something that is essential for human existence and the survival of their societies. This denotes that care becomes a public good when the agent

who is responsible for its provision is not-for-profit oriented. In line with this, there is a great debate on whether care should remain a public good or not.
Care as a private commodity - There is also an argument that care is a like any other good or service and its distribution is best left to the market (Tronto, 2010). It is suggested that when people want to care, they should seek it out and pay what is worth to them. Thus, by this account, care is not regarded as a public good but a private commodity or service. Care as a private commodity means that it can be accessed and purchased from the market (Stensota, 2020). In this case, the private sector or the market is responsible for the provision of care. However, there is also a big debate on whether the market is the best provider of care or not. It seems like there are a lot of inequalities and power imbalances when care is regarded as a private commodity or service that can be accessed through the market.

Phases of Care

Defining care also entails its phases which are important to know to understand the concept of care comprehensively. Care is not a once-off activity, but it is a process with various phases from the beginning to the end (Bubeck, 1995). Care as a process with a series of activities has different phases outlined by Tronto (1993) which include caring about, caring for, caregiving, and care receiving.

Caring about- Care proceeds from meeting the needs which require identification before an engagement. Caring about as the first stage of care that involves identifying, discerning, and understanding the caring needs at hand (Tronto, 2015). Some needs are obvious, but others are complex and require caring. The way we interpret the needs influences the intervention strategies hence, this phase is very important to identify the real needs and give the best interpretation.

Caring for- The existence of a need does not mean that anyone can address or take care of it. This means that the caring for phase involves the responsibility

to take care of some needs. It is a phase of accepting responsibility and realising that something has to be done (Tronto, 1993).

Caregiving- Once the need is identified and someone has taken responsibility to address it then meeting it requires actual caregiving. The third stage of caregiving involves different care activities that are carried out to provide care that meets the needs of care receivers. In this stage, the responsible care provider works collaboratively with the care receiver until the care needs are achieved.

Care receiving- After the care work is done, the care receiving phase is for evaluating if the provided care was successful. Care receiving prompts response of how much of the care needs were met, stemming from the care recipient. This means that care can only end when the needs are met. No care existed unless the care receiver acknowledges the care received (Noddings, 2015).

Ethics of Care

Ethics of care are also important in defining care. According to Tronto (1993), care constitutes four main ethics namely attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness. Lack of attentiveness to the needs of others is regarded as a moral failure to the ethics of care. Therefore, attentiveness is supposed to be at the forefront of care as a vehicle of genuine human interaction. When it comes to responsibility it is not only a formal moral category considered as an obligation to be carried out, but it also bears a political meaning that examines its allocation within the society (Held, 2006). Competence is understood in the framework of moral consequentialism that calls for the concrete expression of concern. Finally, the responsiveness of a caregiver is key in trying to meet the needs of the care receiver. From the ethical perspective, it can be deduced that care means being attentive, responsible, competent, and responsive toward meeting the needs of others.

Although there are many definitions of care, this chapter adopts Tronto's (1993) view that care includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our world so that we may live in it as well as possible.

Critical Reflections

Care has been perceived and defined from various perspectives depending on the discipline, who is defining it, and for what purposes. As a result, care remains an important but broad concept. In general, the keynote on the definition of care is that the way care is defined matters a lot because it determines who is responsible for providing it, how it is valued, distributed, and accessed as well as the possibility of meeting the care needs. This concurs with Engster (2015), who stated that the meaning of care shapes what we pay attention to, how we think about responsibility, what we do, how responsive we are to the world around us, and what we think of as important in life. Therefore, to achieve care democracy, a clear definition of 'care' in 'care democracy' is critical among the designers, providers, evaluators, and also recipients of care.

One of the major problems that disturb care democracy is the proper definition of care. The traditional approaches usually define care from a single or specific dimension or perspective. For example, political and market-based approaches view care either as public or private good or as a political issue only without considering other dimensions like responsibility, attitude, and ethical issues among others.

While other approaches fail to explain care explicitly, the Ubuntu approach can give great value to understanding care. Ubuntu is a holistic approach and its application can enhance a better understanding of care by regarding its multiple dimensions as not mutually exclusive from each other but as complements. This denotes that the elements of togetherness, humanness, and justice among others in the Ubuntu-based practice have the power to guide all players in the care system to understand care not only as an activity

but as a necessity, human right, and social value that should be accessed by everyone and meet their specific care needs. There is a great value addition of Ubuntu towards the understanding of care in general. Care is not just an action but a responsibility that is underpinned by responsibilities, politics, attitudes, and ethics or social values. To better understand care, Ubuntu philosophy emphasises the responsibility of everyone (communality and togetherness). This shapes the positive attitudes among individuals and various political structures to understand care as a necessity without which humankind cannot survive (kindness and humanness).

Dependents and Dependency Workers in Care

Care is usually comprised of two parties which are dependents (those who need care) and dependency workers (those who provide care). There is a general perception that dependents usually depend on their dependency workers but in 'good care' the relationship should be mutual and interdependent. At this point, it is critical to explore more about these terms.

Dependents

Dependents are referred to as individuals with care needs who require some help from caregivers (Kittay, 1999). This means that being dependent is inescapable in the life history of each individual because everyone was or can be dependent at some point. There are identifiable periods in our lives where dependence is unavoidable either for survival or for flourishing. This is because care is needed by everyone during childhood, a moment of illness, when disabled, or in old age (Held, 2006). Therefore, assuring that care is available to those who need it should be a central concern. Some examples of dependents include infants, early childhood, persons with disabilities and illnesses, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups. The long process of human maturation combined with the decidedly human capacities for moral feeling and attachment make caring for dependents a mark of our humanity which is central to the Ubuntu practice (Kittay, 2001). In this case, dependency is not an exceptional circumstance. This calls for human interconnectedness

(found in the Ubuntu philosophy) not only for the purposes of survival but for the development of relationships and cultural solidarity. As the number of dependents is rising every day, care becomes a crucial service. Tronto (2010) postulated that the process of care is embedded with some power dynamics where dependents are regarded as passive recipients who rely on the care providers to meet their care needs. This denotes that caregivers are seen as more powerful than dependents in the care relationship. This is based on the perception that dependents cannot survive without their caregivers. However, the relationship is supposed to be democratic with equal powers and freedom to make choices.

Dependency Workers

A dependency worker was defined by Kittay (1999) as a person who provides care, whether for pay or out of love, for someone who is temporarily or permanently dependent. Dependency work is the task of attending to dependents. In this case, dependency workers may include social workers. By the nature of their work in providing care, social workers are also included as dependency workers. In dependency work, professionals like social workers direct their energies and attention to an intended beneficiary or a care receiver (Engster, 2015). This implies that a dependency worker and the dependent or care receiver enter into a dependency relationship with committed trust in the care, custody, management, or support of another. Part of the work of a dependency worker is to anticipate and represent the needs of the dependents but because of the consuming and poorly compensated nature of work, dependency workers' own needs are seldom met (Tronto, 2013). Dependency workers then are in a double bind, lacking the support to adequately meet and represent the concerns of both their dependents and themselves. Because dependency workers have been primarily women, Kittay (1999) takes their situation to be one of feminist concern.

Critical Reflections

There are many power relations issues among the dependency workers like social workers in care. Most of the care receivers like children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities among others are safeguarded by laws that protect them from being victimised or exploited by their dependency workers. For example, social workers in child protection or adult social care are controlled by the Children's Act or the Adult Social Care Act. However, it is alluded by other researchers like Kittay (1999) that while these laws are protecting the dependents, they leave dependency workers vulnerable. When all powers of dependency workers are stripped off, the dependents become more powerful and dominate the care relationship which is supposed to be democratic. On the other hand, when the dependents are not protected by these laws the dependency workers dominate the care relationship thereby, increasing vulnerability and exploitation.

From a critical perspective, care democracy requires a balanced relationship between the dependents and dependency workers in the process of caregiving and receiving. This type of relationship can be achieved through Ubuntu practice as it values the importance of mutual and human relationships. This means that through Ubuntu practice, social workers as dependency workers in care can facilitate and maintain democratic relationships with their care receivers (dependents). Both parties are equally important for a successful care intervention. Therefore, equal distribution of power among the dependents (care recipients) and dependency workers (Ubuntu social workers) helps assure transparency, freedom of choice, and meeting all the care needs.

Understanding Care and Democracy

Care Democracy

As care is gaining prominence, it incurs a lot of inequalities in its distribution and accessibility. Therefore, care democracy is concerned with transparency, equality, and democratic actions in the provision of care (Tronto, 2013). The

care democracy agenda emphasises on the universal access to good care by all. In care democracy, the main goals are equality, freedom of choice, and justice toward universal care (Brugere, 2020). Democracy in care is a critical phenomenon to ensure that there is no gender disparities and other cross-cutting issues that affect good care. It creates an environment where both the care providers and care receivers have equal rights, are free to make choices, and are responsible for the care outcomes. Care democracy responds to the actual care needs, it is flexible, responsive, and adaptive to the ever-changing care needs (Tronto, 2015).

Why Care Democracy Matters

When there is no care democracy there is usually a care crisis where the care service loses quality and adequacy (Tronto, 2020). Since the demand for care is rising, there is high competition to access the available care. In this case, a lot of inequalities arise when some individuals or groups with more financial power, political power, and other forms of power access more at the expense of others (Brugere, 2020). Care democracy matters in such cases to neutralise power imbalances and ensure equal distribution of care. Where there is care democracy, the helping care relationship between the dependents and dependency workers is strengthened, this helps to enhance collective efforts and mutual understanding which are very crucial in meeting the actual care needs. Democracy in care fosters accountability, transparency, and responsibility which are also critical for meeting care needs (Stensota, 2020).

Ubuntu Practice as an Approach to Caring Democracy in Social Work

Social workers are among the professionals who are responsible for providing care, this means that they are also regarded as dependency workers in care (Kittay, 2001). All care providers, including social workers, are also expected to promote care democracy as a new model where care is placed at the centre of every scale of life. As Ubuntu practitioners, social workers can utilise Ubuntu practice or approach to ensure care democracy in their social work

practice. This section discusses how Ubuntu practice can contribute to the achievement of care democracy goals like equality, freedom of choice, and ensuring justice. It further focuses on how the application of Ubuntu practice in promoting care democracy can implicate social work.

The Significance of Ubuntu Practice in Ensuring Care Democracy in Social Work

Ubuntu practice is the best approach that can contribute to care democracy in social work. Although Ubuntu is applied in other aspects or fields of social work, it is also well-suited in care. Through the adoption and utilisation of Ubuntu, social workers can be able to ensure equality, promote freedom of choice and enhance justice which is very crucial to achieving care democracy.

Ensuring Equality

Equality is one of the major goals of care democracy and it entails non-discrimination and equal access to care. Where care democracy exists, access to care is universal and everyone who needs care services can get them without any form of discrimination in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation among other factors (Tronto, 2013). However, equality to care access is problematic not only in social work practice but also among other care-related professions. Equal access to care depends on how care is perceived (whether as a public good or private commodity) and the responsible care providers. The most fundamental challenge faced by care providers including social workers is to ensure that everyone accesses quality care at the right time to meet their actual care needs. This is because of institutional barriers within their work settings and attitudinal barriers among individuals. These institutional and attitudinal barriers shape certain cultures and behaviour that result in inequalities in access to care. Ubuntu practice which is centred on the principles of kindness, humanness, and togetherness is the best solution to shape and transform the institutional and attitudinal barriers to equal care access. Once the attitude and behaviour of practitioners particularly social workers are influenced by the desire for communality, togetherness, and caring for others, all the negative attitudes

and behaviours can be modified. This is very critical for the transformation of all systems within the care institutions to remove the barriers to equal access to care.

The Ubuntu practice is against selfishness and inequalities which brings equality and universal access to care as major priorities. Ubuntu practice encourages the spirit of living and working together by helping each other in times of need thereby placing universal care access at the forefront (Tronto, 2020). To ensure democracy, care is supposed to be taken as a resource or service that can be shared without excluding others (White, 2020). This means that through the Ubuntu practice, social workers can be innovative and find some ways of maximising care services that meet the demand and solve the care needs of their service users effectively. For example, social workers in developing countries like Zimbabwe use indigenous innovative methods to form small groups or communities that can provide care to its members through a collectivism approach. In this case, they can utilise the local resources to maximise care services that can be accessed by everyone.
The Ubuntu philosophy views all individuals as equal which means that no one should be left behind. In this case, social workers as Ubuntu practitioners are obliged to ensure equality in their practice like providing care. Previous literature has indicated that care work has been dominated by gender inequalities where females are doing the dirty work with low salaries while their male counterparts occupy high and powerful decision-making positions (Kittay, 1999). This implies that inequalities do not exist in accessing care only but also among the care providers. Therefore, utilising Ubuntu-based practice that is non-discriminatory in social work is vital to ensure equality by eliminating gender disparities. This can bring democracy to care provision.

Promoting Freedom of choice

Freedom of choice is another goal of care democracy where both care receivers and providers make their choices without coercion. Care democracy requires all players involved in the care to be autonomous and free to express themselves and take the best options that meet the actual needs of the care

recipients (Noddings, 2015). However, in some care relationships, care receivers are dominated by their care providers. In such relationships, the recipients of care have limited power to make decisions and choices. These power imbalances create situations where care receivers are treated as passive recipients of care who have no potential of making meaningful choices. The domination of care providers in a caring relationship increases the vulnerability and exploitation of care receivers. When it comes to social work practice, the application of Ubuntu helps to treat care receivers in a dignified way. Since human relationships and the dignity of everyone is of paramount importance in an Ubuntu-based practice (Nkosi and Daniels, 2007), care recipients have the freedom to choices and express their opinions and options that help meet their actual needs. Rather than dominating the care relationship, social workers as Ubuntu practitioners value the involvement of care receivers in the caring process which is crucial in achieving care democracy. Ubuntu social workers treat care receivers as active recipients who have an inherent capacity to make choices on their needs. Rather than dominating the relationship they facilitate it, provide options, and leave the care receivers to make their most desired choices. In this regard, Ubuntu practice gives a wide room for making free choices among autonomous care recipients thereby promoting care democracy.

Enhancing Justice

Justice is essential in care democracy, and it involves issues like transparency, accountability, and responsibility. Guided by care ethics, justice is another goal of care democracy. The provision of care should be centred on transparency and accountability (Engster, 2015). Although social justice is one of the values of social work, the adoption of Ubuntu can bring more transparency and accountability in the provision of care by social workers. The moral ethics of Ubuntu combined with the professional values among social workers encourage them to use the care resources in a way that is transparent to meet the care needs of the dependents or care receivers. As Ubuntu practitioners, social workers become more accountable for their actions and be eager to be more effective in providing quality care. Ubuntu

practice values honesty and carrying out duties in a transparent and accountable manner that meets the actual needs of the care receivers. In some cases, in helping relationships like care relationships, the service providers like social workers are reluctant to be accountable when things get wrong or when the actual care needs are not successfully met (Zapf, 2009). This lack of accountability affects proper reviews and the corrections of mistakes to achieve better results in the future. But when social workers who are responsible for care providers operate as Ubuntu practitioners, they can be more accountable and willing to improve their shortfalls towards providing the best care services. By holding on to some moral principles of kindness and personhood (Gade, 2012), Ubuntu practice challenges social workers to have good morals and carry out their duties in the most desired or accepted manner thereby fostering transparency and accountability. These good morals enhance justice which is essential for achieving care democracy.

Responsibility is an integral part of care and no wonder why other researchers defined care as a responsibility. The issue of responsibility is very critical in ensuring care democracy as many questions are raised about who is responsible for providing care. In this regard, enhancing justice entails the establishment of responsible care providers who take the responsibility to make sure that the actual needs of care recipients are met as well as responsible care receivers who reciprocate the same effort to achieve the set care goals. Responsibility as part of justice involves both the care providers and care receivers being responsible for the care outcomes (Tronto, 2020). In relation to the Ubuntu practice, this state of responsibility can be attained by social workers as Ubuntu practitioners. The Ubuntu philosophy is also based on the idea that we are all responsible for taking care of the next person (I am because we are). Based on this philosophy, Ubuntu practitioners in the social work practice of care can be highly responsible and foster justice for achieving care democracy.

Social Work Implications of Applying Ubuntu Practice to Ensure Care Democracy

There are several implications for social work practice in applying Ubuntu practice to ensure care democracy. This is based on the 5As implications. These implications include availability, accessibility, affordability, accountability, and adaptability of care in the social work practice.

Improved Availability of Care in Social Work

A care crisis is one of the common problems in the provision of care (Brugere, 2020). This is a situation where there is a care deficit and where the available care fails to meet the current care demands. As the demand for care is rising, issues like unequal distribution result in the unavailability of care. Therefore, Ubuntu practice has a great implication for social work practice as it ensures fair distribution of care. As Ubuntu practice in social work builds care democracy, it paves way for maximising care services. This contributes to the availability of care. As Ubuntu practitioners, social workers use their skills, knowledge, and expertise thereby making social work the best profession to provide care services. Ubuntu shapes the culture of social workers to have a common goal of making care available for everyone who needs it. It motivates more social workers to take up more care roles and responsibilities thereby avoiding care crises and improving the availability of care in social work.

Strengthening Care Accessibility in Social Work

Another important thing to note is that the availability of care cannot be translated into its accessibility. This implies that care may be available but difficult to access because of various factors like physical, institutional, and attitudinal barriers among others. In some cases, the care is excludable and accessed by a certain group of people based on various criteria. Sometimes in situations where care is regarded as a private commodity, its access is based on the ability to purchase it (Tronto, 2013). This denotes that access to care is not always open and free and a market value is sometimes attached to it. In all these circumstances, care is accessed by those who are eligible. However,

in a caring democracy there is universal care access because care is regarded as a necessity for everyone. This means that the adoption of Ubuntu towards building care democracy strengthens the accessibility of care in social work by removing all sorts of barriers. The spirit of sharing in Ubuntu implicates social workers as Ubuntu practitioners to share the available care services among those who need them thereby reducing its excludability.

Controlling Affordability of Care in Social Work

Another barrier to the accessibility of care is its affordability (Armstrong, 2016), especially in cases where care is not considered a public good. Although most services in social work are offered free of charge, sometimes the process is costly in terms of time and other non-monitory expenses. On the other hand, not all care services are offered for free. In all these circumstances, the affordability of care is expected to be controlled and be friendly to all care users or receivers. As Ubuntu practitioners, social workers have an obligation to ensure the affordability of care. With the goal of care democracy, Ubuntu social workers believe in leaving no one behind thereby placing social work as the best profession with affordable care services.

Increasing Accountability of Care in Social Work

Ubuntu practice for achieving care democracy increases accountability among social workers. This improves the relationship between social workers and their care receivers to meet the most desired care outcomes. Increased accountability adds value to other social work ethics which is crucial in offering ethically sensitive and accountable care services for all. As Ubuntu social workers take more accountability in care services, they become more transparent and responsible for providing the best care. In this respect, Ubuntu social work for care democracy is vital for care accountability in social work practice.

Ensuring Adaptability of Care

As societies are always changing, care needs also change and care demands are therefore dynamic (Tronto, 2020). In this case, care services are supposed

to adapt to the new changes within the societies. Ubuntu practice in social work facilitates interaction between Ubuntu social workers and their surrounding societies to deal with emerging care needs effectively. In their efforts to create care democracy, Ubuntu social workers ensure adaptable care services that are efficient and responsive to the ever-changing care needs within their societies. Just like any other services offered by social workers, care services are affected by both the internal and external environments like politics, culture, and economy among others. However, the application of Ubuntu towards achieving care democracy ensures that care is adaptive and responsive to all these environments.

Conclusion

Care is highly valued as one of the basic services that are important for the survival of humans and their societies. As care is gaining prominence, care democracy is recommended among all the professions that provide care services to ensure equality, freedom of choice, and justice. This chapter argued that social work is among the professions that are recommended to ensure care democracy. In this regard, Ubuntu practice was regarded as the best approach to ensure care democracy in social work practice.

The chapter discussed several issues on how Ubuntu contributes to the clear understanding of care to achieve care democracy and the importance of Ubuntu practice in building and maintaining mutual and democratic relationships between social workers and their care receivers. It also argued that Ubuntu practice is the best approach to achieve the goals of care democracy like equality, freedom of choice, and justice. Further discussion included the social work implications of using Ubuntu practice to achieve care democracy. These implications are availability, accessibility, affordability, accountability, and adaptability of care in the social work practice.

To achieve care democracy, a clear definition of 'care' in 'care democracy' is critical among the designers, providers, evaluators, and also recipients of

care. While other approaches fail to explain care explicitly, Ubuntu is a holistic approach, and its application can enhance a better understanding of care by regarding its multiple dimensions as not mutually exclusive from each other but as complements. The elements of togetherness, humanness, and justice among others in the Ubuntu-based practice have the power to give a comprehensive understanding of care not only as an activity but as a necessity, human right, and social value that should be accessed by everyone and meet their specific care needs. From an Ubuntu perspective, care is not just an action but a responsibility that is underpinned by responsibilities, politics, attitudes, and ethics or social values. Another key point discussed is that care democracy requires a balanced relationship between the dependents (care receivers) and dependency workers (in this case, social workers) in the process of caregiving and receiving. This type of relationship can be achieved through Ubuntu practice as it values the importance of mutual and human relationships. This means that through Ubuntu practice, social workers as dependent workers in care can facilitate and maintain democratic relationships with their care receivers (dependents).

Through the adoption and utilisation of Ubuntu, social workers can be able to ensure equality, promote freedom of choice and enhance justice which are the main goals of care democracy. Equality in care democracy entails non-discrimination and equal access to care. The Ubuntu practice is against selfishness and inequalities which brings equality and universal access to care as major priorities. Ubuntu practice encourages the spirit of living and working together by helping each other in times of need thereby placing universal care access at the forefront. This means that through the Ubuntu practice, social workers can ensure equal access to care services. Care democracy requires all players involved in the care to be autonomous and free to express themselves and take the best options that meet the actual needs of the care recipients. Guided by Ubuntu, social workers treat care receivers as active recipients who have an inherent capacity to make free choices on their needs. Rather than dominating the relationship they facilitate it,

provide options, and leave the care receivers to make their most desired choices. Ubuntu practice gives a wide room for making free choices among autonomous care recipients thereby promoting care democracy. Another point to note is that justice is essential in care democracy, and it involves issues like transparency, accountability, and responsibility. Based on some moral principles of kindness and personhood (Gade, 2012), Ubuntu practice challenges social workers to have good morals and carry out their duties in the most desired or accepted manner thereby fostering transparency and accountability. These good morals enhance justice which is essential for achieving care democracy. The Ubuntu philosophy is also based on the idea that we are all responsible for taking care of the next person (I am because we are). Based on this philosophy, Ubuntu practitioners in the social work practice of care can be highly responsible and foster justice for achieving care democracy. All these discussions indicate the suitability of Ubuntu practice in achieving care democracy in social work. They also implicate social work practice by improving availability, strengthening accessibility, controlling affordability, increasing accountability, and ensuring the adaptability of care in the social work profession.

The realisation and adoption of Ubuntu in social work practice have brought many changes to the profession. All parts of the globe are now appreciating the relevance of Ubuntu in their social work interventions (Tan, 2004). As a philosophy, moral ethic, or new emerging concept, Ubuntu contributes to democracy as it believes in leaving no one behind. This is crucial for the social workers working in the care systems where 'care democracy' is the main agenda. Although it seems difficult to achieve care democracy, I strongly believe that the Ubuntu practice is the best approach that social workers can employ.

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Chapter 3

Foregrounding the Philosophy of Maat and Ubuntu in Social Work Education: 'Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu'

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Abstract
The philosophy of Maat and Ubuntu represents the moral and ethical principle of social justice. The interconnectedness of people and environment that is appreciated by the philosophy of Maat is the Afrocentric worldview to be adopted in programmes such as Social Work. This is to ensure that the identities of all people are included in the transformation agenda and development initiatives. But Social Work educators and students must understand this philosophy and discover ways for implementing its principles in practice. This chapter explores the principles of Maat and Ubuntu philosophy and how they can be adopted in Social Work education. This is also a call for the transformation of Social Work education and practice.
Keywords: *Maat, Ubuntu, Social Work, education, and practice*

Umqondo
Ubunzululwazi buka Maat kanye noBuntu kuveza umgomo wobulingiswa nokufanelekile ngenhlalo yomphakathi. Ukuhlangahlangana kwabantu nemvelo okunconywa ubunzululwazi buka Maat kungumqondo woBuntu okumele wamukelwe kwizinhlelo ezifana nezenhlalakahle. Lokhu

kungukuqinisekisa ukuthi ubunikazi babantu bonke kuyigxenye ye nguquko nokuthuthuka. Kodwa abafundi naba fundisi kudingeka baqonde lobunzululwazi bese bathola izinhlela zokwenza ngokuqondisisa imigomo yako emisebenzini. Lesi sahluko sihlola imigomo yobunzululwazi buka Maat kanye noBuntu nokuthi kungafakelwa kanjani kwizifundo zezenhlalakahle. Lokhu kuququzela nenguquko kwezemfundo nokusebenza kumkhakha wezenhlalakahle.
Amagama asemqoka: Maat, Ubuntu, sonhlalakahle, ukufunda noku sebenza.

Introduction

Western-dominated theories and models have proven inadequate and ineffective in responding to the world issues addressed by Social Work (Mabvurira, 2020). This calls for an inclusive and harmonising Social Work philosophy and framework. Ubuntu is one of the African community values that was eroded by the historical contexts of colonialism and apartheid (in the context of South Africa) (Mabovula, 2011). While Ubuntu represents the humanistic attributes that guide humanity, tolerance, and respect in communities (Mabovula, 2011), it focuses on broader structures such as social justice and development. However, the historical contexts of Africa brought poverty, scarcity of recourses, and crime, among a plethora of other challenges, which eroded the notion of Ubuntu in communities and systems of intervention. There is a need to rethink Ubuntu attributes as the building blocks of transformation and development. Ubuntu is a building block for a democratic society (Mabovula, 2011), and the restoration of shared morality. For instance, the July 2021 Phoenix massacre that claimed the lives of more than 35 African people in the hands of the Indian population in Durban, KZN (Davis, Nicolson, & Simelane, 2021) is one of the many incidents demonstrating the loss of Ubuntu in society, emanating from racial differences linked to the colonial history of South Africa. Although culture and tradition are not static and change as society evolves, the philosophy of Ubuntu must find a way to emerge in the current society.

Ubuntu is fast gaining traction, receiving global attention from Social Work professionals as a framework for relevant practice (Mayaka & Truell, 2021). This is because the philosophy speaks to the indigenisation of Social Work in different ways. The colonial era eradicated humanity. Therefore, there is a need to explore and develop the philosophy of Ubuntu for restoration and inclusive education. Globally, there are concerns about irrelevant Western domination in Social Work Education (Tusasiirwe, 2022). This suggests that decolonisation is imperative. Apparently, Ubuntu philosophy provides practicality on the issue of decoloniality. This chapter focuses on how Social Work educators, practitioners, and students can understand and implement Ubuntu philosophy in practice. Firstly, the chapter reflects on conceptualising Maat and Ubuntu philosophy in relation to Social Work education and practice. By exploring the history of colonialism and apartheid in the context of South Africa, this chapter also discusses the value of foregrounding the philosophy of Ubuntu in Social Work practice. The chapter also explores Ubuntu principles as the decolonial framework that can be adopted in Social Work education for relevant practice during service delivery.

As a way of positionality and reflection, I am an African, previously disadvantaged through the history of colonialism and apartheid. I am an academic staff member in a conventional, pre-colonial university, that existed on racial differences and White dominance (Radebe, 2019). Issues of inclusivity, lack of oneness, equity, and liberatory educational pedagogies have been one of the major, yet lacking values in my educational, and societal engagement and background. For me, this symbolises historical legacy, which indirectly makes me a student of history in the present. Thus, critical reflection on undoing the injustices of the past through appreciation of Afrocentricity, decoloniality, and Ubuntu is fundamental in my scholarship.

Conceptualisation of Ubuntu and Maat Philosophy in Social Work

Maat is the predecessor of Ubuntu (in the South African context) and the concept originates from Ancient Egypt (Baumann, 2015). Although both concepts yield unity, they are not identical. Maat focuses on working together while Ubuntu focuses on being together (Baumann, 2015). Maat formed social interactions in Egypt, based on three modes of solidarity which are active, communicative, and intentional (Baumann, 2015). Maat encourages acting, listening, and thinking for others. The focus is on justice. Thus, the Egyptian concept of Maat relates to the South African philosophy of Ubuntu. This chapter draws on both concepts to emphasise the broader application of mutuality in human behavior. However, because the author writes from the South African context, the Ubuntu concept shall dominate.

There is no single definition of Ubuntu. According to Battle (1996, p. 99), Ubuntu as a concept originated from the Xhosa expression 'Umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu', which means that each individual's humanity is ideally expressed in relationship to others. Ubuntu consists of the prefix ubu- and the stem ntu-ubu, which evokes the idea of being in general (Battle, 1996). Thus, ubu-ntu is the fundamental ontological and epistemological category in the African thought of the Bantu-speaking people (Battle, 1996). Khoza (2005, p. 269) defines Ubuntu as "an African value system that means humanness or being human, a worldview characterised by such values as caring, sharing, compassion, communalism, communocracy, and related predispositions."

The humanity and social justice focus of Maat and Ubuntu speaks to the fundamental principles of Social Work. The IFSW and IASSW (2014) define Social Work as 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.

By its definition, Social Work focuses on humanity and harmony in people's existence through the collective frameworks of equality, inclusivity, and justice for all. That definition can be regarded as the very basic definition and the agenda of Ubuntu philosophy. Ubuntu relates to and is compatible with Social Work (Magumbate & Nyanguru, 2013; Mabvurira, 2020). Thus, Social Work educators, students, practitioners, and service users must realise this link and embrace Ubuntu as a Social Work framework. Ubuntu philosophy is also on the current global agenda in Social Work (Mayaka & Truell, 2021).

Ubuntu (in the Nguni language) or Maat (in the Egyptian language) as an African belief system (Oviawe, 2016) promotes humanity as the culture of life, a unifying factor that brings harmony to diverse people's identities (Lefa, 2015; Mahaye, 2018). The philosophy of Ubuntu is the pride and hope of the African nation (Lefa 2015; Mahaye, 2018). Ubuntu focuses on acceptable ideas and deeds (Magumbate & Nyaangura, 2013). The adoption of this philosophy in education and practice will help students to obtain a high level of moral judgment since it encompasses the different notions that constitute the building blocks of humanity such as spirituality and culture (Mahaye, 2018). Ubuntu allows education to be viewed as a means not of serving the market but of servicing the advancement of society by "instilling to students and practitioners a broad sense of values" (Mahaye, 2018, p.12). For instance, for inclusivity in Social Work Practice, the curriculum must be the "nursery of values" by exalting the African philosophy of Ubuntu in its existence (Mahaye, 2018, p. 13).

People's existence cannot be separated from those around them. Thus, one exists by being included in relation to others (Mahaye, 2018). Social Work

practice that does not speak to the inclusive needs of service users indicates the absence of Ubuntu. However, it is the tenets of Western/Eurocentric education that place value on the individuality that was infused in African education through coloniality (Oviawe, 2016; Makhanya & Zibane, 2020). Therefore, the exclusion of indigenous peoples' experiences in education reflects the deficiency of borrowed educational ideologies in African philosophy. Such education does not allow for the incorporation of Ubuntu in practice. Such Western ideology in education also fails to acknowledge self-realisation as coming from interpersonal relationships with others (Mahaye, 2018).

The interconnectedness of people and things that is appreciated by the philosophy of Ubuntu is the Afrocentric worldview to be adopted in Social Work education in the process of ensuring that all identities are included in knowledge creation, development, and distribution (Makhanya, 2021). Thus, for the African philosophy of Ubuntu to be realised, education must be transformed into the "community and not the collection of individuals" (Lefa, 2015, p.1). This is because the philosophy of Ubuntu encourages solidarity since "it knows neither colour nor race (in today's context), but only knows the human race as created by God". After all, education by its nature is multicultural (Mahaye, 2018, p. 17). Thus, engaging and sharing with others should be valued in institutions of higher learning, for education to reflect the values that are considered worthy in society (Mahaye, 2018). Students must be taught to take responsibility for others and accept their authority and guidance for development (Mahaye, 2018). Similarly, Oviawe (2016, p. 5) argued that,

There is a need to rediscover alternative paradigms like Ubuntu that shift the dominant Western-Eurocentric gaze from an over-reliance on positivism, Eurocentrism, classism, and individualism to a more human-centred and holistic approach that recognises the interdependences within the ecosystem of people, planet, and place.

This suggests the need for higher education to engage in knowledge brokerage by conceptualising the universe as an interconnected system of community networks (Oviawe, 2016). This will be a transition from the destructive colonial history to decolonial inclusive higher education and Social Work practice. This is a call for a postcolonial society that values "greater equality of opportunity and quality of life for all of its citizens" (Oviawe, 2016, p.7). African education must be built on the principles of Maat (Ubuntu), which include, but are not limited to truth, justice, propriety, harmony, balance, reciprocity, and order (Lefa, 2015; Mahaye, 2018). Umuntu umuntu ngabantu means that "to be a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and on that basis establish humane relations with them" (Ramose, 1999, p.37).

Moving away from colonialism and apartheid: Foregrounding the philosophy of Ubuntu in decolonisation

Both the coloniser and the colonised must understand the human degrading strategies of coloniality. Further, they must understand how colonial histories in the present can be dealt with by adopting Ubuntu philosophy in practice. Although the current chapter focuses on Social Work Education, the philosophy is relevant for multiple disciplines that engage in discourses on the advancement of humanity and development.

Colonialism was characterised by domination and oppression in Africa. This manifested as colonial racism, which demonstrated how Europeans ruled over "blacks" for the advancement of "whites" (Tsotsi, 2000, p. 6). Such power imposition and control were proclaimed as "white people's burden of developing African countries" (Birmingham, 1995, p. 1). South Africa gained its independence from British colonial rule around 1902 (Okoth, 2006). However, colonialism continued in different forms through apartheid. Apartheid was a system of racial segregation in South Africa that was enforced through legislation by the National Party from 1948 to 1994 (Makhanya, 2021). The Bantu Education Act of 1952 was one of the

discriminatory policies that governed the apartheid government's education system, ensuring that Africans received minimal education, which sustained them in the oppressed group (SA History Online [SAHO], 2018). The University Education Act 45 of 1959 also extended its ruling by prohibiting African students from attending Whites universities (SAHO, 2018). Social Work education and practice in the country also emanated from this historical context of racial segregation and different services and education for different races (Smith, 2008).

The South African Council of Social Service Professions as the guiding board for the social work profession in the country, could not enforce decolonial education. There was no uniformity in South African universities in Social Work curricula (Mamphiswana & Noyoo, 2016). Although the council set requirements for Social Work education and training in South Africa, every university had to formulate its curriculum (ibid). It can be acknowledged that even in developed countries, there is no uniform curriculum (ibid). Nevertheless, in a country such as South Africa, characterised by historical institutional discrimination, lack of uniformity was designed to differentiate African education from that of other racial groups (ibid). Such arrangements suggested a need for decolonization.

Decolonisation is the "change that colonised countries go through when they become politically independent from their former colonisers" (Oelofsen, 2015, p. 130), through decoloniality. Decoloniality is a school of thought used principally by an emerging Latin American movement that focuses on untangling the production of knowledge from a primarily Eurocentric episteme. It critiques the perceived universality of Western knowledge and the superiority of Western culture. Decoloniality is the practice of decolonisation by critically examining dominant practices and knowledge in modern society (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). The chapter argues that both processes through the adoption of Ubuntu are necessary for transformation in Social Work education and practice. The current Social Work training and

practice should be evaluated to avoid colonial theories and approaches (Tamburro, 2013).

Although colonialism and apartheid ended, their demise did not symbolise the end of 'White supremacy' (Dladla, 2017, p. 39). The liberation negotiations did not exalt Ubuntu as an African philosophy of undoing the injustices of the past. In 2015 and 2016, South African higher education institutions were dominated by the #FeesMustFall student protests, which called for free, decolonised higher education. The students called for contextually relevant curricula that would be free from colonial influences (Kreitzer, 2012; Mbembe, 2016). The discipline of Social Work is not immune to such calls since it is reluctant to address known discriminatory curriculum norms (Mamphiswana & Noyoo, 2006). Restructuring is necessary since Social Work training was skewed to maintain colonial and apartheid systems; hence professionals were not equipped with skills to deal with the disempowered African population (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012). Smith (2008) also called for Social Work education to engage with the socio-political realities of the post-colonial and post-apartheid regimes to critically engage with inequality, oppression, and cultural hegemony.

To date, several studies focusing on decolonisation have been conducted in higher education. For example, in Canada, Abdi (2006) examined the Eurocentric discourses and African philosophies and epistemologies of education. Tamburro (2013) conducted a study focusing on the inclusion of decolonisation in Social Work education and practice. In South Africa, Le Grange (2014) examined the Africanisation of the university curriculum. The decolonisation agenda has received much attention in South African universities. As a result, the 2017 Social Work International Conference held in Johannesburg, focused on the decolonisation of Social Work education. However, the battle of decolonisation is still at an infant stage. This chapter proposes Ubuntu as the decolonial process to be appreciated in Social Work education and practice. There is a need for society to have a zeal for quality

and inclusive education, which leads to practices that exalt critical thinking (Mahaye, 2018).

Ubuntu philosophy in Social Work education and practice

Abantu and Isintu

As suggested by Dladla (2017, p. 43), this paper is against the adoption of Ubuntu in Social Work education and practice without 'Abantu and Isintu' traditions. The teaching material used, and practice guidelines must be critically observed if it originates from Abantu people, who are the owners of the philosophy. Isintu symbolises the culture that foregrounds the philosophy of ubuntu (Dladla, 2017). The shallow versions of Ubuntu dominated by White supremacy and European perspective will sustain the epistemic-ide upheld by coloniality.

Abantu

Language is central to decolonisation and the promotion of an inclusive curriculum. The adoption of Ubuntu as a philosophy in South Africa's higher education must focus on foregrounding African languages. In education and practice, the context matters. Since Ubuntu derives from Nguni languages of South Africa, education must be grounded in Abantu languages. For example, "The Nguni languages are a group of Bantu languages spoken in South Africa by Nguni people. Nguni languages includes Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Swati, Hlubi, Phuthi, Bhanca, Lala, Nhlangwini" (Art and Culture, 2022). However, these languages are at the periphery in academia. Prah (2002 cited in Rassool, 2007) argues that language speaks to the minds and hearts. Thus, creativity and innovative knowledge should be transferred through "the languages of the masses". Unfortunately, this is not the case in the African context. Similarly, in 1985, Mateene (cited in Putz, 1995) raised concerns about African countries' reliance on European languages. The author argues that African languages are excluded even in education and practice where such languages should have the exclusive right to contextual relevance.

Foreign language/s used in teaching and learning increase low self-esteem and anxiety among indigenous students (Rubio, 2007). Such pressure can negatively impact not only the academic progress and learning of students (ibid) but also in practice. This leads to education failing to equip social workers with the basic skills of being able to effectively communicate with clients in practice (Schenk et al., 2015) for context-specific service delivery. For instance, Ncube (2019) has questioned the reasons for African education to be rendered according to former colonisers' languages. He argues that, when this is done, Africans lose their sense of being in the consumption of languages of the colonial master. Non-English-speaking students become alienated in class engagements because of their limited English vocabulary (Makhanya & Zibane, 2020). The issue of non-enunciation and poor elocution are alienating experiences that perpetuate poor English communication skills, which generate fear and feelings of incompetency among the indigenous students (Ibid). Hence, in the post-apartheid era, some South African universities developed language policies that encourage multilingualism in academic engagements. Although issues of practical implementation remain a concern for other institutions, the University of KwaZulu-Natal's language policy has been appreciated as the most practical and implemented (Seepe, 2022).

As a university that aspires to African scholarship, UKZN has demonstrated value in student identities through the language policy that encourages equal use of English and isiZulu in academia. This policy was developed in 2006, revised in 2014 and it is currently in the process of review for 2022/3 (Mngadi, 2022). The constant revision aims to ensure relevance, inclusivity, and practical implementation. The university understands that in language, we find mental strength (Seepe, 2022). This is recommended for an African university, which is different from universities located in Africa (Seepe, 2022). Therefore, UKZN has adopted isiZulu and English to promote mass participation. This is ensured through different activities.

UKZN founded University Language Board (ULB) that ensures practical language implementation at the university. This has culminated in the scientific development of isiZulu through language human technologies such as isiZulu term bank, isiZulu lexicon, isiZulu National Corpus, and isiZulu SpellChecker (Mngadi, 2022). Furthermore, the ULB offices support the translation of material, training of bilingual tutors, and implementation of the DR9 rule, which calls for all master's and doctoral abstracts to be translated to isiZulu. In addition to that, it is compulsory for all nonisiZulu speaking first year students to take an isiZulu module in the first year of study. However, one may question why isiZulu is prioritised, considering the number of indigenous languages in South Africa. IsiZulu was chosen for locality and regional representation since it is dominant in KwaZulu-Natal. Further, the university is in engagement to include other languages such as siSotho and Kiswahili (Mngadi, 2022). Therefore, based on the perspectives of Ubuntu philosophy, UKZN has demonstrated its commitment to transformation and decoloniality. Although there is room for improvement, the university policy values language as an important identity for inclusive and liberating education.

The central aspiration is to value the African invested mode of knowledge production for sustainable education. This suggests a desire for incorporation, consideration, and validation of indigenous languages as equal partners with the Northern academy. Chimamanda Ngozi (2009) has argued for the impossibilities of learning that emanate from one side, as it demotivates diversity. There is a need for diverse knowledge production and transmission for epistemological relevance in Social Work education. Thus, the inclusion of indigenous languages in the curriculum is the basis of decolonisation that values the intellectual capacity of the African continent (Oelofsen, 2015). This means that decolonial education should be African centred to seek to develop indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) through language in academia. Similarly, Nyoka (2019) has argued how un-silencing

the intellectual voices of indigenous people has the potential to develop sustainable education in South Africa.

Isintu

The cultures and traditions (which are termed 'Isintu' in Abantu languages) of Abantu (African) people must be valued in education and practice. Ubuntu practitioners must understand, learn and adopt the cultures of the people to be served (Dladla, 2017). The focus is on their original way of living and doing things without trying to impose colonial cultures. By so doing, indigenous people's way of life gets to be re-centred for effective service delivery (Chitumba, 2013). These are also the basis of social justice, freedom, and liberation for all (Magumbate, 2021). Ubuntu as a philosophy does not only focus on the individual but on family, community, spirituality, society, and environment (Magumbate, 2021). The words empowerment and social justice also remain central to the process (Mayaka & Truell, 2021). This is also a call for culturally sensitive Social Work (Tusasiirwe, 2022). "Before our people can progress, they must discover their soul and their soul lies in heritage…" (Chitumba, 2013, p. 1271). It is important to show the value of Isintu (cultures and traditions) to heal broken identities and low self-esteem, mostly for those who were previously oppressed (Chitumba, 2013). The university research must also actively engage with indigenous knowledge to ensure teaching that is centred on Isintu. This will allow for meaningful and developmental practice. This is also relevant to addressing the injustices of the past by upholding the values of previously oppressed groups. Ubuntu philosophy in practice is a call for equal opportunities for all. It is through Isintu in Ubuntu that can one understand the African culture (Nzimakwe, 2014). All have the right to stand on their cultural practices as equals (Mayaka & Truell, 2021). Hence, Van Breda (2019) suggested that Ubuntu needs to be developed as the African theory in Social Work.

Humanity, tolerance, and respect

Humanity is the focus of emancipation against colonialism (Mabovula, 2011). Through the humanity embedded in Ubuntu as a philosophy, Social Work prioritises equality in all human beings (Mayaka & Truell, 2021) and interconnectedness with others (van Breda, 2019). Tolerance suggests that "Disagreements need not cause harm if there is tolerance and respect for other's viewpoint in the community structure" (Mabovula, 2011, p. 41). Therefore, tolerance aims to encourage people to consider the viewpoints of others and not disregard them. Since South Africa is characterised as the Rainbow Nation, living side by side with others despite differences constitutes true freedom (Mabovula, 2011) and Ubuntu. Respect is the guiding principle for relationships (Mabovula, 2011). It emphasizes the need to shelter humanity and tolerance. This can be done by placing value on others' well-being (Nzimakwe, 2014).

Humanity views Ubuntu as a collection of African values that focus on people as authentic human beings (Magumbate, 2021). This authenticity also relies on Ubuntu as orature and focuses on the lived experiences than documented sources of Ubuntu, which are very limited if they exist. For Social Work education and practice to capture these elements, students, teachers, and practitioners must be exposed to and understand the meanings behind folklore, songs, stories, poems, teasing, epics, jokes or humour, irony, and proverbs (Magumbate, 2021). It is out of such oral tradition and experiences where rich African culture can be found. However, the current author agrees with Mucina (2020), when highlighting the need to seek consent when extracting, observing, understanding, and redistributing such experiences. Consent seeking is a form of respect, which is a guiding principle of Ubuntu philosophy. This direction should not only focus on education and practice but also Ubuntu philosophy in Social Work research.

Humanity, tolerance, and respect also focuses on what Mbiti (1969, p. 106, cited in Magumbate, 2021) view as,

What happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say 'I am because we are and since we are, therefore, I am'.
The above is the translation of umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu. This is what Samkange and Samkange (1980, cited in Magumbate, 2021) suggest as valuing humanity, respect for relationships, and leadership that are people centred. Thus, Ubuntu should shape not only practice but the choice of literature in teaching. Ubuntu philosophy suggests that an individual is part of a larger society. It concerns itself with micro, meso and macro issues. Such focus relates to the values of Social Work since its views a person within the environment. This suggests that Ubuntu also allows one to maintain rational connections with others (Mucina, 2013).

Mucina (2013) further suggested that among others, the following principles guide respect in Ubuntu philosophy,

- One is the reflection of the existence of ancestors.
- Ubuntu is for the wholeness and integrity of nature
- We give thanks for what we have received
- The spirit of land and water is honoured in different ways
- The dead are honoured because they live in a parallel world with the living.

Social Work must incorporate these and other principles of Ubuntu into practice, education, and research. This suggests that it is limiting to the African context to adopt Western perspectives only to analyse the experiences of the African people, instead of drawing on diverse knowledge. Indigenous perspectives from the West in African academia overlook the real challenges facing indigenous African communities. If Social Work principles and values as stipulated in different policies, contradict experiences of indigenous communities in practice and calls for a critical review with inclusivity in mind. For social protection in Social Work, ubuntu provides the guiding framework (Mayaka & Truell, 2021), by ensuring that the well-being

needs of all people are met. Mkhize, Mathe, and Buthelezi (2014) particularly highlighted that the Social Work code of ethics continues to be dominated by the epistemological paradigms of the Western colonial conquerors. Ubuntu forces one to believe that your pain is my pain, my wealth is your wealth, and your salvation is my salvation (Nzimakwe, 2014). One can also not speak about respect and humanity and fail to adhere to accountability and transparency because these are the basis of the philosophy (Nzimakwe, 2014). This is the call for environmental justice through self-determination (Mayaka & Truell, 2021) in Social Work education and practice. Ubuntu is against strategies that highlight people's uniqueness instead of togetherness and equality (Devi dee, 2020). However, the current author argues for critical consciousness, togetherness, and equality that do not ignore the struggles of previously disadvantaged groups. Ubuntu also calls for ethical decision-making and practice, which guides Social Work (Mabvurira, 2020). Thus, Ubuntu is the basis for fairness and consideration in the development of Social Work practice. Community good, fairness, respect, and bringing no harm are not only the guiding principles of Social Work but also relate to Ubuntu philosophy (Mabvurira, 2020). Hence, the compatibility between Social Work and Ubuntu philosophy needs to be acknowledged as the basis of decoloniality in the profession.

Conclusion

The above discussion suggests that Ubuntu as a philosophy should shape the way one thinks about Social Work. Ubuntu focuses on undoing the injustices of the past by valuing the lived experiences of others. This is compatible with Social Work. The connection between the two can be regarded as the decolonial approach that aims to sustain indigenous knowledge and traditions. This chapter has also revealed that Ubuntu philosophy can be adopted at any level by practitioners, students, educators, service users, and so on. Therefore, Ubuntu is a comprehensive African philosophy of decoloniality in Social Work education and practice. Ubuntu remains the central form of social justice (Mayaka & Truell, 2021).

Although Ubuntu philosophy originated in Africa, the chapter does not suggest that it must be adopted in Africa only. The world has the potential to get harmony and equal economic and social development under the philosophy of Ubuntu. However, non-African scholars or Eurocentric African scholars must adopt the philosophy not out of White supremacy interpretations. However, it must emanate from its original source of Abantu and Isintu and use the original principles and values of the philosophy. That is how Social Work practice and education can be standardized around the world through Ubuntu philosophy.

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Chapter 4

Reflections of a Social Work Students' Understanding of Ubuntu in Theory and Practice

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Biography
Nomagugu Gasa is a 27-year-old Social Worker from Johannesburg. South Africa. She graduated with her social work degree from the University of Johannesburg in 2018. She is currently completing her master's from the same university. She is currently working with persons with substance use disorder in Johannesburg.

Abstract
The 2015 Rhodes Must Fall Movement sought to decolonise amongst other things education across South Africa. This paper aims to reflect on my understanding of Ubuntu as a decolonised practice in social work education. Using Schon's (1983) reflection on the action model I will reflect on two scenarios. One that took place in a classroom setting and the other in a workplace setting. These reflections will look at how Ubuntu was implemented in each setting. Lastly, I will provide recommendations on how small aspects of Ubuntu or Africanisation can impact social work students' practice and education.

IsiZulu Abstract
iRhodes Must Fall Movement yangonyaka-2015 yayifuna ukuqeda ubukoloni bemfundo yaseNingizimu Afrika yonkana. Inhloso yaleli phepha ukukhombisa ukuqonda kwami u-Ubuntu njengomkhuba osuswe ubukoloni emfundweni yomsebenzi wezenhlalakahle. Ngisebenzisa u-Schons (1983) ukucabangisisa ngemodeli yesenzo ngizocabanga ngezimo ezimbili. Enye yenzeke ekilasini kanti enye isendaweni yokusebenza. Lokhu kucabanga kuzobheka ukuthi Ubuntu benziwa kanjani esimisweni ngasinye. Okokugcina, ngizonikeza izincomo zokuthi izici ezincane ze-Ubuntu noma i-Africanisation zingaba nomthelela kanjani emisebenzini yezenhlalakahle yabafundi abaqhuba kanye nemfundo.

Introduction

The purpose of this reflection is to provide a view of how Ubuntu has played a role in my education and practice in social work. Particularly how it was implemented in theory and practice in my years as an undergraduate. Furthermore, I am conscious that the practice of Ubuntu in the space of education reflects on my aspirations rather than reality (van Breda, 2019, p. 447) that in this reflection I will explore my experience with the Fees Must Fall movement and how I thought it would immediately affect social work education and practice. I will be making use of Schons reflection-on-action theory (1983; 2002) which means reflecting on the experience that one has already had, or an action already taken.

Defining ubuntu

Ubuntu is an African Philosophy that is based on togetherness, kindness, and humanness "Being able to recognise the full humanness of every person" (Nyaumwe & Mbekela, 2007 as cited in van Breda, 2019, p. 440). Ubuntu is found across many African Cultures although it may be said differently due to differentiating languages (van Breda, 2019). It celebrates the oneness of self and others and creates a more humane world for all (Du Plessis, 2021, p. 64). In my view, Ubuntu is a community, a setting where one cannot exist without the other, a setting where I am because you are.

Defining decolonisation

Du Plessis (2021) argues that many elements of South African education have remained unchanged and still set in Eurocentric epistemologies, hence, amongst other things The Fees Must Fall Movement called for the decolonisation of education (Luckett, 2016). Du Plessis (2021, p. 55) further argues that the decolonisation of education can only take place in a space where different communities come together for reflection and discourse. Kumalo and Praeg (2019, p. 2) refer to decolonisation in South Africa as a "Curriculum Revisionist Project" while scholars such as Agherdien, Pillay, Dube, and Masinga (2022, p. 56) view it as a process that is there to interrogate learning and teaching methods and practices. With the above views mentioned, I can argue that the Implementation of Ubuntu in learning and practice could aid decolonisation within South African Education. In addition, Osie -Hwedie, (2002) asserts that in the conversation of decolonisation or Africanisation Ubuntu can be regarded as a key concept.

Defining Reflection

As a social worker and social work student, I am aware that reflection plays an essential role in social work practice as well as education. Trevithick (2012, p. 251) asserts that the process of reflection allows us the opportunity to review past events and situations. The skill of reflection has been defined by numerous scholars (Schön, 1983; Atkin & Murphy 1994: Finlay, 2008) as the process of learning through experience as well as applying one's personal experience when knowledge is applied to practice. Reflection can take during an event or after a situation has taken place. Janse van Rensburg (2018, p. 141) gathers that reflective practice encourages one to pay attention to one's thought process during or after a specific event.

Ubuntu- in a classroom setting

From my experience, social work is a profession that requires one to be connected to the needs of the community and one cannot do that when their methods of communication are out of touch or too westernised, particularly

when working with rural or disadvantaged communities. With that being said, I think it is important to mention that decolonisation calls for Eurocentric elements in education to be disrupted (Du Plessis, 2021) although we cannot change certain aspects of the curriculum in its entirety. I think it is important for universities to be flexible in their approach to teaching and learning.

I remember in my social work class being introduced to Egan (2010) and the various skills in conducting one on one interviews with clients. As a practice, we had to sit right opposite each other role-playing, where one person was the social worker and the other a client. We had to make use of SOLER (Egan, 2010) -Sit squarely, Open Poster, lean forward, Eye Contact, and Relax)-one of the skills was making eye contact with the client to show that you are paying attention and listening. A student asked, "Prof, my culture does not allow me to look directly at an elderly". In westernised cultures, one can argue that making eye contact means one is paying attention while in African culture it can be a sign of disrespect. At this moment it became important that we can somehow translate western teachings of social work skills into culturally appreciative skills that are aligned with respect, which is a major factor of Ubuntu. Hence, an educator must acknowledge students' backgrounds and realities. Our professor encouraged and reminded us that it is important that we use different skills and techniques which are appropriate for each of our clients. This was one of the many ways in which we were able to introduce Africanness and factor various features of ubuntu into practice. These small aspects of decolonised practice were often hinted at subtly and were never set in stone. Thus, it was a grey area ubuntu was seen as a supporting factor rather than a theories factor in practice.

Efforts to try and Africanise certain concepts were appreciated because they showed acknowledgment of our backgrounds as students. We were in the university which in its own a huge accomplishment and even though we're wanted to learn these 'high-sounding' words and concepts so we can get back

home and say this is what the university has taught us. It was also important that we relate what we have learned to our realities and communities so that we become relatable change agents.

Upon Reflection, although I did not realise it at the time, other ways in which Ubuntu was introduced into social work learning was when we were taught theories that were widely used in social work such as systems theories, ecological models as well as strengths-based approaches (van Breda, 2019). One can argue that those are to some extent embedded in Ubuntu. Thus, van Breda (2019, p. 442) asserts that even core social work values such as social justice, where all members are envisioned to have equal rights is a form of Ubuntu within our practice.

Ubuntu in the workplace.

Van Breda (2019) has asserted that ubuntu to some extent reflects our aspirations rather than realities. I can concur that in a perfect social work practice environment one aims to link clients to services, become a mediator in broken families and communities, allow clients to see strengths and opportunities within their communities, and advocate and lead toward social justice. However, the road to all aspired results is not always easy. We are constantly faced with adversity from the workplace, communities as well as clients.

As a social worker in practice for the past four years, I am of the view that currently some social work administrative systems have not been decolonised. For example, the move from apartheid South Africa to post-apartheid South Africa meant that services need to be extended and serve everyone, particularly the population that wasn't serviced before. As a social worker in the year 2022, twenty-eight years post-apartheid some services have not been decentralised and made available in the townships or rural areas where mostly previously disadvantaged populations reside.

These services include the registration of non-profit organisations (NPOs) and registration programmes such as substance abuse, early child development, skills development, HIV-related programmes and gender-based violence programmes. These are social ills that have an impact on communities, people are affected by these issues every day whether it be directly or indirectly. When communities want to open non-profit organisations and need assistance from social workers to develop programmes and apply for funding they need to travel from rural towns or townships to the inner-city multiple times until the process is completed. This is not only time-consuming but not everyone has the money to travel which is why, in many communities, there are a lot of illegal or non-compliant NPOs offering unregistered and unrecognised services to their communities. They are frustrated by the processes and lack of support from social services.

In social work, we were taught that we need to engage and be active participants within communities if we want to establish a movement of social change. It is very frustrating as a social worker to be part of a department that is not actively engaging with communities and not be on the ground working with communities. To sit and listen to clients tell you how far they have traveled to see you and how many months they have saved up to safely transport money and make copies of documents so that they can get assistance, only to assess the documents and find them incomplete and tell your client to come back next time knowing it will be months before they come back again. As a social worker, you want to capacitate communities so that they are to some extent able to handle social issues impacting them, you want them to come together to form committees and assist one another, transfer skills, run their community gardens, be able to say no to drug dealers in their communities, that is the spirit of ubuntu practice it, in reality. but that does not happen when administrative services meant to help communities are not within their reach. That does not happen when as a social worker I am not given the resources to travel to communities to assist them. When your

job is it be in the office and waiting for clients to come to you and you cannot meet them halfway.

In university we are taught that as a social worker, you need to be working with communities on the ground, however, in reality, we are spending the majority of our time in the office.

What could have been done differently?

Schon (1983) notes it is important to allow reflection to take place within our understanding hence even though I was not involved politically or actively in protests. I only showed support on social media, I view myself as not being in a position to make critiques whether constructive or not on the overall outcomes of the Fees Must Fall protests. however, as a social work student, I am of the view that I can contribute to a few elements of how social work education and practice can move towards being decolonised.

I do acknowledge the universities' introduction of Scheck, Nel & Louw (2015) to our community work practice and how their book Introduction to Participatory Community Practice shaped our community work practice and provided evidence and examples in a South African Context. I further appreciate that scholars (e.g., van Breda 2019) acknowledge that there has been a lack of theorisation of Ubuntu within the social work context as it is often used to support an argument. In my view, Universities can be adjustable and bring alternative approaches into the curriculum that could assist in dismantling a Eurocentric way of learning and teaching.

These are some of the ways, I wish could have been implemented to allow more Africanisation of the social work curriculum.

First, our lectures as scholars could have given us more of their work and research at the undergraduate level to expose us to their various areas of interest from a South African Perspective.

Second, The Language of instruction at most South African universities is English, however, an opportunity to social work principles and skills in African languages would have improved our understanding of what social work as a profession is. For example, being able to express basic principles of social work such as consent, confidentiality, empowerment, and self-determination in various African languages would have allowed us the opportunity to fasten our process of learning and understanding the profession.

Third, the access to African languages translations, there were instances where I avoided speaking other South African languages with clients even though I could sense that they would be more comfortable with it because I feared that I would struggle with interpretation into English or what the client was saying would get lost in the translation. This caused a barrier between self and the client particularly because I was worried how the involvement of other languages because English would affect my report writing. If the curriculum provided some freedom (with limitations) to introduce African Languages, particularly with social work since our clients do include all groups of people.

Lastly, Social workers form committees that will challenge how social work is implemented in the workplace. That all social worker services be decentralised Ensure that social workers have the resources to work and accommodate everyone not only those that have money to travel and access their services.

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Chapter 5

The Use of Ubuntu in Social Work Practice: Lessons from the Gauteng Province Homelessness Programme

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Dr. Emmison Muleya resides and works in South Africa as a Social Work Policy Developer at the Gauteng Department of Social Department and recently also a Research Associate with the Department of Social Work and Community Development, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. He coordinates Care and Support Services to Families and the Homeless programmes at the province and his research interests are in developmental states, structural and developmental social work in the South African Context. It is in pursuit of socio-economic development and social justice that he has been advancing the ubuntu philosophy in addressing the homeless challenge in the Gauteng province of South Africa.

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include citizenship, identity and belonging for minorities in postcolonial communities. It is through her work with vulnerable communities such as migrants, in particular victims of xenophobic discrimination that she is interested in the philosophy of ubuntu in practice to address social issues.

Abstract

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, formal structures to address the issue of homelessness did not exist in the Provincial sphere of Government in Gauteng. Services available were offered by faith-based communities and Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) on an ad hoc and voluntary basis at the local government level. The pandemic and lockdown restrictions that followed meant that the Provincial government - which has as its main function legislative and executive authority, had to devise a temporary strategy to accommodate the homeless. A homelessness programme grounded on ubuntu philosophy was developed to assist with the provision of food, sanitation, and shelter for the homeless. Services were expanded to include park homes that provided temporary shelter and holistic services to capacitate the homeless with skills to become self-sufficient and self-reliant in the long run, as well as provision of health care and reunification services. Using a case study of the Gauteng Province homelessness programme, this chapter will explore the use of the ubuntu approach to draw lessons from the programme and the implications for social work practice.

Keywords: *Gauteng, Homelessness Programme, Homelessness, Social Work, Ubuntu, COVID-19*

Abstract Translation int isiZulu

Ukwandulela ubhubhane lwe- COVID- 19, uHulumeni wesiFundazwe sase-Gauteng waweswele isizinda sesixazilulo sobishi lwenkinga yokwanda kwemiphakathi engumhambuma ngenxa yokungabi nandawo yokufihla amakhanda. O- Hulumeni basekhaya bakulesiFundazwe, babezama ukungenelela ngesixazululo ngokubambisana ngeminikelo yemipheme evela emphakathini yamaKholwa kanye nasezinhlanganweni ezingenzi

nzuzo (NPOs). Ubhubhane lwe- COVID-19 kanye nemigomo yokuvala thaqa izwe, kwaphoqa u-Hulumeni wesiFundazwe- okunguwo owongamele igunya eliphezulu kanye nengqalasizinda sezomthetho, ukuba ubukeze icebo nezinhlelo eziphuthumayo zesixazululo sokukhoselisa imhambuma ngalenkathi. UHulumeni wasungula uHlelo lo- Mhambuma, ngaphansi kwesisekelo so- Ubuntu, ngenhloso yokuhlinzekela lemiphakathi engenamakhaya ngokudla, inhlanzeko yamagciwane, kanye nezindawo zokufihla amakhanda okwesikhashana. Imivuzo eyamukelwa ngaphansi kwaloluhlelo yayithake ukunikelelwa ngamakhaya esikhashana, uqeqesho lokucija lemiphakathi ngamakhono akhuthaza ukuziphilisa nokuzimela, usizo lokunakekela impilo, kanye noqeqesho lokubuyisana kwemindeni ngokubambisana nabezeNhlalakahle. Lesahluko sibukeza ucwaningo lwesigameko soHlelo lo- Mhambuma olwasungulwa ngaphansi kwesisekelo so- Ubuntu ngenhloso yokunqanda inkinga yokwanda kwemphakathi engenamakhaya esiFundazweni sase-Gauteng. Lolucwaningo luhlose ukuhlola umthelela waloluhlelo oluqhakambisa Ubuntu njengesixazululo semihambuma, luphinde luhlole igalelo lomsebenzi wezeNhlalakahle ekubuyisaneni kwemiphakathi.
Keywords: *Gauteng, UHlelo lo- Mhambuma, Umhambuma, Umsebenzi wezeNhlalakahle, Ubuntu, COVID-19*

Introduction

The homelessness phenomenon in social work is under-researched. Limited literature is available on the services provided to the homeless, let alone the paucity of available data on homeless people in South Africa. The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the government's re-evaluation of its programmes to include homelessness as a challenge that needed to be addressed to help curb the spread of the virus. Before this, issues of homeless persons were led by municipalities, religious organisations, and NPOs in their limited capacity. With the introduction of the homelessness programme, funding was dedicated to setting up shelters, hiring social workers, and developing programmes that would provide holistic services for

the homeless beneficiaries in Gauteng province. Despite the lack of a national policy and guidelines to direct the implementation of the homeless programme on the ground, social workers are still working to ensure that services delivered are effective despite challenges. Using the case study of the homelessness programme in Gauteng, this chapter explores the use of ubuntu to draw lessons from the programme and the implications for social work practice. In so doing, the chapter begins by attempting to define homelessness, it proceeds to theorise the concept of ubuntu and its applicability to social work practice. The chapter then details the homelessness programme in Gauteng before concluding with a discussion on social workers' experiences of applying ubuntu in their work with the homeless and the implications of this for social work practice.

Background

Homelessness, in its varied forms and state, is a global challenge that exists in all countries and manifests differently in most communities. It is a complex phenomenon with no singular definition, largely because of the diverse experiences and contexts that homeless people face. Salcedo (2019) is of the view that homelessness is the most acute form of material deprivation and goes on to define it as the inability of people to enjoy permanent accommodation. Homelessness-related conditions are not only about a lack of a place to live. These can manifest in varied forms, that include but not limited to, the marginalisation and denial of basic rights for those affected (Mahlangu & Kgadima, 2021).

The Gauteng City-Region (GCR) Strategy (2021) to deal with homelessness and street homelessness, defines a homeless person as a person without shelter or a place to live. The strategy further differentiates between a homeless person and a street homeless person noting that the concepts are used interchangeably despite their differences. In the strategy, a homeless person is an individual with the inability to acquire and maintain safe, secure, and adequate housing and persons are usually without a family and a

sufficient support system. A street homeless person, on the other hand, is an individual who lacks housing, a fixed or regulated, and adequate night-time residence. The strategy further notes that the difference between the two concepts is that in the case of homeless people, circumstances, usually, traumatic ones are responsible for their situation whereas, for street people, it is usually not a choice.

Despite a lack of a concrete definition for the homelessness phenomenon, academics and policymakers agree on three broad categories of homelessness, namely primary, secondary, and tertiary homelessness. Authors such as Mahlangu and Kgadima (2021) and Sonko-Najjemba et al., (2021) are of the view that, despite a lack of a universal definition, most definitions encapsulate all or some factors enriched in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the Right to adequate housing. In addition to the right to housing for all, these documents, more so Article 25 speak to the applicability of the right to housing for different groups. These groups include women, children, slum-dwellers, persons living with disabilities, displaced persons, and migrants and indigenous persons. A very important element for an inclusive approach that espouses ubuntu values.

Considering that there is no national census on homeless people, researchers in South Africa have relied on individual studies of homeless persons in particular cities. In an attempt to provide a picture of the situation, Cross et al., (2010) estimated the homeless population in South Africa to be in the range of 100 000 to 200 000 people who live on the streets. A recent estimate by the Human Sciences Resource Council estimates that in South Africa, approximately 200,000 people are living on the streets which represents a sizable proportion of the national population of 57.8 million people (Rule-Groenewald et al., 2015). The largest homeless population is in Gauteng Province, specifically in Johannesburg and Tshwane Metros, and are

estimated to be around 15 000 and 7 000 homeless people respectively (Sonko-Najjemba et al., 2021). However, in an interview with the then Acting Gauteng Department of Social Development (GDSD) Member of the Executive Council back in 2020, he stated that at the beginning of the lockdown, they had initially estimated around 15 000 homeless persons across the province but those figures drastically increased to an estimated 50 000 in Gauteng of which 15 000 accounted for Johannesburg, 10 000 for Tshwane and the rest for other regions in the province (Mitchley, 2020).

As the above discussion shows, statistics on homeless persons are elusive and the figures quoted vary. Regardless of this factor, the quantification of street homelessness is essential for both social work policy and practice. Moreover, it is a step toward enabling the Provincial Government to plan for and adequately deliver more structured programmes to mitigate risks and challenges faced by this group of people. The gathering of data on homeless persons should be ongoing and not just a once-off event, given the rapid change and accelerated pace at which the situation and changing needs among the homeless occur. Moreover, data on homeless persons' needs is crucial as it will inform evidence-based programme implementation that utilises the ubuntu approach and principles.

Theoretical Framework: Ubuntu philosophy and its relevance to social work

As advanced in Chapter one of this volume, little work has gone into developing the conceptual foundation of ubuntu in a way that it can be regarded as a 'theory' for social work practice (Van Breda, 2019). According to Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2013), ubuntu is Africa's worldview of social relations, and at the core of its foundation, is social and humanistic ethos. These ethos are more or less linked to South Africa's White Paper for Social Welfare of 1997 which advances the principles of democracy, partnership, ubuntu, equity, and intersectoral collaboration (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013).

Ubuntu as a concept and approach can significantly enhance social work's understanding of our connection between past and current human communities. Moreover, it can help promote the achievement of sustainable development through the recognition that the future depends on the actions of the present. The profession of social work is inherently dedicated to the betterment of society and the protection of marginalised and vulnerable groups. The profession's mission is detailed in the set of core values which are: service; social justice; dignity and worth of the person; the importance of human relationships; integrity; and competence (NASW, 2022). It is these values that have earned professional recognition for its important role in promoting access to human rights and social justice (Sewpaul 2016; Van Breda, 2019).

Therefore, guided by the ethical principles espoused in ubuntu, social work practitioners have an essential role to connect people, communities, and systems to co-design and co-build sustainable communities and promote inclusive social transformation. In the end, as Van Breda (2019) sums it, ubuntu philosophy entails a more robust theoretical framework because it provides conceptual and paradigmatic material that can be used to inform and develop practice theory for social change. Thereby serving to enrich indigenous, African, and decolonial approaches to social work.

In as much as we the authors advance scholarship that advocates for the use of ubuntu in social work practice, it is also crucial to highlight some of the criticism that has been levelled against this principle. Critics not in favour of ubuntu argue that it cannot be universally applicable to all cultures, and it lacks a solid framework which makes it challenging to theorise (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). However, Mayaka and Truell (2021) argue that ubuntu can be applied in various cultures and that lessons from various local practices of care apply the concept of ubuntu that social work and social development practice can draw from. It is against this discussion, that the homeless

programme in Gauteng, South Africa will be explored using the lens of ubuntu.

Case study of the Gauteng Homeless Programme

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Gauteng Government was supporting, through funding four non-governmental permanent shelters, three in Johannesburg and one in Sedibeng regions. In the 2015 /16 financial year, a guideline on the management of the homeless shelters was developed to ensure the provision of uniform guidance of services rendered. Most services afforded to the homeless were coordinated through local government and NPOs. At local government level, the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality owned the three. These include 3 Kotze shelters in Hillbrow with 350 beds: Dan Street shelter in Florida with 80 beds and Windsor West shelter with 40 beds. The City of Johannesburg approved a policy on assistance and management of people living and working on the street in 2010 and it is currently under review.

Religious organisations have for a long time played a vital role in addressing homelessness in the city through food parcel assistance in designated areas. One such organisation that has played a crucial role in filling in the gap is the Mould Empower Serve (MES). It is a registered NPO with shelters in Johannesburg and Kempton Park in Gauteng Province and has been actively working towards providing sustainable solutions to pervasive poverty in the inner cities of Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Gqeberha (MES, 2022).

In the City of Tshwane, with the estimated second-highest population of the homeless, the city had one homeless shelter which is located at number 2 Struben street. The shelter had approximately 379 people. The City adopted the Tshwane Street Homelessness Policy in 2019. The Policy is used to guide all interventions directed at the homeless in the City. The intervention for the homeless is coordinated through the Tshwane Homelessness Forum which is composed of NPOs rendering services to the homeless (Mashau, 2019).

However, the City of Tshwane did not have a budget or strategy attached to it so there was no clarity as to which Department in the City of Tshwane was supposed to be its champion, and it was not sufficiently collaborative in terms of the supposed implementation (Mashava, 2018). Another overlooked entity that has been vital in addressing homelessness is tertiary institutions. Universities also assisted in conducting research, especially when it comes to the needs of homeless people, for instance, the Theology Department at the University of Pretoria is one example (Center for Faith and Community, 2020; De Beer, 2020; De Beer and Valley, 2017).

In the City of Ekurhuleni, a stakeholders' forum was established with the objective of coordinating all efforts initiated by different NPOs providing support to homeless people. These stakeholders included different organisations, church groups, and individuals. This Forum is comprised of NPOs and Community-Based Organisations, the Ekurhuleni Metro Police Department, the South African Police Service, and the City of Ekurhuleni's Health and Social Development Department. In the West Rand and Sedibeng District Municipalities, organisations were providing a range of services to the homeless ranging from the provision of meals, shelter, bathing, laundry, skills development, and substance abuse treatment but without coordinating structures. However, these organizations were largely dependent on funding from sponsorship donations to cover operational costs except for the Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie (SAVF) Vanderbijlpark shelter which accommodated 30 homeless beneficiaries and was one of the shelters supported by the Provincial Government. SAVF Vanderbijlpark shelter strives for the upliftment of homeless people, providing them with a dignified place to stay and services to uplift them and reunite them with the world outside the shelter (SAVF, 2022). Funding limitations made it difficult for homeless organisations to provide more comprehensive services that address identified needs of beneficiaries.

Homelessness Programmes During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, the primary public health response across the globe at the time was for people to 'stay home, to 'flatten the curve' (Ramaphosa, 2020). However, this requirement presented a significant and even seemingly insurmountable problem for those who had no access to safe housing and people living on the streets. In South Africa, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed some inadequacies in how the government had previously responded to the challenges of homelessness because as shown above, Municipalities, NPOs, and religious organisations carried the responsibility of managing or addressing homelessness.

As De Beers (2020) observed, the President's announcement that temporary shelters had to be created for homeless people during the national lockdown, not only exposed serious fault lines but also offered new opportunities. Fault lines included a lack of national coherent policy and strategy, which prohibited effective interventions; a lack of dedicated budgets for street homelessness at all levels of government; a lack of strategic institutional collaboration between different spheres of government, civil society, private sector, universities, and research institutions, with low levels of trust and unhealthy competition often being the norm; and a lack of social, health, and physical infrastructure, geared towards homeless solutions (De Beer and Hugo, 2021). However, it also presented opportunities for addressing homelessness in the country as COVID-19 lockdowns made more visible the reality of street homelessness, which was often made invisible through its absence from policy and funding, institutional commitment, and societal paradigms.

The Gauteng Government Executive Council (EXCO) identified homeless people as one of the vulnerable groups that required protection during the COVID-19 national lockdown in March 2020. As such, the Gauteng Department of Social Development (GDSD) was mandated by the

Government EXCO to lead and develop a comprehensive plan for the management of Homelessness in the province. Subsequently, a Draft Gauteng City Region Strategy on Street Homelessness was developed which entailed identifying the different categories of the homeless and providing funding to strengthen existing Municipality and NPO-run shelters. This strategy was approved by the Gauteng EXCO in September 2021 following extensive consultations.

The strategy sought to facilitate provincial coordination and deliberate efforts to protect homeless people to enable them to lead dignified and secure lives as equal members of society. It was aimed at expediting the process of improving the quality of life for the homeless community and protecting the homeless across all service delivery levels. The strategy also acknowledged the magnitude of the challenge of homelessness in Gauteng Province and the challenges faced by homeless people. These challenges include frequently being victims of violence, intimidation, verbal abuse, and theft.

At the same time, homeless people are often reported to the police for issues to do with harassment and intimidation. Homeless people experience episodes of arrest and confiscation of their belongings. Therefore, central to the homelessness strategy was the protection of the rights of all persons who were homeless. For instance, homeless persons including undocumented foreign nationals who were on the street at the time of lockdown were referred to homeless shelters and then all other processes such as verification of status in the country would follow. Those that were willing to be reunified with their families were offered that opportunity and some foreign nationals were linked with their respective embassies and assisted to return to their countries of origin, where necessary. One could therefore argue that GDSD's homeless programme is centred on interdependent human relationships and the need for social justice in line with the ubuntu principles identified by Van Breda (2019) above.

Between April 2020 and July 2021, the population of the homeless in shelters (permanent and temporary) across Gauteng province was around 3000 with the City of Johannesburg and Tshwane accounting for the larger portion (Sonko-Najjemba et al., 2021). At the end of July 2021, the largest proportion of homeless persons in shelters (permanent and temporary) was 1895 in Tshwane, 888 in Johannesburg, 157 in Ekurhuleni, 95 in Sedibeng, and 30 in West Rand in the 39 shelters across Gauteng Province (GDSD Social Security Reports, 2021). As of May 2022, there were around 2000 beneficiaries in permanent shelters as GDSD stopped collating statistics for beneficiaries that were receiving food in hotspots in October 2021 in line with their sustainability plans. Development of rationalisation plans for shelters to ensure effective management as well as reduce operational costs was undertaken in August 2020 and implementation is continuously monitored. Homeless beneficiaries are profiled quarterly in terms of their needs to ensure the implementation of relevant interventions from 2020 to date. Although this is not enough to address the homeless challenge in its totality, at least over 3000 homeless people are receiving services. This aligns with the objective of the strategy to promote the human rights of citizens as the homeless are taken care of.

Research commissioned by the GDSD, Sonko-Najjemba et al., (2021), to assess the needs of homeless people in Gauteng in the context of COVID-19 was finalised in March 2021 and the findings were presented to policymakers, programme managers, relevant stakeholders, and implementers from homeless shelters across the province. The research confirms that there are myriad causes of homelessness in Gauteng; the main ones being job loss and unsuccessful job seeking, family/partner conflicts, addiction to illicit substances, and unaffordable housing. For street homelessness, evidence indicates that most people have low levels of education and are unskilled as well as undocumented (without National Identity documents) (Sonko-Najjemba et al., 2021).

These factors make homeless people unlikely to succeed in their efforts to find work, and as a result, a substantially higher proportion find themselves remaining homeless for much longer (years), compared to the more educated shelter residents. The magnitude of street homelessness seems to be growing and is currently difficult to quantify (Sonko-Najjemba et al., 2021). Findings from this research indicate that there is a wide variation in the types of services provided in shelters across the province. However, all shelters provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and provide access to general health care as well as mental health services (Sonko-Najjemba et al., 2021) which is a key need for the homeless.

The findings in the research by GDSD are being used to inform future activities to be implemented. In addition, the findings were incorporated into the approved GCR strategy and proposed a comprehensive package of services which include food and nutrition, housing (overnight shelters and transitional), skills development including life skills, job placement, rehabilitation services for those dependent on drugs, identity documents and access to social security, law, and bi-laws enforcement as well as health care services. In line with the research conducted on homelessness, the following pillars were recommended and are part of the GCR Strategy: Pillar 1 - Advocacy, prevention of crisis and early intervention, Pillar 2 - Provision of housing and shelters to prevent and support homeless people, Pillar 3 - Social inclusion, Pillar 4 - Skills Development and Economic inclusion and Pillar 5 - Integrated persons centred system and all current interventions aligned to these pillars (GDSD, 2021).

Approximately R256 million has been made available for the provincial homeless programme since the 2019/20 financial year to support NPOs in partnership with Municipalities for services to the homeless in all five regions of Gauteng Province. This funding is used to cover human resources costs in terms of social workers and auxiliary social workers who render psychosocial support, security guards who provide security in shelters, and for provision of

basic needs such as food, beds and blankets, and laundry services. Some shelters also offer rehabilitation placement, reunify families, provide skills development, and integrate homeless people back into their communities. Some shelters provide temporary residence for people waiting to be placed in drug rehabilitation programmes or while they attend pre-rehabilitation sessions (GDSD Social Security Reports, 2022). Furthermore, park homes were built and furnished with beds and blankets, and ablution facilities in Tshwane, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, and Sedibeng regions to increase bed capacity for the homeless. This funding has been necessary for providing dignity to the homeless in the form of overnight shelter, food, and basic amenities like soaps, toilets, and showers which were not provided before the COVID-19 pandemic.

A multi-stakeholder blitz took place in all shelters in September 2020 to drive service delivery intervention which was aimed at ensuring the exit of homeless people in shelters. This involved key service delivery partners such as the Departments of Health and Home Affairs, the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), the Department of Labour, Municipalities, and NPOs. This intervention continued until October 2021 during which the GDSD for the first time commemorated World Homeless Day in all five regions of the province. This commemoration involved key Gauteng Provincial Government Departments, Municipalities, and NPOs and demonstrated how a collaborative approach to street homelessness can significantly reduce the numbers of people being vulnerable on the streets as homeless persons were vaccinated, some were assisted with applying for IDs whereas development centres showcased different skills available to homeless persons during the commemoration. As a result, and in line with the need to promote social justice, homeless persons were supported with access to shelter, primary health care, and economic opportunity.

Efforts geared towards strengthening partnerships with relevant government departments and stakeholders (mainly Municipalities, NPOs,

Faith-Based Organisations, and Institutions of Higher Learning) to promote an intersectoral approach to dealing with homelessness through bilateral meetings resulted in the successful development of a Draft Strategy on Adult Street Homelessness from May 2020 which was approved by Gauteng EXCO in September 2021 as mentioned. This strategy has ensured an integrated service delivery approach for all the homeless in the province. The implementation of this strategy is coordinated through bi-monthly meetings with all regional coordinators to address service delivery challenges and through a multi-stakeholder quarterly Provincial Forum where all key stakeholders present their implementation reports and challenges are dealt with. As a result, there has been progressive improvement in the involvement of different stakeholders concerning services provided to homeless people and in delivering on their mandates.

One of the principles of ubuntu is that it favours community or macro practice (Van Breda, 2019). Therefore, the multistakeholder service delivery efforts are in alignment with the ubuntu philosophy in that regard. Furthermore, some of the key outputs of the implementation of the programme between April 2021 and March 2022 were that 1504 homeless persons participated in skills development programmes, 1150 were placed in casual jobs by NPOs, 327 applied for IDs and 154 received Identity Documents, 206 were referred for mental health care assessment, 1777 personnel, and homeless persons were vaccinated for COVID-19 and 398 homeless persons were reunified with their families (GDSD, 2022). This might not be enough given the high estimated population of the homeless in Gauteng but it is notable progress given that before the programme, none of these persons had access to these services.

Methodological approach

In South Africa, one of the challenges of using research effectively in confronting homelessness has been the unavailability of current and representative research (Sonko-Najjemba et al., 2021). This challenge is irrespective of who is conducting the research (academics, community-based

researchers, consultants, or government). This issue is problematic given that research serves as a tool to help us better understand the complexity of issues relating to homelessness. Using the qualitative approach, the authors combined extensive secondary data review on the homeless programmes in Gauteng province during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was complemented by in-depth interviews with one policy practitioner and six social workers currently implementing the programme in the five regions of the Gauteng province. These regions include Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, West Rand, Sedibeng, and Tshwane. The six social workers interviewed work in the following regions: three were based in Tshwane, two were from Johannesburg, and one was from the West Rand. Three of the social workers worked for GDSD, two worked for NPOs and one worked with the Municipality.

The merit of the qualitative methodology lies in the fact that it is holistic, flexible, and more suitable for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Furthermore, it is regarded as valid for understanding the subject matter in-depth and this can be achieved through its flexible approach. Qualitative research also allowed participants to raise issues or questions that the researcher might have left out of a structured research design, and this further adds to the quality of the data collected (Kumar, 2014). Thus, in complementing in-depth interviews with secondary data on the homelessness programme, the authors were able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the programme both in theory and practice and further assess the programme's use of ubuntu.

Due to limitations attributed to time constraints and accessibility, beneficiaries of the homeless programme were not included in the data collection process. Social workers currently implementing the programme were easily accessible due to proximity with the first author, hence a purposive sample was employed. Social workers were interviewed on the implementation of the programme and their views on the application of

ubuntu principles as well as their recommendations towards meeting the central objective of the programme which includes the protection of the rights of homeless persons to human dignity.

Ethical issues such as voluntary participation and informed consent were observed especially in relation to data collection, analysis, and managing the control of bias by using the two methods outlined above. Moreover, as one of the authors of this chapter is indirectly involved in the programme as a policy developer, complementing policy documents with interviews with social workers of the GDSD as well as those in the homeless shelters ensured that there was a fair assessment of the programme. In addition, including different perspectives and experiences from persons directly implementing the programme and the policy practitioner, ensuring that the analysis and conclusions drawn by the authors were informed by a comprehensive understanding of the strategy both from a policy and practice level.

Ethics approval for the study was obtained from the GDSD 's research unit. In compliance with good research practice, the chosen participants were adequately informed of the purpose and methods of the assessment, risks, and benefits of the assessment as well as the principle of voluntary participation. A request was made to record the interviews through the recruitment letter that was sent beforehand, and all recordings were conducted with the full consent of the participants. The use of the interview recordings was also explained to participants before the start of each interview.

Data processing in qualitative studies depends upon how much the researcher plans to communicate the findings (Yin, 2009). The authors used thematic content analysis to identify themes emerging from the interviews. Further, the themes were examined to bring meaning and order to primary data. This was done to corroborate meanings derived from analysis of literature regarding ubuntu and social work practice, to address the question

of whether the Gauteng Homeless Programme applied and was aligned with ubuntu principles. The following section provides a discussion on the themes that emerged from the interviews with social workers that provide services to the homeless housed in the shelters.

Findings: Understanding the Use of Ubuntu in Social Work Practice with homeless people

To gain an understanding of the lessons from the homeless programme in Gauteng and the use of ubuntu in social work practice, the following section presents a discussion of some of the themes that emerged from the data. The discussion will be based on the following: social workers' definition or understanding of ubuntu and its principle; the applicability of ubuntu in social work practice; understanding of ubuntu and its principles; the applicability of ubuntu in the Gauteng Homelessness programme; successes and challenges of the homelessness programme and social workers' recommendations for improving the programme.

Definition of Ubuntu and its principles

Social workers interviewed showed a clear understanding of the concept of ubuntu and its principles. A common theme was that ubuntu is founded on humanistic values of kindness, respect, dignity, compassion, humility, interconnectedness, and cooperation. Moreover, ubuntu is about treating others the way one also wants to be treated. From the above analysis, one can assert that participants share a basic understanding of the concept of ubuntu and its principles in terms of its connectedness between humans and the importance of how one treats others in terms of respect, kindness, and the need to cooperate with others. This is shared by some scholars such as Moyo (2021) who has argued that ubuntu centres on interdependent human relationships while Van Breda (2019) postulates that ubuntu connotes generosity, consideration, and humaneness towards others. The common definition provided showed that social workers in the programme not only

have a grasp of the concept and its principles but have a shared understanding of the concept of ubuntu and its principles.

Applicability of ubuntu in social work practice

Social workers were of the view that ubuntu is an inherent part of the social work practice because it not only guides how social workers work and treat clients but also aligns with social work principles such as non-judgementalism, confidentiality, acceptance, and so forth. Moreover, social workers were of the view that ubuntu and social work go hand in hand because the mandate of social work is to address social injustice and inequality. Emphasis was also placed on how one treats others and clients. One social worker stated: You can't help someone you don't respect. Another element that was brought up by the social workers is that ubuntu helps one acknowledge that the profession is part of an ecosystem and so social workers cannot work alone. This further asserts the interconnectedness that underpins ubuntu as alluded to in the definition presented above. Moreover, the social workers' views advance Mupedziswa et al., (2019) who are of the view that there is a natural relationship between ubuntu and aspects of the social work profession as practiced in Africa. Therefore, the authors also highlight the potential of ubuntu to serve as a guiding framework for social work practice in Africa.

Applicability of Ubuntu in the Gauteng Homeless Programme

Based on the participant's responses, we conclude that most of them are already applying ubuntu principles in various ways with their clients in the homeless shelters. For example, one social worker stated that despite the fact that the law allows for a homeless person to stay in the shelter for six months, social workers understand that sometimes people need more time to work on themselves and deal with their circumstances, so they allow such individuals more time in the shelter beyond the stipulated six months. Moreover, social workers mentioned that the work itself forces one to apply ubuntu. In his reflection, one social worker stated: We are dealing with situations where one

must attend to clients who are in really bad conditions. We have no history of these clients and some of them are criminals, substance abusers, rejected by their families, and so forth but when the person is in front of you, you have to see them as a person and extend kindness despite their circumstances. So, the homeless programme forces you or teaches you to apply ubuntu. Some social workers who did not deal with issues of homelessness before the programme have learnt a lot from this process.

For other social workers, the applicability of ubuntu was in the provision of shelters. This is because before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no structured government programme to address the challenges of the homeless. Moreover, before the programme, homeless people were stigmatised, and their rights side-lined. The homelessness programme has helped to re-centre their challenges in mainstream social work practice and humanise their experiences by ensuring that their rights and dignity are recognised. Furthermore, the programme is guided by values of inclusivity and acceptance. Social workers stated that everyone is welcome in the shelters. Factors such as race, gender, etc have no bearing on who is accepted in the shelters. The homelessness programme also takes on a holistic approach. Social workers provide psycho-social support to help clients deal with their traumas, and skill-building programmes are implemented with clients to equip them with the knowledge and skills to be self-sufficient when they leave the shelters (GDSD, 2021).

Solidarity and unity among stakeholders were other factors that were highlighted as important in the programme. Finally, the programme was commended for helping to bring about social change in communities. There is a focus on reuniting clients with families and relationships with families are mended through the assistance of social workers. These actions show that the programme considers the needs of the individual but also strives to incorporate the community because there is a shared understanding that a person is an extension of the family and community they come from. So,

addressing all aspects of an individual helps to tackle their situation holistically. Thus, in this regard, the programme makes use of the principles of interdependence that are found in ubuntu.

Successes and Challenges of the Gauteng Homelessness Programme

Social workers highlighted both the success and challenges of the homelessness programme. Granted, this is a new programme that was implemented by the government in March 2020 at the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and the instituted lockdowns to prevent the spread of the virus. However, over the two years the programme has been in existence, milestones have been gained in the provision of services even though some challenges persist and need to be addressed. We discuss the successes and challenges of homelessness from the experiences of the social workers working on the issue below.

Social workers agreed on the need for and importance of the homelessness programme because it not only created work opportunities for social workers but also helped reduce the number of people who were homeless. Social workers alluded to the fact that some people were removed from the streets and placed in shelters which protected them against the harsh realities of staying on the streets. The inclusion of social workers in the programme has ensured that psycho-social services are provided to those dealing with traumatic issues, and struggling with substance abuse, and has ensured assistance with reuniting and building trust among family members. Some homeless people had run away from home due to conflict and misunderstanding and social workers have played a pivotal role in tracing the family members of the homeless and helped to restore family relationships. One social worker mentioned that in some cases, family members had thought the homeless individuals were dead. Another success of the programme is that homeless people that were previously undocumented have been documented by the state and are now in possession of Identity Documents and birth certificates. This has also helped children who were

previously out of school to go back and access an education. The provision of programmes to equip clients with skills such as farming, baking, sewing, etc help them to become self-reliant and independent after leaving the shelter. This shows the holistic approach of the programme.

Challenges were expected given that the programme is still fairly new and has never been implemented before in the province and on a large scale. Social workers highlighted the lack of a national policy on homelessness that will help guide their work as a challenge. Some appreciated the strategy on homelessness that the Provincial government has developed but emphasised the need for a national policy to be in place. In the same light, social workers felt strongly that the development of a national policy should take place in consultation with social workers on the ground as they are well versed on issues affecting the homeless and to also avoid any gaps in the document. Already, with the absence of guidelines, several gaps have been identified that make it challenging for social workers working with the homeless to effectively do their job.

Two of such challenges mentioned were the issue of undocumented migrants. For example, one social worker mentioned that it became difficult to track the families of such individuals in the event that they lost their lives while staying in the shelter. Further, dealing with homeless persons with mental health issues was raised as challenging for social workers with no experience in mental health care. Some participants indicated that there are no proper referral structures in place on how to handle such cases and which professionals can accept such referred cases. Thus, a solid referral strategy needs to be put in place.

Tying closely to this issue, another challenge was the lack of coordination between government departments. Social workers mentioned that the issue of homelessness is often viewed as a social work issue. One social worker mentioned that during the initial stages of implementing the programme, it

was difficult to receive assistance from other departments because they refused to assist and said homelessness was not an issue within their jurisdiction. Another social worker mentioned that even the police have no understanding of homelessness and viewed it as a social work issue. A lack of coordination between departments presents a challenge for social workers because some assistance required by the homeless can require interventions beyond the scope of work and capacity of social workers.

Another challenge that was highlighted was the need for more shelters. One social worker mentioned that in her region, the location of the shelters is very far for most people, and they have to make the hard decision of turning away some homeless people in need of shelter because there is no space to accommodate them. The shelters were also criticised for not being disability friendly. Homeless people living with disabilities cannot be adequately accommodated because basic infrastructure such as a rail for those in wheelchairs is not available. Moreover, the shelters are not conducive for families, for example, one social worker indicated that the shelters are not family oriented which forces social workers to separate families. Another concern raised was the issue of dependency. In as much as the homelessness programme has been lauded for getting people out of the street, it has equally created dependency in some clients. It was mentioned that some clients have been staying in the shelters for more than two years and have no interest in making an effort to change their lives for the better and there is nothing social workers can do because they cannot force them to change. To address this challenge, it may be necessary that individual development plans with time frames are put in place once a homeless person is admitted to a shelter so that an exit plan may be discussed and agreed upon with the individual. This will help to work towards empowering them to become self-reliant.

Implications of Gauteng Homelessness Programme Case Study on Social Work Practice

The above discussions have shown that the Gauteng homelessness programme, even if still in its infancy draws on the values of ubuntu. This is apparent in how social workers on the ground implement the programme using the core values and principles of social work that are directly related to those of ubuntu. The authors did not get the opportunity to interview beneficiaries of the homelessness programme and therefore cannot speak to the efficiency of the services they receive from social workers. However, based on the analysis we made of documents on the programme and from the practice experience of social workers we spoke to, ubuntu is a principle that seems to ground the work of the programme. Moreover, as shown in the preceding discussions, the programme focuses on connectedness and interdependence in the provision of services to clients. The recognition of a person's family and community and efforts to bridge the gap that has been created is a great example of ubuntu in practice. Through this programme, the humanistic values of ubuntu have been exercised as homeless people, who have been side-lined and not usually taken into account in social development programmes are now included in social work practice and their rights and dignity as proclaimed in the South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996 are recognised.

At the policy level, much needs to be done to ensure that the practice guidelines are in line with ubuntu principles. In as much as a national policy has not yet been developed, social workers have shown that a lack of guidelines has presented so many gaps that act as a barrier to effective service delivery. GDSD has developed the guidelines for homeless services and these guidelines are currently being used to guide service delivery after approval in September 2022. Moreover, there are calls for streamlining of services between departments. The fact that there is still no proper understanding of homelessness by some government departments outside of social work has proven to be a challenge that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, the issue

of sustainability is something that was highlighted by social workers as the skills development programmes are aimed at encouraging the beneficiaries to be self-sufficient and independent. This helps the programme ensure the sustainability of interventions.

It is also important for the government to ensure that the homelessness programme also focuses on prevention. Helping people before they are homeless will not only prevent the emotional and psychological trauma of those affected but it will also help to ensure that factors that cause homelessness are dealt with before it occurs. Although the GCR homeless strategy emphasizes prevention and early intervention, preventing street homelessness is therefore a key challenge and a priority that the Gauteng Government must deal with to ensure that all citizens enjoy their human rights and that the vulnerable which includes the homeless are treated with respect and dignity. This will require a multiple stakeholder approach in which communities, civil society organisations, government departments, and the private sector work together to implement systematic responses that will help prevent recurring homelessness.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the use of ubuntu in social work practice using the case study of the Gauteng Homelessness programme. The overall discussions have shown that social workers have an understanding of the concept of ubuntu and its applicability to the social work practice. In fact, some of the social work principles and values that social workers employ in their work with beneficiaries of the homelessness programme are linked to ubuntu values. Moreover, there is an importance placed on the use of ubuntu principles in practice. The homelessness programme is designed in a way that upholds ubuntu principles. Despite the challenges experienced in the programme and by social workers, at best, services such as reuniting and building trust among families, ensuring the documentation of homeless people to enable them to access the social services they are entitled to,

provision of counselling to deal with trauma and equipping beneficiaries with skills to enable them to be self-reliant and independent are some of the practical examples that the programme has shown to incorporate the ubuntu approach in the programme. In the same breath, it is important for the practice guidelines that have been developed to be embedded in ubuntu principles. This will ensure that social workers continue to offer holistic services to beneficiaries and that stakeholder collaborations and referral systems between government departments are strengthened and effective.

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Chapter 6

Transforming Communities Through Ubuntu Philosophy: Prerequisites, Opportunities, and Implications for Social Work Practice in Africa

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Abstract
The African philosophy of Ubuntu has emerged as a counterweight strategy to the pervasive consequences of long-term individualism entrenched in

African social work because of its western origins. This chapter contends that African social workers can utilise Ubuntu philosophy in transforming poor communities and building resilient societies. This requires understanding the principles of Ubuntu and its embeddedness in African cultures as necessary prerequisites for this transformation. Its emphasis on collectivism as social capital, interconnectedness, and equality of human beings can be used to transform poor communities, thereby creating enormous opportunities for social work practitioners in Africa to enrich the lives of their clients. By implication, African social work practice is asked to promote bottom-up community-led interventions built on local voices/experiences.
Keywords: *Ubuntu philosophy, social work theory, community transformation, resilient communities, indigenous social work, decolonial social work, Africa*

Ekinojjole

Obukkiriza bw'Abaddugavu ku bw'obuntu bw'omuntu, bufuuse olupimo era oluwenda okukomya embeera ey'obwanaasiwa mukange eyaggyawo enkola y'emirimu ey'ekipooli mu Badugavu ng'eva mu mawanga ga Bulaaya. Essuula eno erambika enkola y'emirimu ey'ekipooli mu Baddugavu gye yinza okweyambisaamu obukkiriza obwo okubbulula ebitundu ebyekuyengera mu bwavu. Kino, kyetaagisa okutegeera obulungi ennono n'enkola z'obuntu bw'obuntu n'engeri obuwangwa bw'Abaddugavu gye buwembejjebwamu, okumanya ebyo ebiteekeddwa okusibwako essira okusooka okusobola okwebbulula. Obukolaganyi ng'omusingi gw'obufunyi mu mbeera z'obuntu ezaabulijjo, obukwatane ko n'obwenkanya mu mbeera z'obuntu byonna bisobola okweyambisibwa ng'emikutu okuyamba ebitundu ebyekuyengera mu bwavu mungeri yokwongera emikisa ku mirimu gy'abakozi b'embeera z'abantu ezaabulijjo okusitula omutindo gw'obulamu bw'abantu be baweererezaamu. Mu mbeera eno, kitegeeza nti abakozi b'embeera z'abantu ezaabulijjo mu Baddugavu balina eddimu okusitula ebitundu okuviira ddala ku muntu waabulijjo nga beyambisa ebitundu ebisoolobye ku binaabyo nga beesigama ku ddoboozi ery'omuntu owaabulijjo n'obumanyirivu bwe.

Introduction

Professional social work in Africa was introduced by the colonial administrations. This has left numerous professional aspects in many ways rooted in western worldviews and practice approaches. In the period immediately following Africa's independence, governments and scholars quickly agitated for an African worldview to social work, but progress has been slow. It is important to recall however that while professional social work spread across the continent, indigenous African knowledge systems and ways of helping persisted, and continue to exist even today. This view has been articulated for example by Twikirize and Spitzer (2019) in their book on indigenous social work in Africa. This understanding and the developmental challenges of Africa, such as poverty and marginalization, have led to calls for alternative thinking to drive progress in communities.

In many ways, social work in continental Africa has adopted a developmental approach to promote the socio-economic transformation of communities (Chineka and Mtetwa, 2021; Lombard and Viviers, 2020). As actors focus on acceleration of service delivery and community development, the infusion of ubuntu is in the interest of communities as it enables people in different spaces to work collectively (Mabasa, 2020). This is because the ubuntu philosophy is already internalized by the African people and is a bedrock for community actions across societies. This view has been amplified by Chineka and Mtetwa (2021) for example who have urged governments and development partners in Africa to employ a grassroots approach to social economic transformation, particularly within marginalized communities.

This chapter advances the argumentation that the ubuntu philosophy can be used by social workers to transform and develop poor, vulnerable, and marginalized communities in Africa. This is done to demonstrate that African social work theory, has the potential for anchoring practice and education on promoting social change as an alternative to western theory. The chapter, therefore, outlines an axis that illuminates the possibilities and potential

interfaces between the ubuntu philosophy and transforming communities in Africa. It first presents the backdrop and context that frames the need to transform African communities, by placing emphasis on internal and global forces. It then offers a snapshot of the central arguments in the construction of the Ubuntu philosophy as a social work paradigm in Africa. It further elucidates the prerequisites and opportunities for transforming communities through Ubuntu. It ends with implications for social work and concluding proposals for alternative community transformation practices rooted in the wide and grassroot internalization of the ubuntu philosophy.

The Need to Transform African Communities

The quest to transform African communities can be grounded in three interlocked arguments: a historical pursuit of social development in Africa, the need for African solutions to Africa's development problems, and the lessons learned by Africa from recent global social-economic shocks. Firstly, Africa has for long grappled with the quest for community transformation and development (Noyoo, 2022). The post-World War II and post-independence periods were particular times of intensive debates about Africa's community transformation in both international and African forums. These debates were driven by the need to address poverty in communities and build social services for Africa's population. To date, poverty remains one of the greatest challenges for communities on the continent, despite its diverse resources. To this end, Chikadzi (2022) has urged African social workers to refocus on the profession's historical roots of dealing with populations marginalized due to poverty and its consequences. This calls for community transformation to focus on addressing poverty, and stimulating the linkages between social welfare and economic progress in communities

Secondly, there are growing voices for homegrown solutions to African problems. This is in part due to the realization that imported solutions have not yielded the desired results in the quest to transform African communities (Mensa-Bonsu, 2016: Noyoo, 2022). Discourses on African solutions for

African problems recognize that imported solutions are intricately linked to dependence on international aid, a huge presence of the international humanitarian and non-profit sector organizations on the continent, and the efforts of the international community to develop Africa. Tefera (2022) has demonstrated that these imported approaches are highly centralized, conflict with Africa's social-cultural contexts, and could be viewed as an instrument of modern-day imperialism. In such a case, community issues ranging from governance, gender equity promotion, socio-economic development, peacebuilding, and promotion of cohesive societies will require internal innovations and ideas within Africa (Mensa-Bonsu, 2016).

Thirdly, the lessons learned in Africa from recent global shocks should drive the need for transforming communities to build resilience, and internal reliance and galvanize community-led welfare systems. According to the World Bank (2022), the risks from COVID-19, climate-induced crises, and the Ukrainian conflict present long-term risks to Africa's development. These risks will also constrain the continent from reaching the twin goals of ending poverty and the attainment of a shared prosperity as envisaged in the sustainable development goals [SDGs]. African academics and practitioners have begun to digest for example the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic on community transformation. Noyoo (2022) has concluded that capitalism and its focus on enterprise rooted in individualism showed serious failings during the COVID-19 pandemic and its suitability for African development has been seriously questioned. Additionally, Chikadzi (2022) has also demonstrated that the current neoliberal development arrangements are unsustainable in uncertain times and therefore incompatible with the social development that Africa inspires to achieve. These arguments demonstrate the need for alternative development paths suitable for Africa's social-cultural contexts and that promote African ideals. The values, principles, and ideals of the Ubuntu philosophy, a pan-African ideology could hold promise and inspire community transformation in Africa, for African citizens.

Theoretical Perspective: Ubuntu Philosophical Paradigm

It's not the mission of this chapter to build the ubuntu theory. Rather, this section is an illustration of the existing construction and discourses by other authors of the major theoretical arguments that constitute the ubuntu paradigm. Ubuntu paradigm has gained global prominence as a philosophy for social work theory and practice (IFSW, 2020; Mayaka and Truell, 2021; Mugumbate and Chereni, 2020). With origins in African social, political, cultural, economic, and community thinking, Ubuntu is a humanistic approach and an African worldview of social relations that emphases being and becoming through others (Chigangaide, 2021; Mugumbate and Nyanguru, 2013). It holds that community strength derives from community support, cooperation, and working together through a universal form of brotherhood or sisterhood of the African people belonging to a bundle of life (IFSW, 2020; Mupediziswa et al, 2019). It's a constitution of the values and practices that black people of African or African origin view as making people authentic human beings through the promotion of human relations and a people-centered focus (Mugumbate and Chereni, 2020). Ubuntu opposes direct individualism which would negate social groups and community units and deliberately strives to link the individual to the collective (Mupedziswa et al, 2019).

The necessity for the application of Ubuntu in social work in African contexts has been widely and vigorously noted in recent years (Migheli, 2017; Mugumbate and Chereni, 2020; Mugumbate and Nyanguru, 2013; Mupedziswa et al, 2019; Twikirize and Spitzer, 2019; Van Breda, 2021). These have suggested various models of Ubuntu philosophy that are compatible with social work practice in Africa. An examination of their arguments suggests that the Ubuntu philosophy should be viewed as a form of social capital, a social justice framework, an anti-poverty and social protection model, an ecological and eco-spiritual model, an indigenous model, and a decolonial model of practice. These elements constitute a collective and communal approach that social work embraces. This chapter, therefore,

engages with the transformational and community orientation aspects of the ubuntu philosophy. This is through its emphasis on approaches, solutions, and interventions that are homegrown, innovative, social-economic and poverty reduction focused, mobilize communities, are culturally responsive, and build resilience through indigenous modeling (Twikirize and Spitzer, 2019).

Pre-requisites for Transforming Communities through Ubuntu

Although the term Ubuntu has an African origin, there is a growing feeling among Africans that they are not benefiting from the philosophy. This is because Africa remains one of the continents experiencing so many social, political, environmental, and economic upheavals (Bolden, 2014). As we write this book chapter, millions of Africans continue to be helpless, homeless, landless, illiterate, jobless, and hopeless in part because their fellow Africans are selfish, heartless, mindless, shameless, and remorseless. This section suggests that for Africans to benefit from Ubuntu philosophy there is a need for a deliberate effort to emphasize the underlying fundamental values of the ubuntu philosophy as a prerequisite that can usher in the benefits for transforming communities.

The recognition of human relations as essential ingredients for social-economic transformations. According to Samkange and Samkange (1980) cited in Mugumbate and Chereni (2020. vii), 'Ubuntuism' requires a person to recognize the humanity of others, and on that basis, establish respectful human relations with them. The same authors further noted that when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life. This in a way points to the need for everyone in a community to focus on humanity first. Their expression is in line with one of the sayings among the Banyankole people of Western Uganda ("Ogire Obuntu, Obuntu bukuhe abantu, abantu bakuhe ebintu") and the peoples of Rwanda ("Jyira Ubuntu, Ubuntu buguhe abantu, abantu baguhe ebintu") that "if you have humanity, humanity will

bring to you people, and the people will give you wealth". This saying implies that to achieve wealth, an individual must first possess Ubuntu. It also argues for community transformation interventions to build cooperation among people as a vehicle for creating fortunes for communities.

A firm understanding of self-help as an ideal of ubuntu for community transformation. In a community that is faced with social, economic, political, and environmental challenges, community members always feel "handicapped". They feel that their problems are unmanageable without external assistance. Yet, the community has unrecognized capabilities to deal with its own challenges. In this case, external support is only needed to supplement internal resources. The Ubuntu philosophy can be utilized to empower such a community through the values of trust, love, unity, dignity, hope, and respect (Bolden, 2014). Trust looks at how people can live together in a community with the zeal to help one another to 'grow'. It encompasses the elements of love, unity, and patience. In a poor community, trust can help members to develop their mental, emotional, spiritual, relational, and behavioral aspects.

Care and kindness are also embedded in Ubuntu philosophy and instrumental in transforming poor communities. In crisis situations such as armed conflicts, and technological, environmental, and other human-induced disasters, communities normally experience a social breakdown, grief, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and psychosis. Others experience fear, anxiety, and dread (Sustainable Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, 2017). Given that no two people possess exactly similar skills, abilities, and talents, there is a need for people to care for one another. By implication, each person has a fundamental role to play in dealing with community crises. Hence, care and kindness expressed by community members regardless of what they are going through can undoubtedly promote a spirit of brotherhood, togetherness, and

responsibility, thereby creating an enormous opportunity to overcome their hardships.

Social cohesion through the values of patience and tolerance is also an important underlying prerequisite of Ubuntu philosophy and a basis for transforming poor communities. In community development, multiple barriers normally constrain the process (Shava & Thakhathi, 2016) hence limiting progress. In such situations, it takes patience and tolerance to deal with these barriers. The same applies to people living and working together. Many mistakes may be committed as no single person is perfect. With patience, people can easily accept each other's weaknesses and help each other to overcome life challenges. When people genuinely express patience and tolerance, they are highly likely to become hopeful. Hope focuses on the time ahead. However, if members lose hope, they may consequently develop a fatalistic attitude. Ubuntu nurtures social cohesion as a spirit to drive social transformation.

Opportunities in Transforming Communities through Ubuntu

In recent years, the African philosophy of Ubuntu has been fronted as having the capabilities to offer theoretical and practical directions to community transformation (Chagangaidza, 2021; Chineka and Mtetwa, 2021; Odari, 2022; Van Breda, 2021). Literature developed in this regard suggests that this potential abounds in the fields of social protection, public health, social economy/enterprises, education, human rights, freedoms, and democratic governance (Chagangaidza, 2021; Chineka and Mtetwa, 2021; Mayaka and Truell, 2021; Mugumbate and Nyanguru, 2013). This section of this chapter argues that Ubuntu philosophy can act as a foundation for Community transformation in Africa and illustrates this possibility in the following arguments.

Promoting Public Health in Under-Resourced Communities

Ubuntu, an African philosophy, espouses togetherness, collectivism, and a spirit of working for the good of all not solely the individual (Odari, 2020). This notion of togetherness and collectivism can act as a vital asset in promoting public health campaigns, notably community hygiene, preventing communicable diseases, and responding to health threats. In times of pandemics, such as COVID-19 which the world has been grappling with since December 2019, the ideals of Ubuntu can inspire community members to work together in providing sustainable solutions. Drawing on examples from Uganda, the ideals of Ubuntu inspired individuals, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), companies, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and herbal medicine practitioners to draw on their diverse resources both cash and non-cash items in the fight against the COVI9-19 pandemic. This was after H.E. the president of the Republic of Uganda appealed to the public to support the government in the fight against COVID-19. Consequently, the public responded by helping through contributions of cash, food, and other in-kind items (Rupiny, 2020).

While a wide range of factors including timely state intervention undoubtedly contributed to a successful campaign against the pandemic, the popular perception in Uganda is that the cash, food, and non-food items donated by the community were at least in part, the reason for Uganda's low mortalities resulting from COVID-19 pandemic (Atwine and Mushomi, 2022). Of course, it is hard to conclude that such charitable acts would have been realized if people did not have collectivity values of love for one another, care for others, social solidarity, compassion, and a sense of collective responsibility.

Promoting Social Protection in Communities

Social protection is viewed as a safety net to protect people from poverty, vulnerability, and insecurity (UNICEF, 2021; ILO, 2018). It consists of arrangements premeditated to minimize people's exposure to a wide range

of risks. However, most current formal social protection efforts in Africa are still largely beyond the reach of informal workers (Liisgaard, Mitullah, and Torm, 2022). Consequently, workers in the informal sector have for a long time been forming informal initiatives as means of their own social protection. Echoing examples from Karagwe district in Tanzania and Western Uganda during the late 1980s, each village was organized in what was known as 'Chama' and 'Ekibiina' respectively. Each household was expected to belong to at least one such group. Whenever death befell, members would respond with food stuff and other forms of material and social support. Regarding Ubuntu philosophy, it must be stated that these groups never had written constitutions like what seems to be a mandatory requirement today. They instead operated under the ideals of Ubuntu: love, care, compassion, responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and reciprocity. Overall, the above points to the evidence that through Ubuntu philosophy, Africa can mitigate a series of vulnerabilities and transform lives.

Promoting Sustainable Development of African Communities

Ubuntu focuses on the inclusivity of everyone within the community, and their responsibility to others and future generations (Mayaka and Truell, 2021). The consideration of future generations means that Ubuntu philosophy can be utilized to promote sustainable development. As Van Breda (2019) notes, sustainable development is the maintenance of something over a long period. The concept is also viewed by Church (2012) as a development that protects the environment while enhancing the quality of life for all, more particularly for those who are affected by poverty and inequality. Van Breda (2019) further contends that Ubuntu can significantly promote the achievement of sustainable development through the recognition that our embeddedness in the human community is not merely in the present community, but also in both the past and future generations. It is to be hoped that when people have love, care, and respect for mankind and the resources upon which life depends, they might avoid practices and habits that could deplete useful resources for both the present and future

generations. Consequently, this world would have more arborists than woodcutters and deforestation would be followed by reforestation. In addition, fishermen would use recommended fishing nets, industrialists would control all forms of pollution, and farmers or herdsmen would prioritize the most recommended farming and herding practices respectively. In the end, policymakers at all levels would not compromise the needs of the future generation in an attempt to meet the needs of the current generation.

Anchoring Collective Social Enterprises

Poverty is one of the greatest challenges in African communities (World Bank, 2020). Ubuntu-inspired and anchored collective social enterprises in the continent's communities could be transformational. This is because Ubuntu philosophy is the antithesis of individualism that misguides most business approaches in the nowadays trade culture. According to Grossman (2016), individualism refers to a focus on the individual. Whereas an individualistic society hinges on the values of personal control, independence, individual accomplishments, and idiocentricism on one hand, the Ubuntu philosophy on the other hand is premised on interdependence, cohesion, mutual obligation, and allocentrism. However, to realize interdependent and cohesive societies, people should above all demonstrate agape love, care, respect, trust, kindness, forgiveness, reciprocity, responsibility, honesty, and compassion. These values are urgently needed in the African continent that has been permeated by the Western competitive business practice of capitalism, which usually signifies greed and a focus on oneself at the expense of others (Cheung and Bauer, 2021).

Undoubtedly, by embracing the ideals of Ubuntu, African entrepreneurs would collectively address challenges endemic to the cost of starting and doing business, lack of access to finance, high taxes, and low cross-border trade (Asongu and Odhiambo, 2018). In addition, love, care, respect, and trustworthiness would act as potential drivers of collaboration and

partnerships among the African business community. Besides, business owners would share capital, business knowledge, and market ideas. The thriving African businesses would in the long run position African communities on the right pathway to community transformation.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Education in Africa

The ubuntu philosophical paradigm and its potential for transforming communities in Africa have implications for social work. These implications for social work practice, research, policy, and education are the basis of this section in the arguments that follow.

The Adoption of Universal and Collective Interventions

The African ubuntu social work practitioner should strive to promote interventions that are universal and collective (Chineka and Mtetwa, 2021; Chigangaidza, 2021; Mupedziswa et al, 2019; Van Breda, 2021). Universal interventions in this chapter refer to interventions that focus on whole communities or national states with the potential of participation by all. On the other hand, collective interventions are those that address the needs of social groups and community units rather than focusing on individuals. Within this arrangement, the practitioner should constantly seek to link the individual to the social group or the community collective (Mupedziswa et al, 2019). This is because ubuntu promotes communalism and collectivism as building blocks for social groups, community units, and social cohesion. Accordingly, Zvomuya (2020) calls for the restoration of this collectivism in African social work to transform communities. An example is collective and cooperative rural savings schemes, investment groupings, farming groups, or community infrastructure-building schemes. This will require using local leaders and resources, capacities, and experiences as building blocks for community transformation interventions.

Building Community and Human Relationships to Anchor Transformation

The ubuntu paradigm necessitates the practitioner to build a stronger community and human relations that will anchor community transformation. This is because the ubuntu paradigm is built on human relationships (Mugumbate and Chereni, 2020; IFSW, 2020). This means that people but not the interventions should be the focus of the transformative struggles. The essence of all interventions should be to foster community relationships, social cohesion, and the cooperative spirit of the locals. In this way, the humanness of ubuntu (Zvomuya, 2020) can be activated through progressive and harmonious human friendships and relationships to drive community transformation. This can be achieved through mass participation in interventions, without leaving any person behind. It can also be done through constructive dialogues, engaging all people at various levels to be part of the transformation agenda. Additionally, this approach should be the theoretical and practical basis of all poverty reduction interventions in Africa (Zvomuya, 2020) to enable social work to translate these interventions into social development.

Questioning and Dismantling of Western Models of Community Transformation

The ubuntu philosophy demands that African social workers vigorously critique and dismantle western models of community transformation. This requires African practitioners to assert indigenous models of doing social work, which must be exhausted and centred before any western models are sought (Tusasiirwe, 2022). It also requires constantly questioning and challenging the dominance of western models in the African context, and the dominance of western development institutions, aid, funding, and practice knowledge systems. Critical practice reflection is essential to activate this stance. The awareness of the ideological and cultural embeddedness of western societies in imported models should enable practitioners in Africa to rethink their relevance, and search for applicable local knowledge and models rooted in the Ubuntu ideology and the local cultures of Africa. An

attitude of dismantling the foreign, colonial, and racist structures and prejudices that result in the marginalisation and devaluing of the indigenous models in the first place is inevitable to achieve community transformation (Tusasiirwe, 2022).

Centering Ubuntu and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Social Work Education and Training

Social work education and training in Africa should center the ubuntu philosophical paradigm and its focus on indigenous knowledge systems as a theoretical framework (Mugumbate and Nyanguru, 2013; Mugumbate and Chereni, 2020; Mupedziswa et al, 2019; Tusasiirwe, 2022). This requires teaching social workers on the African continent about the applications of the ubuntu philosophy in social work in general, and its explanatory frames in community transformation specifically. This will also require exploring its strengths and limitations in the application, and what difference it can make in changing communities. It also further implies that, the western theory is not taught as a given but where necessary as supplementary to ubuntu and other indigenous thought in social work (Tusasiirwe, 2022). The use of literature on ubuntu to ground African social workers is a good place to start. Examples of such literature are already discussed in this text. Also, building materials for other local indigenous knowledge systems for education is another avenue. Practicing social workers can get refresher training, lectures, discussions, and seminars on ubuntu as part of their continuous professional development and training. Social work research is anchored by local thinking, theories, and knowledge systems is another way of developing its application in education and training.

Recommendations

In view of the arguments presented in this chapter and the implication for social work practice and education shared in the previous section, two critical recommendations are made. Firstly, social workers should enhance the self-reliance capabilities of African communities, and secondly, social work

practitioners should develop and center a strong grasp of indigenous knowledge systems to support their practice.

Enhance the self-reliance capabilities of African communities

The chapter recommends that African social workers engaging as ubuntu practitioners should enhance and strengthen the self-reliance capabilities of local communities to facilitate community transformation (Chikadzi, 2022). This should be aimed at enabling community self-transformation, and the continuous capacity of the communities to be active and meaningful agents and participants of transformational change in their localities. Noyoo (2022) suggests that these capacities can be built by disengaging community development from international development first, then building local capacity for transformation using indigenous ideals, and then re-engaging these communities with international development later. Working with communities, to build their interventions is another alternative. This will require a slow, but progressive dialogue with community members, their leadership, and elders, as well as re-education on the transformative agenda. Building the capabilities of the communal and collective spirit to spur change is another way. This may require harvesting local success stories, learning from previous efforts, and linking people's cultures with the transformation spirit.

A strong grasp of indigenous knowledge systems

Secondly, this chapter further recommends that African social work should place strong and particular emphasis on indigenous knowledge systems to transform communities. These knowledge systems demands are compatible with bottom-up strategies. These are also democratic, participatory, and therefore more sustainable for Africa's mass transformation. They will enable social workers to work with and not for the marginalized communities that they serve. This could be achieved by targeting, identifying, documenting, learning from, and scaling up local approaches that deal with community challenges. The examples explored by Twikirize and Spitzer (2019) of

indigenous and innovative social work approaches in Africa which can be applied to address poverty, socio-economic transformation, foster care, and older persons' welfare are an illustration of this potential. This approach and process would then inform the translation of indigenous knowledge systems into large-scale interventions, programs, services, and policies that address community transformation. This will place emphasis on local and contextual ways of doing, being, becoming, and knowing (Tusasiirwe, 2022). Such interventions will therefore be local, understandable by the locals, and suited for the local African contexts.

Conclusion

To contribute to the transformation of African communities, African social work has been argued to adopt a developmental orientation (Chikadzi, 2022; Noyoo, 2022). Additionally, the current realities in many African communities require African social workers to innovate and build a knowledge and practice system that promotes this developmental stance for specific contexts. As such, this chapter has grappled with the question of how to transform African communities through the theoretical and practical frames of the Ubuntu philosophical paradigm. It has demonstrated that African communities need urgent transformation due to extreme poverty, the external shocks to her transformation agenda, and the quest for homegrown solutions. It has called the social workers' attention to the ubuntu philosophical paradigm as an "African worldview" to understand communities and the interventions essential to transforming them.

It's argued that the ubuntu philosophy offers the social worker unique and contextual sets of values, ideals, principles, and directions, termed as prerequisites that should anchor their practice to transform communities on the continent. These can be translated into opportunities for application into social work practice in the promotion of public health, social protection, communal social enterprises, sustainable development, and in addressing other community challenges in Africa. To this end, this chapter has drawn

implications for social work practice and education that require a focus on strengthening communal (human) relationships, building universalistic social work interventions, centering development on communities, and a grasp of indigenous knowledge systems in the education of social workers. It's recommended that promoting community self-reliance and a strong grasp of indigenous knowledge systems is essential to transform African communities.

In the context of welfare, this chapter argues for macro social work interventions in transforming communities. It places a strategic focus on the common good and the transformation of the community, through which individuals, families, groups, and other small systems will derive their well-being. It places emphasis on social groups and community units, and the constant strive to link the individual to the collective (Mupedziswa et al, 2019). This constant quest to connect individuals or small systems to the collective offers a unique window of opportunity for an African approach to micro-social work practice in transforming communities. The application of the ubuntu philosophical paradigm in community transformation is compatible with the social development orientation that African social work seeks (Chikadzi, 2022; Noyoo, 2022). It's also suitable in a mixed economy, a kind of social democratic welfare model that many African countries pursue.

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Chapter 7

Co-Building the Ubuntu Ecological Resource Centre: A Local/Global Application of Ubuntu

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Contact

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Biographies

Abu Mansaray, known as George, is a social worker and grew up in Sierra Leone. He started work as a teacher before becoming more extensively with people affected by war and destitution. He has worked for both government and NGOs in Africa and Europe. He has university qualifications in economics and sustainable development and is currently enrolled on the Erasmus Mundus MA programme in Advanced Development in Social Work. He has worked across partnerships in responding to health crises, Ebola and Covid, and worked with communities reuniting families after war and rebuilding infrastructure of health and schools, redeveloping local economies. In 2014 he founded Ruth's Hope Kindergarten for social development and capacity building for sustainable communities. In 2016 the Sierra Leone Association of Social Workers joined IFSW during his Presidency of the association.

Ruth Stark, MSc, CQSW, MBE/Chief Ya Bomposeh Kunk Bana the Third, Matheng Section, Lokomosama District, NW Sierra Leone; Independent Social Worker, Scotland; Emeritus President International Federation of Social Workers (2014-2018). Ruth works as an independent social worker in Scotland. In a career stretching back over 40 years she still works with people who are experiencing difficulties in family life, in their mental health, in the

criminal justice system and people facing deportation; often a combination of some or all these issues. Work comes from the different court systems, some by direct referral and some from social work services. For 15 years she was the lead for the professional association in Scotland. In 2013 she was awarded an MBE for services to social work in Scotland. In 2019, working with Ruth's Hope Kindergarten the community invited her to join them in the role of a Chief in the district. She has written extensively on the complexities of balancing competing human rights, responsibility, equity, social work practice and the importance of lived experience.

Abstract

Many aspects of our lives within our local communities are influenced and occur in the context of global issues that know no national borders. Economic crises, wars, natural disasters, pollution, and climate change are major factors in our current challenge for co-building our sustainable shared futures, working towards a fairer, balanced eco-social world where no one is left behind. We have seen at firsthand in our communities that the international aid model does not provide sustainable change for our collective well-being. Its 'rescue' or 'guilt' motivations ignore local assets and resources, the self-determination of the people, and foster dependence on aid. This undermining of our communities' strengths has led to a review of the current paradigms of investment in social development and we have suggested for some years now 'that western models of social work and social development do not work here'. This chapter explores the story of the design and implementation of a community plan following state failures in rebuilding infrastructure after a disaster. It explores the development of changing paradigms in philosophy, economics, and policy – absorbing and utilising ubuntu values, the importance of leaderful communities that recognise people's strengths, and the need for a global revolution in understanding our collective responsibility for our planet, challenging the world institutions to refocus on economic health, away from the ideology of economic growth.

Di wod

Di wae en mana wi dae liv we lif na wi contri den dipen on how di wol dae woke. Kopor wahala, fet-fet en di wae en mana wae all tin don boxup – di weda dae wam en dorti borku. Al dis na babala woke for wi al bot wi al for woke as wan. Wi don see sae di wate man wae for woke soba bot som of di wae nor dae woke na wi yone sai den. Di wate man wae, nor gee value to we yone wae fo woke. Dis dae make al di tem we dae dipen pan dem. Dis wae en mana for woke nor gud fo wi .So, wi don change di wae en mana wae fo go bi fo. Wi don make am clear sae, wate man wae no dae woke na wi yone sie den. Borku tin den bot wi lif na wi contri den dae hapin bicos of how di wol dae woke en wi nor get bandri. Di korpor wahala, fet-fet en di wahala den wae dae ambug di sai den wae wi dae – don push wi for woke wit orda piple den. Dis go elp wi.

The Beginnings

Social work beyond borders has been the vogue for the past decades in especially difficult circumstances such as war, disaster, and pandemics. The approaches and or models instituted by governments and International Aid organizations were purely western and only sit well at some point in emergencies to at least cushion the challenging situation at the time. These Western models are not sustainable and don't work well in our context, and maybe not in other contexts either. While activities may appear to be done in the spirit of Ubuntu often the key indicators of respect and acceptance, the values that hold the communities together, are set to one side.

The communities bask in wisdom and the capacity to continue living their lives in dignity. This is understood by some social work practitioners who already, from experience and as inspired by the community, value the power of the community. This has ensured an understanding and has facilitated the examination, incorporation, and blending of indigenous approaches to social work into other contexts. The global networking approach in the name of Ubuntu has been strongly beneficial in engaging social workers from other

cultural traditions to learn about and embrace approaches that have been highly successful in our different countries.

Figure 4: Our interdependence with the planet

The example we would like to use to illustrate Ubuntu in practice is the co-creating of the ecological resource centre. All continents acceptance of multiculturalism as the hub around which Ubuntu revolves is being demonstrated as we co design and co build the centre. Support from the global network of resources Avenir Social in Switzerland, Han University Netherlands, our Lat- Am group from Chile, Colombia, USA, Scotland and rural communities in Sierra Leone have come together to co-design and co-build an Ubuntu ecological resource centre. Facilitated through the Ruth's Hope Kindergarten Sierra Leone a global network of mutual learning has developed.

Figure 5: One of our many international meetings

Each partner has brought resources into the global network emulating and revealing Ubuntu. How this is done in its entirety is looked at critically explaining every step in the processes and procedures adopted in moving the joint work for our common futures through today. We have met some cultural challenges in understanding a different way of working together, not least in the funding of sustainable development. However, we have discovered that focusing on our shared futures has taken us forward to co-build resources in our community, where state or international funding has not been present.

These photos illustrate how we co-build our community development starting with the community meeting, collecting and analysing what we already have and identifying what we need from ourselves and working with other people

Our community values

The Ubuntu philosophy which implies I am because we are, has been in practice since time immemorial. It carries different names with the same meaning across cultures. Some of such names include “Kankaylay”,

"Bondesia", " Lanyii" and " Dim din" amongst some tribes in Sierra Leone, Liberia and the republic of Guinea. It has been a source of life, treasuring each other and ensuring sustainable, mutual, unbiased gain. Its key tenets of love, respect, trust, fairness, hope, care, solidarity, oneness to mention but a few serves as the hub around which the communities evolve. The community assets are the people, their songs and dance, stories, their generosity, the smiles and laughter and their ambition for sustainable change. The more that we interact with each other the greater the trust between us that builds the strength of our community.

The communities across different cultures had been able to build their homes, roads, grow their food, and take care of their health, social protection system and social life generally. Smiles and appreciation are seen on the faces of community inhabitants. They never lose sight of the things that hold them together. The indigenous models of authority as instituted by communities continue to respect the diversity within our communities and let them thrive in their various life endeavours.

Leaderful community development for our shared futures

The Hope Kindergarten was started after the 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone out of frustration that international aid agencies, focusing on silo issues, failed to work with the communities to tackle the devastation to families and the environment which had been broken up because of violence, fear and environmental destruction of war. The social workers recognized that rebuilding with communities the environment to fulfil the collective responsibility of reuniting children with their families and nurturing regrowth of sustainable safe environments are pre-requisites to enabling communities to provide the garden so that they can fulfil the community obligation that it 'takes a whole village to bring up a child'. Ubuntu provides the basis for an organic process to support families and future generations in fulfilling safe sustainable living.

As the families and community came back together in the years after the end of the war it became apparent that international aid and local sustainability were coming from different value bases, that shaped the systems of funding. Over time this has proved obstructive to the progress of rebuilding vibrant communities (Green, 2016). The guiding principles of the work undertaken by the community are equity, respecting the richness of diversity, eco social balance in our world for sustainability and investment in our shared futures. These principles did not fit well with the environment of international aid and political instability where short term crisis driven resourcing of social development, based on western models of economics, was ineffective resulting in community disillusionment. The outside, top driven, global north models used post WW2 based theories on economic stimulus to restore international trade, like the Marshall Plan in Europe, but these do not work in organic Ubuntu cultures. Our communities are not NGOs they are rooted in indigenous models developed over millennia, to establish equity and balance for sustainability. As we have developed community driven development plans in the past four years, we have come to question whether it is possible to find new ways to fund sustainable development rooted in the principles of Ubuntu (IRISS). This is a question that we took recently to the People's Global Summit in June 2022 and we have seen developed in the People's Charter for an Eco-Social World.

In revisiting the strengths within our communities, we have rediscovered self-determination in that "you are free to choose but you are not free to alter the consequences of your decision", Ezra Taft Benson. An effective observation as we turn attention in the vision for our shared futures to global social justice after centuries of international exploitation of ores, minerals, and people; taking from one country to build the wealth of another – leaving many people behind.

It has not just been recovery from war that has affected our communities but the lack of care of our planet, from local and global collective failures in managing waste and contributing to climate change that know no borders.

Figure 6: The fishing community under threat from pollution and climate change

Our communities have had enough of living with violence or war, and the destruction of our planet; just like the people of Yemen, Syria, Palestine, Israel, Ethiopia, DCR, Eritrea, Ukraine, Myanmar and many more…. The consequences for people and our communities as a result of the actions of states is the displacement of people with waves of refugees throughout the world caught in a cycle of a new crisis intervention from international governments and aid agencies requiring domestic changes to services and communities where the waves pass through or stop. The long-term reality is that many will not return to their homeland without significant investment in rebuilding infrastructure not only in buildings but in social communities – our first organic systems of social support.

Over many generations displaced people live in refugee settlements in other countries. Building new communities within another country than their own. Creating work and local economic systems. Building schools and training centres. People who do not have citizen rights but contributing to the care of the planet through recycling and their organic social reconstruction Still fearful to return to their homelands They remain in the shadows and on the margins of civil society. One such community is Nakivale in Uganda where the community have evolved schools, workplaces and their own links internationally, yet without the freedom of movement enjoyed through citizenship.

Figure 7: Hope Training Centre Nakivale

The photos above illustrate the Hope Training Centre Nakivale which indicates the living conditions, the social enterprise of recycling waste plastics, the school and the support group for people with albinism - fleeing persecution and death in neighbouring countries.

Can we rebuild better using Ubuntu?

It is 20 years since the end of civil war in Sierra Leone; we are still working with the aftermath. We have discovered many things in that time, as many previous generations around the world have also discovered following destruction by war or environmental disaster.

Time is now a critical factor in sustainability. Applications for investment from the poorest people to the richest people globally are time-consuming when time is no longer on our side. The expectation that funding will happen from the wealthy states as a result of a measurable project in response to a research study that identified a specific need fails to acknowledge the complexity of our interconnectedness as recognized in the indigenous values of Ubuntu and Buen Vivir. With climate change and the instability in geo-politics we need practical, as well as principled, change to achieve a balanced eco-social world for our shared futures. Local problems occur in the context of global problems requiring local and global solutions.

The Community Experience

10 years after the war had ended social workers, often employed on short term contracts by international NGOs were becoming very aware that many of the 'interventions' were short lived, not focused on critical issues for sustainability and producing long term disillusionment in the communities. Families were still separated; poverty was endemic, and the environment was being exploited. Long-term trauma was evident, and no efforts seemed to be in place to bring dispersed families back together. By 2018 the Hope Kindergarten had reunited 383 children with their families, this also included some who had been taken to neighbouring countries. In achieving this remarkable reunification support was needed and provided by the community as they came to rebuild relationships and trust to weave the co-design and co-building for our joint futures.

The process of working together in the community is firmly rooted in the local indigenous social structures and this process of community leaderful development is described in detail in Social Work Beyond Borders (2020).

Figure 8: Community meetings building the plan 2019

From the Community Plan the community decided that their first priority in a fully accessible ecological resource centre. Designed by the community, it will provide for a multi-purpose building, a faith room, a high school, a school boarding block, a clinic, a back packers lodge, recreation ground, a vegetable garden, a tree nursery, tree planting space out of the centre, swimming pool, water supply unit, solar light unit, cultural hall and a jungle trail out of the centre and a multi-cultural kitchen, bar and restaurant.

Figure 9: Everyone has a role - this is the team collecting and analysing the data of community assets and resources - skills, material for building etc..

From the Community Plan the community decided that their first priority in a fully accessible ecological resource centre. Designed by the community, it will provide for a multi-purpose building, a chapel, a high school, a school boarding block, a clinic, a back packers lodge, recreation ground, a vegetable garden, a tree nursery, tree planting space out of the centre, swimming pool, water supply unit, solar light unit, cultural hall and a jungle trail out of the centre and a multi-cultural kitchen, bar and restaurant. The community vision for the centre goes beyond their own natural space. It will provide a place to strengthen global learning and support reciprocity in our shared futures with people from across continents, not least of this is sustainable education, infrastructure, employment and recreation – reinforcing our diverse communities ability to enhance well-being of every person in a protective and nurturing garden environment for work, rest and play!

To build this resource centre the community first sought resources from within the community where there are many skills. Thereafter they have developed networks of support based on organic growth with roots – locally, community members, well-wishers, the community diaspora, national, regional and international. The initial resources from within the community cleared the land, designed the building, found local building materials and progress has been made. But some essential roofing materials, drainage,

energy supplies of solar panels all need to be sourced but learning from experience local people need to acquire maintenance skills to keep this investment in working order. And in exchange the community offers unique learning about co-building sustainable development in a world that is becoming dangerously close to self-destruction. Ubuntu – I am because we are.

Figure 10: The community prepares the land for building

The funding challenges

In seeking the necessary resources that we need to find from outside the community we have hit some interesting cultural and systemic issues. People we have engaged in this co-design and co-build are enthusiastic and willing to be involved, but on our journey, we have discovered that communicating our rethinking of some of the 'global north' ways of funding social development locally and globally may need to be done differently – and we cannot do this alone.

We have formed international partnerships in Europe, North and South America and each has cultural ways of investing and measuring successful outcomes where there is not a common language. This requires each participant to listen very carefully and to find the common path. Some of our mutual understanding has been helped by the writing of people like Angus Deaton (2013) or Paul Vallely (2020) who have raised many issues about how inequality and poverty still exist.

This has led us into the world of economics and investment in sustainable development and in our co-learning and co-building we are engaging with

investment funding, for example with organizations like GEFI (Global Ethical Finance Initiative) through our joint interest in climate change and sustainability www.globalethicalfinance.org. Using the common goals being developed through COP26, 27,28 etc. we are sharing our different perspectives, finding common ground and co-developing ways we can work together for our shared futures. One such development is exploring the language and then the models of current investment by institutions historically based on hierarchical models of banks and governments, with the new developments in eco-green financing as being developed in Peru Green Gold Forestry: A conservation company protecting and restoring the Peruvian rainforest developed by green investors and now run by the local community.

This has led into another factor that creeps into this discussion, the use and ownership of land. It has raised the different cultural and philosophical expectations of ownership, obligations and responsibility allowing discussion of the complexity of individual and collective rights. Conflict is often fuelled by dispute of ownership. Traditionally land has been seen in many cultures as a community asset. National borders are a relatively recent invention that over millennia have changed and been fought over, for what purpose? The inclusion of the significance of indigenous knowledge in the Global Definition of Social Work (2014) has helped us refocus on our common assets to widen our professional understanding of the well-rehearsed narrative of power and control, empires and colonialism so that together we can build change. Barriers and defensive walls were built for protection and land was enclosed. In China the Great Wall was built to separate it from Mongolia, in the UK the Roman Emperor Hadrian built a wall in 122 separating Scotland from the rest of Britain. The Cold War in Europe after the end of WW2, was epitomised by the Berlin Wall built in 1961 which separated East and West Germany, to be torn down in 1981 by the people. In different parts of the world, we have seen the importance of indigenous communities who have challenged this individual ownership of land. In New Zealand and Australia, the Māori and Aboriginal communities, like the Seminole 1957 in

Florida USA have successfully retained recognition of their land rights. It does raise a question however about even when the Seminole have their own schools, health systems and police force – are they a country within a country, like the people of Nakivale which passport system in our current phase of social development gives you freedom to travel?

The paradigm for investment in sustainability is now shifting, alongside our recognition of community responsibility for our shared assets and resources, the land, water and all who share the planet. With our collective knowledge of social and community development we have the potential to make the critical changes to our shared futures. As we have looked at how we can fund sustainable development for us all we see other issues raise their head require that lateral inclusive thinking of enquiry which is much more than inquiry.

Initiatives that bring us together, challenging and bridging our silos of skills, knowledge and experience will help decrease the chasm between the wealth of the few and the poverty of the many. When people in their communities are not heard by governments, we see reports in media around the world where people take to the streets, form protest movements, become angry and violent and often this leads to civil or national wars. This is happening today in every region of our world – these are issues beyond our borders.

We already have rich analytic resources to draw on for working together to reshape our futures. In listening to the perspective of the funder in our current world system we know the funder exercises a judgement about how they will spend their money. We have developed the role of professional fundraiser in many national and international NGOs. They have developed experience in shaping the application for funds based on the western model and the critical importance of understanding the motives of the funder to get the 'right' messages to give to attract the attention of the donor. They also know that successes have to be demonstrated in order to attract more funding. In co-building our community plan we came across a great deal of disillusionment with this aid model of researchers, funding and no sustainable development.

It was put distinctly to the IFSW African Conference in Uganda in 2019, by a young person with lived experience who eloquently stated that supporting young people with their families, where love and respect are the roots of development has been known from millennia to be the effective way to protect young people from early pregnancy and exploitation (Mansaray, Mansaray & Stark, 2020). Listening to people with lived expertise to find great ways forward is often the missing factor for sustainable futures.

How funders make decisions is complex, both objective and subjective. Not just on facts and figures but each of our lived experience and how it has shaped our values affects our decisions - Have we experienced poverty? Have we experienced abusive relationships that have affected our capacity to trust? Have we moved through 'sisu', from being a victim to again having the confidence and strength to contribute? These are important indicators for sustainability.

Whilst many recognize the reciprocity of economic and social health for individual and collective well-being, we find that funding decisions in social development appear to be made on silo projects that fail to recognize the complexity of the whole multi-dimensional interactive atoms that make up the molecular whole that needs to be developed and evaluated. Using the philosophy of the living organism of complex interconnectedness as optimized in Ubuntu or Buen Vivir can help us all transform our shared futures.

Can we re-think the episodic cycle of wars and economic policies?

The economic stimulus of building weapons of destruction is nonsensical, yet we see many politicians focus on this as a method of boosting failing economies whose success is measured by growth of profits, enabling power and control to be sustained. Conversely, we see post war manmade reconstruction and re-building that concentrates on physical infrastructure

with little regard or involvement of displaced people and their communities and rebuilding of social interconnectedness to provide the root system for organic social protection. People need to be valued to feel safe (Stark, 2019). As demonstrated in many indigenous cultures where the communities make decisions about shared priorities and shared resources the principle and relationships developed through ubuntu using assemblies and meetings with the community shaping priorities work.

Through sharing our own experience, we want to start a process of open discussion to co-design and co-build new thinking and actions for resourcing sustainable development. In our area there is no state investment in infrastructure - roads, electricity, drainage, fresh water supply, housing or support for people to emerge from poverty through fairly paid work.

Through the community plan the community have identified a need for local knowledge to be developed and have attracted a partnership with agricultural experts to work together to increase local skills in the community with farming. This includes expanding their fields, training on sustainable farming methods, seed multiplication and marketing. A hundred acres of arable swampland was provided by the community for the project. This will give more yield, adequate food on the table, enough cash money to meet other family needs and there will be a turnaround of life in the various communities we serve.

We are now taking our lived experience into other partnerships with health and financial investment, to other people who are experiencing wars and disasters. Together we can build a better future. Social work has been in practice since time immemorial and remains to be of life's essence in every culture. Every culture has a name attached to such a brilliant profession, but these change over time. Life, humanity, love, care, trust, challenges, oppression, messy stuff, change are key vocabularies in the practice of what we now call social work whilst working with individuals, groups and or

communities. The world can rediscover that we still have a role in our shared futures in an eco-social sustainable world through the Ubuntu social work practitioner.

Figure 11:Building sustainable communities

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The Bullom Community transfer of indigenous knowledge through the oral tradition through many generations

Chapter 8

Positioning the Natural environment in Ubuntu's Axiom 'Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu': An Ecospiritual Social Work Perspective.

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Abstract
Over the past decades, there is an increasing interest in the meaning of 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' or 'a person is a person through other persons.' Utilising an Ubuntu-inspired Ecospiritual Social Work perspective, this chapter aims to critically reflect on the meaning of 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu.' As an ecophilosphy, Ubuntu is holistic and illustrates the interconnections between human beings and the natural environment. In exploring the significance of the natural environment through Ubuntu philosophy, issues of radical equalitarian ecological justice, sustainable development, climate change and public health are explored. The chapter underscores that 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' is philosophically inclusive of the environment as part of the 'others' and as part of 'umuntu.'
Keywords: *Ubuntu; Ecospiritual Social Work; Umuntu; Natural Environment; Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*

Kubvira makore akawanda neanoraudzira, pane chidokwa dokwa chekuda kuziva kuti zvinomborevei kuti, 'munhu munhu nekuda kwevamwe.'

Tichishandisa mafungiro nemaonero ehunhu, nekuwadzana kwevanhu nezvisikwa zvose uye nemweya, chikamu chinotarisa zvakadzama mayererano nokudyidzana kwavanhu nezvimwe zvisikwa zvose. Chikamu chino chinosimbisisa pfungwa yokuti hapana chisikwa chiri nani kupinda chimwe uye kuti munhu azove munhu, zvimwe zvisikwa zvinotovawo nebasa mukuvandudza kuve munhu. Zvakatipoteredza nezvisikwa zvose zvine nzvimbo mudingindira, 'munhu munhu nekuda kwevanhu' nokuda kwekuti zvinovandudza utano, mweya neraramo yedu.

Introduction

Over the past decades, there is growing interest on the meaning of 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' (Ewuso & Hall, 2019; Okyere-Mank & Konyana, 2018; Eze, 2010). Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu literally means 'munhu munhu nevamwe vanhu' in Shona and 'a person is a person through other persons in English (Shutte, 2001: 2). The axiom, 'a person is a person through other people' is an affirmation of one's humanity through the recognition of the 'other' in their uniqueness (Eze, 2010). The meaning of Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu has recently been expatiated from Eric Berne's transactional analysis perspective (Chigangaidze & Chinyenze, 2022). That is to say, the axiom has been explored through the constructs of stroking, transgenerational scripting, and physis among other elements of Transactional Analysis. For Metz (2007), 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' has descriptive senses to the fact that one's identity as a human being, casually and even metaphysically, depends on a community. Ubuntu promotes the spirit that one should live for others (Munyaka & Motlhabi, 2009). A person with Ubuntu has a sense of compassion, community, and shared concern for the rights of others (Muthukrishna & Ebrahim, 2014). The term Ubuntu, has in most parts, been limited to mutual aid but scholars such as Van Breda (2019) have extended it to ideas of ethics, ecospirituality, and sustainability. In the same view, Chigangaidze (2022) illustrates that Ubuntu personifies the natural environment and evokes the Rights of Nature.

Conceptualisations of the relationship between humans and the natural environment are present in the philosophical and social-scientific literature (Flint et al., 2013). The African philosophy of Ubuntu emphasizes the consolidation of the human, the natural environment, and the spiritual (Chibvongodze, 2016). In addition, Ewuso and Hall (2019) are of the idea that Ubuntu as an expression of 'communing with others' involves a fundamental connectedness of all lives in the natural and spiritual environments. Becoming more fully human does not mean caring for only human beings but also the entire biophysical world (Le Grange, 2012). The natural environment is also the home of human beings (N'kulu-N'Senha, 2019).

The fundamental meaning of 'umuntu' or 'person' in the Bantu metaphysics is 'life force' (Jahn & Grene, 1961). This life force is present in the environment (Mkhize, 2018). A human being is always in motion, a human being continues to conduct an inquiry into existence, experience, knowledge, and truth. Hence, to be umuntu is to have motion, it is to be uku-Ba (becoming a Spirit), to come into being, to happen, and to transform (Mkhize, 2020). The environment is well known as a source of life that provides energy, water, food, and air as the habitant of ancestors. Thus, the environment can be regarded in this sense as (umuntu). Furthermore, Ubuntu kulya or kudya means for one to exhibit Ubuntu, one should have eaten. Hence, the environment as a source of food contributes to the attainment of personhood. It is safe to argue, therefore, that the environment is part of other persons that are in the axiom 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu.' Among the Shona, the song, 'mvura naya naya tidye mupunga' translated to mean that rains should pour for us to eat rice is familiar to the young children who could dance in the showers of rain knowing that this would bring a good harvest of grain. Thus, the environment is a source of energy, food, water, and air which are vital for survival.

The impetus of this chapter is to show that the natural environment is part of 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' through the lens of Ecospiritual social work. In

so doing, this chapter seeks to show the connectivity of humans to the natural environment, their commitment to nature, and their interconnectedness through the Ubuntu axiom, 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'. Ubuntu reflects on the interdependence of human beings and the natural environment (Chibvongodze, 2016; Chigangaidze, 2022). Interests in nature as a therapeutic milieu has ancestral foundations, for example, Roman texts suggest that there are health benefits to the countryside and greenspaces (Franco et al., 2017). There is increasing focus on the potential role of the natural environment in the general health and well-being of humans. Research shows several physical, psychosocial, and spiritual benefits of interacting with nature (Keniger et al., 2013). The multi-sensory experiences of nature are essential because the monotony of stimulation can be a source of stress (Franco, 2017). Physiological benefits of the natural environment include reduced cortisol levels, reduced headaches, faster healing, reduced occurrences of diseases, and reduced mortality rates from circulatory diseases (Keniger et al., 2013). From an Ubuntu perspective, healing involves treating the environment as well. The interaction between the environment and personal or community health is essential. If the environment is not treated, then it is difficult to attain and confirm that one has been totally healed. Therefore, the axiom 'a person is a person through other persons' or 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' can be understood within the context of the environment given the role of the environment to human wellbeing.

Ecospiritual social work

The social work profession has been blamed for ignoring the natural environment or accepting a shallow ecological conceptualization of nature as something separate from human activity (Besthorn & Canda, 2002). There are calls for the social work profession to act toward environmental justice (Chigangaidze, 2021; Dominelli, 2014; Klemmer, 2020). It has been stated that deep ecology offers social work a fundamental view of the person/environment construct and argues for a shift in the way humanity perceives its relationship with nature (Besthorn & Canda, 2012). Ecospirituality

emphasizes that individual identity and well-being are dependent upon the well-being of the Earth and everything on it. It underscores a sense of responsibility for oneself and the collective whole (Gray & Coates, 2013). An eco-social work perspective argues that human beings are social and organic, intrinsically embedded in interdependent relationships within the larger ecosystem (Hoff & Pollack, 1993). In Ubuntu, ecospirituality is connected to issues of social development and sustainability in that the environment is meant to be handed over to the next generations in an improved state (van Breda, 2019). There are indigenous thoughts that species are in kinship relationships with human beings, and that all life is sacred (Koprina, 2014). Ecospirituality in social work, especially through the lenses of Ubuntu philosophy, highlights that the environment is the habitat of God and our ancestors (van Breda, 2019). Thus, from an Ecospiritual social work perspective, human beings and the environment are symbiotically interrelated. The environment impacts the biopsychosocial and spiritual facets of human beings.

The Environment personified.

In Ubuntu, personhood, or humanness 'is in a symbiotic relationship, or is inextricably bound up, with the dynamic (bio)physical and spiritual words' (Ewuso & Hall, 2019, p. 97). Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu illustrates the relatedness of an individual to others through the 'ukama' (relatedness) perspective. In Ubuntu, the natural environment is related to human beings through the ukama perspective (Chibvongodze, 2016, Chigangaidze, 2022). The Earth (natural environment) is to be treated as our clan, our mother, or our cousin (van Breda, 2019). In addition, the environment is related to human beings through totemic ancestorhood (Le Grange, 2012). It is generally accepted among the Shona people that the human being was created from the soil (part of the Earth). Among the Karanga and other Shona ethnic groups, during burials, pastors recite a popular phrase, 'ivhu kuvhu, dota kudota, guruva kuguruva' which can be translated as, 'soil to soil, ashes to ashes, dust to dust' (Chitakure, 2021). The assumption is that the body has

returned to its place of origin which is the soil from which God created man. Furthermore, the natural environment is what connects people with their ancestors and their unborn future generations (Chigangaidze, 2022; van Breda, 2019). Again, the names of the clans are derived from the natural environment. Chibvongodze (2016, p. 159) highlights that:

In many parts of Zimbabwe, the name of a clan is derived from the identities and mannerisms of wild animals. This sharing of clan names with animals stimulates a sense of affinity between the people and the wild animals, such that the personal and social identities of individuals become signified by a certain type of animal (Galaty, 2014). It is common among the Shona ethnic group of Zimbabwe to name their clans after animals. Shoko mentions some of the clan names which are; Mhofu (Eland), Samanyanga (Elephant), Simboti (Leopard), Shumba (Lion), Dube (Zebra), Hungwe (African fish eagle), Hove (fish), Soko (Monkey) and so on (Shoko, 2007).

Chibvongodze further argues that it is the duty of the clan to bear the animal's name to protect that animal from harm and extinction. People who feel more connected to nature are likely to show pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours (Fretwell & Greig, 2019). Therefore, it is crystal clear that the connectivity, interdependence, and commitment of human beings to nature influence even the naming of clans. Thus, the dictum that the natural environment is part of 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' is in this sense justified.

Positioning the environment in 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'

In this chapter, we position the natural environment in 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' in two ways:

1. As part of the 'others'
2. As umuntu / the first person in 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' or 'a person is a person through other people.'

Natural environment as part of others

The axiom, 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' or 'a person is a person through other persons' involves the natural environment as part of 'others' in the phrase. Terblanché-Greeff (2019, p. 97) explains the dictum, 'A person is a Person through others' in the following context: Here the word 'person' (small letter 'p') refers to individual humans whereas, "Person" (capital letter 'P') refers to personhood, self-hood, and humanness as a 'person' should strive by interacting with others (humans, non-humans, and nature).

Thus, in this case, the natural environment has a place in 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu', or a person is a person through other persons. The environment is included as part of the 'others' in the Ubuntu axiom, 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu.' As aforementioned, the natural environment is the source of life energy that sustains life in all human beings. The natural environment is a source of life, water, energy, food, and air. Put simply, one does not attain Ubuntu without interacting with the natural environment.

Case examples

- Plants, animals, and rivers form essential elements of the African religious ontology and identity (Mbiti, 1969).
- The environment is the place where ancestors and gods who play a key role in the lives of people reside. The environment is seen as a divine being with the potential to influence human behavior. The natural environment is used to communicate with the ancestors who have a role in our being.
- Totems and clan names are often derived from the names of animals and the natural environment. Thus, the identity of African people also reflects the environment. Naming clans from the natural environment depicts an understanding of how the environment contributes to our identity.
- The world has been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has been described as an environmental disease. The virus is spread through the infected environment (air with the infected person's droplets, and

surfaces where these droplets have landed). When the environment is infected then we are also infected and affected. Measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic included social isolation and social distancing which are key elements in our personhood. The environment in this context becomes an integral part of the 'others' that contribute to our personhood.

- In the African context, the cleansing of the environment is a necessity for holistic healing to take place. From an Ubuntu perspective, any attempt to heal an individual cannot ignore human and environmental relationships (Chuwa, 2012). Thus, Ubuntu philosophy adds to the concept of environmental embodiment by appreciating that environmental factors can affect body systems in ways that contribute to diseases and affect human functionality.

Natural environment as 'umuntu'

The natural environment itself exudes a spirit of Umuntu. By umuntu, it means that the environment in its natural form demonstrates elements of humanity such as humaneness, life, and reciprocity. The natural environment shows humaneness by naturally having a consideration for the people that occupy and surround it. People who occupy and surround the natural environment benefit from the environment they occupy by deriving livelihoods sustained by natural resources such as minerals, food, and medicines from natural herbs. It is the natural environment that produces these different resources for human use which shows that the environment in its natural form has a consideration for the life, wellbeing, and socio-economic survival of the people around and within that environment. Umuntu is also characterised by life. The natural environment values human life and the life of other living organisms since its components such as vegetation support human life by supplying oxygen. The natural environment in its various components is a living organism that supplies life to other components such as human beings that surround it. Umuntu is also exuded by showing reciprocity. Generally, human beings can survive by being

reciprocal. No individual has everything that they need. One must lose something to gain something from other people. This is evident even within the natural environment since the natural environment loses some of its components to also gain something from the people that occupy it. The natural environment supplies oxygen and gains carbon dioxide from humans and animals. The natural environment supplies food and in return, people take care of the natural environment by preventing harmful activities such as deforestation which harm the life of the natural environment. For the environment to continue to produce life energy it requires people to take care of it. In Ubuntu, the environment is meant to be given to the next generation in a much better state than the way it was handed over to us by our ancestors (Van Breda, 2019).

Implications for social work practice

The interventions of social work should cover the linkages between nature and the people and aim for a harmonious relationship between them (O'Leary & Tsui, 2021). Social workers must challenge the narrative that permits people's share of the Earth's resources to be usurped by a minority. Social work should support and champion the establishment of hybrid businesses that work to care for people and the environment (Ramsay, 2020). If the person is oriented towards communitarian well-being, the commodification and misuse of non-humans and natural resources are detrimental to the attainment of Ubuntu (Terblanché-Greeff, 2019). The misuse of the natural environment affects the well-being of human beings.

Social work as a profession is inclusive of Ecospiritual practices that include advocating for the rights of nature and the protection of the environment. Social work initiatives and research involve working together with environmentalists and other scientists in protecting the environment and formulating policies that ensure environmental sustainability. Social workers focus on advancing social justice issues and environmental justice is a key element in the day-to-day practice of fighting the aftermath of environmental degradation. It is known that the most vulnerable

communities suffer the most from the effects of environmental degradation and it is these communities that social workers work with daily. Thus, social work practice needs to strike a balance between protecting people and nature through engaging in projects that fight global warming. Furthermore, social workers are educators who can raise awareness in communities through community dialogues, community outreach projects, and sustainable development initiatives on the protection of nature.

Environmental pollution is a growing public health concern worldwide and adverse pollutants are associated with the prevalence of several cancers and diseases (Xu et al., 2015). Parasitic infections are the leading cause of child morbidity affecting low-income populations and can be transmitted because of an unhealthy environment (Garbossa et al., 2013). Social work in public health focuses its practice on the prevention of diseases, the protection of the environment to alleviate the prevalence of diseases, and the utilisation of the environment (physical, social, spiritual, political, and economic) in providing a therapeutic milieu for individuals, groups, and communities. Social workers need to consider natural therapies such as engaging with their clients in green spaces, and assessing how environmental issues are linked to the morbus prevalence.

The focus of social work has been to address the psychosocial environment, but this chapter is part of other calls to consider the influence of the natural environment on the wellbeing of individuals, groups, and communities. Social workers may consider strengthening partnerships with environmental health practitioners, public health specialists, and other multidisciplinary professionals in addressing environmentally inflicted diseases. Furthermore, issues of climate change and natural disasters are of the essence to an Ubuntu social work practitioner as these aggravate inequalities and mostly affect poor communities. Ubuntu social work practitioners play a major role in disaster preparedness, policy formulation, resource allocation and budgeting, and therapeutic interventions in the event of an unfortunate

incident. Ubuntu-informed social work practice narrows down on how ideas of neoliberalism are linked to environmental degradation and the suffering of communities. Thus, if the environment is infected our well-being is affected. Thus, Ubuntu social work practice calls for policy formulators to think of how their decisions can affect the environment and people in the present and future timeframes. Placing the environment in the axiom, 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' is an essential way to acknowledge that our humanness is dependent on the environment.

Human beings have been blamed for environmental pollution and land degradation affecting the welfare of current and future generations. For humankind to survive the environmental crisis, the synergism between the ecology of human societies and the natural physical environment will become a fundamental component of social work and all related professions' theorizing and interventions (Klemmer, 2020). Our interactions with our cousin or our mother, Mother Earth should be considered to leave this planet in a better form to the next generations. Ubuntu represents the highest level of global messaging within the social work profession for the years 2020-2030 (Mayaka & Truell, 2021). Ubuntu requires that social workers understand the natural environment from the axiom, 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' to comprehend the interconnections between people and the environment. This understanding reinforces the construct that the natural environment has rights (Chigangaidze, 2021) and radical equalitarian ecological justice (Besthorn, 2012) because of the personification of the environment. The moment we respect the natural environment as one of us, major catastrophes in the name of climate change will be reduced.

Perceiving the environment as part of 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' connects to the thinking of Global Citizenship (whether we live locally, regionally, or internationally; we are all interconnected with the environment), and issues of climate change connect us all. Whether one decides to deny that the natural environment is our roots or not, our interconnection with nature is beyond human intellect. Ubuntu philosophy

accepts that our physical, psychological, social, and spiritual wellbeing is integrated into the natural environment which bears the physis (life energy). As the highest level of global communication for social work for the years 2020-2030, Ubuntu connects us to the calls of co-building a new Eco-social World: Leaving No One Behind which is the main theme for Global Social Work and Social Development 2022. It should be noted with caution that the axiom 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' is far much richer than just this environmental perspective. It is applicable from sociological, political, technological, legal, and economical lenses. This phrase is applicable in social work, political science, legal studies, environmental science, philosophy, education, and medical sciences.

Conclusion

This chapter has positioned the environment as part of Ubuntu's axiom, 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' or 'a person is a person through other persons' from an Ecospiritual Social Work Perspective. The African philosophy of Ubuntu has gained interest in social work and has launched the 2020-2030 Global Agenda of Social Work and Social Development. Positioning the environment in the Ubuntu's axiom connects the philosophy to some of the themes of this Agenda, for example, working towards environmental sustainability. The chapter has positioned the natural environment as part of 'others' and as part of the first person 'umuntu'. Furthermore, the chapter advances the construct that the environment has rights, and appreciates the environment as a divine being and creation of God. To its end, the paper advocates for the respect of the environment for the benefit of human wellbeing, sustainability, and public health issues. Let us remember our roots and that we cannot do without Mother Earth. The natural environment is divine and connects us to generations before and after us. Our food, shelter, water, energy, and other vitalities are embedded in the natural environment which plays a major role in our human dignity and our expression of Ubuntu.

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Chapter 9

Ubuntu Social Work Benefits both the Practitioner and Service Users: An axiological Reflection of a Clinical Social Worker and Theologian.

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Abstract
Ubuntu philosophy values kindness, empathy, forgiveness, social justice, compassion, human rights and social connectedness. An Ubuntu Social Work practitioner is expected to exhibit these values in practice. Reflecting on the axiology of Ubuntu, this chapter explores the scientific benefits of the aforementioned values. It argues that Ubuntu Social Work promotes health, social development and sustainability. Of essence, the reflection posits that Ubuntu Social Work is scientifically beneficial to both the practitioner and service users. Ubuntu Social Work values connects both the practitioner and service user in ways that transform society. Finally, the chapter explores the ripple effects of Ubuntu when put in practice. As a philosophy, Ubuntu should be understood from its value system for it to change the world.
Keywords: *Ubuntu values; Social Work; Health and wellbeing*.

The concept of Ubuntu is an integral part of African ethics which emphasizes humanness, kindness, considerateness, empathy, human rights, generosity,

sharing, respect, forgiveness, altruism, compassion, benevolence, and other virtues (Chigangaidze, 2021a; Ngomane, 2019; Letseka, 2000). Ubuntu echoes the African thought of acceptable behaviours and ideas (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). In its very nature, Ubuntu is a multi-faceted, multi-layered, and complex construct (Chigangaidze, 2021b, 2021c; Coatzer et al., 2018). Ubuntu brings to the world the human face to every aspect of life (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). Ubuntu says something about the person's character and conduct (Samkange & Samkange, 1980). The construct of ubuntu can be referred to as the attainment of personhood (Molefe, 2019).

In the past decades, Ubuntu has generated much interest in most disciplines that aim to enhance human welfare. It is generally accepted that the African worldview of Ubuntu can shape community responses to disaster (van Breda, 2019). In addition, there are many similarities between the ethics of nursing care and Ubuntu (Nolte & Downing, 2019). Ubuntu can be considered as a value in social work (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). For many scholars, Ubuntu is regarded as consonant with the values and ideas of social work, notably empathy, human solidarity, and human dignity (Van Breda, 2019). This chapter will explore the benefits of Ubuntu Social Work practice from the values of the African philosophy. It will consider the scientific benefits of kindness, empathy, social connectedness, social justice, spirituality, and forgiveness.

Kindness

Intrinsic to the African way of life in Ubuntu is kindness (Broodryk, 2002). Kindness is not an easy construct to define and conceptualise. This chapter acknowledges that the concept of kindness implies familiarity and recognition that one should treat others as one would relate to one's own family and friends (Patel, 2019). Performing acts of kindness lead to a greater good for self and others as it promotes wellbeing, self-awareness, purpose in life, social support, and an enhanced positive effect (Boellinghaus, Jones & Hutton, 2013; Dunn, Akin & Norton, 2014; Patel, 2019). There is a strong

association between kindness and enhanced feelings of happiness and wellbeing (Rowland & Curry, 2019). In addition, kindness help enhance resilience against stress-related effects on health (Poulin & Holman, 2013). Kindness is an expression that emphasises people's interdependence. For Sampson (2003: 147), 'everyone relies on others, including the kindness of strangers, for her or his survival and well-being.' Furthermore, the effects of kindness seem to promote the essence of Ubuntu- the greater good and health of the community. One of the broader effects of kindness is that it is socially contagious (Tsvetkova & Macy, 2014). Put simply, people who receive help from others are more likely to help strangers in the future. Noteworthy, Ubuntu shouldn't be confused with kindness as it goes much deeper. Ubuntu recognises the inner worth of every human being starting with the individual (Ngomane, 2019). The African philosophy has other values including empathy. In the next section, this chapter will show how empathy promotes human health and well-being.

Kindness is essential in building professional relationships at the workplace. It increases the sense of connectivity and positive outcomes with fellow professionals and clients. Kindness relates to other values of social work such as acceptance, a non-judgmental attitude, and respect for human dignity. Kindness in social work relates to a balance between empowerment and mindfulness. Kindness addresses the area of mindfulness in social work practice. Kindness is being present at the moment, accepting an individual holistically, and utilising a strength-based perspective in tailoring solutions with the clients. Thus, kindness in social work involves respecting the human dignity of every individual without considering their past and their social status. It is about being purposely present to actively listen, help and empower the individuals, groups, and communities that we work with as social workers.

Empathy

One can showcase ubuntu by empathising with others (Nussbaum, 2003). Empathy, and ultimately compassion, is a neurological state that can be identified in the brain activity of the individual who witnesses the suffering of the other (Bernhardt & Singer, 2012). It promotes forgiveness (Wieseke et al., 2012). By motivating prosocial behavior and reducing aggression and providing a basis for moral development, empathy plays a vital role in human life (Meyza et al., 2017). Research has shown that empathy has a positive role in the physician-patient relationship and promotes good health outcomes (Decety, 2020). Empathy can be enhanced through shared decision making which is also a pre-requisite in Ubuntu-informed practices. Similarly, shared decision-making empowers clients by inviting them to consider the pros and cons of different treatment options including no treatment (Hashim, 2017). Ubuntu is about making a pact to listen more and understand others (Ngomane, 2019). Empathy is a condition for effective therapy as stipulated by the humanistic theories and connects well with the African philosophy of Ubuntu.

The concept of empathy is a fundamental factor in many professionals such as social workers, doctors, nurses, and psychologists. Empathy has been positioned together with unconditional positive regard, acceptance, and the need to create a therapeutic milieu for the client's growth and healing (Rogers, 1957). Empathy in social work involves paraphrasing, summarising, and reflecting on the meaning of what the clients have explored. Empathy inherently considers the effects of neoliberalism, and egoistic ideologies and promotes the idea of considering the welfare of others. An empathic way of being with the other person has several constructs as it involves being sensitive, moment by moment, to changing felt meanings which flow in other people; it means temporarily living in another's life, moving about it without making judgments; it means sensing meanings which the other is aware of and communicating the sensing of the person's world to the person (Rogers, 1980).

Empathy in Ubuntu makes the Nguni healers speak of the gut feeling of umbellini which is a bodily felt sense that healing has taken place (Gendlin, 1996). In emphasis, Chigangaidze (2021c) connects empathy in ubuntu to the sensational modality of the multimodal approach in that umbellini involves the bodily felt sensation of the other person's experiences. There is no doubt therefore that empathy plays a pivotal role in the wellbeing of people, and if taught and applied to life, will lead to positive emotions which will not only add to psychological health but also lead young people towards better inter as well as intrapersonal understanding. Furthermore, Ubuntu calls for social workers to utilise sociological imagination in empathising with their clients. It is important to reflect on how social structures affect an individual's wellbeing. Social workers need to look at individuals in the context of their positionality and at the same time appreciate their humanity. Ubuntu advances the use of empathy in social workers' advocacy for social justice and human rights for the enhancement of people's welfare. If we remain silent in the face of people's oppression as social workers, our ability to empathise with others would be ineffective. Having an awareness of the individual in relation to community systems and tracing individual troubles in the context of broader sociological issues. As Ubuntu connects the past, present, and future; empathy driven by this philosophy focuses on understanding the individual in these timeframes. Empathy is at the epicentre of interventions that focus on social change, transformation, empowerment, and development. Thus, in Ubuntu, empathy is a prerequisite for healing and ensuring the enhancement of people's welfare.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness includes a change from negative to positive cognitions, emotions, motivations, and behaviours towards the perpetrator (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). The positive emotions and behaviours include empathy and compassion (Kadiangandu et al., 2007). Empathy and compassion are essential values in the African philosophy of Ubuntu (Chigangaidze et al,

2021; Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020; van Breda, 2019). The interconnectedness of these values demonstrates how Ubuntu as a philosophy promotes health: each value augmenting the other in its functionality to promote human wellbeing. This reflection acknowledges that:

> If granting forgiveness is a gift that can keep a good man from turning bad, then generally forgiveness must be a good thing. And, good things have good effects. With human beings, good effects typically translate into well-being. One form of well-being is health. Thus, there has been growing scientific and therapeutic interest in the possible connections between forgiveness and well-being, or more specifically, health.
> (Bassett et al., 2016: 28).

Correspondingly, forgiveness is not just emotionally uplifting but it enhances our health (Ngomane, 2019). Thus, forgiveness is associated with promoting health and wellbeing through its therapeutic benefits.

Conflicts are frequently occurring in this contemporary world and these lead to immeasurable problems such as distress, mental health conditions, displacement of families, and poor health in general (Ho & Fung, 2011). Conflicts are usually a result of unforgiveness and require forgiveness to minimise their occurrence. Ubuntu, as a collectivistic worldview is characterised by the need to maintain social harmony and minimise conflict which might influence the community members to be more forgiving (Hook et al., 2009). Ngomane clearly shows an example of forgiveness by one advocate of the African philosophy of Ubuntu:

> Nelson Mandela is a clear example of a man able to forgive what appeared to be unforgivable acts against him. When he was asked to provide a list of people he wished to invite to his inauguration dinner as a president of South Africa, he insisted his former jailer Christo Brand was invited, much to some people's surprise. By then, he and Christo had become good friends. This relationship was public knowledge and allowed people in South Africa to reconsider whether they were able to forgive perpetrators of harm in their own lives. (Ngomane, 2019: 144-145)

Ubuntu promotes forgiveness and social connectedness which fosters harmony. It has been argued that Ubuntu is an African theology promoting the idea that people are only humans in communities in the full expression of Koinonia (Greek word for fellowship). Fellowship can fully be attained through acts that heal relationships such as forgiveness. In promoting forgiveness, Ubuntu advances the notion of reconciliation. Reconciliation is a central part of the social work mandate as the professionals are called to 'address barriers, inequalities, and injustices that exist in society' (Kreitzer & Jou, 2010). Social workers work in settings where they can promote forgiveness. For example, social workers in criminal justice systems can encourage reconciliation projects and offer therapeutic interventions in the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community. In addition, social workers have often been offended by service users and their families. For example, social workers working in mental health institutions have been socially and emotionally shouted at by service users. As practitioners in the field, several times we have offended one another and found it difficult to forgive. The more bitterness people keep towards each other, the more unprofessional we become. Ubuntu fosters the constructs of forgiveness and reconciliation which are vital elements for the social work profession. The profession of social work is well positioned to promote forgiveness as it is situated in settings where people have been offended and are emotionally hurting. Again, Ubuntu promotes self-reflection in the areas of forgiveness.

Social workers need to forgive themselves and others before engaging in therapeutic interventions to ensure the countertransference of positive energy in reaction to the client's transference. For example, a social worker is a parent of a teenager who has substance use problems and has been stealing money from the bank account to fund his addiction. The social worker has been bitter and angry at his/her child. The same social worker, while dealing with his/her domestic issues, receives a case of a client with similar challenges at work. The social worker must reflect if his unforgiveness will not impact the

therapeutic relationship with the client. Essentially, whether his bitterness will not be displaced by the client who is also abusing substances. Unforgiveness of any nature, either by the client or the social work practitioner can hinder therapeutic relationships.

Social Justice

Noteworthy, the primary determinants of the public's health are social- the level of health inequality is related to the level of social inequality in the larger society (Wallack, 2019). Similarly, health is determined not so much by what medical practitioners do to the patients, but by arrangements in society (Marmot, 2017). In advocating for change, Wallack (2019:903) clearly states, "significant change requires us to shift from just understanding problems as personal, individual, or behavioral to responding to problems as linked to social, economic, and political structures." Likewise, the World Health Organisation (2008) acknowledges that social injustice is killing on a grand scale. The State must create conditions in which people can be healthy (Wallack, 2019). Similarly, the ideology of botho (ubuntu) philosophy disapproves of "any form of anti-social, disgraceful, inhuman, and criminal behaviour, while at the same time promoting the idea of social justice for all" (Rankopo & Diraditsile, 2020: 2). In addition, ubuntu-informed justice court systems appreciate that the offender might be a victim of socioeconomic conditions and the main aim of the justice system should be a restoration of relationships, healing and reconciliation in the society (Elechi et al., 2010).

Social justice extends beyond human health and wellbeing to issues of environmental sustainability (American Nurses Association, 2015). The African viewpoint of Ubuntu is also an ecophilosophy that respects the interdependent relationships between nature and humans (Chigangaidze, 2021a; Chibvongodze, 2016). Again, social justice theory appreciates that social identities do not exist in isolation from race, class, sexuality, skin colour, gender, and other factors (Breunig, 2019). Ubuntu theology promotes multi-racial reconciliation (De Grunchy, 1999) and inclusivity of diverse groups of

people (Chigangaidze et al., 2021). Ubuntu philosophy sees everyone as an equal and with human dignity (Ngomane, 2019). Essentially, the ideology of Ubuntu emphasizes equal distribution of wealth, respecting human dignity, and fighting corruption (Chigangaidze, 2021a). Ubuntu captures the worldview that promotes Africa's egalitarian, humanistic, communitarian, interconnectedness, and participatory democratic values (Elechi et al., 2010). Ubuntu as a collectivistic approach embedded in sustainable development, can best impact social development practice (Mupedziswa et al., 2019; van Breda, 2019). Social development is one pathway to fighting social injustice (Banerjee, 2005).

Compassion

Compassion moves from the experience of emotion to action, in that, it is often accompanied by the acknowledgment and motivation to ameliorate someone's feelings. In addition, Patel (2019) argues that compassion is how care is given, through relationships based on empathy, kindness, respect, and dignity (Patel, 2019). Ubuntu encourages people to drop their judgments and embrace compassion and understanding (Ngomane, 2019). Compassion is how care is given, through relationships based on empathy, kindness, respect, and dignity. It refers to a deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve the pain and this often flows naturally (Chochinov, 2007). Ubuntu calls on us to believe and feel that: Your pain is My pain, my wealth is your wealth, and your salvation is my salvation (Nussbaum 2003). Our interconnectedness, our common humanity, and our responsibility to each other flow from our connection. Social work is compassion driven and ethically reflects how care is given. The profession emphasises compassion-driven leadership and Ubuntu can help strengthen the modalities of social work interventions and leadership.

Social connectedness

The foundational gesture of Ubuntu is the manner of giving, as a reciprocal act of sharing resources, deep connectedness, and solidarity (Nolte &

Downing, 2019). Being connected to other human beings is an essential survival need that can be equated to food and without it, it stimulates the physical pain connections of the brain (Lieberman & Eisenberger, 2009). There is growing evidence of the role that social relationships play in protecting against cognitive decline (Haslam et al., 2015). Social connections enhance resilience against negative and stressful experiences on mental health (McKenzie et al., 2018). No one would be successful in life without a few stable social relationships. Ubuntu as argued by Battle (1997) is an African theology promoting the idea that people are only humans in communities in the full expression of Koinonia (Greek word for fellowship). Fellowship can fully be attained through acts that heal relationships, for example, forgiveness. Through ubuntu, the importance of principles of reciprocity, inclusivity, and sense of shared destiny is highlighted. In Ubuntu, the community exists within emotional and relational bonds on which people depend to fulfill their own potential, rather than being composed of detached rights-bearing individuals with little connection to the broader community (Nolte & Downing, 2019). Social isolation is a major threat to people's wellbeing and affects suppressing the immune system (Haslam et al., 2015). Individuals with the lowest level of involvement in social relationships are more likely to die than those with greater involvement (House et al., 1988).

Humanistic theories such as Maslow hierarchy of needs focus on the need for belongingness in human survival. Psychologically it is essential for people to be socially connected, have a sense of belonging, and enhance psychosocial functioning. Social work focuses its interventions on every level of the ecological systems approach and a biopsychosocial-spiritual model which all emphasise the individual's connectedness to the micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono systems. Social connectedness is evident in social work assessments guided by the person-in-the-environment perspective. Community resource mapping and networking are all strategies that emerge from an Ubuntu understanding that the community has a responsibility of addressing the needs of its individuals.

Spirituality

Ubuntu is a state of wellness that connects human beings to other beings in the world. Ubuntu has been described as a belief system since belief has been argued to influence attitudes and behaviour (Damane 2001). Spirituality refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred (Puchalski, et al.,2009). Spirituality and social concern cannot be separated but in fact, are inversely interconnected. Nolte & Downing argue that spirituality lies in a person's connection to other people and the universe, and the strong personal faith that drives each individual. There is growing evidence indicating that Spiritual practices are closely associated with better wellbeing. Ubuntu, personal and communal spirituality are often the most dominant domains in a guide for living healthy and offers a framework for the right action within most communities. Whilst spirituality can mean many things in popular usage and is often understood differently by different people, research suggests that spirituality is important in the general well being of people and their mental health (Richards & Bergin 2005). In this chapter, we regard spirituality as a quest for personal meaning within a community, which includes intellectual, ethical, social, political, aesthetic, and other dimensions (Mamman & Bukari 2016). This will enable us to have a quality of reflection that is holistic in scope, especially with the nature of interconnectedness of ubuntu and spirituality. In social work practice, spirituality has emerged as an important subject, and theories such as the biopsychosocial theory have been extended to cover the domain of spirituality.

Application to social work practice

Since its inception, the social work profession has been about kindness, social justice, social connectedness, compassion, and empathy. Ubuntu Social Workers should have compassion for themselves and others. The issues of self-care regimes, peer support, and networking in social work are grounded in the African philosophy of Ubuntu and can be seen through its values as

well. Ubuntu can help add value to compassion-driven leadership in community development projects, workplaces, and learning institutions. Research on kindness in the workplace is increasing and Ubuntu Social Workers can utilise organisational social work / industrial social work theories in integrating Ubuntu values in the workplace for the enhancement of service provision. Ubuntu values strengthen collaborative working and anti-oppressive practices through the principles of social justice and social connectedness. It should be noted that Ubuntu is a political philosophy, and its values aim to fight political injustice and oppression. Ubuntu is about sacrifice and going an extra mile for the benefit of others. Social workers need to think about how their kindness, social connectedness, social justice orientation, empathy, and other essential values impact their clientele and generations to come. Ubuntu connects the past, present, and future; when applying these values, social workers need to think about the future of their service users while appreciating their present circumstances and being informed by how the past shape their clientele's welfare. These values are complementary to each other and form the basis of our practice as Social Workers. Indeed, these values should be our everyday life in and out of the workplace.

Social work professional values and ethics promote a non-violent approach to dealing with violence as well as supporting reconciliation in post-conflict situations (Kreitzer & Jou, 2010). Furthermore, compassionate presence is proposed as a way of practicing social work that is grounded in our humanitarian roots and current research (Stickle, 2016). Ubuntu values have been present in our practice as social workers. These values and ways of life can benefit both the practitioner and the clientele system. One act of kindness can change how the client sees the world. Ubuntu Social Work is deeply rooted in the view that its value systems are transferrable. There is some form of 'transference and countertransference', consciously or unconsciously, of the Ubuntu values when practiced with an open heart and

desire to enhance life. These values form the basis of our ethical principles as social workers, theologians, and other helping professionals.

Conclusion

Ubuntu -inspired social work is deeply rooted in the values and virtues of kindness, compassion, empathy, social justice, social connectedness, spirituality, forgiveness, and others. Fundamental to the daily practice of social work are the principles and ethics that are based on such values. This chapter is an axiological reflection of how Ubuntu values enhance both the health and wellbeing of the practitioner and the service users. All social workers need to consider these values to promote service provision, enhance wellbeing and strengthen relationships. Let us remember that as we practice Ubuntu, we are being kind to ourselves and others. Therapeutic relationships with the people we serve begin with the application of the Ubuntu values. Ubuntu as a way of life gives us a sense of purpose and promotes our wellbeing and relationships. Ubuntu values reinforce the ethos of social work practice.

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Chapter 10

"It Takes a Village to Raise a Child": Experiences of Social Workers Implementing Chasefu Empowerment Support Trust Children & Youth Programmes in Chasefu District, Eastern Zambia

James Mumba

Contact

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Biography

James B Mumba is a Zambian social worker and development expert. He holds a master's and bachelor's degree in social work from Mulungushi University Zambia, Diploma in Social Work from University of Zambia, Postgraduate Diplomas in Teaching and Lecturing, Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluations from University of Lusaka and he is a also a Young African Leadership Initiative and Nelson Mandela Washington Fellow. With over 10 years of experience with local and international organizations, donor agencies and learning institutions, James has been involved with Africare Zambia in life skills and OVC psycho social support programs, Child protection and sponsorship programs with Plan International, Child sponsorship and social protection services with World Vision Zambia, HIV/AIDs programmes with USAID ZCHPP Zambia and EU PSGBV Project under CMMB Zambia as well research, lecturing and consultancy works in Eswatini, Malawi and Zambia respectively.

James research and practice interest areas include Gender Based Violence issues, Child protection matters, Social behavioral problems, social policy, and social protection. His interest in ubuntu theory and practice is to see how traditional methods of solving social problems in rural communities can be integrated and well promoted in social work practice.

Abstract

Villages remain vital in a child's social and psychological development. Today, "it takes a village to raise a child," should ring more to communities than ever before. Guided by the African philosophy of Ubuntu, the study explored the experiences of five (5) social workers in implementing Chasefu Empowerment Support Trust youth programmes in Chasefu district, Zambia. The study used a qualitative research method imploring an explorative research design and purposive sampling technique to select participants. The study found that social workers have had different experiences in implementing children and youth programs. They indicated that the experiences have been fulfilling, worthwhile, motivating, inspiring, and encouraging though with some challenges, difficulties, and stress at times. Thus, the findings of the study tell a story that fosters collaboration between indigenous social work methods and practice. Recommendations have been done to the challenges to better social work practice, especially in rural settings.

Abstract translation in Zambian "Nyanja" language

Midzi imakhalabe yofunika kwambiri pakukula kwa chikhalidwe cha ana ndi m'maganizo. Masiku ano, "pamafunika mudzi kuti ulere mwana," ziyenera kudziwika kwambiri m'madera kuposa kale. Motsogozedwa ndi fundo ya Ubuntu, kafukufuku uyu adafufuza zomwe anthu asanu (5) adakumana nazo pokwaniritsa mapologalamu a ana ndi achinyamata a Chasefu Empowerment Support Trust m'boma la Chasefu, Zambia. Kafukufuku uyu adagwiritsa ntchito njira yofufuzira yomwe ikufuna kupanga kafukufuku wofufuza komanso njira yopangira zitsanzo kuti asankhe otenga nawo

mbali. Kafukufuku uyu adapeza kuti ogwira ntchito zachitukuko akhala ndi zochitika zosiyanasiyana pakugwiritsa ntchito mapulogalamu a ana ndi achinyamata. Iwo adawonetsa kuti zokumana nazo zakhala zokhutiritsa, zopindulitsa, komanso zolimbikitsa ngakhale pamakhala zovuta, ndi kupsinjika nthawi zina. Choncho, zotsatira za phunziroli zikufotokoza nkhani yomwe imalimbikitsa mgwirizano pakati pa njira zachitukuko za chikhalidwe cha anthu ndi machitidwe. Malangizo apangidwa ku zovuta kuti azichita bwino ntchito za anthu makamaka m'madera akumidzi.

Introduction

The environment where a child grows is cardinal for his social and cognitive development. With an estimated population of 3.4 billion in the world still living in rural areas (UN Population Report, 2020), villages remain in existence today even with charging dynamics. More often in Africa, villages continue to play a vital role in shaping values, beliefs, and norms in society. Nowadays, the mantra "it takes a village to raise a child," should ring more in communities than ever before. Guided by the African philosophy of Ubuntu, the qualitative study was undertaken to explore the experiences of five (5) social workers implementing Chasefu Empowerment Support Trust child and youth programmes in Chasefu district, Eastern Zambia. The study objectives were to explore the experiences social workers have in working and raising children in Eastern province and ascertain the challenges rural social workers face in Eastern Zambia. The experiences are shared in line with their involvement with the local community-based organization in the district in ensuring children and youths realize their potential and be better citizens.

Study methodology

The study was qualitative in nature and involved semi-structured interview guides to research participants' experiences. Five social workers were interviewed which included two males and three females coming from the community-based organisation in Eastern Zambia. These were purposively

selected to give their views on the subject matter in line with the work they do with children in villages.

The study was done in the Eastern province and the findings of this study are a story of the work, activities, and programmes social workers do in promoting the ubuntu philosophy. The findings of the study are presented qualitatively in this book chapter aimed at telling a story to foster collaboration between indigenous social work methods and practice.

The Environment: Chasefu District, Eastern Zambia

Zambia is a landlocked country located in Southern Africa. With ten (10) provinces and a hundred and sixteen (116) districts, Chasefu is among the districts in the country. (ZDHS, 2019-2020). The district was created in 2018 under the Patriotic Front administration to foster decentralization and local governance and is among the rural districts in the Eastern Province of Zambia. The district has a total population of 96,028 of which 46,675 are males and 49,353 are females (CSO, 2010). The area is mainly inhabited by Tumbuka-speaking people under senior chiefs Magodi and Phikamalaza who oversee the cultural and traditional affairs of the district. The district is clustered into 10 wards, 72 zones, and about 1,162 villages at its lowest level (Nkole, 2020). Though the area is predominately Tumbuka-speaking, it also has a mix of ethnic groupings like the Ngoni, the Nsenga, and the Chewas due to intermarriages and proximity to Malawi. The people of Chasefu mainly depend on agriculture as their way of survival as most of them are peasant farmers. The major cash crops grown in the district include maize (staple food), cotton, beans, and groundnuts.

According to a qualitative study conducted by Winrock International Zambia, MAWA project (2017) revealed that Chasefu faces problems of teenage pregnancy, Child marriages, alcohol abuse among youths, lack of clean and safe drinking water, poor road network, no boarding secondary school in the district, limited opportunities for youths and women, long distances covered

by women to access health services, poverty among community members. All these and other problems affect the rights of children, women, and men in the district.

Chasefu Empowerment Support Trust (CHEST)

Considering the plethora of problems plaguing Zambia and Chasefu in particular, locally minded social workers came together to form a community-based organization called Chasefu Empowerment Support Trust (Chest). At their heart is the organization's motto "Service to the people". Chasefu Empowerment Support Trust (Chest) is a voluntary membership-based, Community cantered and Community Based Organization that is non-profit, non-religious, non - Political, and non-partisan and that does not discriminate on account of colours, creed, tribe, race, or nationality (www.chestZambia.org). The organization envisages a community in which families are economically empowered and have access to basic human rights to realize their potential and wellbeing. In achieving this vision, Chasefu villages are served through various thematic interventions that range from child protection, to health, education, and livelihood support.

The implementation of activities is supported by the governing board of Directors, social workers, and active volunteers in the villages of Chasefu as well as donors in and outside Zambia. The activities and methods used relate more to ubuntu philosophy as shared by the social workers in the subsequent paragraphs. Casework, Group methods, and community development methods of social work are also demonstrated.

The Village Concept

Chasefu is predominantly rural, and villages can be seen all over as one moves around. The phrase "it takes a village to raise a child" originates from an African proverb and conveys the message that it takes many people to provide a safe, healthy environment for children, where children are given the needed security to develop and flourish, and to be able to realize their

hopes and dreams (Gladstone et al., 2021). This requires an environment where children's voices are taken seriously and where multiple people including parents, siblings, extended family members, neighbours, teachers, professionals, community members, and policymakers, care for a child. All these 'villagers' may provide direct care to the children and/or support the parent in looking after their children. Thus, the majority of people still value the village tenets. Gladstone et al. (2021) contend that principles of communal responsibilities and duties to take care of their children is an essential component in raising children. Most societies around the world do not expect mothers or parents to rear children alone. Parents and their young children are usually enmeshed in larger kinship groups and communities that help with childcare and other tasks. (Gladstone et al., 2021).

Since time immemorial, raising children is a difficult task for which no one is ever completely prepared. There are situations where support from others is not only warranted but also desired by the parent. Often in our individualistic society and urbanized communities, offering support to a fellow parent is considered improper and viewed as stepping on others' toes. However, rural communities still value the importance of Ubuntu's philosophy and communal responsibility in raising children.

The adage "it takes a village to raise a child" illustrates the need for a network of families, community members, values, and relationships to support the development of our children. This is true in so many ways. We live in an interdependent world, and we have a multiplicity of needs as we move through life from babies to children to men and women. These needs cannot be met by one person, guardian, or by one specialist. They require strong village systems because they may not be just education needs or health needs or social or psychological needs. They surely vary and thus, require a multi-sectorial or multidisciplinary response. Mugumbate and Chereni (2019) sum it up well that Ubuntu is about an authentic individual human being part of a

larger and more significant relational, communal, societal, environmental, and spiritual world. A village as it were and as it should be.

Through different projects Chasefu Empowerment Support Trust is implementing in Chasefu district, the common adage has been demonstrated. Various sectors, professionals, and entities are on board to support child development and aspirations. The fact is that it takes a team of teachers and school professionals to discover and encourage a child's strengths and learning styles. It takes a network of family and friends to nurture and support a child's physical and mental requirements. It takes a number of different agencies or government ministries, at the institutional level, to respond to all the developmental stages of a child as they grow. All this happens to ensure responsible citizens are raised for the betterment of the community. Moral values, self-worth, and respect are inculcated in the young ones. The education, health, and child protection sectors work in harmony in contributing to the Ubuntu philosophy.

Experiences of Social Workers in Implementing Different Programmes

Social workers remain crucial in the empowerment and community development of society. Through the various roles they play in the community, they sharpen human behaviour. The social workers at Chasefu Empowerment Support Trust have been doing their part in this discourse. Through different child protection and education programmes at the organization, social workers share their experiences in supporting children and youths to realize their full potential and are protected from all forms of harm. The following are programmes social workers are involved in and support in the district.

Child Protection committees for awareness raising

In ensuring that children are well nurtured and protected from social vices in their communities and surrounding areas, the community working together

with social workers came up with child protection committees. In these committees, they have a structure that comprises a chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and two committee members to support the operations of the committee. These are volunteer committee members supporting child protection matters. Among the many critical roles played by the committee are to raise awareness in their villages on child marriages, child rights, gender, and gender-based violence, teenage pregnancies as well as Child abuse. Such mechanisms relate to ubuntu philosophy of ensuring that members of the community support children for the betterment of the whole. The group methodology of social work is also demonstrated in working together for a common goal.

"A child protection member will go into a village, mobilize people and start discussing about child rights. He or she is well trained to address issues of such nature and if he is unable, he refers the issue to a social worker in the organization" ……shares one of the social workers.

Furthermore, these child protection committee members act as community watchdogs or whistle-bowlers in matters of child marriages or child abuse. They do report social vices to the nearby Victim support unit under the Zambia police for further investigations.

Social workers at the organization ensure that the committee members are well-mentored and supported to discharge their duties. Time after time, capacity building is done by the social workers in conjunction with the Zambia police. "As Social workers, we train them, come in to provide psycho-social support and counselling services to children abused…" …. narrates one of the social workers. These Community-based mechanisms function in collaboration with the formal government and the Community-Based Organization in Chasefu. This is done to ensure that children grow in a safer environment and are protected. Working together with the community has

made the work easy for social workers. The support of the villagers is vital in raising responsible and disciplined children.

Child protection committees are also found in various schools formed by social workers. The belief is that involving children in their own protection against violence in schools through anti-violence clubs in schools, children's courts in schools, and child rights clubs gives them the to advocate and speak on many matters affecting them. Children promote their rights through creative means such as art, drama, or their initiatives and ownership. By so doing, a common understanding of child rights and protection is developed.

Village centres for early childhood education

The organization complements government efforts in the education sector through village centres. The major focus has been early childhood education to ensure that children have early stimulation and a basic understanding of literacy at a tender age. Community members working together with social workers identify a local church, hall, or safe space where children below the age of 5 come to learn. In this model, one of the community members and a social worker come in to volunteer to teach children while the community may support the community person through cultivating his or her field or paying in kind. Social workers through the organization will support with materials like stationary, balls, and chalks for better upbringing of children. This is similar to the tenets of Ubuntu philosophy and the community development method of social work.

These community schools act as centres for play and learning. One social worker revealed that: …. "Twice a week, I go to the community school and talk to the girls and boys on the importance of education and their rights…I also find time to play with the children different sports and provide counselling and psycho-social support…. ". This is part of community involvement and shaping the morals of both boy and girl child.

"My experience with this village is amazing… During autumn, after harvesting crops, community members mobilise maize meals and cook porridge for the pupils in these community schools. Women would volunteer and support the process…." shares one social worker working with the organization.

All this is done to ensure children attend the early childhood community centres and are raised as better citizens. The village centres not only offer education but also ensure better parenting of children. Occasionally, parents would come and share parenting skills with their children in these centres. Ideally, an education and care service community involve a meaningful connection to place and people. Community members are valued, and, through strong, positive relationships and shared decision-making, they feel a sense of belonging and connection to the place and people. Social workers are cardinal in that area.

Community Insaka Approach

One of the critical roles of social workers is community mobilization. Social workers will facilitate such processes to ensure community development. Community insaka is a model where people in the village meet to discuss issues affecting them. Insaka means a convenient meeting place or a safe space, shelter in the local language in the area. Ordinarily, the Insakas have been used for chatting and sharing stories in the villages, especially by men. This is greatly related to ubuntu philosophy of belongingness and oneness of the community members to solve community problems.

"I took the opportunity to use the insaka to discuss child protection issues in the community. I would go and sit with the parents, bring about a topic, and put our heads together on how it can be resolved. So far, so good" ……narrates one social worker. Through social workers, Community actors play a critical role in implementing child protection through identifying and monitoring at-risk children, mediating family, and community disputes, and providing

direct support for children in need of protection. They can also refer children and their families to more specialized services.

Issues of child marriages, teenage pregnancies, and human trafficking are discussed in such fora. Community insakas may not only help prevent and respond to child protection issues but also act as pressure groups and advocacy wings on the state or local government to demand services needed in the community. In essence, such mechanisms at the village or community level shape the upbringing of children. A community becomes a parent to the children, thus putting mechanisms for the survival and development.

Sports for social change

Generally, sport is known for entertainment but in Chasefu, sports is being used for social change and education. Sport has proven to have a special attraction to young people as it offers opportunities for fun play and physical challenges. Social workers, therefore, take advantage of this power of sport as a mobilizing tool to reach children and their parents in rural areas.

Social workers in collaboration with community members identify the popular sporting activities in the community. They then rank them and select the top three which they use to educate boys and girls on life skills, Sexual reproductive health rights, HIV and AIDs, and gender-related issues. Not only do they target children, but also adolescents and adults are engaged in issues of citizenship, human rights, gender, health, sexuality, and violence.

Football and netball are the most common sporting activities in Chasefu. These are being used to ignite debate on a specific subject matter. The discussions before the match, at half time, and the end of the match makes it more interesting as it involves the players and spectators. That unity of purpose is cardinal in the effective growth of children. The topics discussed are centered on child development, life skills, and responsible behaviour. The content is informed by a commitment to child protection, gender equality,

and engaged citizen activism that promotes the idea that each one of us in the village has a role to play, and that each one of us can create a better, more equitable, and more just world. The activities encourage boys and girls to reflect on their own experiences, attitudes, and values. They encourage all parents to get involved, support children and prevent all forms of violence that hinder children to reach their full potential.

Sports clubs are located right in the villages of Chasefu. In the sports sessions, the boys and girls are taught to be good parents when they grow up so that a generation free of violence and social ills is attained. In this discourse, a social worker shared that:... ", I put up a tent at the corner of the ground and provide referrals from the sports field to youth-friendly corners or health facilities for youths to access comprehensive sexuality services" .....

This is complemented by a study done by Sport in Action Zambia (2010) which indicates that sport and recreation are tools to improve the quality of children's lives by providing programmes that stir motivation, provide positive health outcomes, child protection, and self-reliance through social and life skills development.

The sports for social change methodology are aimed at helping boys and girls choose not to use violence but to rather choose to live in equal relationships with males and females (SIA, 2010). In other words, it aims to help youths break the barriers and end violence of any kind, but especially gender-based violence, in our society. To parents, the methodology challenges them to be cheerleaders in communities in bringing better morals and not just spectators of children when they are seeing they are being destroyed. Through community support and community coming up together to witness sports activities, the boys and girls feel safe. Through these activities, HIV and AIDs is also reduced in the community as people are informed and educated. Sports is contributing to making that change through social workers' initiatives.

Women's Clubs for child support

In ensuring children are supported and their basic needs are met, social workers in the organization have formed women's clubs. Each women club consists of fifteen members who share a common belief and understanding. Fifteen women's clubs have been formed and the groups received training in business and entrepreneurship, savings methodology, livestock management, and sustainable agriculture methods. The training were organized by the social workers and facilitated by key staff from Agriculture and cooperatives department in the district.

"In 2019, we supported the groups with 5 pigs and 5 goats in the initial phase. The support was a startup capital usually given to the groups. Since then, the groups have managed to pass on 2 pigs and 2 goats to 8 members at a minimum of each group. The idea is to ensure that each group has livestock and grows them aside from the group ones. Economic stability is the desired outcome…." reveals one social worker at the organization.

Social workers believe in group methodology. Group methodology demonstrates Ubuntu. Using group methodology, women will be able to have livestock of their own and support the growth of their children. Besides this, social workers have trained the women in village savings methodology where they contribute small money with share value, get loans to do business and at the end of each cycle, they share. Children's school fees and other necessities are met in the process. All this is meant to ensure that families support each other so that their children's social, economic, and physical needs are met.

Raising Children in a Changing World/Environment

The programmes social workers have been involved in have demonstrated an experience of the power of Ubuntu philosophy especially in raising children in rural Zambia. In this part of Zambia, the village continues to intervene and help steer a child in the right direction through changing dynamics. In old

days, there used to be a time when neighbours freely talked with one another, where trust, mutual respect, and a sense of community existed. Children knew that if they misbehaved on the block, or around the neighbourhood, other adults could not only weigh in but also freely correct them. It was a shared understanding that society was one community, striving for a better future. It was known that if children are reared correctly, the future would be bright. Unfortunately, times have changed, and things are not the same anymore in many societies today. Societies are more nuclear and the "I and myself" syndrome has even penetrated the village where norms and values have always been strong. That feeling of community and shared understanding seems to be eluding us in so many communities.

Neighbours are not only apprehensive about correcting children, but they are also afraid. They are not certain if the child's parents will support them or how the child will respond. The statement, "don't talk to my child", is heard way too often. This message is clearly understood to mean, do not correct, admonish, or scold someone else's child. What this more than suggests is, if one sees a child misbehave, one isn't empowered to correct them. When one hears the child is using profanity or sees them throwing a rock at a neighbour's window, stealing at a store, fighting in the community, or simply exhibiting inappropriate behaviour, one is hesitant to get involved.

Moreover, back in the day community living was given. Dating back thousands of years to somewhat recently, people lived in communities for safety, socialization, and shared resources. From the earliest days of humanity, our brains have been programmed to live in close proximity to others, to share food and tools, to protect each other, and to exchange ideas. The past century has drastically changed the concept of community, no matter if one lives in a rural area, a suburban neighbourhood, or an urban metropolis. Families no longer cohabitate as intergenerationally as they once did, especially as the appeal of the nuclear family began to increase. The move from rural living to urban lifestyles to suburbia and then back to city life

has meant that extended families often fracture and live further and further apart. We are often caught up in the reality of constant busyness that we do not take the time to get to know our neighbours'. Social media has redefined connection and friendship, leaving us staring at screens more than engaging with the people around us.

The impact of this is apparent in parents and children. The adage "it takes a village to raise a child" is still true. Somewhere along the way, we have lost the village. We need to raise children in nurturing, creative, and safe ways. As a result, families are missing out on crucial learning experiences and much-needed support systems. In the end, many parents feel isolated and alone in their struggles, and children don't have the opportunity to engage with a diverse group of people and personalities.

It is in these times that social workers need to stand up and speak up. Not all hope is lost as the social workers interviewed shared. Social workers need to mobilize, advocate, and create an enabling environment for families in a village setup to co-exist and support children. Different interventions need to come up with strengthened referral mechanisms. By doing that, children will understand and behave accordingly. The methods used in Chasefu speak to Ubuntu philosophy and what ought to be done in many societies to help raise children.

Benefits of Raising Children in a Community Setup

Benefits to Parents

The benefits of parents being in a village setup outweigh the challenges. Having a sense of community is generally beneficial and creates a positive feeling. Outlined below are some of the benefits parents have realized in Chasefu.

a) The feeling of belonging. This entails the feeling that one is part of the community where one live. In a communal setup, a parent and his or her family feels accepted, safe, and identify with the community. Family

does not only refer to one's spouse and offspring but all relatives (Samkange and Samkange, 1980). His children become the children of that particular community. That feeling is good for a child's growth.

b) Parents feel they have a degree of Influence. Parents benefit from feeling that they matter and can make a difference in the community. They can influence decision-making, through laws and parenting skills in raising good children. The parents influence children and community members.

c) The other benefit is that of Integration and fulfilment of needs. Being in a village setup makes guardians integrated and work for the common good of society. The feeling that your needs can be met by the community is fulfilling.

d) In a community, there is a shared emotional connection. The feeling of attachment or bonding between community members through shared experience, place, or history makes people help and support each other. When people know each other history or status of a particular family, they tend to support the children or offspring of that household. That emotional attachment is the Ubuntu in community members.

e) Communities share a purpose. In villages, different programmes like child protection mechanisms have a shared purpose. A community is usually driven by a shared purpose. They have tangible reason for connecting and working together. For example, in children's education and care, this shared purpose is promoting positive educational and developmental outcomes for children. Individual community members, such as educators and families, will already have this singular purpose; but, when a community works together on a shared purpose, greater outcomes can often be achieved.

Benefits to children

Children at the end of the day are key beneficiaries of the work of social workers and families working together in villages or communities. Overall, the community is essential to the quality outcomes of children. Highlighted are how children are imparted in belonging to a village or community setup.

a) Th§e village supports children's development, wellbeing, and learning. As demonstrated by the village centres for early childhood education in Chasefu, children develop better in an environment of relationships. The child's community provides a vital relationship context for their learning and development. This is particularly important during the early years of child development. As the Bible records, "train up a child in the way he should grow, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" … (Proverbs 22:16). Positive, responsive, consistent, and secure relationships with others provide a supportive, growth-promoting environment for children's development, wellbeing and learning. Children's behavior, beliefs, and values are built on this foundation. A child's relationship with the environment begins in the family but then extends to adults and peers outside of the family who have important roles in their life. The village and its members are a significant part of many children's well-being. Communities that foster positive interactions and relationships between children, peers, and adults strengthen children's positive outcomes and well-groomed futures. Positive relationships between a family and village members also provide a powerful role model for children.

b) The village supports children's belonging and learning. There is no better environment to learn in apart from a village or community. When children have a sense of belonging and feel safe, secure, and supported, they have the confidence to play, explore and learn. A service that is strongly connected to the people and place of its community is welcoming, inclusive, and connected to the culture and context of children's families while nurturing respectful and reciprocal relationships with children's families. The sports for change activities,

children's clubs, as well as child protection committees, ensure that nurturing for children to grow in a safe environment. Connection to the community creates a responsive, safe, and stable education which in turn, promotes children's belonging and learning.

c) The village promotes children's sense of identity. Children's understanding of themselves is developed through relationships and in the context of their families and communities. Village programmes engage children in ways that help them define who they are, what they can become, and how and why they are important to other people. Identity is a strong foundation for children's social and emotional development as well as their sense of agency. (Center on the Developing Child, 2004).

d) Village Participation supports children to contribute to their world. Having everyday experiences and participating with the people and places of a community enables children to observe, engage, understand, and actively contribute to their expanding world. This supports children to live interdependently with others, be decision-makers, and have influence. The ability to participate in different communities helps young children to respond to diversity and become socially responsible. Participation in community insakas and sports for change not only helps them to grow but also allows them to express themselves on matters of the world around them.

e) Village connection and collaboration support families. When families are well-supported, they are better equipped to nurture their child's development, wellbeing, and behaviours. A village that is connected and collaborates with support organizations can be instrumental in facilitating targeted support for families. Family and community organizations support families and children in a coordinated manner through child protection and education programmes. Furthermore, Children from disadvantaged backgrounds or with additional needs are at particular risk. To ensure children are protected and grow well,

connection and collaboration between families and community stakeholders is essential.

Challenges Faced by Social Workers in Rural Communities

Rural social work practice is challenging and demanding. Rural social work professionals find themselves to be one of the only forms of support available to their clients (www.online.yu.edu). While there are a number of resources designated specifically for these communities in Zambia and many developing countries, social workers practicing in rural areas still find themselves challenged in many ways.

The discussed below are some of the challenges shared by rural social workers in Chasefu.

a) Physical Distance. One of the biggest challenges in rural social work is the distance between clients and social workers. In many parts of Zambia, the clients are mostly in remote rural areas while social workers are placed in one centralized place like a zone, ward, or district. Distance becomes a barrier in attending to day-to-day clients' needs. In such essence, even child protection mechanisms suffer the same challenges because the distance between clients can span as much as 50 kilometers.

b) Lack of Public Transport. In line with physical distance is the lack of public transport in most rural areas. Rural areas often lack the public transportation infrastructure to make cheaper travel a feasible option for clients and social workers. Traveling these distances with less than reliable transportation can lead to missed appointments, the inability to access necessary medication, and complications in finding needed childcare. This too affects rural social work practice.

c) Communication challenges. Conducting sessions over the telephone or via video calls can be a potential solution to these problems. However, a bigger part of Chasefu District does not have communication towers and the communication network is limited. Many remote areas lack the

infrastructure to provide reliable call and internet services. Some clients, children, and guardians do not feel comfortable with new forms of technology as they worry about the security of personal devices. Child protection is further compromised in such.

d) Small Communities. Maintaining confidentiality and appropriate boundaries is a very important concern in rural social work. In many small communities especially villages where there can be a stigma and discrimination, clients are often worried about their identity at the social worker's office and becoming the subject of rumours. On the other side, they are also challenges faced by social workers the fact that they live in the same community as their clients. That means crossing paths outside of a session is a much more common occurrence. A brief run-in at the grocery store can be easy to navigate but having a child in the same class presents more nuanced complications. These dual relationships can potentially jeopardize the client's confidentiality and the treatment they receive. It is essential for appropriate boundaries to be set up early in the therapeutic relationship, so awkward scenarios can be scripted or avoided entirely. Clear communication and understanding are key.

e) Complicated Groups. Group work is one of the methods of social work. Group therapy can be an incredibly helpful tool for social workers and clients but can present unique challenges in rural areas. Distance between clients can make physical meetings difficult. In addition, the issue of clients' privacy can discourage participation, because those attending might have pre-existing relationships or have accidentally met others in the group outside of the sessions. For social workers, getting buy-in from those in the group and the community is essential. Group meetings need clear standards of behaviour about respecting boundaries and anonymity. It's also important to understand the history of their community and listen to its members about what kind of support is needed.

f) Burnout. With limited numbers of social workers in Zambia, burnout is an obvious case. Having the support of colleagues and supervisors can be essential to avoiding burnout for any social worker. However, rural social workers often do not find those connections easy to build. Instead, they create that network with other social workers in different districts and provinces to get the feedback and collaboration they need. The other challenge of being one of a few professionals in an area is that many rural social workers find themselves unprepared for the wide variety of clients they serve. Burnout can leave them suffering from compassion, fatigue, and lower job satisfaction. (Brown et.al, 2017). This in turn can lead to poor quality care for clients and challenge clients' abilities to build strong relationships.

Relationship Between Ubuntu and the Topic

Ubuntu is essentially about togetherness. It promotes the tenets of humanness where individuals in the community are sharing and caring. This chapter has demonstrated a great relationship with ubuntu philosophy through the various experiences and activities social workers do in Chasefu district. The child protection mechanisms, village early childhood centers, Community Insakas, and Women clubs promulgated by social workers are essential elements of demonstrating the relationship of Ubuntu in this chapter. These actions have demonstrated an impact on children and the community of Chasefu.

The sacrifices and tenacity of social workers to navigate the challenges of rural social work practice to ensure children are raised in a safer environment are understood to be the ties that bind the human spirit. By so doing, demonstrating ubuntu practice. Ubuntu is about fighting for the greater good. It can be through casework, group work, or community development methods of social work. Above all, it's imperative for social workers to help all people, young and old, to achieve only the best for the present and the future. This chapter endeavoured to prove that relationship through the principles,

understanding, and activities associated with ubuntu philosophy in an African setting.

Conclusion

The findings of this study present the experiences of social workers while working with children in rural communities of Eastern Province Zambia. The experiences are different depending on one's involvement in the work of raising responsible children. Challenging, gratifying, fulfilling, and worth doing but above all, it can be said that social workers do their best in the work they do despite the challenges they have. The study findings show how social workers are contributing to child protection mechanisms for child growth and survival.

At the end of it all, healthy parents lead to healthy families. Not just physical health but emotional health too. However, going it alone with even just one child, let alone multiple children, does not lend itself to positive child well-being outcomes. Often parents feel stressed, overworked, judged, and inadequate. Burnout and exhaustion are real, but without a community or a village around to validate those feelings, many parents feel like that pain is unique to them. The village becomes a supportive mechanism and more should be encouraged going forward.

The key, as we project the future is lost with the disappearance of community living, is the death of shared resources among families. From small things like sharing meals to larger benefits such as having a trusted friend to leave your children with, parents and children are missing out on experiences that lift and expose societies to different ways of living and engaging with the world. Something which needs to be addressed as we move into the future.

Strengthening extended family systems, village setup, stakeholder participation, and social workers' involvement, well-behaved and taken care of children will be raised. Therefore, if social workers, families, community

organizations, schools, neighborhoods, councils, and other community resources connect, collaborate, support, and build, positive educational and developmental outcomes for children will be achieved. The future of the child rests on the village and communities they live in. From this research, it can be concluded that social workers have great experiences in raising children in communities though with some challenges.

Recommendations

The experiences shared present a platform that social workers are essential in supporting children's growth and development in a village, community, and society. With pandemics like COVID 19 and emerging social problems like child defilement, and child trafficking to mention but a few, the future for Ubuntu's social work philosophy is cardinal. Therefore, the following are recommendations going forward for practice and the profession.

- More collaboration and concerted efforts with different stakeholders in a village environment to support, raise and protect children in communities.
- Enhanced extended family support systems in communities like it was before.
- Improved advocacy mechanisms on children matters among key stakeholders.
- Recognition and support for the work social workers do among different stakeholders.
- Training of more rural social workers to provide services to children.
- More schools of social work to consider specialization in child protection and welfare issues.
- ·Strategic decision for government and non-government organization to place social workers in rural areas.

- Changing times require changing strategies & innovation for the practice of social work.
- Government to attend to rural communication and road network challenges for proper support of social services in Zambia.
- Operationalization of the bill of rights in the constitution and children code act 2022 for Zambia to put children's matters at the centre of government policy mechanisms

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Chapter 11

Preserving the Spirit of Ubuntu through Kinship Care: The Case of Namibia

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Biographies

Emmerentia Leonard teaches several courses on social welfare and social development with a concentration on child, youth and family welfare. She grew up in the small town of Usakos, in the Western part of Namibia, where everyone knew each other and any African adult could discipline a child because a child belonged to the community and every African in that community was considered family. In her teachings, Emmerentia advances Ubuntu-inspired social work models in child protection that view children from family and community perspectives and not Western models of individualistic values that champion institutional care.

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Abstract

Historically, the care of children in Africa was automatically taken over by next of kin during times of family crises. Over the years, and notably with the Western influence that idealises the nuclear family, childcare arrangements in the African context have changed. Subsequently, in the contemporary child protection system foster care, adoption and institutional care arrangements take precedence over kinship care. Using the Ubuntu perspective, this chapter looks at the formalisation of kinship care in Namibia through legislative reforms. It further highlights how social workers could leverage these reforms and the accompanying financial support offered by the government to advance the care of children in need of protective services by next of kin in the true spirit of Ubuntu.

Keywords: *Extended family, kinship care, Namibia, Ubuntu*

A translation of the abstract into Oshindonga

Monalenale etekulo lyaanona moAfrika, olyali oshinakugwanithwa shaakwanezimo oku kuthapo aanona mboka, okuyathila oshisho, noku ya tekula, uuna aavali nenge mboka yelineekelwa oshinakugwanithwa shokutekula aanona mboka itaaya vulu gwe. Meemvula dhapiti, shika oshalunduluka omolwa enwethemo lyomithigululwakalo dhaauninginino/aaEuropa mboka ya tala kutya ezimo olyathikamapo momusamane nomukulukadhi naanona yawo. Onkenee, kapena omukwanezimo ena uuthemba gwokutekula aanona yaantu yalwe inaashipitila paveta. Ishewe, omulandu gonena gwegameno lyaanona nolyokutekula pa veta ogwasimana shivulithe uuteku waanona gwopamuthigululwakalo ngashii gwakalako nale. Pakulongitha omukalo goUbuntu, ontopolwa ndjika otayitala nkene uuteku wopamuthigululwakalo wuna okutulwa milonga

moNamibia tashipitile melundululo lyoveta. Ishewe, ontopolwa ndjika oyatala nkene aanilonga yopankalathano taya vulu okulongitha elundululo lyoveta nomakwathelo gepangelo gopashimaliwa okunkondopaleka esiloshimpwiyu lyaanona yeli moompumbwe dhomayakulo gegameno taga gandjwa kaakwanezimo okupitila mombepo yoshili yoUbuntu.

Introduction

Families are the basic and essential building blocks of society (International Federation for Family Development, 2017) and as such are regarded as very important throughout Africa (Assim, 2013), and indeed, elsewhere. Similarly, the African Charter on the Rights of the Child posits/recognises that the child occupies a unique and privileged position in African society and that for the full and harmonious development of his personality, the child should grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2022). Besides the significant role ascribed to the family globally and specifically in Namibia, there is no clear definition of family attributes mostly due to the diversity of family forms and living arrangements (Assim, 2013). In modern Western societies, children are typically raised by their biological parents in a central nuclear family unit (Brown et al., 2020). The nuclear family is often associated with the idea of being the 'ideal' or 'proper' family or family form and as such, is assumed to be the benchmark from which all other family forms differ or deviate (Assim, 2013). In most African contexts, the responsibility for the care of children is not only on the biological parents within the nuclear family set-up but is shared by all in the extended family network (Amos, 2013; Assim, 2013). The extended household organisation refers to the presence of adults other than parents and their partners, such as grandparents, other kin, and housemates sharing in the upbringing of children (Mollborn et al., 2012).

Childcare has historically been thought of, in Africa, as a social task performed by an entire extended family (Brown et al., 2020). This collective

sense of responsibility for the 'proper' upbringing of children is the background to the African proverb which states, 'it takes a village to raise a child', with the 'village' referring to the extended family and kinship community at large (Assim, 2013, p. 27). Kinship care is therefore widespread in societies on the African continent (Brown et al., 2020; Fink & Gronemeyer, 2021; Muchanyerei, 2020; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). It is based on the social philosophy of *Ubuntu* which is centred around the capacity of individuals to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining a community with justice and mutual caring (Khomba & Kangaude-Ulaya, 2013; Nussbaum, 2003). Child fosterage is a culturally appropriate form of family life in Africa, where for example in Ethiopia, historically, children were purposefully sent to live with relatives in 'normal' times for reasons that are different from resolving the problems of orphanhood and child destitution (Abebe & Aase, 2007). Extended family systems thus allow childcare to be a collective social responsibility shared across wider kin, providing important mechanisms for accessing education, medical treatment, and economic opportunities (McQuaid et al., 2019).

This paper advances a case for the care of children in a kinship system as it has been the custom across most African cultures. It calls for social work practice with children which is grounded in indigenous social welfare systems and anchored on the principles of *Ubuntu* to be more responsive to local needs and involve culturally relevant intervention.

Background and context

Namibia, with a surface area of 824,290 square kilometres, is situated in the southwest of Africa with a population of about 2, 5 million people (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020) of which 1 043 323 are persons under the age of 18 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2019). It has fourteen political regions with around eleven ethnic groups and multiple dialects, with a predominant presence of a particular ethnic group in each region (Sharley et

al., 2019). Although Namibia is categorised as an upper-middle-income country, it has one of the most unequal distributions of income per capita in the world with a Gini coefficient of 0.572 (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2014; World Bank, 2016). Under German (1884 to 1915) and then the white minority apartheid South Africa (1915 to 1990), Namibia endured brutal colonial and oppressive rule (Kössler, 2015; Melber, 2019) which in a way framed parental involvement in the upbringing of their children.

German Colonial Rule and the Indigenous family

The German colonisation of *German SouthWest Africa*, the colonial name for Namibia commenced in 1884 when it declared Namibia a 'German Protectorate,' which led to a conflict that culminated in the genocide of Namibia's indigenous people. In 1904 and 1905, the Ovaherero and Nama people of central and southern Namibia rose against German colonial rule. However, following the German Lieutenant-General Lothar von Trotha's infamous *Vernichtungsbefehl* (extermination order), thousands of the Ovaherero and Nama people of central and southern Namibia were brutally killed, driven into the barren Kalahari Desert where they starved or died of thirst, while others were overworked in concentration camps in Windhoek, Swakopmund, Karibib, Okahandja, Luderitz and Shark Island (Becker, 2021). There is scant literature on children and the youth in terms of African colonial history and a relatively limited understanding of the experiences of childhood (Zollmann, 2015). It would however be a logical assumption to make that those children who were orphaned by the genocide were taken in by the surviving next of kin.

South African Colonisation, Apartheid Rule and the family

The colonisation of *South West Africa*, the colonial name for Namibia under South African rule, which started after the First World War when Germany was defeated and lasted until 1990, subjected Namibia to the policy of apartheid which separated Namibians along racial and ethnic lines. Black Namibians received a poor education, had inadequate healthcare, were

subjected to forced labour, and were forced into ethnically segregated settlements also referred to as homelands or *Bantustans* (Hayes et al., 1998). In response to the South African colonial rule, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) through its military wing, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), launched a guerrilla war that lasted from 1966 till 1988 that came to an end with the UN-supervised election in 1989 leading to independence in 1990.

Legislative framework on kinship care in Namibia

Namibia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which calls for "State Parties to respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child" (UNICEF, 2022). Namibia also ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child *(ACRWC) which* was adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1990 (in 2001, the OAU legally became the African Union). The ACRWC recognises that the child occupies a unique and privileged position in African society; and that for the full and harmonious development of their personality, the child should grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding *(African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2022)*. The UN Guidelines on Alternative Care further provide that in considering alternative care for children, efforts should primarily be directed to enabling the child to remain in or return to the care of his/her parents or other close family members.

In 2015, Namibia enacted the Child Care and Protection Act, 2015 (Act No. 3 of 2015) which is a progressive law that provides mechanisms for the care and protection of children in the country. The Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA) is congruent with the guiding principles of the CRC and ACRWC which emphasizes the rights of children and parents, the role of extended family, and the importance of children's views in decisions that affect them. The formal recognition of kinship care in Namibia through legislative provisions

acknowledges approaches to child care which are typical in Africa instead of the application of foreign concepts such as institutional care, to African contexts (LAC, 2016). Even though kinship care is normally a voluntary arrangement made by families, a court can order the placement of a child with kin where this would be in the child's best interests, providing for a distinction between informal and formal kinship care. Informal kinship care arrangements have removed the aspect of professional assessments and give the parent who is unable to care for a child the liberty to select a suitable kinship caregiver. In circumstances where a parent fails to seek caregiving assistance for his/her child in need of alternative care, social workers are then mandated to conduct assessments to seek suitable family members which are referred to as formal kinship care (LAC, 2016). Formal kinship care comes with the delivery of state assistance to kinship carers which is in line with the ACRWC that calls on State Parties to, in accordance with their means and national conditions, take all appropriate measures to assist parents and other persons responsible for the child and in case of need, provide material assistance and support (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2022).

The best interest of the child is the primary consideration in all relevant regulatory frameworks as it pertains to child protection. The legal recognition of kinship care and the eligibility of kinship carers to apply for State grants for the children in their care is thus a needed milestone. To be eligible for the state grant, a kinship care agreement must be concluded with the kinship caregiver and registered with the clerk of the children's court (LAC, 2016). These agreements may be made independently or with help from a social worker, a traditional leader or a legal practitioner and are optional, required only if the kinship caregiver wishes to receive a state grant for the child (LAC, 2016).

Kinship care and Ubuntu in the Namibian context

The communal value of a person is strongly based on what they do for their family and community, and this is a very vital and important part of daily life and family bond in Africa (Nussbaum, 2003). One area where *Ubuntu* is strongly expressed is in the care of children and as such the practice of kinship care which entails the care of children by most commonly the extended family, remains widespread in most Namibian cultures (Brown et al., 2020; Fink & Gronemeyer, 2021; Hishongwa, 1992; Leonard, Ananias & Sharley, 2022; Opel, 2021).

Colonialism and Namibia's arduous fight for liberation posed a threat to the security of family structures and, consequently, reconfigured families resulting in an increase of female-headed households and the strengthening of the extended family as a safety net (Hishongwa, 1992, Kamminga, 2000, Ruiz-Casares, 2010). The impact that the reconstruction of kinship networks has had suggests that present-day Namibian families are socially interdependent, meaning that common goals are established with others and peoples' lives are more intimately affected by the actions of others (Brown et al., 2020). In contemporary Namibia, kinship care, customary, especially among Black Namibian families, has become the norm with the extended family caring for children whose parents were unable to do so for varied reasons (Fink & Gronemeyer, 2021; Opel, 2021; Ruiz-Casares, 2010).

The practice of child migration in and out of kin networks in Namibia has, therefore, been historically prevalent with as high as 40% of children not living with their biological parents (Brown et al., 2020). Among the Ovambo, the largest ethnic population group in Namibia, aunts, grandmothers, namesakes (*mbushe*), and older siblings tend to be more prominent as caregivers and the (time-limited or permanent) sending-away children to other locations and other relatives was (and is) a cultural practice and normality (Fink & Gronemeyer, 2021; Ruiz-Casares, 2010). Extended family provides the child with a sense of belonging and identity; and provides an

opportunity for children to maintain strong ancestral ties with a wide range of family members they share common roots and ancestry (Bray & Dawes, 2016; Leonard et al., 2022, Mann & Delap, 2020), as it appears utterly natural to live with relatives or other caretakers who are not their biological parents (Fink & Gronemeyer, 2021).

Challenges to preserving kinship care and Ubuntu

Many African communities realise the importance of taking care of and supporting their own relatives and kin (Muchanyerei, 2020). Hitherto, the notion of *Ubuntu* has remained a central tenet of Namibian culture although rapid modernisation processes alter the cultural practice of kinship care (Fink & Gronemeyer, 2021). Colonialism, globalisation and recurring economic difficulties have shrunk the value of *Ubuntu* while many people have been forced to move out of their communities in search of greener pastures (Shepherd & Mhlanga, 2014). This has brought about cultural pluralism that has, to some extent, swept away some of the values ingrained within the notion of *Ubuntu* (Kurevakwesu & Chizasa, 2020; Shepherd & Mhlanga, 2014). For instance, with the intrusion of Western cultural values, there is now a value system shaped by individualism, where a thick line has been created between the nuclear and extended families (Kurevakwesu & Chizasa, 2020). A self-reliant nuclear family arrangement is becoming more common in Namibia with little community support available. There is a sense of erosion and loss of the original community identity and underpinning values, especially in the urban areas, which were seen to have been overtaken by a more consumerist Western individualistic culture (Bauman, 2007). The notable change is that there has been a swift in the traditionally peripheral importance of biological parenthood whereby until a few decades ago Oshiwambo children used to exclusively address adults as *meme* and *tate* (mother and father) but recently a differentiation has been observed where children would call adult relatives or non-relatives by the title aunty/uncle or *kuku*/ouma (aunt, uncle, grandma) (Fink & Gronemeyer, 2021.

In Namibia, the orphans and vulnerable children's (OVC) crisis which stems from the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the rapid dissolution of traditional family constellations, has on the one hand increased the necessity to take in non-biological children; at the same time, the willingness and material capability to take in children seem to decline (Fink & Gronemeyer, 2021). Poverty in Namibia impacts day-to-day life manifested through unemployment, lack of food, overcrowding and so on, which impact children's development and well-being. In a study on child fosterage in Namibia, participants talked about carers' lack of money for school necessities, clothing, food, health needs and travelling (Sharley et al., 2020). Even though the state provides welfare grants, the lack of national documents such as birth certificates impacts children's rights and their ability to access such grants for kinship carers to satisfy children's basic needs. Some families do not know of this national welfare programme, the registration process is complex and protracted, and many people do not have the means to undertake the long journey to the relevant government office to register the child for the grant resulting in a decreasing readiness of people to take in children and to take care of children in need (Fink & Gronemeyer 2021). Irrespective, an opportunity to receive a state grant is a motivating factor to take up kinship care in Namibia (Sharley et al., 2020).

In many African countries, care work is highly gendered, with women and girls assuming the most significant caring roles for their families and communities (Evans, 2010). Most participants in the study by Leonard et al. (2022) emphasised the role of women in the everyday care of children in Namibia, the lack of involvement of the father in child-rearing practice (Fink & Gronemeyer, 2021) and the death of a mother as a common reason for a child to be cared for in extended family networks. In Namibia, internal migrants tend to follow employment opportunities moving from regions where there are few employment opportunities, to urban areas which offer increased financial prospects (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2019). There is little discussion on the day-to-day role of fathers within their families or

households which could be understood in the context of internal migration, acknowledged as being traditionally undertaken by men in the family who leave their homes in search of paid employment (Murray cited in Young & Ansell, 2003). Grandparents, in particular the grandmother, taking care of grandchildren is a traditional institution that is culturally, socially, economically and politically legitimised (Kamminga, 2000). The legislation is not explicit on the role and responsibility of both genders in children's care and protection within kinship care arrangements (Brown et al., 2009). More work will need to be undertaken in this regard.

According to African socio-cultural concepts of childhood and childcare, children, families and communities have reciprocal rights and responsibilities as part of an "intergenerational contract" to provide care and support when needed (Evans, 2010). Children in communities across the region may also take up caregiving responsibility at a very young age posing a challenge to the "Western ideological constructions of childhood as a carefree phase of innocence, in which children are free from 'adult responsibilities and work' as well as norms of parenting that define children as being dependent on their mothers (and fathers) for nurturing, care and socialisation" (Evans, 2010, p. 6). The children's contribution to the family under the *Ubuntu* philosophy implies that "what they are doing will enable or empower the community around them and help it improve" (Khomba & Kangaude-Ulaya 2013, p. 673). Generosity requires people to be aware of and attentive to the needs of those around them, rather than focusing only on their own needs (Van Breda, 2019). This compassion and sense of care for others in need by children seems to be developed from observations in the community, but also personal experiences, which result in being kind and serving others (Leonard et al., 2022). This could create tension between Western and indigenous child-rearing practices, which calls for culturally relevant paradigms that understand children within their own context and relationships to ultimately inform policy and practice.

Besides the CCPA provisions, conspicuous by absence however was the lack of children's contribution to, or involvementin kinship care decision-making and arrangements; as decisions are made by grandparents (predominantly grandmothers) and other adult relatives (Allcock, 2018; Sharley et al., 2020). The criticism levelled against *Ubuntu* argues that some of its values weaken societies when it comes to children, such as the respect for authority that culminates in the African tenet that *children should be seen and not heard* disempowers and exposes them to abuse (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). As a guiding principle of the CRC 'Parties shall assure the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'. Adults, including social workers, have a moral and legal duty to ensure children have the right to have their views heard (should they wish) and assist children and young people to contribute their opinions on any decisions that affect them (Lundy, 2007). Hence, social workers should ensure that kinship care arrangements facilitate the space for children's voices to be heard, consulting them on matters which affect their care. This would also provide opportunities for policymakers and practitioners to gain new understandings about children's wishes and needs (Stienitz, 2009) whilst ensuring that children have greater influence over decisions that impact their lives (Lundy, 2007).

Social work practice and kinship care

From a policy perspective, the CCPA with its recognition of kinship care has laid the foundation for enshrining Ubuntu in the care of children. Social workers should thus ensure that the policy provisions come to fruition by addressing the obstacles that lead to hesitancy to kinship care because the extended family is a central institution of Namibian society (Fink & Gronemeyer, 2021). Among the obstacles experienced by potential beneficiaries is a lack of documentation such as birth certificates, death certificates and identity documents which are compulsory for kinship carers to qualify for welfare grants (Sharley et al., 2019; Taukeni & Matshidiso, 2013).

Realisable implications for social work practice related to working to increase knowledge about and assisting with child registrations, so all children have citizenship and entitlements in accordance with the UNCRC, ACRWC and CCPA (Sharley et al., 2019).

Social workers have a prime role to play in ensuring that the family is capacitated through the application of an empowerment approach in issues such as caring for children (Muchanyerei, 2020). The shortage of social workers in Namibia and the lack of necessary resources to work effectively is most certainly something that contributes to the effective delivery of social services for children. According to the Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey (NHIES) 2015/16, 26.9% of positions in the public sector were vacant, with vacancies standing at 42% for social workers (NPC, 2020). However, the centrality of the extended family in the care of especially vulnerable children is a leverage for social workers which they should protect from erosion. The family becomes pivotal in ensuring that individuals exist, realise their goals and reach self-efficacy (Muchanyerei, 2020). To that effect, the growing trend in Namibia has been for social workers to secure placement of children in need of alternative care with their next of kin as the first line of response rather than foster and institutional care. Adopting the notion of *Ubuntu* in child welfare resonates with the strength's perspectives wherein, communities already have their strengths through *Ubuntu* as far as child protection is concerned (Kurevakwesu & Maushe, 2020). With the notable shortage of social workers in Namibia, they should leverage this existing strength of communities to ensure services are provided throughout this sparsely populated country. Similarly, community childcare workers employed by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare promote child protection and strive to reduce the risk of child abuse at a community level, through case identification and making the necessary referrals to social workers. This collaboration in a way takes child welfare services to all parts of the country but also lessens the workload of the overburdened and insufficient number of social workers.

Ubuntu decentres the individual as the prime unit of analysis, as conventionally applied in the person-in-environment (PIE) perspective of social work and rather emphasizes the relationships between people as expressed in the African maxims, "It takes a village to raise a child" and "your neighbour's child is your own [child] (Van Breda, 2019). As echoed by Kurevakwesu and Maushe (2020) there is no Afrocentric social work without bringing into perspective the notion of *Ubuntu* because the aspect of *Ubuntu* is what defines humanness in the African context and social workers are there to deal with individuals who are in a cultural system defined by *Ubuntu*. Historically, social work has introduced Westernised thinking into developing countries through the process of colonisation, 'silencing' indigenous voices in the process and disregarding local wisdom and knowledge (Gray, Coates & Yellow Bird, 2010, p. 1). The demand for localised social work practice and education is a well-versed discussion which supports the development of fitting and culturally relevant approaches, congruent with a country's social, political and economic contexts (Mupedziswa, 1992). The formalisation of kinship care through the CCPA is a step in the right direction as the understanding of and provision of alternative childcare must be congruent with the societal context in which children exist (Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2010).

Conclusions

Namibia emerged from a rather difficult past of colonialism that reconfigured the family structure relying mostly on the African tradition of helping each other as a sign of the connectedness and communalism of humanity. The presence of the family particularly during difficult times or times of need is closely linked to the African concept of *Ubuntu*. This is true to Archbishop Desmond Tutu's maxim that the quality of *Ubuntu* gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). It is therefore imperative that social work practice in considering alternative care for children in need of protective services embraces the philosophy of *Ubuntu* as

a social protection and anti-poverty framework (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013).

This paper offers important insights into kinship care in the Namibian context underlined by the *Ubuntu* philosophy. It in no way posits that Ubuntu is the ideal agenda to the exclusion of Western knowledge systems, but equal consideration and integration of ideas from both worlds in the care of children in need of protective services.

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Chapter 12

Ubuntu Values in Action: Narrative Practice with Young People Experiencing Stigma and Discrimination

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sociology of family. Jean Paul is interested in how interpersonal, intrapersonal, and environmental values of ubuntu influence the health and wellbeing of individuals and community members.

Abstract

This work highlights a narrative practice journey integrating Ubuntu values with six young people having physical and mental impairment. The practice consisted of listening to them and reading their stories, learning about their past and present hardships, discovering with them their strengths and hopes for the future. Group and individual practices were used. The Ubuntu notions of humanness, human dignity, solidarity, care of others coupled with narrative therapy tools such as individual and collective externalizing, re-authoring, re-membering conversations, working with memories, letters writing, and tree of life guided this practice. Due to Covid-19, only two continued the practice and have now experienced changes in their lives. The Ubuntu values in social work practice should be strengthened to fight against stigma and discrimination.

Abstract Translation into Kinyarwanda

Ubu bushakashatsi burerekana urugendo rw'isanamitima rikoresheje inkuru rwakoranywe n'urubyiruko rw'abantu batandatu bafite ubumuga bw'ingingo n'ibibazo by'ubuzima bwo mu mutwe. Imyitozo yari igizwe no kubatega amatwi, gusoma inkuru zabo, kwiga ku bibazo byabo byahise ndetse n'iby'ubu, gufatanya kuvumbura imbaraga bifitemo n'ibyiringiro by'ejo hazaza. Hifashishijwe imyitozo mu itsinda hamwe n'imyitozo y'umuntu ku giti cye. Indangagaciro z'Ubuntu nk'ubumuntu, icyubahiro cy'umuntu, ubufatanye, kwita ku bandi, hamwe n'uburyo bw'isanamitima rikoresheje inkuru hifashishijwe kuvuga ibyakubayeho uri wenyine cyangwa uri mu itsinda hamwe n'abandi, kwandika bundi bushya inkuru no kongera kuba umunyamuryango, kwibuka, kwandika amabaruwa, igiti cy'ubuzima ni byo byifashishijwe. Bitewe n'icyorezo cya Covid-19, abantu babiri gusa ni bo bakomeje imyitozo kandi habaye impinduka mu buzima bwabo. Gukoresha

indangagaciro z'Ubuntu bigomba gushimangirwa mu kurwanya ipfobya n'ivangura.

Introduction

In the journey with the group of participants with which the practice was conducted, listening to and reading their stories demonstrated that they have gone and still go through difficult times, face different challenges such as stigma and discrimination due to their health status.

The narrative practice journey started with a group of six young people who were university students. The first two have sight impairment, the third has lost physical ability (speaking correctly, ability to write and walk properly) and has mental problems, the fourth has mental problems due to a shock on the head, the fifth has a speaking and hearing impairment while the sixth has physical impairment. Only one was born with a physical impairment while for the rest, impairment developed while they were either little children or adolescents. It is important to start with a brief presentation of the problems the youth were faced with.

Social stigmatization and discrimination

The young people in question have experienced poor treatment by some family members (parents and siblings), some peers and neighbours. This has had a negative impact on their intellectual, social, and psychological development. Listening to their stories and the hardships they have experienced show that the stigma and discrimination done by their family members, especially parents, was caused in some cases by past injury/harm the parents experienced and then, the consequences of the injury were transferred to their children who had no stake in what happened to their parents. The parents did not have enough strength to carry their own burden and be able to attend to the needs of their children who had difficulties adjusting to the social environment. The stigma found in society had pressure on parents and other family members, engaging some into discrimination

practices. From there, it was noticed that some situations like having a family member who has a handicap or mental health problem (considered as a burden) creates a relationship between that burden and stigma.

Culturally speaking, handicap was not acceptable as it was considered as a shame to the family, a link to bad spirit or a punishment to the family to have an 'abnormal child'. Some might have the feelings to kill the babies while others would prefer to hide them in the house so that none in the neighbourhood could see them (Davin, J. et al. 1989). They are considered as different to others, malfunctioning creatures, bunches of imperfections (Engel 1991). In such situations, (Wakhungu 2014) emphasized the different problems affecting community members of all categories like shame, rejections as mentioned above, while (Begum 2007) showed the importance of narrative practice to help both the children and their mothers/parents to cope with the situation. Very few were able to accept the children and try their best to help them as they can. With the promotion of human rights, there have been changes but it is an on-going process. Parents, siblings, neighbours, teachers, and the community at large need to be sensitized on their roles in assisting the persons living with handicap/mental health problem and on the fight against stigma and discrimination.

As stated by (Ogude 2019), it is very important to emphasize the African philosophy of Ubuntu - a concept in which your relationship with other people shapes your sense of self and belonging. It is a style of living that begins with the premise that 'I am' only because 'we are'. Persons with mental handicap are human beings who need respect, support, and love to thrive in their respective families and communities just as the spirit of Ubuntu emphasises treating every human with dignity. Otherwise, considering handicap or mental health problems as a shame hinders the wellbeing of those affected. As (Drahm-Butler 2015) puts it, "*Shame can stop people from fulfilling their hopes and dreams and prevent them from engaging in everyday aspects of their lives, including accessing services*."

This narrative practice was conducted with the following aims:

- Share the life stories of the young people standing up stigma and highlight the importance of listening to their stories in narrative therapy practice.
- Point out the strengths of youth standing up stigma and raise their self-esteem through narrative practice to enable their contribution in the community.
- Point out the challenges youth standing up stigma are faced with, from the family (non-acceptance, stigma), from the community (cultural barriers, stigma, in/adequacy of infrastructure, associations/advocacy instances, policy related issues, education).
- Highlight the place of Ubuntu values in improving the wellbeing of people with impairment.

Ubuntu Philosophy in addressing stigma and discrimination around mental health and handicap

Ubuntu philosophy is generally defined as the African culture to demonstrate kindness, empathy, support and mutual caring, with respect, dignity and humanity for the sake of common interests and justice for every human (Chigangaidze 2021); (Khoza 2006); (Luhabe 2002). Ubuntu is rooted in practical actions of strengthening relationships, respecting humanness (Chigangaidze 2021).

Ubuntu philosophy presumes that human beings as social beings prefer to live close to one another, in peacefully way, sharing available resources in the social environment for individual and collective benefits (Chigangaidze 2021). None should be discriminated against, everyone is entitled to benefit from the available resources, everyone is supposed to be assisted, loved, and cared for in the interest of the entire society.

People with mental challenges or handicap are, under Ubuntu philosophy, entitled to care, support respect as the rest of humanity. Ubuntu values of mutual support and solidarity guide social work practice in general and social work practice in Rwanda, in particular. In line with this study, social work practice intervenes between those excluded from society, those who are considered as a threat to society, and those who are integrated into that society. For problem solving, social assistance is run through family nets and community support. Such assistance means mutual assistance that suggests working together. Different initiatives for problem solving and support to vulnerable groups reflecting Ubuntu values are in place, such as ubudehe, umuganda, umugoroba w'umuryango, girinka, gacaca, to name a few (Uwihangana et al. 2020); (Kalinganire and Rutikanga 2015).

In applying Ubuntu values in our case, we are interested in assessing the interactions between individuals in the community and the impact of the environment on individual behaviours. As such, the study reflects Ubuntu values on the impact of the family and the entire community on the wellbeing of individuals (Chigangaidze 2021). Mental health is influenced, to a large extent, by the social, economic, and physical environments in which people live (Platform and Organisation 2014).

Listening to the stories of the young people in our study, we noticed that the poor social, economic, and physical support impacted negatively on their lives. Therefore, the social work practice applying Ubuntu values in mental health and handicap area is sharing best examples on how to influence the family and community to become friendly in avoiding stigma and discrimination around mental health and handicap. This is corroborated by *Ukama* interpretation of Ubuntu, which stipulates that individuals belong to the family and whatever they do, whatever they need should be found within the family (Mugumbate and Chereni 2019).

Methodology

An appointment for the first meeting was secured via short messages. During this first meeting, the objectives of this project were presented, and the informed consent sought from participants. Narrative practice was explained, our own story shared with them: why interest in people with handicap, motivation to study social work to bring the contribution in assisting vulnerable people, especially people with handicap, to value their strengths, their potentials and help them raise their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Only one session was possible with the entire group in late February 2020. When the universities and schools closed later in March 2020 due to Covid-19, the students had to go back in their respective families. After attempts to reach them by phone, only two were available but it was not possible to meet them physically. Therefore, the practice continued with only the two who were accessible either on phone, WhatsApp, or emails, hoping to meet the rest when the university reopens. As the pair does not live in the same neighbourhood, they were reached separately and, in some cases, they had preferred to write down what they wanted to share with us. Asking questions in the written form as well can be helpful as it helps shape the conversation and invites the person to reflect on what is important to them and their skills before putting it into writing. The challenges of life are important to hear about too and the responses to hardship.

For the respect of privacy and confidentiality, their names have been changed; the ladies will be called Ruth and Teddy, while gentlemen will be called Tom, Ben, and Gerry.

The following narrative therapy tools were explored during this practice: Individual and/or collective externalizing conversations, re-authoring conversations (tracing the social, relational, cultural histories of skills and knowledge), re-membering conversations, working with memories, letters,

tree of Life, double-story development, and the rich description of the alternative/preferred stories of people's lives.

Externalizing conversations

The points emphasized in the externalizing conversations were what they value in themselves, their qualities, what they think are their strengths, their level of self-confidence and self-esteem that allow them to go through the hardships they experience in their communities, in their families and especially in class (White 2006).

Here, a person's 'sense of confidence' or working to strengthen your relationship with 'confidence', staying connected to 'confidence' in some situations means that the youth reach a stage where they accept themselves as they are, believe in themselves, are not ashamed of themselves and use their intellectual as well as physical capacity to advance. In social work, we believe in strength, whatever little it may be, in a person's agency for individual empowerment toward positive change.

In the same way, narrative practice is more interested in contributing to a person's sense of personal agency and helping to centre the preferred identity stories in a person's life - so they are more richly known to them and others and available for them to live out. This first encounter enlightened them on their preferred stories, on their personal agency and on how to keep going, despite the hardships.

Re-authoring conversations-strengthening a second storyline

They were happy to tell their own stories: the guiding questions were:

Can you share with us your life story? What is your relationship with your family? As a small child, what has been your hard moment in the family, at school and in the community/neighbourhood? How do you cope with the situation here at the university? How did you find yourself in social work? Do

you link your choice to your health situation? What are your challenges? Strengths? Dreams? Hopes? Who does help you to carry on? What are the lessons learned from the experiences you have gone through? How do you feel after telling your story?

These questions were meant to set up the context for the talking and develop other important questions-landscape of consciousness questions- where people connect to what is important to them and can see themselves often in new ways. It creates a scaffolding to make meaning with others.

The group narrative therapy session offered them an opportunity to open, to share their stories to the point that one of them (Gerry) shared his story in detail for one hour and half. Gerry revealed that it was his first time to tell it and that he was feeling relieved. The story was an illustration of very difficult moments but also strengths and hope

> "(...) all what happened prevented me from continuing my studies, but I always had hopes that one day, I would go back. When I was not at school, I was helping my family in the fields or with any other work to gain a living. Then, I would find an acquaintance suggesting that I continue my studies and offering some help. That is how I finished secondary school and found myself at the university. I do hope to finish and even get a job".

He is still in touch with some friends who have always been there for him. Ruth, with tears in her eyes while talking, revealed that every time she talks about her story, she feels a bit sad but at the end, she feels somehow relaxed. As someone who was very much neglected by her own family, she is now happy that she met people who love her and helped her to study; "*the sky is the limit*", as she said.

What meanings can a listener, an outside witness, give to the above statements? As an outside witness, it is obvious that through both stories, *they have experienced stigma to the point that they were not able to talk about their life*

experiences. Over again, it was clear that the society/the immediate environment of the person with a handicap/mental health problem plays a big role in offering the opportunity to grow and thrive/to empower the person or in hindering the person's development (Chigangaidze 2021). This is evident with the progress the participants have made with the support and help from their social network.

Teddy revealed that she cannot go back to her family because her mother does not love her, while Ruth said that she feels comfortable at home when she is with her young sister. Otherwise, she stays in her uncle's family; she revealed that she feels more comfortable with friends than family members. This *speaks to how stigma can cause isolation and disconnection*.

Tom revealed that the handicap allowed him to pay attention to the sufferings of others and to start thinking on what to do, to ease the burden of those suffering. The decision was to start *with listening to others as others did in his case*; he found that *the ability to listen to others is a very good quality and those who are being listened to feel valued and free*. This is a great example of an alternate story how this person found it helpful *to be listened to and now he listens to others. Listening is connected to being valued and free. So, the skill is linked to values.*

Life testimonies

What they have in common is that they feel comfortable being in social work since they find that they learn a lot concerning valuing all human beings, especially the most vulnerable. For some, it was not their first choice, but as it is now, they are happy: social work principles and values are in one way or the other like their own values of helping, caring, listening, etc.

Before this narrative therapy session, there was no other opportunity to talk openly with them, except formal conversation during teaching such as short introductions from the whole class (names, previous studies, motivation to

study social work), they had never had the opportunity to share their testimonies in that group. It is amazing to listen to their hopes, their initiatives and commitments, their optimism about life, without being stopped by what others consider as the 'limitations'. Some examples: visiting the sick, befriending those who are marginalized at schools because of 'difficult behaviour', being convinced that their situation will improve, that they will find jobs or go for further studies is a sign of hope in a bright future. Apart from the hardship experienced in the past and the difficulties caused by the pandemic, these young people have a sense of confidence for a bright future. They have dreams, aspirations, goals and hopes (White 2006).
How does stigma impact their education, their capacity to cope with trauma/abuse/violence and their dreams for the future?

Education

Stigma affects the life of those with handicap/mental health problems. Some members of this group were not able to attend school in due time since their parents were always telling them that it is a loss of time and money; they were always isolated and 'called names' in reference to their handicap (*ruhuma, impumyi* [blind], *karema, kamuga, kajoriti* [casualty], etc.), which increased their loneliness; brings shame into their lives, affecting the way they consider themselves too. Others started on time but stopped along the way. It was not easy for them to follow, especially those with visual impairment.

Their health conditions influenced what they are studying now, as some said: "*I have chosen the area I am feeling the most comfortable in; due to its mission and objectives (social work is an empowering profession, especially empowerment of vulnerable people)*" (Ben). Furthermore, it is easy for them to follow the lectures: "*It is easy for us to access the teaching materials using 'Braille' which would not be easy for us if we were in pure sciences, where we would have to draw maps, use formulas, etc.*" (Tom). Nevertheless, as they said, they have problems following in some courses, but they get the support from classmates.

Thus, studying social work is connected to the values that are important to the students - to bring about positive change into how handicap and mental health are considered (Alternative story).

They are all happy to be in social work, even those who did not know social work before and found themselves enrolled in social work. One of the focuses of social work is to make people discover their strengths, not focusing on weaknesses or limitations. *All were happy after taking social work courses which made them understand that they have strengths and capacities to assist others in the society and to bring positive change.*

Coping with trauma/abuse/violence

As already said in the introduction, the youth we are working with have gone through hardships. They have been (and some are still victims) of trauma, abuse, and violence either by family members or community members. They are coping with the hardships and trying their best to overcome the consequences.

Conversations on phone, WhatsApp, and emails with them require making sure confidentiality is respected. Frequent checks during the lockdown were done to make sure they are not experiencing again violence and abuse during this critical period. Fortunately, those reached revealed that they were secure. Since it was a very sensitive topic, one of us first took time to talk to them individually on phone about our previous conversations, asking them how they were feeling and if they were ready to continue the narrative practice journey and go in depth on some of the points introduced earlier. The two ladies agreed to write down their stories since it was not possible to respond on the phone. Here are the questions they responded to:

Can you tell us about the trauma/torture that you were subject to? Did these abuses take different forms? During the time when you were being subjected to this injustice, how did you try to endure this? What did you try to think about? Were there any memories you tried to hold onto? Any dreams? What

sustained you through these most awful times? Were there different ways that you tried to endure the different forms of torture/trauma? Why is it important to you for other people to know about this? What were the effects of these forms of trauma/torture in your life? What were the effects on you? On your relationships? In your family? In your community? What were some of the most difficult effects for you? Why were these most difficult? Are there any ongoing effects of this trauma/torture in your life?

They have not responded to all these questions, but they gave valuable information underlining their past and present life stories. After receiving their written responses, we had again time to discuss on phone: One of us had the task of talking with them to maintain trust and confidentiality. They were thanked for their contribution to the work and were asked if they feel any positive changes from the narrative journey we have embarked on together. They revealed that they are feeling well. Concerning questions not being answered, they revealed that for some, they had very bad memories and did not know where to start, while for others, they had no response since they had not experienced the situation. We respected their choice because they are free to participate, to respond and to withdraw whenever they wish.

In general, they have been abused by family members in the following ways: hard corporal punishments, denial to provide food/school fees, lack of affection/care/love, no proper guidance, advice, and support, calling them names and saying that 'they are good for nothing'. All the physical and psychological abuse and violence have had traumatic effects on the youth: shame, feeling of worthlessness and isolation.

A testimony from Teddy:

> "My mother forced me to drop out from school to help at home. When I returned after a long time, she would beat me for nothing and force me not to return to school to avoid that the teachers and classmates see beating signs on my body. She would tell everyone wrong statements against me, even now (...)"

Another testimony not very different from the above:

> "Since my childhood, I experienced domestic violence in my family; none cared about me, my elder brothers and sisters were always fighting each other and beating me for nothing, as I was the 'weakest' in the family. (...) Losing my best friend and her family members traumatized me to the point that I was unable to attend school for a year. They were the only people that would show me genuine love and affection." (Ruth).

The effects of trauma are many and may have recurrent impact on those who have been victims of traumatic events and suffered stigma (White 2004):

> "I sometimes feel sad, angry against myself and my family. When I see parents happy with their children, I feel bad because I have never had this favour. While alone, I always want to scream, and I feel shame about my family (...)" (Ruth).

Through narrative practice, problems can be looked at in a different way, and talked about as external to us: 'the problem is the problem; the person is not the problem'(White 2007). This frees us to explore and re-author our identities without shame (Drahm-Butler 2015).

The difficult conditions may pass with appropriate psychosocial care and support. In more complicated situations, mental health entails medication deemed as unavoidable or compulsory, thus, growing stigma. Those on medication are supposed to behave according to society's norms and structures considered as 'normal', which is not always possible (Hamilton 2019); (Denborough 2019).

Another testimony from Teddy: "*I always cry when I think about all the abuse and violence I went through (even now I am crying while writing this testimony). It is a lot, but it will end*". It is obvious that there are times of hope, joy in the voice and times of hopelessness, grief and questioning this painful difference (Denborough 2019).

When it comes to resilience and strengths to move ahead, they revealed that care and support from friends and some people from the extended family are vital. Ruth said:

> "with time, I was able to accommodate the situation. I have met caring people and the fact that I do not live in my family quite often reduced the tensions."

They are not held down, they want to keep their heads above the clouds, see their hopes and dreams come true:

> "I hope for a better future. I finished primary and secondary school because there are caring people. I am now at the university and will finish soon. I hope to bring change into how people with impairment are treated" (Ruth).

To corroborate the above, Teddy added:

> "I must keep strong; it is for a purpose that God protected me. I must forget the past and embrace the future. After all, I am at the university, this is promising."

Future: dreams and hopes

Looking back to what happened in the past; they marvel at what God did for them and are confident that the future is bright. Ubuntu highlights spirituality as an essential part of life and relationality. The spiritual life of Africans and some scientific practices are integrated They feel strong and confident to raise their voices so that 'others do not suffer' as they did. This is not an easy task; there must be strong advocacy boards to support their initiatives. The Ubuntu relates to bonding with others, being self because of others (Mugumbate and Nyanguru 2013). Of course, there is an association of people with handicap but there is a need to strengthen such boards with evidence-based knowledge and practice so that they advocate properly for their members.

Their dreams, aspirations are to impact positively on how the handicap is perceived in the society, to be living testimonies that people with handicap/mental health problems can succeed in society and encourage others in the same situation to be self-confident. These are ways to reduce stigma by life testimonies.

Working with memory

The topic of working with memory was introduced. Brief explanations were provided by phone and a written document with more details was sent by email. Here are the questions used to guide our conversation: Are there people who are dead, and you keep thinking about them? Do you remember wonderful times spent together? If yes, who are they? What are the good things you remember about them? What can you tell them if you meet again? What can you ask them? Let's say that you write them a letter. What may be its content?

At first, it was not easy for them to respond. They were encouraged that it is in the process of re-membering/reconnecting with the loved ones for the management of the grief and loss. Only one lady did this exercise.

Remembering loved ones and good moments spent together/rich story development

She sent a message with the following content on this point:

> "My loved one who died was my mother's cousin. We were almost the same age and were living in the same neighbourhood. We were always together, playing together, doing tiny house chores together. We were going to school together; she should not leave for school or go back home without me. During rainy seasons, it was very difficult for me to walk [due to her physical handicap], she could put me on her back till we reached our destination (Ruth).

This evokes a lovely image, an expression of solidarity, humanness as portrayed in Ubuntu.

The above statement shows that they have spent wonderful moments together; she has very good memories of her best friend who passed away. It is a rich story in the sense that it presents expressions of care that are different to stigma. Re-membering conversations help connect people to other experiences in life that are important to them, value, and respect them as human beings.

Memories about the loved ones

Apart from the support she received from her best friend, she also has some other good memories of her:

> "She was a very generous person, ready to help others and share whatever she had with all her friends. She is the only person who was able to make me smile and laugh! I was stigmatized by members of my family and neighbours, but she was the only one who was supportive and friendly to me. I have very good memories of her" (Ruth).

Unfortunately, they have not got the chance to stay together for a long period as she died when they were both 10 years old.

Asked what she can tell her best friend if they get the opportunity to meet again, Ruth replied:

> "I would tell her how much I miss her and how it has been difficult and painful to wear her clothes after her death. I would tell her that I carry on her generosity, care, and love to others in memory of how kind she has been to me. I would present her a lady I helped to overcome stigma simply because I tried to be by her side while others were not caring. She could not even smile but now; she laughs and makes others laugh because she knows that I care and there are others who care. I would tell her that I am happy to be at the university studying social work, to bring positive change."

This is a beautiful example of Ruth providing a double storied account of her experience.

Ruth has new friends, of course, but she cannot forget her childhood best friend, who was by her side when she most needed genuine love and support to overcome the hardships.

Since letters are among the tools that are used in narrative therapy, especially while working with memories, we kindly requested Ruth to write a short letter to her friend. It was not easy for her; she did not know what to tell her after such a long period, but she tried.

Letter to a loved one who passed away

> To my best friend whom I miss a lot,
>
> I am writing this letter to you, even if I do not know if you hear me. When you died, I was left with a lot of grief and sorrow, but as days went on, I became used to your absence and tried to cope with the hard situation, although it was not easy. After your death, life became so desperate that I dropped out of school for a year. After a sad time, I went back to school and as of now, I am in my second year at the University of Rwanda, in social work program. I grew up, I do not know whether you can recognize me if we have the chance to meet. I sometimes ask myself questions about you: I wonder if we would still be good friends if you were still alive, I wonder how tall you should be and many more questions. I recall what we did together, for example how we used to enter your mother's food store, take donuts without her permission, then get punished together, and many more other childhood stories. It is difficult for me to know which question to ask you and what to tell you. I beg the almighty God to offer us an opportunity to meet again. Maybe when I die, we shall get plenty of time to converse.
>
> Keep Resting In Peace.
>
> Your friend forever, (Ruth)

We found the letter beautiful and moving; it captures their friendship and what she wants to hold onto from that special time. This experience of being supported has sustained her for many years.

From the beginning of our joint work, she shared with us that she is surviving because of the love, friendship from people other than her own family. It means that it is the people outside her family who give her strength right now. The fact that she is no longer with one of her dear ones is a great loss. It was not easy for her to work on this memory and re-membering. It is understandable because reflecting on the loss and grief is not as simple as such; it may sound weird. But also keeping good memories of loved ones is a strength to advance. They had dreams to achieve together but now, she must move on alone. It is not easy for her but luckily enough; she has new friends with whom she is happy.

In honouring their friendship and keeping connected with her, Ruth has decided to be kind and caring for others, especially those experiencing hardships. She is determined to work hard and have a bright future since it was their dream.

Re-membering with those still alive

These young people experience hardships related to their life situation: suffering from the handicap, from mental health related problems and to the associated stigma, abuse, and violence, even from family members and close relatives. These young people should find how to raise their heads up (Sather and Newman 2015). Narrative practice proves to be a useful tool to use while working with the youth with handicap/ mental health related problems and when possible, with their families to minimize the discomfort the handicap brought in their lives.

Collective narrative practice

Being at the university and moreover in social work, is strength for them, for their family, for others who have a handicap and for the whole nation. It is a sign that 'a handicap/ mental health related problems' is not always an end of life. The reflection since the beginning of this work with the group is that empowerment of vulnerable people, strong collaboration/partnership

between them, their family members, and the community, all this through an enabling environment led to self-acceptance and positive change for every partner mentioned above. *The focus must be on the steps they are trying to make, to the achievements they have made so far and to their different abilities and skills that constitute their strengths.*

Providing space for members to tell their stories through collective narrative documents, share their pain and sufferings but also their resilience, strengths, skills, knowledge, hopes, and dreams is important to devise strategies to help them properly and to address social as well as environmental hindrances to their full development (Denborough 2019). The collaboration between community, social institutions, research institutions, governments and NGOs is crucial for successful interventions in the future.

Ubuntu values applied: what results for the young people experiencing stigma and discrimination?

The different methods used during this Narrative Practice were guided by different values of Ubuntu philosophy. The following section present some of the results.

This Narrative Practice created connectedness among the youth enabling them to share their stories, to talk about their perceptions of the available resources from their respective families and communities to meet their emotional, physical, social, and cultural needs (Marston 2015).

Ubuntu philosophy values the storytelling that upholds laughter/ amusement and engagement of the listeners. Ubuntu recognises that storytelling during childhood would develop children's social skills (Chigangaidze 2021). In the present case, there was no laughter but the engagement of listeners (other members of the group) and their own engagement towards others in the community, as well as development of social skills as illustrated by their testimonies. Students were encouraged to

share their own story and own values and commitments, which sparked the attention to what to emphasis on in their lives and increased their engagement to share openly.

This practice enabled them to focus on the positive side of life, try to learn from their limitations and to draw energy from what they used to see as negative. The use of Ubuntu allowed to promote the behaviours that make life meaningful in fostering healthy relationships and reducing human suffering. Ubuntu upholds the replacement of negative behaviours with positive humane behaviours (Chigangaidze 2021).

The double-storied account of lived experiences created the space for the understanding of the outcomes of their experiences, either positive or negative. Acknowledging and honouring the effects of hardship and the problems they have endured, while also shining a bright light on their responses, values, special skills, what is held precious. Applying the Ubuntu values led to replacing negative feelings with positive ones that are integrative of both the individual and community well-being (Chigangaidze 2021). So, with the young people trying to overcome hardship related to social and cultural limitations, Ubuntu is a philosophy to count on to take steps forward, to overcome barriers related to stigma and discrimination.

While practicing the re-authoring conversations and strengthening a second storyline, they were offered an opportunity to free a heavy burden from their shoulders and their hearts. After telling their stories, they were asked to reflect on it and its meaning to their lives. It was not very clear what the meaning should be, but one said that the experiences they have gone through are not meant to discourage them; on the contrary, it is a *bridge to a brighter* future (alternative story in the making) for them and for those experiencing the same situation. The Ubuntu values of solidarity, connectedness, togetherness, empathy played a big role in making this group of young people feel supported, together (Chigangaidze 2021). After the discussion,

they felt valued, released from the burden of the oppressive past, neglect, and sufferings.

Therefore, working with their family, friends and neighbours or the community in general is important to make possible their full integration. This is in line with Ubuntu and social work practice's views of the person in the context of the community, the person-in-the-environment, respectively (Chigangaidze 2021). Furthermore, when parents connected by a common experience of having a child with life-limiting condition work together for self-support and support of their children, they are strong enough to bring changes for themselves, their children, and their community. Working together has also to power to change the perception on terms used to characterize mental health and handicap (Marston 2015).
All have stories of friends and neighbours who were listening and comforting them, which made them realize the importance of listening to others. *They all developed the skills of listening and counselling*. The team revealed that they are always in touch with those people who were caring and listening (those who are still alive). The engagement of the listeners contributed a lot in changing the lives of the youth they were listening too and developed their social skills of listening to others (Chigangaidze 2021).

As future social workers, they are convinced that they will at their turn, use listening and caring skills in supporting services users. It is obvious that social work is connected to the Ubuntu philosophy upholding humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and promoting a pleasant and qualitative communal life in the spirit of family (Broodryk 2007).

Another important achievement is the illustration of stories through a tree of life (in the annex), which is used as a narrative therapy tool to advocate for fair treatment and promotion of the rights of people with handicap in their communities, at schools and at universities.

Working on memory highlights again the importance of solidarity, positive human relationships in the integration of vulnerable persons, especially youth struggling with stigma. Having a person who shows genuine love, empathy and compassion is a strong bridge, a strong foundation for a successful integration. *Being able to talk about the past events, whether positive or negative; living positively the grief and loss period is very important in the lives of human beings*. Thus, the philosophy of Ubuntu as a cultural method of mental health promotion informs us that being human is anticipated from the life quality of relationships determined by the incidence of positive and negative emotions and cognitive assessment for one's commitment in life. Ubuntu upholds fundamental and optimal humanity as it is rooted on fundamental virtues of love, self-control, and resilience, indispensable for good-quality negotiation (Chigangaidze 2021).

Working with memory is also important since it is a connection with the loved ones who passed away but also to re-membering with the ones they were no more connected with due to different reasons. As the Ubuntu emphasizes connectedness, solidarity, and mutual support (Mugumbate and Chereni 2019), re-membering is very important.

Another result of this narrative practice is the confirmation of be the conclusion that "youth with a handicap/ mental health related problems are able". This was achieved with Ruth who is member of a community instance to advocate for people with handicap. There is a Rwandan proverb meaning that a person with disability is still a person who has certain values: "*Akamuga karuta agaturo*" (a disabled person is better than a tomb/or a dead one). Disability does not mean inability when a person is still alive. They have potential to be discovered, developed, and used for the good of all.

They revealed that the sessions we have had enabled them to have another version of their lives, to understand the reasons behind the unsympathetic treatment by their families and to adjust with the difficult period the world is

going through. What comforted us during the narrative practice is that they disclosed that they are now feeling at ease in their families, which was not the case in the past. This is a positive outcome of the journey we have undertaken: bringing positive change starts with oneself, at home, within the family before expanding to the whole community.

With this positive outcome, this practice confirms the assertation of Ubuntu that the meaningful life depends upon the quality of human relationships and on positive dialogue within human relationships (Chigangaidze 2021). Unfortunately, the pandemic stopped almost everything; the plan to work with family members was not possible but at least we know from close follow up that there are positive changes in how they are being treated by parents and relatives. They are now members of their respective families; the re-membering action bore fruits.

The important achievement after this Narrative Practice with the youth is that they wish to use these skills and knowledge to make a difference/bring positive change for others. They were encouraged to bring forward these positive ideas starting from their close friends and relatives. One of them is now member of the Local Government representing people with handicap.
On our side as practitioners/lecturers from this practice, it became obvious that it is very important to listen to stories of our students, learn about the foundations for action and decision to know their motivation to study a given course, and understand their worries. Then, it is easier to guide them through their education journey so that they are empowered enough to deal with life challenges. They are an inspiration to us, as lecturers on how to bring innovation into how we structure our classes and other education materials. Ubuntu African philosophy advances our interconnectedness, our common humanity, and the responsibility to each other that flows from our connection (Chigangaidze 2021); in the actual case, the connection between lecturers and students. We learn a lot from their efforts as much as they learn from us; it is a parallel learning journey.

This practice is for us a foundation to revise how we deliver our teaching, how we impact the lives of those we teach and how the knowledge and skills imparted to them will be put in use to benefit the society.

Conclusion

One of social work values is to focus on positive aspects in the lives of service users: friends, family or any other support group, their skills and knowledge, their strengths, and aspirations for the future. It is somehow challenging to think about the future, to try hard to imagine how to reach their dreams when young people are faced with stigma and discrimination related to mental health or handicap.

To achieve successful integration and lead meaningful lives, there is a need for support from professionals, family, and the whole community because, as a Rwandan proverb states 'igiti kimwe ntigikora ishyamba' (One tree cannot make a forest) or "Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu" meaning that "a person is a person because/through other" (Tutu 2004).

Initiatives of working together, putting in place platforms for exchange is very important for them to support each other mentally and socially. These platforms offer an opportunity to go beyond the problems, admire achievements and think about the future, as stated by (Sather and Newman 2015).

The idea of working together, solidarity and mutual support as portrayed in Ubuntu philosophy inspired us to suggest to the youth to join an association or any other platform of people suffering from mental health problems or persons with handicap. Proper assistance, empathy and care mean a lot in the lives of youth fighting stigma and discrimination.
Ubuntu values promote the behaviours that make life worthwhile, promote health and reduce human suffering (Chigangaidze 2021). Solidarity adds

flavour to life, being in a group for mutual support is a strength, an assurance to reach far and a tool to fight against social injustices.

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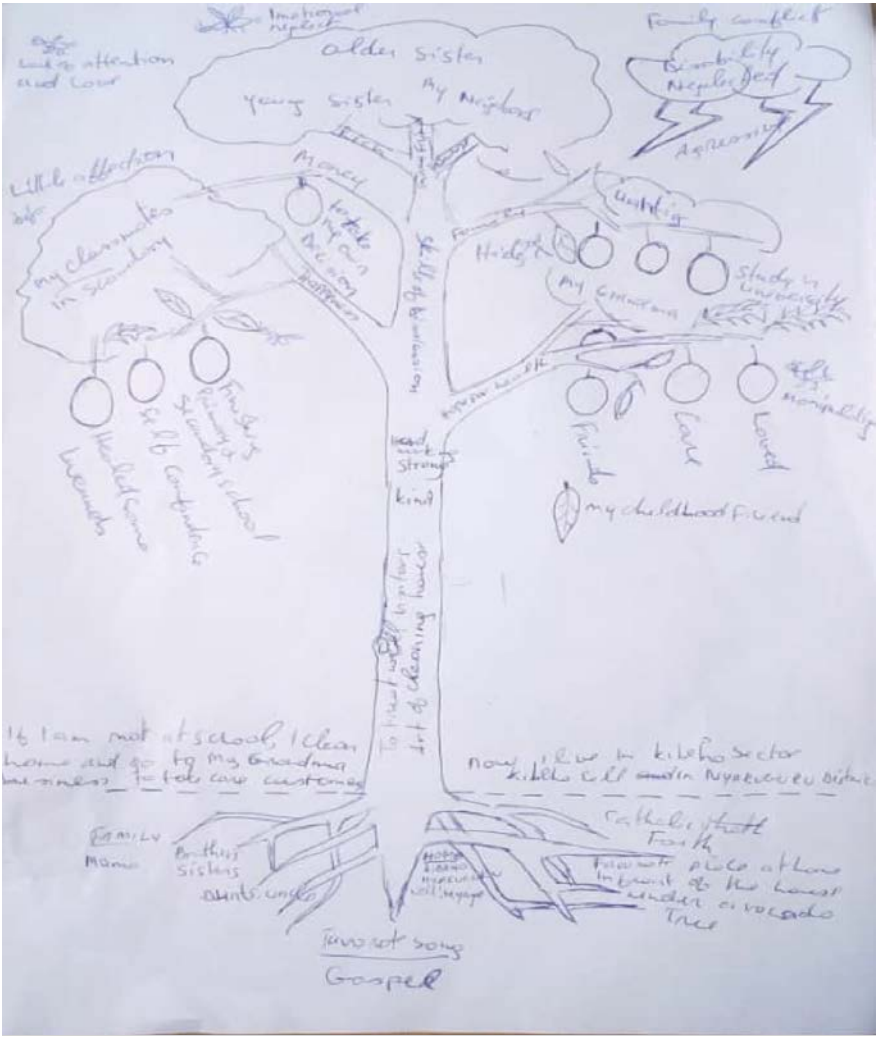
Annex 1: Tree of life for Ruth



Annex 2: Tree of life for Teddy

Chapter 13

The Potential of Family Group Conferencing as an Expression of Ubuntu

Jeanette Schmid and Joan Pennell

Biographies

Jeanette Schmid is a social work practitioner, researcher, and educator. Being South African has exposed her in theory and practice to the philosophy of Ubuntu. She has experience also in Switzerland, the United States and Canada, which has expanded her understanding of world perspectives. Her decade of work in Family Group Conferencing reinforced the value of working collectively and supporting connection and the relational. In recent years, Jeanette has been reminded how Ubuntu principles resonate with Indigenous Canadian ways of knowing, doing and being and facilitate decolonization, this fuelling her passion for social work responses to reflect Ubuntu.

With husband, sons, and cats, Joan Pennell, a retired professor of social work, lives in the south-eastern US state of North Carolina. This is a state with a long history of African American and Native American oppression and liberation. From an early age onward, she resided in different places, opening her eyes to the power of varied cultures. Her long-term work with family group conferencing confirmed her faith in the capacity of groups to form bonds of caring and support. All these experiences strengthened her appreciation of Ubuntu as a philosophy and ethics of making kinship.

Abstract

In the global North, social workers are typically inducted into individualized intervention, with the result that they lack the cultural understanding regarding collective, communal experience to integrate Ubuntu into their practice. We explore Family Group Conferencing (FGC) as a way of respecting and applying Ubuntu in Western, Eurocentric contexts. FGC, as a child welfare model, reflects Ubuntu principles and counters dominant paradigms. In understanding FGC's successes and challenges, social workers might have further insight into how to attend to Ubuntu precepts outside of its original African context in a way that is meaningful and relevant to diverse cultural groups.

Introduction

Family Group Conferencing (FGC) is a family decision-making approach that as originally intended, resonates with the principles and practice of Ubuntu. FGC thus serves as an instructive exemplar of how Ubuntu as a philosophy of community and an ethical framework for practice might be integrated into social work intervention. Relying on the decade-long experience Jeanette had as an FGC Coordinator in Toronto, Canada, as well as the expertise of Joan, a key facilitator in introducing FGC to North America, this chapter identifies how the values and processes of FGC intersect with conceptualisations of Ubuntu. Applying Ubuntu requires attention to critical contextualisation and the advancement of holistic approaches that are spiritually guided, urge justice for all, and strengthen family and community bonds. In addition to establishing the ways in which a practice such as FGC reflects the ethos of Ubuntu, we articulate barriers that could undermine the implementation of FGC within an Ubuntu framework and draw out general strategies for circumventing such obstacles.

Beyond making the links between FGC and Ubuntu, this chapter translates Ubuntu principles into a non-African social work context—particularly a North American environment where mainstream social work is typically

individualised, and most social workers lack exposure to collective forms of practice, but also where there is a strong presence of communal cultures, whether autochthonous or immigrant. FGC, though not widely practised, is familiar to a segment of social workers in North America. This link may provide a bridge for non-African and/or non-collectivist social workers to consider how Ubuntu is relevant to their practice and how it might thus be infused into their work.

In our orthography, we aim to be sensitive to 'Indigenous' being capitalized when referring to specific groups (e.g., First Nations, Inuit, and Metis) but being written as 'indigenous' in other contexts.

Our Positionalities

Knowledge is not neutral. As authors, we need to be transparent and reflexive regarding the influence of our social locations on the discussion of FGC and Ubuntu (Alan, Pease & Briskman, 2020).

Jeanette is a white South African, attentive to indigenous/local practices and to centering collective approaches that foreground and strengthen connections, foster collaboration, and privilege the voice of service users (and thus their culture and meaning making). This orientation emerges out of her experiences as a member of an anti-apartheid professional organization (Patel, 1992; Sacco & Schmid, 2015) and in Canada as a family group conference coordinator, program coordinator, and program consultant.

Joan became rooted early in the Society of Friends' (Quaker) beliefs of spiritual equality and communal discernment as well as a testimony against injustice and for peace making. Living in different countries, including Ethiopia as a child and Canada as an adult, connected her to different world perspectives and with Indigenous peoples, and to the work of opposing family violence and advancing family group decision-making (Pennell, 2023). She continued such efforts locally and internationally upon returning to the

United States (Pennell & Anderson, 2005). Later learning about Ubuntu, she felt an immediate respect for this spiritual framework and saw its deep relevance to making homes, communities, and the broader society places in which everyone could belong, grow, and contribute.

Both Jeanette and Joan recognize that being able to draw on a philosophy that valorizes the worldviews and practices of those of African descent opens new opportunities for relationship building. In trying to conceptualise Ubuntu, we acknowledge that the philosophy is prevalent across sub-Saharan Africa and potentially provides a guide to social work with children (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019).

Ubuntu as it relates to FGC

Ubuntu is an African worldview of inherent connection, the individual only finding meaning in collective bonds (Boesak, n,d.; Mandela, n.d.; Tutu, n.d; Wamara et al., 2022). Our humanity, identity, and achievements are tied to the humanness and efforts of others. Well-being is not simply personal but is fundamentally relational in that it is affected by the well-being of those around us and revolves around mutual caring and empathy. Ubuntu centres on harmony to facilitate human dignity, social functioning, and strong communities. In profoundly valuing all humans, Ubuntu suggests that men and women share power (Nzegwu, 2020; Oelofsen, 2018). Ubuntu makes visible not just connections between people, but also a holistic existence bound into the natural world (Chibvongodze, 2016; Radebe (2019), undergirding its relevance for environmental sustainability, land reform, indigenous social planning, social action, and community development initiatives. Ubuntu is a philosophy that needs to be understood in conjunction with further epistemologies for a holistic understanding of African values and an appreciation of the continent's diversity. It also has international relevance through its central concept "I am whom we are" which reflects an ontology of who we are, an epistemology of how we know, and an ethics of what we should do (IFSW, 2018).

Specific aspects of Ubuntu stand out when considering FGC. We will elaborate on these in our discussion. First, Ubuntu invokes key social work ideals such as humanism, mutual and reciprocal identification, compassion, solidarity, holism, participation, and communal support (Mayaka & Truell, 2021; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). Second, Ubuntu corrects Eurocentric biases that foreground and atomize individual experience and rights (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019) and avoid challenging inequitable structures harming families and their communities (Reisch, 2019). Next, Ubuntu offers a framework of communal responsibility and rights (Martinez, 2021; Van Breda & Sekudu, 2019), which are also articulated in the United Nations' (2007) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples. Using Ubuntu becomes a reminder of eroded societal values (Mabovula, 2011; Mathebane & Sekudu, 2017; Sekudu, 2019), though social workers are cautioned against mythologizing people's capacity to reactivate or rely on Ubuntu, particularly in communities that have become deeply fractured and carry the scars of intergenerational trauma. Additionally, Ubuntu facilitates social work's responsiveness to Indigenous cultures outside of Africa (Mayaka & Truell, 2021) and constructing the world as "All my relations" (Baskin, 2016), and directs attention to global Southern and collectivist perspectives, for example in supporting immigrants and refugees, as well as longstanding racialized local populations (for example, Giwa, Mullings & Karki, 2020). Finally, Ubuntu activates decolonizing social work (Sekudu, 2019; Van Breda, 2019). This might occur through the affirmation and valuing of local practice and forms of engagement, prioritizing the family and the community, as well as creating the space for healing, community self-determination, and recentering culture and ceremony (Baskin, 2016) and facilitating notions of "relationship, respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility" (Johnston, McGregor & Restoule, 2018, p. 13)

Family Group Conferencing in Child Welfare

Having considered the meaning of Ubuntu, particularly in relation to social work, we offer an overview of the FGC process before examining the ways in

which FGC and Ubuntu might intersect. FGC as an approach to culturally responsive family decision-making was first legislated in Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1989 with the passing of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act (Hassall, 1996). In 2017, cultural respect was signalled in the adoption of new titles for the 1989 legislation: for Māori speakers, Oranga Tamariki Act; and for English speakers, the Children's and Young People's Well-being Act.

In the 1980s, driving changes to Eurocentric child welfare intervention, Māori leadership forcefully spoke out against the cultural racism behind their children and youth's marked overrepresentation in child welfare and youth justice systems, placement outside of their communities often resulting in lost cultural identities and sense of belonging (Rangihau, 1986). It was hoped that in embracing a culturally resonant, collective form of decision-making and involving families whether of South Pacific, European, or other descent - child welfare and youth justice solutions that were meaningful and sustainable would emerge.

This chapter's focus on child welfare is not meant to diminish the value of FGC in other settings. Among others, these include youth justice (Shearar & Maxwell, 2012), mental health (De Jong & Schout, 2018), and older adult services (Beck, Lewinson, & Kropf, 2015).

We next identify key features of FGC. The extent to which these features are incorporated varies by the jurisdictions in which conferences are used. Before FGC is initiated in child welfare, it is incumbent on program developers and agency funders to ascertain local interest in conferencing and seek out cultural and community guidance on its philosophy, design, governance, implementation, and evaluation (Roby et al., 2015; Waites et al., 2004). Such guidance can be continued over the program through advisory councils or community panels involving local people and those with direct experience of child welfare who can provide consultation to child welfare workers and FGC

coordinators on family culture, service provision, and issues of racial, gender, economic, and environmental injustice with which families daily contend. Crucial over the long term is having in place legislation that specifies FGC's key principles, stipulates its use, ensures sufficient funding (Anderson, 2005), and devolves control over the program to local communities (Tukaki, 2021).

The FGC process in child welfare begins with the coordinator engaging in extensive, usually in-person preparation of family members and involved professionals. Children, youth, and adults in families are encouraged to participate with attention paid to what support they require for expressing their views (Pennell, 2005b). The preparation includes a dynamic expansion of the family circle, with each family member being asked who else might be part of the circle with the children and their families. In FGC there is an extensive investment in ensuring that all those who are connected to the child or wish to be so (including paternal relatives), are invited to, and prepared for, the conference (Schmid & Pollack, 2004). In situations of family violence, methods for safely including fathers and other people who have abused family members have been developed (Burford, Pennell, & MacLeod, 1995).

The meeting itself usually takes place in a venue at which all family members can feel comfortable over one day, though this can be extended. For instance, a Kenyan study reported that conferences were held primarily in a family home, children's school, or chief's office, with children present at least part of the time (Ottolini, 2011).

The conference is typically organized and convened by an independent FGC coordinator who is employed outside of the child welfare system. Food chosen by the family is served, childcare is made available, and families are supported in accessing the conference. The family chooses how to begin and end their conference, such as by prayer, song, words from a senior family

member, or simply taking their seat in the circle (FGC Ontario Provincial Resource, 2011).

As noted by the FGC Ontario Provincial Resource (2011), during the first phase of the conference, family members and service providers meet to again hear the child welfare concerns that have been shared in the preparatory process and ask questions about these concerns. The presentations are offered respectfully and clearly, without judgment calls against family members. In the second phase, the family group meets on its own and privately, without any facilitation or presence of service providers, though the latter remain on-site to provide any further information if this is required by the family. Plans include components to be carried out by the family group, community organizations, and government agencies.

Once the family group has crafted a plan, the full circle meets together again for the plan to be presented and formally approved by the child welfare authorities. Their approval signifies that they support the action steps and intend to authorize funding for concrete resources and professional services. If needed, the plan is presented also at court with the assumption that the judge will accept a plan that has been agreed upon by the family group and child welfare workers. Any FGC participant can ask for a follow-up, and times for such meetings may be built into the plan.

After the conference, the work focuses on carrying out the plan. What is important is that the plan's vital steps, not necessarily all, are honored, with the family group and workers carrying out their responsibilities. A family group member might serve as the monitor to remind service providers and families of the action steps. Because lives change rapidly, plans typically require reworking with the family group's consent.

The Intersection of FGC and Ubuntu

FGC is underpinned by several essential principles that ground the work. We highlight where these values echo those of Ubuntu. Noting that the FGC model developed in the aftermath of Māori protest against individualistic, Western systems of child welfare and youth justice, it is no surprise that there is a close connection between the values that underpin both FGC and Ubuntu. We outline several ways in which FGC and Ubuntu intersect and how Ubuntu might enlarge understanding of why and how FGC might nurture family leadership.

Expanding the Definition of Family

A fundamental FGC precept is that the Western notion of the nuclear family is expanded to include members of the extended family network (Burford & Hudson, 2000; Schmid & Pollack, 2004). This tenet emerges from the belief system of the Māori. As explained by Catherine Love (2000), a Māori woman of the Te Atiawa tribe and Ngati Te Whiti subtribe, the smallest societal unit for her people is the whanau, which includes the immediate and extended family, which is embedded within larger tribal units of the hapu and iwi. The whanau, rather than individual parents, are responsible for the children's upbringing. For a social worker to remove children is not only unnecessary because others in the whanau are there to provide care but fundamentally tears at the fabric of Māori social organisation. Māori children are inextricably bound within their whakapapa or genealogy, connecting them to their past, present, and future relatives; the land; and the spiritual order. Love concludes, state substitute care, such as a foster or adoptive home, can never replace Māori children's whakapapa.

The role of child welfare in extracting children from their homes and severing links to their cultural networks would likewise be of grave concern in Africa, where children are expected to grow into contributing community members (Mabovula, 2011). From an African worldview of communalism, the moral life is one of mutual caring and sharing of resources (Mupedziswa, Rankopo, &

Mwansa, 2019). In traditional African society guided by Ubuntu, caring for children's welfare was seen as the responsibility of the whole community (Mushunje, 2006). Thus, examining how FGC in child welfare might fit with an Ubuntu philosophy may assist with creating more responsive and respectful ways of engaging with families and their cultural communities.

Viewing Family as Resourceful

It is assumed in FGC that families want to care for their children, demonstrate resilience and have collective strengths (Montgomery, 2014), and that a widened circle increases the available informal resources and thus successful implementation of plans (Corwin et al, 2020; Schmid & Pollack, 2009). While it is suggested that a group that is too small may not be able to generate meaningful, sustainable solutions, there is no cap on who can or should be invited (FGC Ontario Provincial Resource, 2011). It is thus hoped that children experience their families as resourceful rather than as the core of the problem. A mutual sharing of resources allows children potentially to remain within the extended family network rather than being placed in stranger care (Ottolini, 2011). Such familial engagement becomes a reflection of family members' generosity, reciprocity, and care towards one another, as is the case also in Ubuntu (Kurevakwesu & Chizasa, 2020; Mabovula, 2011), which seeks to reconstitute relationships for the better (Maphoso & Keasley, 2015).

Establishing Belonging to Community

The family group is intentionally recruited in the recognition of the child needing a sense of belonging and connection. Conventional notions of attachment are disrupted by including ideas such as children needing to be identified with their culture, people, and land to feel secure. This mirrors Ubuntu philosophy, where the child is considered a significant member of, and belonging to, the community (Mabovula, 2011). Moreover, as reflected earlier, Ubuntu means that one's sense of belonging and confidence is rooted in knowing that one is part of a greater whole.

Upholding Family Leadership

FGC is essentially an empowerment approach that is family led. Instead of imposing a solution on a family group, FGC facilitates the ability of the family to take care of its own (Metze et al., 2015). This assumes that family groups make better decisions about their own needs because they generate plans tailored to their circumstances (Schmid & Pollack, 2004). This is 'relational empowerment' where the family network becomes the primary source of support (Metze at al., 2015 p.170). FGCs are a means of affirming and building family capacity and are intended to ultimately strengthen the communities around a child or children (Burford & Hudson, 2000). Hence, collective decision making recognises, reinforces, and widens the circle around the child. Ubuntu, too, is focused on communalism and collaboration and therefore collective decision-making, underpinning such processes with an emphasis on conciliation rather than conflict (Mabovula, 2011). A focus on conciliation at any cost could become problematic in FGC in the context of family violence if family members were pressured to reconcile (Hayden et al., 2014). What is important is that each member of the community has a voice, noting that the interests of each are bound up with those of the group's well-being (Mabovula, 2011).

Affirming Cultural and Spiritual Knowledge of Families

FGC processes are culturally accessible to families and affirm their decision-making modes. Families are encouraged to use their cultural knowledge to open meetings and guide their private decision-making time. Mabovula (2011) suggests the Ubuntu similarly is exercised in a particular cultural space. Ubuntu, in its acknowledgement of the spiritual, also permits this dimension to be named and integrated into FGC practice.

Advancing Community Care

FGC is expected therefore to promote interconnectedness and solidarity through its expanded definition of family, active inclusion, and focus on resilience and strength rather than 'bad' parenting. It recognizes that adult

and child safety is mutually interdependent, and that family wellbeing is reflected in children's wellbeing and vice versa. The integration of culture creates space for spiritual expression and a holistic approach to issues. In both FGC and Ubuntu, connection, collaboration, community, and collectivity are essential values. The welfare of one is seen as intersecting with the psychological and social health of the group or community. The strength of the individual is reflected in community strength, while familial or community robustness is impacted by individual functioning. The emphases on widening the circle, affirming family culture, activating informal and formal resources and centering service user knowledge mean that this approach represents what Freymond and Cameron (2006) framed as 'community care', contrasting this with the Anglophone 'child protection' and European 'family services' categories of child welfare responses in the North. The intersection with Ubuntu is evident here, as community care is promoted through notions of communalism (Madlovu, 2011).

Widening the Relational Lens

While there is a clear overlap between FGC precepts and Ubuntu, using Ubuntu philosophy more intentionally in FGC may strengthen the work further. For example, conscious application of FGC may enable FGC coordinators to engage more explicitly with the family's understanding of the relational, highlighting further their caring capacities. Using an Ubuntu lexicon may also allow for more sensitivity to what families convey to each other in their words and actions. As such, coordinators may use the language of ancestors, situating the family not only in current temporal relations but also historical and future relations. Joan remembers well her awe at learning how the private family time opened for one African American family. The grandmother with much dignity shared the family genealogy: She recounted that her own mother had been a slave and now today she had "60 grandchildren and 75 great-grandchildren" (Pennell, 2005a, p. 42). This honouring of the family's growth overtime reconnected the participants.

Having renewed their bonds, the family group began to make plans to promote the wellbeing of some of the great-grandchildren.

Yet another way in which Ubuntu might widen Western views is by challenging narrow ideas of motherhood to instead recognize how mothers, fathers, grandparents, and others connect generations and give meaning to relationships. Further, ways in which Ubuntu can strengthen FGC is the cultural emphasis on conciliation that could be used to reinforce a consensus approach. In another FGC illustration, the father attended the first part of the conference for his son but then needed to leave for his work shift. The boy's stepfather volunteered to drive the father to work. A long-term family friend explained to the coordinator the cultural significance of this gesture, noting that the bonding between the two men and the offer of the ride was "unheard of" in their community (Pennell, 2009, p. 86). This act of conciliation underlined to the family group that the two men could work together in support of the boy.

Finally, the application of Ubuntu may open ideas around where conferences are held, going beyond the notion of neutral venues to choosing places in which the family feels peaceful and in harmony. This might include churches for some African Americans or a cook-out for Cherokee families (Waites et al., 2004). Ubuntu might also speak to the implied moral obligation family members have to participate in collective processes and to offer mutual support. Thus, Ubuntu may offer Western social workers a broader vision regarding the possibilities for engagement but also adds to the ways in which families' processes can be understood and appreciated.

Lessons from the FGC Experience for the Integration of Ubuntu into Social Work

Considering the ways in which FGC and Ubuntu echo one another, there are lessons to be drawn from the FGC experience that might be extended to the ability of social work to meaningfully centre Ubuntu. This applies even as we

are aware that FGC has a relatively focused remit, whereas Ubuntu as stated is a philosophy, even if it can also be a practice framework (Gouws & Van Zyl, 2015). These lessons centre around positive applications, the dilution and abbreviation of FGC, the substitution of alternative methods, and finally inappropriately setting FGC up as a pan-Indigenous approach.

FGC as a Meaningful Response in Child Welfare

Anglophone child protection systems have been characterized as expert driven systems that are punitive, intrusive, and individualized, and that target poor, Indigenous, and racialized communities - thus frequently failing to keep children safe (Dettlaff, 2021; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Western child protection systems have come to recognize the importance of partnerships with and participation of family. In several locations, systems have increased their reliance on kin support for substitute care and sought non-adversarial approaches and hence viewed FGC as a potential mechanism for including the voice of families in matters that affect them (Schmid & Morgenshtern, 2017). FGC also is seen as useful in resisting the disproportional representation of racialized and Indigenous children in child welfare (Allan et al., 2021; Godinet et al., 2010). Additionally, as the need for culturally relevant intervention has become clearer, FGC is viewed as a culturally responsive tool. With a greater awareness of how detrimental deficit-based interventions are, FGC is further seen as a strengths-based intervention (Montgomery, 2014). Thus, FGC is a model of intervention that potentially addresses pronounced limitations of child protection systems. We have demonstrated that Ubuntu can potentially strengthen FGC, and in providing a meaningful way to address the deficits of Anglophone child protection, can resist racism and coloniality.

However, the challenges inherent in social work systems may prevent Ubuntu from being fully actualized, as we demonstrate below.

Dilution and Abbreviation

A first area where there might be lessons for the implementation of Ubuntu relate to the ways in which FGC principles and processes have been undermined. While FGC should be contextualized, what has been presented as local adaptation has in many cases been a dilution of the essential values of FGC rather than simply a change in format.

According to Schmid and Morgensthern (2017) and Schmid and Pollack (2009), FGC may be abbreviated and become technocratic where neoliberal and child protection assumptions prevail and risk and standardized and universal responses are foregrounded, regulatory, intrusive, and punitive responses are favoured, and families are viewed as blameworthy. Such assumptions may weaken the family's ability to be autonomous and self-directed. Moreover, the risk discourse inherent in Anglophone child protection systems and increasingly directing European family service approaches to child welfare (Biesel et al., 2020) provokes distrust of families and reserves attention for risk rather than strengths.

Examples abound. The definition of what constitutes a family is diluted or limited, or the associated procedures and available resources limit family representation. Moyle and Tauri (2016) report that some New Zealand FGCs have been held without any whanau (extended family) being present. FGC is also diminished where child welfare experts are unable to relinquish their decision-making authority and power, and assume that by doing so, they are ceding their professional expertise. Workers may not have the cultural knowledge to explore whanau relationships (Moyle & Tauri, 2016); coordinators and workers may not be adequately trained (Tukaki, 2021).

Further, we know from our experience that timelines adopted may not be in accordance with those deemed reasonable by the family, thus negating family autonomy. FGCs may be held during working hours, thus limiting participation to those who have the resources to attend. Confidentiality and

privacy concerns may be prioritized thus limiting the sharing of information pertinent to safety concerns with the wider family group. Families may be invited into an FGC as a once-off venture rather than as an ongoing partnership, consequently decreasing family commitment and trust especially where workers resume the reins of the case. Barriers may also include holding the conference in a physical space that is not perceived as welcoming by participants. Stacking professionals into the first phase of the conference or having a service provider enter the private space as a support for a family member may diminish rather than privilege family voice. Not investing adequate time in direct preparation may also undermine outcomes as might trying to limit the length of the conference.

FGC coordinators may be perceived as biased towards child welfare systems, particularly if it is not visible to families how the coordinator is distanced from child welfare decision making. Families may be expected to rely on their own resources instead of these being supplemented through external systems. Moreover, FGC requires the investment of front-end resources with the belief that changes emerging through the process are sustainable and long term. However, neoliberal funding approaches tend to have a short-term focus, and require standardized budgeting, line items not necessarily being able to accommodate the complex and diverse resource allocation emerging from FGC plans. Additionally, FGC programs are not funded adequately to ensure sustainability and model fidelity (Schmid & Morgensthern, 2017).

These varied ways of undermining the family's authority in the process may be carried out intentionally, though most often it would seem that such dilutions relate to organizational expectations and constraints and are unintentional consequences of a dominant child protection discourse encroaching on FGC and reinforcing application of familiar practices (Braithwaite, Braithwaite, & Burford, 2019). These FGC experiences suggest that there is a danger that the principles of Ubuntu will potentially be diluted and disaggregated, thus hollowing out the essential meaning of Ubuntu.

Practitioners should therefore be aware that these various barriers may all be exercised to limit the integration of Ubuntu principles into child welfare and/or social work practice.

Substitute Approaches

Instead of developing or sustaining an FGC program, alternative processes may be proposed. These have included intensive family work to avoid substitute care; family team meetings or wrap around where the family member or members constitute one part of a larger team; and rapid FGC for crises situations (for example, Crea & Berzin, 2009). Typically, these alternative approaches are expert-led, with family members being consulted, but not directing decision-making. Time invested in such processes is significantly less than the hours invested in North American FGC preparation processes or the day long conferences (Crea & Berzin, 2009). Family finders (Greeno, et al., 2019) have been appointed who generally prioritize forensic methods over an organic dialogue with identified family members, the knowledge gained often seen as pertinent only at the point of discharge from care.

We recognize that these various processes may have value in and of themselves and may be used in a way that respects family leadership and quickly returns children to their family or relatives (Pennell, Edwards, & Burford, 2010). Moreover, a recent Māori-led review of the child welfare system in Aotearoa/New Zealand urged instituting informal and recurring meetings with the family group ("Hui-ā-Whānau") with their governance devolved to the local community (Tuaki, 2021). Nevertheless, based on the FGC experience in North America, it can be anticipated that approaches will be used that appear to replicate Ubuntu but on closer scrutiny may only zero in on one aspect of the philosophy or offer a poor imitation. To resist such dilution, the practitioner needs to be grounded in the philosophy of Ubuntu.

A Pan-Indigenous Approach

It has been destructive to adopt a pan-Indigenous approach to FGC, and this may be the case for Ubuntu also. FGC as a process cannot be assumed to automatically have meaning to persons of all backgrounds and cultures. In the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, Kristen Basque (2023) observes that family circles rather than conferences are an "authentic experience" for the Mi'kmaq. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Moyle and Tauri (2016) state, FGC could, depending on the way the model is operationalized, be experienced as a formulaic and standardized process in a Western mould, and thus not be experienced as having meaning. Wherever a model is used, it is vital to adhere to principles rather than form (Pennell, 2004) and whatever the cultural background of people, to respect local helping knowledge rather than imposing a model (Pennell, 2023).

In applying these lessons to Ubuntu, the culture and priorities of each group need to be foregrounded. Not everyone may wish to adopt the language of Ubuntu. The practitioner needs to be extremely cautious that Ubuntu is not appropriated as a mechanism of external control, and instead needs to consider how Ubuntu can be used as a form of endogenous regulation responsive to the hopes of families and communities (Braithwaite et al., 2019).

The Role of Research

How research is presented also plays a role in the perceived value of FGC. This is particularly so in the current evidence-based environment that elevates randomized controlled trials over other forms of quantitative and qualitative research (Roo & Jagtenberg, 2021) and where evidence is needed to support expenditure on upfront resourcing. Applying the Ubuntu philosophy requires engaging with a larger group, which may be expensive, and it may be that unfavourable research outcomes might be used to argue that centring work in an Ubuntu philosophy is not worth the cost.

FGC has been applied to address child welfare concerns in multiple countries, the research outcomes pertaining to these initiatives being somewhat mixed. There is substantial research supporting positive outcomes for families regarding agency in decision making, safety in the home, and permanency in keeping children with family or kin (Allan et al., 2021; Corwin et al., 2020; Marsh, 2021; Mason et al., 2017; Ottolini, 2011). Dijkstra et al. (2016) also identify research that suggests FGC involvement does not improve outcomes for vulnerable children. Further, the ability for children and women to have voice has been questioned. Contradictory research outcomes might be attributed to the diverse adaptations of the original New Zealand/Aotearoa model that have emerged out of contextualizing the process (Schmid & Morgensthern, 2017). Adaptation is reflected in many ways, from monikers used to describe processes to FGC implementation strategies. Because operational consistency is needed for any meaningful positivist comparison (Lalayants et al., 2021), it becomes difficult to compare like with like. Consequently, what research methodology is appropriate to identifying FGC success is debated, as are the definitions of success – which should reflect family perspectives, not only professional ones (Mitchell, 2020). Many argue that FGC, like many social work interventions, cannot be evaluated using randomised controlled trials, especially as the lifeworld of families is complex and dynamic (Roo & Jagtenberg, 2021). Program evaluation may be more appropriate (de Jong & Schout, 2018, p. 164) and qualitative approaches also may reflect process more adequately (Mitchell, 2020).

It may similarly be challenging to assess the value of Ubuntu which also is focused on the functioning of a complex, multifaceted system. Ubuntu can be translated into a practice approach, but it is not a program that can be assessed in a quantitative, positivist way. It may be more useful to explore local meaning making regarding Ubuntu as a philosophy.

A Passing Phase

Further, Ubuntu may be passed off as simply a passing phase in the same ways that seem to have happened with FGC. FGC gained currency at a time when family partnership was being lauded in some sectors of particularly Anglophone child welfare. Interest seemed to peak in the early 2000s. For example, in British Columbia, Canada, under the Child, Family and Community Services Act of 1996, FGC was introduced into legislation as an option social workers needed to consider when working with families (Schmid & Sieben, 2008). But initial eagerness seemed to wane. In recent years, however, the Ministry of Child and Family Development (n.d.) has again appointed collaborative practice facilitators, perhaps because engaging with Indigenous families in ways that fit for them is being stressed politically. These workers are expected to engage in a range of family involvement strategies, including FGC, mediation, and traditional community practices. In Ontario, Canada, FGC expanded from the city of Toronto into the province in the 2000s but while there have been some successes, has struggled to ensure sustainability and is not necessarily seen as timely or relevant (Schmid & Morgensthen, 2017). These waves of interest in the approach suggest to cynics that FGC is not a foundational way of engaging with families in the child welfare system, and rather simply a passing 'flavour of the month'. At the same time, mainstreaming the FGC approach without shifting dominant assumptions has inevitably led to the dilution and hollowing out of FGC, and a checkbox approach. Moreover, positioning FGC as a panacea for all family troubles, regardless of how it is applied, sets up the model for criticism and failure.

Thus, if Ubuntu is to be adopted as a social work philosophy, existing underlying dominant paradigms must not only be challenged but also decentred and perhaps displaced. If this does not occur, Ubuntu remains vulnerable to being watered down, and instrumentalized, the essence of the philosophy being compromised. Taking lessons from FGC, organizations and

associated systems need to shift to ensure that internal and external values intersect with Ubuntu precepts.

Conclusion

Because FGC resonates with many of the values underpinning Ubuntu, FGC can be an effective instrument of Ubuntu - where every effort is made to adhere to the core principles and values of the model, and where the goal is to capacitate and empower families to make and follow through on decisions that make sense to them. Moreover, understanding the successes and challenges of FGC serves as a template for appreciating how to integrate the worldview of Ubuntu into all contexts of social work practice.

Our analysis of the intersections of FGC and Ubuntu suggests that centering Ubuntu philosophy may strengthen social work practice in many ways. Adopting Ubuntu may make practitioners aware of a range of frameworks that might describe the lived experience. The language of Ubuntu further enables social workers to frame and foreground relationships among people. Being aware of Ubuntu also alerts us to the traditions of collective being that we might unintentionally carry and speaks to a desire many have for connection with others to whom they 'belong'. An Ubuntu lens in social work might highlight the ways in which notions of familial solidarity can be used to strengthen the care of individual family members, may offer a culturally appropriate response to families who are Indigenous or racialized, and may offer new opportunities for partnerships with families. Although not the focus of this article, Ubuntu additionally allows the integration of the ecological and environmental in understanding relationships with others and the natural world.

Because Ubuntu relies on a collective understanding of issues and communal problem-solving, organisations wanting to introduce this philosophy into their service delivery need to interrogate how conventional individualised social work processes may undermine this goal. They need to shift the focus

from the individual 'client' to recognizing 'clients' as family and community members. Short-term change may not be immediately evident in applying Ubuntu and a longer-term view should be adopted. Shortcuts in processes simply will not deliver the same outcomes. Organisations similarly need to understand how the dominance of neoliberal thinking makes the implementation of Ubuntu much more difficult. Thus, social service agencies should consider both the epistemologies and ontologies they centre and external factors such as funding and key policies that shape service delivery.

We do wish to underline that an initial consideration is not to 'mainstream' Ubuntu. The notion of 'two-eyed seeing' (Marsh et al., 2015) creates space for recognising Indigenous and non-Western approaches in social work. However, for Ubuntu to meaningfully influence social work practice (and education), it may be necessary to decentre and displace certain tenets of social work that are valued in dominant social work thinking. Ubuntu should rather be considered a philosophy that is intentionally applied rather than being subsumed or co-opted into dominant approaches. For Ubuntu not to be ghettoized and seen as relevant only to the 'other' it may therefore be necessary to de-centre Eurocentric social work practice. While Western social workers may not necessarily 'live' Ubuntu, they can actively create space for Ubuntu philosophy and associated practice.

Social work is at its core relational, and this philosophy is no clearer than in the maxim "I am because we are". Infusing Ubuntu into our social work practice and teaching will strengthen our engagement with people coming from collective and communal cultures, but also reinforce notions of respect, responsibility, and reciprocity.

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[1] FRIENDS supports parent advisory councils. See https://friendsnrc.org/parent-leadership/parent-advisory-council/ An example is the North Carolina Child Welfare Family Advisory Council. See https://friendsnrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NC-Child-Welfare-Family-Leadership-Model.pdf

[1] See http://www.nzlii.org/nz/legis/consol_act/ota1989145.pdf

Chapter 14

Ubuntu Philosophy for Socio-Economic Integration of Female Sex Workers in the Rwandan Community

Liberata Mukamana, Consolée Uwihangana, Eugénie Byukusengea, Aline Mutabazia, Charles Kayaboc and Stella Matutina Umuhozad

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Biographies

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Dr Eugénie Byukusenge is a lecturer at the University of Rwanda, College of Business and Economics, School of Business. Her PhD research was about business performance of SMEs in Rwanda. This is closely linked with her broader research interests which include entrepreneurship, venture creation, women entrepreneurship, management of SMEs and human resource management. She is also a team member of the innovation project entitled 'Financial education approach for coping with female sex workers in Rwanda'. This project aims to integrate socially and economically female sex workers in the community, which links well with ubuntu.

Ms Aline Mutabazi is a lecturer at the University of Rwanda, College of Business and Economics, School of Economics. She is currently a PhD student at University of Rwanda in the programme of Economics. She holds a Master's degree in Economics of Development. Her research interests focus on development economics, health economics and public policy. She has participated in the initiation and implementation of different projects that use Ubuntu philosophy to improve the welfare of the Rwandan population.

Mr Charles Kayabo is the Chief Executive Officer and Founder of LUTI (Let us Transform Life Initiatives) Organization which intervenes in social work practices for community transformation. He holds a Masters' degree in Leadership and Development. In that regard, and in collaboration with the University of Rwanda, he has contributed to the research projects on

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Ms Stella Matutina Umuhoza is a lecturer and researcher at the University of Rwanda, School of Public Health. She has over ten years of experience working in public health systems and social work practice. Currently, she serves as a member of the Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) Consultative Group and Health Financing Core Group in Rwanda. Over the years, she has provided technical assistance to various government institutions and international organizations in developing policy documents and briefing notes on gender-based-violence, equity, equality and social justice, influencing decision making at the national level. Abstract

The phenomenon of sex work is increasing among young women aged 20 and above in Rwanda. This study used a mixed approach in working with female sex workers from Huye, Gasabo, Musanze and Rubavu Districts. Factors leading women into sex work may include poor economic conditions, lack of love and support from parents/guardians and peer pressure. The consequences are many: physical and emotional violence, sexually transmitted infections, stigma, discrimination and poor parenting. Participants to the study revealed that sex work is not a good option to end their problems, and they are willing to quit if offered alternatives for survival. The study uses Ubuntu philosophy to promote respect, dignity and socio-economic integration of sex workers. It recommends empowering sex workers with basic economic life skills.

Key words: *sex work, Ubuntu, socio-economic integration, Rwanda.*

Abstract Translation [Kinyarwanda]

Umwuga w'uburaya mu Rwanda ukomeje kwiyongera ku bagore bakiri bato bafite guhera ku myaka 20 kuzamura. Ubu bushakashatsi bwakorewe ku bagore bakora uburaya batuye mu turere twa Huye, Gasabo, Musanze na Rubavu. Amakuru yakusanyijwe hifashishijwe uburyo bukomatanyije, harimo gukusanya imibare n'ibiganiro mu matsinda mato. Zimwe mu

mpamvu zitera kwishora mu buraya harimo ubukene, kubura urukundo rw'ababyeyi n'ubufasah mu muryango ndetse n'igitutu cyo kwishushanya n'urungano. Ingaruka zo gukora uburaya ni nyinshi: Ihohoterwa, kwandura indwara zandurira mu mibonano mpuzabitsina, kunenwa mu buzima bwa buri munsi, guhezwa ndetse n'uburere butaboneye bw'abana babakomokaho. Abakoreweho ubushakashatsi bagaragaje ko gukora uburaya ataribwo buryo bwiza bwo gukemura ibibazo bafite, ahubwo ko bifuza kubuvamo baramutse babonye ubundi buryo bwo kubaho. Ubu bushakashatsi bwakozwe bushingiye kuri filozofiya y'Ubuntu igamije kwimakaza ubwubahane, agaciro ndetse no kongera gusubiza mu buzima busanzwe abakora uburaya. Iyi filozofiya itanga inama yo kongerera ubushobozi bw'ibanze bwo kwiteza imbere mu bukungu no gucunga imishinga iciritse.

Introduction

Ubuntu philosophy, as an African construct, has progressively been recognized in the academic literature. Previous studies revealed that Ubuntu has been applied by various disciplines such as psychology (Mkabela, 2015), education (Oviawe, 2016), leadership (Ndlovu, 2016), business (Woermann & Engelbrecht, 2019), nursing (Marston, 2015), social work (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019; van Breda, 2019; Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013) among others.

In social work, Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2013) highlighted the importance of Ubuntu and noted that it is part of social work as it is contributing to all aspects of daily life. It is in this regard that the existing literature has indicated some of the applications of Ubuntu to various aspects of social work, including the fight against corruption (Dudzai, 2021), families living with mental illness (Engelbrecht & Kasiram, 2012), justice (Nnodim & Okigbo, 2020), mental health (Chigangaidze, 2021), ethical decision making (Mabvurira, 2020), children (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019), gender (Worthington, 2011), and refugee protection (Mhlanga, 2020).

However, while the importance of Ubuntu has been noticed in the social work context, there has been little consideration of Ubuntu on female sex workers' issues. Available literature has limited its scope to explaining the negative consequences of selling sex and has remained silent on the strategies that can help female sex workers to exit. For instance, the study conducted by Qayyum et al. (2013) revealed that sex work has negative impacts on women's health as well as their social situation in the community. Women involved in sex work are in danger of being infected with HIV/AIDS and other types of sexually transmitted diseases. They are socially excluded, their rights are not respected, and they occupy a marginal position in access to resources that can help them promote their welfare. Further, Schulze, Canto, Mason, and Skalin (2014) conducted a study to assess the impact of sex work on gender equality. This study revealed that poverty and lack of employment opportunities were the main factors forcing women to enter sex work.

Rwanda has a big challenge of sex work that is increasing among young women in their 20s and 30s, adolescents of 15 to 20 years, and women older than 30 years (Nyataya & John, 2017). But its scope and size are still difficult to know and effective ways to address it are yet to be devised (Mutagoma et al., 2015). Some attempts have been made in the context of public health with an emphasis on condoms and contraceptive measures to prevent sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies (Ingabire et al., 2019). Yet, these strategies are more directed toward improving their health outcomes rather than motivating them to leave sex work. Other strategies advocate punitive measures involving arrest and incarnation, advancing justifications that these harsh punishments will force them to look for other survival means outside sex work (Binagwaho et al., 2010).

Ubuntu and female sex workers

Ubuntu is generated from the Zulu proverb 'Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' which can be translated as "a person is a person because of or through others" (Fraser-Moleketi, 2009; Tutu, 2004). In the context of African culture, Ubuntu

is an expression of showing compassion and humanity to needy people and can contribute to building and sustaining justice in communities and establishing continuous caring (Khoza, 2006; Luhabe, 2002). The Ubuntu philosophy indicates the interconnectedness and the individuals' responsibility towards each other (Nussbaum, 2003). Young girls and women as well as families facing social and economic problems should be approached in the spirit of Ubuntu to find solutions together. As African societies are communal, such values as interconnectedness, solidarity, and support for each other should be strengthened and maintained so that none is left to fend for themselves and end up in deviant behaviour like sex work to gain a living. Bury (2011) noted that it is very important to understand the vulnerabilities associated with female sex workers to provide social protection to them, therefore, the need to use Ubuntu philosophy.

Given the increasing number of female sex workers in Rwanda, this study aims to examine the factors that push young women to enter sex work, identify the consequences they face while doing sex work and discuss how Ubuntu philosophy can help overcome that situation so that female sex workers are eventually reintegrated socially, emotionally and economically in their respective communities.

Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A quantitative approach was used to collect the information related to the demographics of the respondents using a semi-structured questionnaire. The qualitative approach was used to collect lived stories about the causes and consequences on female sex workers, their children, and their society through in-depth interviews. The respondents to this study were female sex workers including women and girls who accepted that selling their sex was their primary source of income. To be included in the sample, female sex workers had to be over 18 years old at the time of interviews. The age of 18 was chosen as the minimum since it is defined as the

age of majority for acting independently by the Rwandan law nº 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and families. Most of interviewed female sex workers operated from various venues including bars, nightclubs, and open streets.

Due to a lack of information on the number of female sex workers in Rwanda that could give the researchers an idea of the size of the research population, the respondents were selected by using an area probability sample. Thus, one district in Kigali, namely Gasabo, and three districts outside Kigali; namely Huye, Musanze, and Rubavu, were chosen. The districts outside Kigali were reported as the three fast-growing towns by the report of the World Bank Group of 2017 on reshaping urbanization in Rwanda. They were therefore purposively chosen as study areas since the female sex business is known to be highly concentrated in urban cities. Finally, the non-probability sampling methods including purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used to select the respondents.

Johnson (2014) recommends using the snowball sampling method when the researcher is investigating 'unacceptable' societal behaviour such as prostitution because potential participants would run away from the researchers for fear of possible ramifications. From that recommendation, potential respondents were identified from their networks. To obtain the first contact in each selected district, the researchers were assisted by the key partners working with sex workers, namely LUTI in Huye District and ASSOFERWA in Gasabo, Musanze, and Rubavu Districts.

The initially sampled respondents helped researchers recruit other participants after informing and reassuring them that their confidentiality and anonymity would be guaranteed. Due to the sampling method used, the number of respondents turned out to be 268 compared to the previously planned 200. In fact, some female sex workers showed up without invitation after they were informed by their colleagues.

To obtain the information, a questionnaire bearing two parts was used. The first part was meant to collect quantitative information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age at involvement in sex work, level of education, job before involvement in sex work as well as the causes and motivation of becoming a sex worker. The second part was meant to collect qualitative information on life experiences after becoming a sex worker. The participants were asked to reflect on the causes of entering sex work as well as the various consequences of the sex business on their lives, their children, their families, and the community. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews using digital audio recorders and the data collection process took place in March and April 2019.

The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data was done by using some procedures. To carry out quantitative analysis, the data were first entered by using SPSS version 18.0 and that helped to generate frequency tables about the demographic characteristics of the respondents. To carry out qualitative analysis, three steps were involved: First of all, the data which were audio-recorded in Kinyarwanda were transcribed and then translated into English. Second, the responses were read and compared and that helped to generate themes and sub-themes vis-à-vis the objectives of the study. Finally, the analysis per se was done by reporting the opinions of the respondents using verbatim quotations extracted from English transcripts.

Concerning ethical guidelines, the study was authorized by the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST) which has the mandate to regulate research in Rwanda (see letter No NCST/482/92/2018 issued on 21/02/2019). To maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents, pseudo names were used. Other ethical guidelines were respected by telling the respondents that they were free to participate or not participate in the research. Those who were willing were requested to sign the informed consent forms. As the study entailed sensitive questions, the interviewees were informed of their right to determine how far to go in their

answers, which question to answer or not answer, and drop out of the study should they wish not to continue. The participants were equally allowed to ask any questions related to the study before giving their consent to be interviewed. Prior to data collection, the respondents were assured that the study was to be conducted for strictly academic purposes and that confidentiality protocols would be observed while analysing and discussing the data.

Presentation of results

Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Socio-demographic variables chosen by this study were district of residence, district of origin, age, education level, marital status, number of children, and duration of sex work (see Table 1 below). Those variables were chosen because they encompass the major attributes related to the causes of being involved in sex work and some insights about the consequences.

Characteristics		Number	Percentage
Total respondents		238	100
Respondents by District of residence	Huye	66	27.7
	Gasabo	72	30.3
	Musanze	50	21.0
	Rubavu	50	21.0
Respondents by origin	From the district of residence	98	41.2
	From a rural district	139	58.4
	From the neighbouring countries	1	0.4
Education level	None	43	18.1
	Primary	142	59.7
	Secondary education	52	21.9

	Above secondary education	1	0.4
Age group	Below 21 years old	33	13.9
	From 21 to 30 years old	112	47.1
	From 30 to 40 years old	82	34.5
	Above 40 years old	11	4.6
Marital status	Never married	151	63.4
	Widow	5	2.1
	Married	2	.8
	Divorced or separated	80	33.6
Duration in sex work	From 1 to 5 years	99	41.6
	From 6 to 10 years	63	26.5
	From 11 to 15 years	53	22.3
	From 16 to 20 years	19	8.0
	Above 20 years	4	1.7
Number of children	0	27	11.3
	1 and 2	151	63.5
	3 and 4	55	23.1
	5 and 6	5	2.1

Table 1: Demographic information on the respondents

Table 1 above shows that more than half of the participants had been in sex work for more than 5 years of whom 61% were under the age of 30. It also shows that 90% of the participants had children while 63% of them had never been married. This implies that many children were living with their mothers with no recognized fathers.

Factors leading to female sex work.

The results of this study show that the factors leading to female sex work are intertwined in economic, psycho-social vulnerabilities and living in the house of female sex workers.

Poor socio-economic background

Poverty and related poor socio-economic background of the respondents were the main drive to enter sex work. Research participants indicated that they had no stable source of income to finance their living conditions prior to entering sex work. One of them revealed that:

> My mother died at my young age of 14, I don't even know my father. I stayed with my mother for three years and with the help of one of my friends, I went to Kigali to find a job. I was employed as a house girl. After a few months, I started having sex with my boss. He was offering me clothes and shoes in return. As we were living in a compound with many houses and families, the wife of my boss managed to be informed by the neighbours about my relationship with her husband. One day, she went to work and returned earlier than expected. That time, I was having sex with her husband. She waited for the night to send me out. I didn't have anywhere to go. I went and met sex workers on the street and from that day, I started my career. (A sex worker respondent aged 19, Gasabo District).

Interview participants argued that the only way they can feed their families and themselves is to turn to sex work. One of them said:

> You know what, selling sex is not easy. It is rather a sacrifice. Just imagine standing on street the whole night, waiting for someone you don't have an appointment with. Many times, you can wait until morning without getting any client and you go back home with empty hands. We do this job because we cannot find an alternative solution for surviving. (A sex worker respondent aged 32, Huye District).

The participants to this research acknowledged that they cannot satisfy their basic needs with the money they obtain from sex work. They live in inadequate housing, do not eat or feed their children properly, find it very difficult to send their children to school and do not, in most cases, have medical insurance. One of them expressed such a situation in the following terms:

> The money I obtain is not sufficient to buy all I need in life, for example, paying for the rent, buying food and clothes for my children and catering for

> other necessities! I think this money is damned! (A sex worker respondent aged 39, Rubavu District).

Some female sex workers try to do petty trade but are not always successful since their work of going out at night prevents them from working properly during the day as revealed by one of them:

> …if I am drunk, beaten or not paid, it will not be possible for me to do my small business the following day. Then, my business will slow down or even stop. That is why I am in constant economic deprivation. (A sex worker respondent aged 35, Gasabo District).

This economic vulnerability leaves female sex workers and their children into poverty which makes it impossible for them to enjoy adequate standards of living.

Psycho-social vulnerabilities

The most important psycho-social factors reported include lack of love, lack of support from parents or caregivers and bad living environment. The narratives from the respondents revealed that some had lost one or both parents at their early age and were mistreated or lacked appropriate care from their stepparents. This resulted into siblings taking over child caring responsibilities as one girl confirmed:

> After the death of my mother, my father decided to marry another woman and it was not possible to understand each other. I went to live with my grandmother, but she was not able to provide for my basic needs. So, I decided to go to town where I was received by one of my former colleagues who was a sex worker. Like her, I decided to start offering sexual services to get money. I have been in this for two years now. (A sex worker respondent aged 19, Huye District).

Other female sex workers have been rejected by their families because of teenage pregnancy. One respondent narrated that ordeal in the following terms:

> I was impregnated by a teacher from our neighbourhood when I was 13 years old. After giving birth, my parents refused to host me. One day, they refused that I sleep in their house and was obliged to spend nights outside. After spending nights outside for two weeks, I decided to leave my family and went to town, joined sex work and I now have two children. (A sex worker respondent aged 29, Rubavu District).

Another respondent added:

> I got pregnant when I was 16 years old. The day my parents heard about that bad news I was refused to stay at home. I managed to find a house girl job in Kigali. I did the work for two months and then left it to join sex work. (A sex worker respondent aged 28, Gasabo District).

Being hosted by female sex workers

Young girls living with female sex workers become used to seeing sex relations and end up considering them as normal. Living with sex workers play a big role in pushing young girls into sex work as one of them said:

> I was a house girl in the family of a female sex worker. When some of her customers came to see her when she was not around, they suggested that I have sex with them and I accepted because I was paid. After leaving that household, I continued with sex work. (A sex worker respondent aged 24, Musanze District)

Sometimes, children imitate their mothers as one those mothers implied:

> My first born is a sex worker too, we are even together here! It is painful! I try my best to change my behaviour so that she changes too and starts another direction in life. (A sex worker aged 50, Rubavu District).

Another fact is about women trafficking done by old sex workers. As they are getting old, they are not sexually attractive and choose to host and sell young girls who are new in that career.

> Before my life in sex work, I was a house-girl. I received an information from my friend that sex work job is paying more than the job I had. One night, when everyone was sleeping, I left that home and went to a woman who

> accepted to accommodate me. I obtained her contact through my friend. She was 47 years old. The clients used to come to her home, and she directed them to me. The money I was paid was shared with the woman. I took me three months before I decided to live her house and work on my own. (A sex worker respondent aged 22, Gasabo District).

Consequences of doing sex work

This research sought to establish the consequences of selling sex on female sex workers, their children, and the Rwandan community, in general.

Physical and sexual violence

Most respondents pointed out that they were beaten and raped by their clients. They added that, on many occasions, they provide sexual services, and they are either not paid or paid less than what was agreed upon. One female sex worker gave her testimony in the following terms:

> There is a day I can't forget in my life. I was on the street waiting for a client. Luckily, I found one whom we agreed Frw 3,000 Frw ($3) for a night. We went to the lodge. After providing the service, he went out for a while, but I was not paid yet. In few minutes, three men in uniform entered the room and asked me what I was doing there. I could guess they were sent by my client to chase me out without being paid. They harassed me and two of them raped me. (A sex worker respondent aged 40, Huye District).

Apart from being refused payment for the service offered, female sex workers are sometimes beaten. One of them narrated the experience saying:

> Look at these scars on my face; I even don't have all my teeth. I was once refused payment by one of my clients who, in addition, beat me to death. (A sex worker respondent aged 38, Rubavu District).

Nevertheless, female sex workers do not report their violence to competent authorities due to various reasons. One respondent said:

> ...We fear to report our violence to the authorities because we are not

> credible to them. We are considered as liars, deviants. We are somehow excluded from our society. (A sex worker respondent aged 35, Musanze District).

Another female sex worker emphasised that point saying that:

> We are not considered as human beings; nobody cares about our situation. (A sex worker respondent aged 32, Gasabo District).

Sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS

The study participants reported not using protective condoms when they are proposed interesting money, even if they know that it is one of the measures to protect themselves.

One testimony was laid out as follows:

> Sometimes, a client promises to double the price if you accept to have unprotected sex. Then, you think about the house rent not yet paid, the school fees and the food for the children, and finally, you accept. You may be infected with HIV/AIDS, but you don't have the choice. Life is very hard. (A sex worker respondent aged 32, Rubavu District).

If a married man sleeps with a female sex worker who is infected with sexually transmitted diseases, he can easily transmit the disease to his wife and the whole society may suffer from the consequences of unprotected sex. The alarming situation is that, among the buyers of sex, there were a good number of young boys (aged between 20-25 years). The dangers of spreading HIV/AIDS among young males and the carelessness hitherto attached were expressed as follows:

> ... Most of our clients are young boys or single males who are not ready to get married. I don't care if they use condom or not! What I need is money to take care of my children. (A sex worker respondent aged 42, Rubavu District).

The statement above shows that at a point in their lives, female sex workers are dehumanized and that feeling leads them not to care about the life of their clients, the latter's family members and the consequences of their health choices.

Stigma and discrimination

Sex workers and their children are stigmatized and discriminated against and all that has a negative impact on them, on their status in the community, especially on the growth of their children. To confirm that, one female sex worker said:

> Given the clandestine nature of our daily work, I have experienced social stigmatization and vulnerability. Local leaders have removed my names and my kids from the list of the beneficiaries of Community-Based Health Insurance Scheme because I am a sex worker. None of us was allowed access to decent housing via government community housing programmes. (A sex worker respondent aged 32, Musanze District).

Another one corroborated the statement arguing that:

> My name was once put on the list of those who would benefit from a small start-up capital at the local level. When the list reached a higher decision-making level, I was removed on the pretext that a sex worker cannot do anything else apart from selling sex! So, what do you want me to do if nobody believes in my capacity to change? (A sex worker respondent aged 37, Rubavu District).

Apart from being denied the right to enjoy the socio-economic support, sometimes, sex workers are also denied the right to participate in community development as disclosed by one of the respondents:

> Let me tell you, in my community, nobody can elect me whether in a local government position or in women's council at the local level even though I have the intellectual and physical capacity. But because I am labelled 'indaya' (sex worker), I am discriminated against. If we were approached and integrated in the community, it may be one channel for

> our behaviour change. (A sex worker respondent aged 43, Musanze District).

Children also experience stigma and discrimination in the community and that affects their intellectual, psychological and social growth. A respondent sorrowfully shared her experience:

> It is a pity that our children are victims of our behaviour. For example, when they are playing with others in the neighbourhood, you know that sometimes children fight one another. When such a situation happens, other parents say that it is not surprising because they are the off springs of sex workers. This hurts us and our children, too. Some parents stop their children from playing with ours or chase away our children when they go to their homes. This is quite horrible! (A sex worker respondent aged 35, Gasabo District).

The consequences of stigma and discrimination against the children of sex workers while the former is at school were also highlighted. One lady depicted the impact of such stigma on her children saying:

> My children were always pointed a finger that their mother is a sex worker to the point that one abandoned school. (A sex worker respondent aged 33, Gasabo District).

Another sex worker also agreed that her behaviour really impacts her child's school life:

> My daughter likes school very much and always tells me to stop my behaviour because it affects her at school. She keeps telling me that sometimes while in class, she recalls about what happened at home, the man she has seen coming and she loses concentration, yet she wants to learn and succeed. (A sex worker respondent aged 35, Rubavu District).

Poor parenting

Children of sex workers are generally left unattended to at night while their mothers go out in search for clients. In some cases, these children are said to be given drugs (sedatives/sleeping pills) for a long sleep to not wake up during the night. On that point, one participant revealed that:

> … I have a child of ten months. During the night, I lock her in the house. I put milk in the baby's bottle with a sedative and place it in the bed exactly where my breast should be. When she wakes up, instead of taking my breast, she finds the baby's bottle and feed herself". (A sex worker respondent aged 28, Gasabo District).

The same woman reported the challenges that the children of female sex workers face when the latter are caught up by security people:

> … When we are rounded up by the police, we are transferred to transit centres for some weeks. Only God knows how our children survive during our absence…. (A sex worker respondent aged 28, Gasabo District).

Another respondent pointed to a similar situation as follows:

> My neighbours know what I do. Wherever I live, I make sure to befriend my neighbours because I know that they will assist me one day or another. So, I leave my two year old child in the house and do not lock the door just in case… When my neighbours do not see me in the morning, they immediately understand what happened to me and take care of my child. This is not the type of care and education I would wish to give to my child but I do not have any other choice. (A sex worker respondent aged 26, Huye District).

It is sometimes difficult or impossible for female sex workers to show affection and emotional support to their children. One of female sex workers confessed that:

> Due to violence and other problems, I face, it is very difficult for me to love and take care of my children properly. Sometimes, I am the one insulting and abusing them for nothing. I do not care if they have school materials or if they go to school clean. All that affects them and has an impact on how they love each other or even how they love me (A sex worker respondent aged 34, Rubavu District).

Failure to show love and care to children leads to the inability of female sex workers to discipline their children and that, in turn, is likely to lead to a dreadful children's conduct. With lots of regrets, one of them confirmed that:

> I started sex work when I was 18 years old. Now I have four children from different fathers. My first born is in sex work too. She dropped out of school while she was in Senior 3. My son is among the 'marine' [a street children gang based in Kigali]. I have everything to take care of them because my clients are rich men who give me a lot of money, but my behaviour has affected them. I regret all that, but it is too late. (A sex worker aged 45, Gasabo District).

Some female sex workers are afraid of what will happen to their children who always watch the dirty job they are involved in. One of them expressed such fear as follows:

> ... I have two daughters aged 10 and 12, respectively. If I receive a client at home, they know that they should find a place where to go and come back after the client has left. But I am afraid that they will follow in my footsteps. (A sex worker aged 36, Rubavu District).

Discussion of the Findings

The findings from this study have exposed a number of factors which push young women to enter sex work, namely lack of family love, care and support; family conflicts and lack of good values which ought to have helped them develop their personality as well as their economic and social capacities. All this has damaged their self-confidence and personality to such an extent that they have accepted to sell their bodies for money.

As Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2013) argued, such life experiences are against the values of *Ubuntu*. It is in this regard that *Ubuntu* ought to play a big role in restoring the lost confidence of female sex workers. This can be done through family promotion policies in which family members will be empowered to understand their roles as parents or children, be able to prevent and address problems without opting for sex work. Furthermore, it is

advisable to reinforce existing community networks such as 'Family Evening' (umugoroba w'umuryango), 'Friends of Family' (inshuti z'umuryango) and 'Mediation committees' (abunzi) to educate family members on their roles in fighting against deviant behaviours and sexual addictions.

Children of sex workers may also face life challenges because of their mothers' behaviour. Community members consider them as undisciplined and do not want them to play with their children. Female sex workers acknowledge also that they are not good mothers due to their behaviours that are incompatible with mothering responsibilities (Praimkumara & Goh, 2015). The obligation to go out for search of clients at night pushes them to give sleeping pills to their children for a long sleep to stop them waking up and making noise when they are not at home. This is totally against humanness promoted by *Ubuntu* philosophy.

According to Marston (2015), the concept of *Ubuntu* would assist the child, the family, and the community to make sure that the child is closely linked to society. In the same way, Beckham et al. (2015) revealed that the absence of female sex workers to their duty of mother exposes their children to bad living environments that put their life in danger. It is evident that the children of female sex workers experience stigma, discrimination, abuses, and mental health problems including depression, anger and trauma, among others (Willis, Vines, Bubar & Suchard, 2016). Therefore, the concept of *Ubuntu* is encouraging all family members to work together, respect everyone's responsibilities, especially parents so that all the children feel loved, supported, and comfortable being at home.

In this respect, strengthening *Ubuntu* philosophy and values of humanness, respect and solidarity involves considering female sex work as a community problem rather than individual problem. This idea has been supported by Metz (2011) who noted that individuals are characterized by communal nature where they must maintain their identity and solidarity with others. This requires reinforcing traditional values of self-respect, mutual respect,

and mutual support as the principles of *Ubuntu* philosophy. These moral values should be instilled into children at an early stage so that none in the community is left alone to fend for themselves or suffer alone. Next to this, female sex workers and their children should be morally and psychologically supported and guided into the right direction.

Lastly, as Mupedziswa, Rankopo and Mwansa (2019) argued, *Ubuntu* philosophy is encouraging teamwork and collaboration where group support and cohesiveness are promoted. Mupedziswa et al. (2019) added that, from *Ubuntu* perspective, it is the responsibility of everybody to take advantage of community initiatives and ambitions that contribute to the development of the community. Likewise, Migheli (2017) noted that African countries should consider *Ubuntu* as a critical tool to reduce conflicts and poverty. Using *Ubuntu* in the context of female sex workers in Rwanda would be important to empower them by providing them with such basic life skills as vocational skills and small income generating skills to increase their chances in the labour market by preventing them from gaining their lives from sex work. Self-help groups (*ibimina*) should also be organized to enable them starting these small income generating activities.

Conclusion

As discussed above, female sex workers in Rwanda are facing many problems such as poor financial and living conditions, discrimination, stigmatization as well as sexual, emotional, and physical violence. Thus, poverty, inequality and sex work are interlinked as most sex workers are poor young women (Longo et al., 2017).

The majority of participants were convinced that sex work is not a good option to solve their problems. They do that job due to lack of alternatives for survival. They are conscious of serious consequences of their negative behaviours on themselves, their children, families, and the whole community. Their children are negatively affected by their lifestyle which results into severe mental health problems like depression, trauma, and

substance abuse. This calls for *Ubuntu* philosophy to help these female sex workers along with their children, not only to solve their problems but also empower them to be active participants in the problem-solving process.

Female sex workers who participated in this research were willing to quit. It is a process to which the whole community is called to contribute by showing them compassion, understanding, and empathy and by promoting respect and support for their socio-economic reintegration. This calls in *Ubuntu* philosophy as a foundation for social change. Once *Ubuntu* philosophy is well understood and correctly applied, all human beings, former female sex workers included, will be well treated and integrated in the community where they will contribute to changing their living conditions.

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Chapter 15

A Critical Review of the Refugee Camp System in Africa: An Ubuntu Perspective.

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Contact

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Biographies

Victor Chikadzi is an academic at the University of Namibia. His research interests are in the area of social justice, social protection, child protection, sustainable livelihoods and social entrepreneurship. Victor largely adopts a social justice and human rights perspective in most of his research and this is influenced by the Ubuntu philosophy. Victor believes Ubuntu should form the basis of policy and decision making in all aspects of human life if the world is to become a better place for all.

Emma Leonard is an academic committed to social work education, practice and research as a means for furthering a social justice agenda. She believes in the oneness of humanity and true Africanness that prioritises community over individual interest. Having witness the power of communalism during the struggle for Namibia's independence and living in a country that gained its independence in 1990 as a result of true solidarity from especially independent African States, Emma spurns the current wave of Afrophobic conduct in Southern Africa. She however believes that as Africans we can decolonise ourselves and re-learn how to co-exist respectfully.

Janet Ananias is a social work educator, researcher and practitioner. She is teaching in the Department of Psychology and Social Work at the University of Namibia in a wide range of courses such as Social Work with groups, Social Welfare Law, and Social Work Theoretical perspectives, Foundations of Social Welfare. Her research interest includes amongst others child neglect, child fosterage, social gerontology, mental health and refugees. Her personal and professional values and principles are strongly guided by the Ubuntu philosophy.

Abstract

Immigration is increasingly becoming a thorny issue globally due to a myriad of pull and push factors which force people to move from one country to another. Refugees account for a significant portion of immigrants in Africa due to civil wars, political persecution, and economic crises among other factors. As part of dealing with the refugee 'problem' in Africa, many countries adopted the camp system which is a form of containment although it is not seen in this way within the prevailing public discourses. Using the Ubuntu perspective, this paper problematizes the issue of refugee camps as a form of detention and confinement which has Eurocentric origins and goes against the African notion and practice of Ubuntu. We argue that the refugee camp system is rooted in coloniality informed by western 'ways' which are foreign, 'inhumane and un-African and needs a rethink.

A translation of abstract into Khoekhoegowab

Hūb nâ an gûgâxas ge arosen ra garpisib kha hoa hūbaisi gomgâxa dīxūse ra ī, hākhonagus di gomaxasigu di tsarab xa, hîa khoena nē hūba xu nau hūb ga ra doe kaiba. Afrikab nâ Hūb nâ angûgâxa-aon di nāsa âba ra kuruuin ge hū-aona, gaeguigusi torogu, gīgōsi khamasa mâsigu, tsî marisâukhāsib di gomsigu xa ra aromahese, oron guina gaikhâis xa. Nē hū-aon di gomsiga oresa Afrikab nâ hōbas aroma gu ge gui hūga anharaga kurusa ge khōoatsoatsoa. nēb a gau hū-aon di gomsiga khō!nom!noms dibase, îb ga

hûhâsigu di hoadi nâ hanu gaub ase mûhe tama kara ī xawe. Ubuntu mûgāgauba oab ge nē ôanâ haweba hū-aon di anharaga sîsenūs di gauba ra gomsihawimā, khō-omgā tsî gaenons, hîa Europaba xu ra huis dib ase tsî nās kha Ubuntu sîsenuib oagu hâsa. Sida ra noaoa-ūs ge hū-aoanharagu di gaub a gâiāgaeguis di gaub nâ a gaogaosa tsî hûn di gauba oa a unusa khaisa, hîa a augasi âigauba, khoesi soraxa tsî Afrikaî tama tsî âigâsa hâba hâ khaisa.

A translation of abstract into OtjiHerero

Omatauriro wovandu okuza momahi wavo okuyenda komahi warwe, otjiṉa tji tja rira okuiya monyama mouye auhe mena roviṉenge ovingi pekepeke mbi ṉiṉikiza ovandu okupita momahi wavo na vyarwe mbi nanena ovandu komahi ngo. Omapu nge taurisa ovandu ovengi tjinene mOafrika owo nga: ovita pokati kovature, oṉiṉikizire poo ondatumisire yoporotika, nouzeu mongorongova; okutamuna tjiva wawo uriri. Otjorupa rwokuzengurura omatokero wovataure mOafrika, omahi omengi otji ya zikamisa otumbo twovataure otjomuano womaṯiziro omasemba wovataure nangarire kutja kape munika nao otja komahungi nge hungirwa mokati kotjiwaṉa. Okuza meho roundu mena rovandu, etjangwa ndi mari tara kotumbo twovataure otjomuano wokuṯizira ovandu mondeko poo motjovakamburwa mbya yetwa i yovaapa va Europa nu mbu ri omuano mbu pirura ongaro ya Afrika indji youndu mena rovandu. Eṯe matu munu kutja omuano wotumbo twovataure wa zikama mohuurire yomiano vyovaapa mbi ha pwiririre Oafrika, mbi yamburura ongaro youndu nu mbi ha ketere Oafrika nu mbi mavi sokuripurirwa rukwao.

Introduction

Immigration is increasingly becoming a thorny issue globally due to a myriad of pull and push factors which force people to move from one country to another. Refugees account for a significant portion of immigrants in Africa due to civil wars, political persecution and economic crises, among other factors. As part of dealing with the refugee 'problem' in Africa, many countries adopted the camp system which is a form of containment although

it is not seen in this way within the prevailing public discourse. Albeit a feature in a few African countries during the colonial era, the camp system was and remains a concept that is foreign to the 'African' way of handling immigration emergencies.

The immediate aftermath of independence from colonial rule for many countries was characterised by humane and progressive ways of handling refugee crisis in liberated African countries. The spirit of solidarity, unity and collective orientation in dealing with African problems was common. The then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) promulgated a refugee policy that sought to provide guidelines on protection of refugees fleeing their home countries for various reasons (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2022). During these decades of colonisation, African countries readily welcomed and largely integrated all persons from within Africa who sought refuge in their national borders (Sebola, 2019). This approach embodied the spirit of Ubuntu - a recognition of our common origins as Africans but more importantly as human beings. The founding fathers of Africans independence at the time understood that continental unity was an imperative pursuit and this was to be seen in how countries supported and helped each other in not only fighting colonial rule but in accommodating each other's citizens.

Sadly, when the curtain of colonialism finally came down with the coming of independence member states began to move away from the previous refugee protection regimes that embodied Ubuntu. As noted by Masuku, (2018), many African countries gradually started to realign their immigration policies by adopting those of the global north which were exclusionary. Using the Ubuntu perspective, this paper problematizes the issue of refugee camps as a form of detention and confinement which has Eurocentric origins and goes against the African notion and practice of Ubuntu. It argues that the refugee camp system is rooted in coloniality informed by western 'ways' which are foreign, 'inhumane and un-African and needs a rethink.

The context of refugees around the globe and in Africa

The refugee problem has existed since time immemorial and it dates back to ancient- times when people were forced to seek refuge in other lands due to factors such as war, family conflict, and famine. In recent times, factors such as political persecution, tribal conflicts, economic crisis and wars account for the widespread problem of people migrating to seek refuge in other countries within and across national borders. The chosen destinations are often places where refugees believe they would be able to have a better life (UNHCR, 2016; United Nations News, 2021). Amnesty International (2022) estimates the number of refugees globally to be around 26 million and it is believed that 85% of these refugee populations are being accommodated in the global south with Africa accounting for the majority of cases. Due to factors such as civil wars and economic decline which is rife in Africa, the continent remains the leading host as well as refugee generating part of the globe (Rutinwa, 1999; Sebola, 2019).

According to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention countries are obliged to afford refugees certain basic entitlements to ensure that their worth, dignity and right to safety, food and security is guaranteed. There is also an expectation that host countries, together with other relevant stakeholders, work closely together to find lasting solutions especially for refugees who are accommodated in camps which are seen as a transitory measure (UNHCR, 2016). In 1969, the then OAU which later morphed into the African Union (AU) adopted the OAU Refugee Convention to provide guidelines dealing with the refugee crisis in Africa which at the time was exacerbated by the armed struggle for independence from colonial rule by colonised countries. At the time of its adoption, the OAU Refugee Convention was by then a pioneering endeavour as it was the first regional refugee protection instrument globally (UNHCR, 2022).

Throughout the decades of colonial domination of Africa, liberated African countries gladly welcome persons seeking refuge many of whom were

coming from countries which were still under colonial rule. Many of the refugees would move to liberated African countries where they could freely organise for both armed resistance as well as pushing for diplomatic onslaught to push pressure on colonial regimes to end colonial oppression and persecution (Rutinwa, 1999; Sebola, 2019). Thus, as a way of showing solidarity amongst African states, liberated countries would readily welcome refugees to stay, work, study and freely engage in any endeavour that helped with their struggle for independence (Masuku, 2018). Communities would gladly welcome refugees and support them with their integration and visible formalised social protection programmes were in place to support refugees. In true African solidarity, refugees seamlessly integrated themselves into mainstream communities of their host countries (Okello, 2014). In rare cases where refugees were placed in a camp setting, they would receive the support they needed and enjoyed all the rights necessary for safeguarding their dignity (Rutinwa, 1999). The spaces were not characterised by the containment and extreme policing measures that have become a common feature of many African refugee camps in recent times.

As the struggle for independence ended in Africa, many countries began to focus their attention inwards to push for nation building and ensure adequate service provision to their peoples (Okello, 2014). At the time, the expectation was that refugees would be able to go back to their home countries upon attainment of independence. Sadly, the fight against colonialism was soon replaced by many other perpetual intercountry conflicts which led to continued displacements of persons. Thus, instead of the refugee situation subsiding, in some places, it worsened (Okello, 2014). The continued proliferation of refugees in postcolonial Africa has resulted in a policy rethink in many countries and refugees are now seen as an inconvenience that needs to be managed (Rutinwa, 2014). Groenewaldt (2010) notes that the policy shift in Africa on matters of immigration is in part an imitation of Europe's policies which are largely exclusionary and harsh.

The camp system with its Eurocentric origins has thus become one of the favoured ways of handling the refugee crisis.

In Southern African, countries such as Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe adopted the refugee camp settlement as a refugee containment strategy. The camp system restricts free movement and refugees have to rely on food rations from stakeholders who are responsible for camp administration since they cannot be gainfully employed outside of the camp (Masuku, 2018). The camp system usually has adverse effects on the overall welfare and wellbeing of refugees. The limits placed on refugees' movement infringes on their ability to enjoy other basic rights. Scholars such as Idris (2017) and Groenewaldt (2010) note that while refugee camps are designed with the aim of providing for and protecting refugees, in reality it is a place that precludes refugees from accessing many other rights such as freedom of movement, the right to work and the right of association, amongst others. Furthermore, camps are not suitable for human habitation on a long-term basis as it is meant to be a temporary measure to contain refugees while a suitable solution is sought which can give them permanency. Sadly, refugee camps are increasingly becoming a perpetual feature of many countries and people would stay indefinitely in such spaces despite the limitations and adverse conditions (Idris, 2017; United Nations General Assembly; 2018).

The origin of refugee camps

The camp system is largely rooted in Eurocentric thinking. It was used as a militarily institution to facilitate mobilisation for conquest and/or an institution to subjugate and control the conquered. As noted by Forth and Kreienbaum (2016) one of the pioneer advocates of concentration camps was the British General Thomas Kelly-Kenny. He commandeered one of the largest army camps in Britain and it was an institution through which the majority of British soldiers were mobilised for war. Concentration camps for civilians were later established and their format was a replica of military camps and camps where prisoners of war (POWs) were kept. Soldiers and

POWs were meant to live a bare minimum existence where it is about survival rather than living or striving. Thus, camps were always seen as a very temporary measure and people were never supposed to be exposed to prolonged tenancy in such a harsh and dehumanising space.

As the British colonial tentacles spread into Africa and other places, concentration camps began to sprout in these conquered spaces as instruments of social control and domination during the many guerrilla wars that the British had to fight in their quest for global supremacy. Writing on the origins of concentration camps in the South African War of 1899–1902, Forth and Kreienbaum (2016, p. 245) note that,

> As the war degenerated into a prolonged guerrilla conflict, Britain turned to scorched earth tactics, driving women, children and non-combatant men from their farms and concentrating them in fortified towns, thereby severing guerrillas from the civilian support networks upon which they depended. For the purposes of social and military control – as well as humanitarian relief – authorities subsequently accommodated these populations in a system of purpose-built suburban camps. It was thus that the term concentration camp entered the global lexicon.

Apart from Britain, there are also other colonial superpowers that adopted the camp system as a tool of social control and domination during wars for colonial conquest. For example, Spain placed Cuban peasants in fortified towns between1895 and 1898. The United States of America (USA) military also used concentration zones in the Philippines between 1899–1902 to control civilian populations. Similarly, Germany also established concentration camps in the then South-West Africa (now Namibia) in a systematic genocide of the Herero and Nama people from 1904–1908 (Forth & Kreienbaum, 2016). It is also common cause that Germany used concentration camps as places of social control, torture and extermination of the Jewish population during the Holocaust.

Refugee camps are thus a phenomenon that was inspired by these early dehumanising concentration camps based and rooted in subjugation and domination. The camp signifies control rather than protection. It signifies loss of autonomy and denial of being in its fullest measure. There is nothing Afrocentric about refugee camps, neither is there anything humane about such an institution. Refugee camps are among the manifold institutions that signifies Africa's disconnection with its roots. Ubuntu, "*I am because you are*", is a living concept rooted in the realisation that people are one. In that oneness we find solidarity and define our course of life. We suffer together, we celebrate together and we succeed together. On the contrary, refugee camps are an institution of separation which provides a convenient distinction of the deserving and undeserving, the stranger and belonging, us and the other (insignificant other). Refugee camps are present in Africa as one of the colonial legacies; of Africa inheriting colonial institutions and ways of life which are not compatible with Ubuntu. Since time immemorial, among the manifold tribes of Africa visitors were always treated with the same dignity and respect which was accorded to the locals. This civility was rooted in Ubuntu and an understanding of our common origins as humanity.

To exist in a camp setting is to be relegated to the margins of society. Camp life is based on a rudimentary existence where the focus is largely on surviving and making it each day at a time without any reasonable certainty about 'tomorrow' and what it holds. Social work is a profession founded on the ethos of social justice and it affirms the worth and dignity of all persons regardless of colour, tribe, nationality, status, class or any other distinction. In this regard, the phenomenon of refugee camps globally but more so in Africa is something social workers must find to be problematic. Refugee camps are not compatible with the values of social work. The camp system is discriminatory, racist, tribalistic and rooted in narrow national considerations that work to the detriment of other humans. Refugee camps may be a normal phenomenon of the global north where they were 'authored' and are 'owned', but it remains a strange phenomenon to African-ness

although embraced by many countries in Africa. Hence, our assertion that many leaders and people in Africa are an epitome 'European minds in black bodies, a people who have lost their heart and soul of what it means to be Bantu (people).

From an Afrocentric perspective, one cannot be both human and dehumanise one another. This African notion is reinforced by Freire (1970) who noted that when we dehumanise other people, we in turn dehumanise ourselves by those very same acts. Freire (1970) introduces the concept of objects versus subjects. When people are treated as objects, they are dehumanised, they are dispensable and undeserving of dignity. On the contrary when subjects are treated with dignity and respect, they are worth and deserve to be heard and seen. Based on this dialectical juxtaposition of objects versus subjects by Freire, it is clear that refugees camp represents a process of objectification. Refugees within a camp system represent a people with a suppressed voice, a people denied of autonomy and freedom, a confined people and thus, an 'imprisoned people'. It is a space of the bare minimum, a space of extreme rules and regulations that do not apply to subjects (citizens). It is a place where given a choice, no one would ever want to exist in. Why then should countries adopt such a policy position of confining and detaining refugees? Refugee camps are nothing but an improved version of a prison which is sanitised by a change of lexicon but the essence is the same. It is a space of desperation, a place of limited freedom and highly regimented. Such an institution is devoid of Ubuntu. It is un-African and decolonisation of African institutions cannot be complete until refugee camps are eliminated and a more humane system of care is introduced based on human compassion, justice and human dignity.

The notion of Ubuntu

The principle and practice of Ubuntu within African cultures underscore the idea that to be biologically human is not enough to qualify one as such, rather humanness in acquired progressively and perpetually by living in a

harmonious way which affirm the worth and dignity of other persons. Many values and principles of social work such as the recognition of the dignity and worth of persons and valuing people as unique are an embodiment of the Ubuntu philosophy (Mhlanga, 2020). Hence, Ubuntu is a central notion guiding the practice of social work within the African context (Kurevakwesu & Maushe, 2020). Ubuntu has also become a global idea as it has gained universal acclaim. In 2021 the World Social Work Day celebrations adopted Ubuntu as a central theme and adopted as a core notion in the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development for 2020 to 2030 (Chigangaidze, Mafa, Simango & Mudehwe, 2022). In an assertion that speaks to the global appeal of Ubuntu, Van Breda (2019) argues that in order to live in harmony with one another and the environment, Ubuntu calls us to embrace each other as humanity and not just focus on those related to us.

Although Ubuntu is central to African ways of life and even expressed in policies and practices of countries such as South Africa (Mutsa, 2020), the acceptance of one another as Africans, especially immigrants from African States, is gradually being eroded (Mogoboya & Montle, 2020). This anti-foreign sentiment is also increasingly becoming a common feature in official policy positions of different countries in areas such as child protection and service delivery. As we argue in the chapter, refugee camps are a direct contradiction of the Ubuntu philosophy (Sebola, 2019) and camps mirror Africa's gravitation towards the alien ways of the global north which are embodied in the global north's continued quest for postcolonial economic, political and social domination of Africa as an unequal global partner.

The colonial, racist and oppressive roots of the camp system: An incompatibility with Ubuntu

One of the greatest tragedies of the African struggle for liberation from colonial domination was that countries fought for independence without theorising what independence meant and would mean in a postcolonial order. Thus, independence from colonial rule was loosely translated to mean

black majority rule. The many struggles for independence in Africa were fought by men and women whose mould, design, thinking and way of being had become deeply rooted in coloniality. Those who saw the dawn of independence and democracy in Africa neither fully understood nor did they seek to reconnect with the 'Africa' that was, before colonialism came. As such, African liberation 'heroes' simply inherited colonial institutions and the ways of life of the colonisers remained deeply entrenched in African people. The people African countries had at the onset of their independence were no longer a people of Africa but a people in Africa. For the people of Africa are a people whose ways of being and rooted in African-ness and a people in Africa are simply bodies of persons who have lost their connection to African-ness.

It is therefore accurate to characterise Africans at independence as European minds in black bodies. The ways of Europe became the ways of Africa. Ever since then, Africa is still struggling to regain its 'heart and soul' of African-ness. Decolonial studies are an attempt by African scholars to reconnect Africans with African-ness. It is an attempt to go back in time and answer the eternal question; who are we? We are the Bantu meaning people. Being Bantu is not a permanently assigned identity but one that has to be authenticated through Ubuntu. When we lose Ubuntu (our humanness) we cease to become Abantu (a people); we dehumanize ourselves. To this end, Ubuntu is central to being African. Ubuntu must be embodied, demonstrated and lived through Africa's policies, its institutions and its process in economics, politics, health and social life. It is against this backdrop that we problematize refugee camps as an institution devoid of ubuntu. We argue that the refugee camp system is rooted in coloniality informed by western 'ways' which are foreign, racist, inhumane and un-African and needs a rethink.

Ubuntu in action in the colonial order and struggle for independence

During the struggle for liberation, many of the struggle stalwarts guided inter country movements in humane ways which was an epitomised Ubuntu. Nations did not look inwards, rather, African solidarity was the common theme. For several decades of the colonial struggle, liberated African countries readily admitted all persons coming from countries across Africa who needed refuge (Rutinwa, 1999; Sebola, 2019). Similarly, Masuku (2018) argues that liberated African countries allowed people seeking refuge to enter their countries where they were integrated into the local population and could freely move, work, study and conduct business. Further, Okello (2014) notes that during this time social protection was not provided for people seeking refuge, rather the refugees were expected to seamlessly integrate themselves into local communities. While the assertion by Okello (2014) is true to a limited degree because what was largely absent was formalised social protection regimes. Instead, there was indigenous social protection systems based on informality when looked at through Eurocentric lens. Settling in of refugees was not that difficult because local people accepted, accommodated and supported the 'visitors' in a display of Ubuntu, the spirit of African solidarity, harmony and co-existence. This oneness, camaraderie and concern for the welfare of those in distress was a true embodiment of Ubuntu in action. One's struggle was everyone's struggle. This was a living example of the "I am, because you are". If it could be done then during difficult and resource scarce times, what has changed in many of these African countries? What stops all countries from adopting the same humane way of dealing with the refugee crisis?

Groenewaldt (2010) rightly notes that immigration policies in Africa were largely influenced by the adoption of instrumentalist immigration policies in the global north which are based on an attempt to limit freedom of movement. This Eurocentric way of operation is not in any way compatible with the prior humane policy during the colonial era where countries

accommodated refugees through open integration. Why should African leaders copy the ways of the global north? While scholars such as Rutinwa (1999) argue that the shift in refuge policies in the postcolonial era was triggered by the marked increase in the refugee population in Africa, it can and should not be a justification for denying human dignity to persecuted persons. What Africa needed then and still needs now is a coordinated response based on actively addressing the push factors that are leading to the refugee crisis. African solidarity now needs to shift from mere accommodation of refugees to actively and collectively working to prevent and speedily address any potential situations that breed immigration crisis. Such a holistic approach would drastically reduce the number of people seeking refuge and it would make integration a more obvious option especially for those countries that hide behind the scarcity of resources as a reason to keep refugees 'imprisoned' in camps under extreme conditions less favourable for human existence. If integration of refugees was possible during the struggle for freedom from colonial domination, it should be much easier in a postcolonial order. Sadly, political misgovernance in postcolonial Africa is at the heart of the refugee crisis. When the spirit of Ubuntu is lost in governance, it cascades to all areas of society with devastating ripple effects. In this regard, refugee camps are largely a resultant by-product of failed governance in both the refugees sending and receiving countries.

Refugee camps as spaces of precarious existence

Refugees are persons running away from painful circumstances. The pain escaped from is soon replaced by other manifold forms of pain in a refugee camp. Life in a camp is a precarious existence, nothing is certain and people live at the margins of society far away from opportunities and normal existence. Thus, refugees can be characterised as a people running from the fire into the frying pan. In this case, the fire (push factors in the home country) is worse than the frying pan (refugee camp) but it is still a difficult situation. It is survival that comes at a heavy cost. Given the no choice situation that refugees have, they simply settle for life in a refugee camp albeit reluctantly.

The refugee camp is a place of precarity, solitude, pain, confinement and bare minimum existence not compatible with the African way of life which is guided by Ubuntu. Below we discuss the several ways in which refugee camps are a direct violation of the afro-centric practice of Ubuntu.

Refugee camps as a denial of being

When persons are confined in refugee camps, it is in essence a tacit denial of their being. The conditions in refugee camps are largely appalling. It is a miserable space to be, albeit for the desperate; it is better than the places where they ran from. In essence the camp system is a tacit invocation to refugees to be grateful for whatever is provided, otherwise go back to where you came from. It is a place of few rights albeit in theory they have rights. Writing on the detention of migrants, Mountz, Coddington, Catania and Loyd (2012, p. 530) note that "practices of detention reify borders between citizens and non-citizens, producing categories of legality and illegality, alien and non-alien". There is little difference between detention of immigrants in facilities and putting them in a refugee camp. These are both forms of detention which are underlined by denial of freedom, scarcity and desperation. The refugee seeker becomes an object, they are the less significant and undeserving other compared to citizens. This in essence is what Freire (1970) referred as treating others like objects. By extension objectification of refugees is a denial of their being. In such institutions Ubuntu is the greatest casualty.

Gross-Wyrtzen (2020) argue that institutions such as refugee camps provide an apparent distinction between "the valuable and the disposable". The common refrain that is largely unsaid yet apparent is the thinking by African leaders that 'we have our own problems to contend with and so we can't allow you in our space'. In other words, refugees are received but not fully welcome so they must be contained in a particular space according to the terms and conditions seen fit by the host. The world of refugees is thus a world of the abandoned, less deserving and "out of place" (p. 890). In theory, refugee

camps are seen as essential for the safety and easy provision of care to them. However, confinement in such spaces precludes refugees of enjoying many other rights which are vital for their own economic, social, emotional, spiritual and psychological wellbeing (Idris 2017; Groenewaldt, 2010). With its abiding commitment to social justice, the profession of social work can neither turn a blind nor seek to ignore the problematic nature of refugee camps and institutions of human habitation. The profession needs to be true to its social justice mission and thus must be at the forefront of policy advocacy that calls for a rethink of the refugee camp system. Ubuntu must be the rallying point for such efforts.

Refugee camps as places of stagnation

Borrowing from Coutin's (2010) lexicon as put forward by an immigrant in a detention centre, time in a refugee camp is in essence "dead time" (p.204) for many refugees. While some refugees have managed to advance themselves and ultimately escaped a life of containment in a refugee camp, for the majority, it is a place and time of stagnation. There is little that many refugees can do to make the most of their time and advance themselves in a preferred direction. Refugee camps are thus spaces of regression, stagnation and 'arrested potential' which only allows for a bare minimum existence. The very design and location of many refugee camps is strategic in many countries. The locations tend to be isolated, characterised by rurality, lack of opportunities and far away from cities and major towns. This makes policing of refugees' movements easy and they live under perpetual surveillance. In essence, their existence is a feared one and needs constant monitoring and policing. In such spaces, it is difficult to make progress in life for the majority of refugees hence, stagnation and regression. Many people have had to bury and surrender their talents in the hopeless maze of refugee camps. Such a treatment of persons is not compatible with African-ness and it is a direct violation of the "I am, because you are" notion. These colonial institutions of social control and subjugation have no place in a civilized world. In Africa,

such institutions are not compatible with Ubuntu. Such spaces need to be decolonised. In Africa, refugee camps 'must fall'.

Temporary-permanence

In continuation with our characterisation of refugee camps as places of stagnation, we note that the existence of refugee camps has and is largely characterised by temporary-permanence. Their very design is only intended as a transitory measure and they offer minimal comfort. It is a space of destitution and desperation, a place of bare minimum existence. Given a choice, every refugee wants to be 'let loose' and be integrated into mainstream communities of their host countries. Their stay in refugee camps is seen as temporary, yet; there are persons who have lived in refugee camps for many years. In Southern Africa, the Dukwi Refugee Camp in Botswana was established in 1978 and the Osire Refugee Camp in Namibia in 1992; and both continue to operate to this day. They have thus become a permanent feature of society and thousands of refugees have and continue to spend their precious time and life in these spaces of containment under very difficult circumstances. These conditions of containment and confinement cripple the capacity of many refugees to provide for themselves and meaningfully advance their lives. Many children born in refugee camps live their formative and sometimes later years in these confined conditions in violation of their human rights. Thus, while refugee camps are in theory a temporary measure, they have actually become permanent spaces. Idris (2017) notes that camps promote dependency among refugees and, in the long run, pose a financial burden to host countries and international organisations that are responsible for several aspects of the upkeep of refugees. While the financial burden on the hosting countries is a matter of concern, we ought to be more concerned about how camps strip people of their dignity and worth; and cripples their capacity for self-provision and care. Thus, the financial burden posed by refugee camps on host countries is a voluntary one borne of their unwillingness to integrate refugees into mainstream communities where they can assimilate and provide for themselves.

Implications for social work

The fight for social justice and protection of the most vulnerable people in society is an abiding commitment and integral concern for social work. To this end, the issue of refugee camps needs to be put on the global agenda for social work. Advocacy efforts to push for the abolition of refugee camps are needed at multiple levels such as the United Nations, African Union, and other continental and regional bodies. At present social workers unquestioningly work in refugee camps to provide psychosocial support and other needs such as health and relocation to refugee communities. While this is commendable work, social workers need to become more vocal on the inhuman conditions, hardship and suffering that refugees face during camp life. As a true embodiment of Ubuntu in social work practice, social workers should also lobby for local integration of refugees in the countries of asylum. More studies are needed to interrogate the short and long term consequences and negative outcomes caused by living in refugee camps.

Conclusion

Africa remains beset with socioeconomic and political challenges that make it one of the leading generators of refugees in the world. Many countries that are popular destinations for refugees find themselves confronted with a double burden of struggling to deal with poverty, unemployment and inequality while at the same time they have to deal with the challenge of continued refugee influx. This has led to a marked shift on immigration policies of many African countries as seen in the adoption of refugee camps as places of containment for refugees as opposed to integration practices which were common in liberated countries during colonial times. In theory, refugee camps are designed as temporary spaces to accommodate refugees while a suitable lasting arrangement is being found, however; they have become permanent places for many persons. Such 'temporary-permanent' spaces are largely not suitable for human habitation. Refugees in camp settings are largely subjected to heavy policing, limited movement and they have no access to employment opportunities. As argued in this chapter,

refugee camps are not compatible with the practice and philosophy of Ubuntu. Camps represent spaces of secondary victimization for refugees who run away from pain and move into yet another space of pain. Refugee camps have their roots in England and the greater global north context and they were founded as instruments of social control, conquest and subjugation. Camps are thus a hostile measure which is tacitly designed to dissuade refugees from moving to host countries. This is against the spirit of solidarity, harmony, compassion and empathy which should guide migration and immigration policy making in Africa. Further, camp settings are a violation of the social justice ethos on which the social work profession is founded. Camps are discriminatory, exclusionary dehumanizing and violate the basic rights of refugees. To this end, the social work profession should be at the forefront of advocating for the abolition of refugee camps. The camp system was and remains a concept that is foreign to the 'African' way of handling immigration emergencies. The refugee camp system is rooted in coloniality informed by western 'ways' which are foreign, 'inhumane and un-African and needs a rethink.

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Chapter 16

Ubuntu: A Strategy for Improving the Wellbeing of the Elderly in Uganda.

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Biographies
Dianah Aharimpisya is a professional Social Worker and Social Gerontologist in Uganda. She is a Lecturer of Social Work at Nkumba University. Her research interests include but not limited to: - Social Gerontology (Elderly and Ageing), Social Work Practice, Child development, Social Protection and Behavioral change. As a social worker and gerontologist, the ubuntu philosophy speaks volumes in improving the lives of people. Ubuntu's emphasis of 'being self through others' emboldens me to ensure compassion, togetherness, equality, caring, sharing, sympathy, empathy, respect, tolerance, and humanness in my practice.

Kasekende Francis is a Ugandan professor of Organizational Behaviour and Organizational Development. He has vast knowledge in the management of human resources. He currently serves as the University Secretary at Nkumba University, a position that makes him the accounting officer of the university. While dealing with human resources, the Ubuntu philosophy recognizes the significance of treating employees as human beings as well as ensuring respect, teamwork, interconnectedness, loyalty, honesty, caring,

dependability and performance, hence creating more humane and productive workplaces.

Kiyingi Frank Pio is a Ugandan Doctor (PhD) of Counselling psychology. He currently serves as the Academic Registrar at Nkumba University. Ubuntu is a very important aspect in the Counseling profession and is considered as therapy that actually contributes to the healing process of different vulnerable populations. The Ubuntu philosophy helps counselors to connect with individuals and help them cope with the diverse challenging situations.

Abstract

Ubuntu has gained momentum in the global arena after being emphasized in the Global Agenda (GA) of the social work profession. Ubuntu, is the African philosophy of sharing and caring. This philosophy has had profound implications for the elderly in sub-Saharan Africa. Ubuntu can best be described as an African philosophy that emphasizes 'being self through others'. Elderly people in this paper are defined as those persons aged 60 years and above. Their humane (ubuntu) spirit has made them do tremendous contributions to society as guardians of traditions and cultural values which are passed on from generation to generation, contribute immensely to wealth creation, support and care for children, conflict resolution, problem solving among others. Therefore, the focus of this paper was to explore ubuntu as an effective strategy for improving the wellbeing of the elderly in Uganda. The study was exploratory and descriptive, using experiences of older persons in Kabale District. Data were collected using interviews and focused group discussions. The study found strong acquaintances between ubuntu and older person's wellbeing. The study found that ubuntu is a very important aspect because it gives the elderly a sense of self-worth, self-respect, individual wellbeing, life-satisfaction and achievement. Ubuntu further enables the elderly to transfer the humanistic values to the next generation as well as helping the current generation to deal with their difficulties in a more effective manner by applying the humanistic

values they have inherited from the elderly. This paper concludes that the elderly can thus impart these values to the rest of humankind and the younger generation to ensure effectiveness in the practice of ubuntu. The study recommended that improving the wellbeing of the elderly does not require just one strategy but a combination of several strategies including involvement of all stakeholders especially the older persons themselves following the saying "nothing for us without us", family members, community members, caregivers, civil society, as government takes lead in promoting wellbeing.
Key words: *Ubuntu; Elderly; Wellbeing*

Abstract translated in Runyankore-Rukiga (language spoken in South-Western Uganda)

Obuntu butandikyire kugyira amaani n'omwete hanyima yokuhamizibwa Global Agenda y'amashomo ga Social Work. Obuntu, mu Africa nikimanyisa 'okugabana' hamwe 'nokufwayo'. Ogumwete gw'Obuntu gwine empinduka eyi gurikutaho aha magara g'abakeikuru n'abagurusi omubicyweka bya Africa. Obuntu nibushobororwa kurungi nk'omwete gwa Africa gurikufwa aha "kuba omuntu kurabira omubandi bantu". Abakeikuru n'abagurusi muri ekikihandiko n'abo abemyaka 60 (nkaga) nokugaruka aheiguru. Obuntu byabo butumire bakora ebintu beingi omubyaro ebibari kuturamu nkababikyi b'amagezi g'ebyakare hamwe nokwegyesa ab'orurengo oruto emitwarize, nibakora ebyobugaiga, nibareberera efuuzi, kandi nibashoborora entaro hagati yabatari kwikyirinzingana. Bwenu, ekyikihandiko ekyi nikyishoborora Obuntu nk'omuringo g'okuhwera abakeikuru n'abagurusi omumibereho yabo omuri Uganda. Og'umoshomo gurakozesa ebigambo by'abakeikuru n'abagurusi ba Disturikiti ya Kabale. Ebibigambo bikagambibya omumushomo ogwakozirwe aha bagurusi n'abakeikuru bakubuzibwa ahamibereho yabo. Kandi, ebyarugyire m'umushomo ogu biragira ngu hariho akakwate kahango ahari Obuntu hamwe n'emibereho mirungi y'abakeikuru hamwe n'abagurusi. Og'umoshomo gukashuba gw'ashanga ngu Obuntu n'ekintu kikuru

munonga ahab'wokuba buraha abakeikuri n'abagurusi okwemanya nkabomugasho, okweha ekitinisa, okubaho gye, kandi n'okumarwa. Obuntu burongyera kutuma abakeikuru n'abagurusi bayegyesa obu rurengo oruto emitwarize kandi nokubayamba kugyita omunkora. Ekyikihandiko kyirahendera kiragyira ngu abakeikuru n'abagurusi barata emitwarize mirungi omubantu boona kugira ngu berekye Ubuntu. Ekyihandiko ekyi nikihabura ngu kugira ngu emibereho y'abakeikuru n'bagurusi ebegye, tikiretengyesibwa kukoresa omuringo ngumwe ngwonka kureka haretengwa emiringo mingyi harimu ekwejumbamu kwa abantu boona kukira munonga abakeikuru n'abagurusi turakuratira orugyero ruragyira ngu "hatagyira ekyakorwa kirankwataho haza ntariho", abanyabuzare, abataka, abarikubareberera, ebitongore, kandi gavumenti eyebebembeire omukufwayo ahabyemebereho mirungi.

Introduction

Ubuntu has gained momentum in the global arena after its emphasis in the Global Agenda (GA) of the social work profession. The word Ubuntu is derived from a Nguni (isiZulu) aphorism: Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu, which can be translated as "*a person is a person because of or through others*" (Moleketi, 2009); (Tutu, 2004).

Ubuntu is defined as a set of values and practices that African people view as making people authentic human beings. Although the various aspects of these values and practices vary across different ethnic groups, they all point to one thing- an authentic individual person is part of a larger and more substantial relational, communal, societal, environmental and spiritual world (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020).

In principle, Ubuntu, is the African philosophy of sharing and caring. The context of ubuntu asserts that society gives human beings their humanity. This philosophy has had profound implications for the elderly in sub-Saharan

Africa. Ubuntu can best be described as an African philosophy that emphasizes '*being self through others*' (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013).
To summarize the above definitions, Mishack, (2014) states that the principles that define ubuntu include: togetherness, brotherhood, equality, caring, sharing, sympathy, empathy, compassion, respect, tolerance, humanness, harmony, redistribution, obedience, happiness, wisdom, communalism, communitarianism, kinship, group solidarity, conformity, human dignity, humanistic orientation and collective unity.

In this paper, the term elderly is defined as those aged 60 years and above. This definition is recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO 2020). Their humane (ubuntu) spirit has made them a valuable asset to society as custodians of traditions and cultural values which are passed on from generation to generation, contribute immensely to wealth creation, support and care for children, conflict resolution, problem solving among others.

As defined by the CDC (2018), Well-being is a positive outcome that is meaningful for people and for many sectors of society, because it tells us that people perceive that their lives are going well (CDC, 2018). However, it is important to note that there is no consensus about one definition of well-being, nonetheless there is general consensus that at minimum, well-being contains the presence of positive emotions and moods (such as; contentment, happiness), the absence of negative emotions (such as; depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfillment and positive functioning (Frey & Stutzer, 2002).

The Practice of Ubuntu in Uganda

> "A person is a person through other persons. None of us comes into the world fully formed. We would not know how to think, or walk, or speak, or behave as human beings unless we learned it from other human beings. We need other human beings in order to be human". (Tutu, 2004:25).

Borrowing from the above statement, I believe that senior citizens (elderly) of Ugandans have tried to practice ubuntu in their day today living. This is what makes them unique individuals. For that reason, the Ubuntu philosophy is integrated into all aspects of day-to-day life throughout Uganda and it is an impression shared by all tribes in Northern, Central, Western and Eastern Uganda.

While all the regions in Uganda are practicing ubuntu, this paper will focus on the practices of ubuntu by the elderly in South-Western Uganda where data were collected. Therefore, the following are the practices of ubuntu by the elderly in South-Western Uganda.

Wealth creation

The policy for older persons states that the elderly make valuable contribution to the eradication of poverty through participation in economic activities and that is why they promote wealth creation (MGLSD, 2009). This wealth is beneficial to their descendants through inheritance. Many older persons take pride in this achievement in life.

> "I am glad I used my youthful years to work hard, now my children and my grandchildren will not suffer. I have a farm of cows, banana plantations, over 10 acres of land and buildings for rent. This is enough for them survive if they do not foolishly misuse them when I die" (Older Person, 86 years).

Care for other people especially orphans and other vulnerable members of the family

One respondent narrated how all his siblings passed on and he took up the responsibility of taking care of all the orphans as well as other members of the extended family. He had this to say

> "I used to make knives, hoes, pangas and other machines from iron work which I sold and got money to cater for my family, orphans from my late brothers and also other members of the extended family" (Older Person, 95 years). Another respondent said "I dig, sell off food and use the money to

> care for my husband who is weaker than I am because he deserves more care" (Older person, 65 years).

The National Policy for Older Persons and Ageing (NPOPA) further stipulates that older persons offer essential care to young children, vulnerable adults and other older persons. It is not uncommon, for example that older women care for their adult children who have a mental or physical disability. Approximately 50 per cent of older women have care responsibilities, compared to 27 per cent of older men. In particular, two thirds of older persons in skipped generation households engage in care work. Attention must therefore be given to the increasing prevalence of skipped generation households where both older persons and children are extremely vulnerable (MGLSD, 2022).

Social cohesion

The fact that the ubuntu philosophy believes in solidarity which is central to the survival of many African countries, the elderly in Uganda have taken it up as a goal to promote unity both in their communities and families. One respondent narrated how he uses his position as the head of the family and elder in the clan to organize meetings even when the members are not willing. He said,

> "Being the oldest in the clan and in the family, I use my position to call for clan and family meetings and I make sure everyone participates because whoever missises without a genuine reason, he pays a fine or he is miscommunicated. I do this because my family had started to disagree on certain issues and grand children were not knowing their relatives. This has helped to bring back the unity in my family because of constant meetings" (Older Person, 96 years).

To support this, authors like Young, (2008) assert that such issues as building trust, developing effective local leadership, provision of relevant information, and the creation of safe-spaces where dialogue and understanding can begin to be nurtured through community cohesion (Young, 2008).

Conflict resolution

Ubuntu is an indigenous approach to conflict resolution and peace building. The elderly in Uganda have used this approach to ensure peace, security and harmony among families and communities. Some older persons use their authority as elders in the community to resolve conflicts even when they are not called upon. However, some older persons narrate that, whenever there is a conflict, be it in family, community and other sectors, they are called upon to deliberate on issues concerning such threats or conflict. One elderly man notes that "*I cannot count how many times I have been called by the local leaders to resolve conflicts especially concerning land*". In his part three (III) of ubuntu, Sigrun (2010) described that ubuntu is used as a conflict resolution strategy and involves five stages: after investigation, the perpetrators are encouraged to acknowledge responsibility; perpetrators are encouraged to show genuine remorse; they are encouraged to ask for forgiveness, and victims are encouraged to forgive (Sigrun, 2010).

Guardians of traditions and cultural values

The policy for older persons clearly states that the elderly make significant contributions to society as guardians of traditions and cultural values, which are passed on from generation to generation. Older persons deliberate that their major role is to transfer cultural values, knowledge and skills to the younger generation so that their culture will not fade away (MGLSD, 2022). No wonder, scholars like Mischack came to a conclusion that a community living according to this mode of ubuntu cherishes the wealth of wisdom that originates from the elders. Such a community will guide leadership by involving elders. Such a community will instill the ideals of ubuntu as part of education and training for its children. Thus, the education of children will be designed in such a way that it promotes African values that are based on ubuntu (Mishack, 2014).

The above descriptions of the Ubuntu philosophy bring to light that the elderly emphasize humanistic, community-based and socialistic activities

within local communities that improve wellbeing. As a result, the Ubuntu philosophy has crucial implications for the elderly as it is about the continuity of generations therefore plays a significant role in improving the wellbeing of the elderly in Uganda.

However, the relevance and position of older persons has diminished in the modern economy driven by money. With urbanization, a monetary or transactional value has been imposed upon kinship ties, disempowering a majority of older persons who are poor and cannot make economic contributions. Instead, they are forced to remain relevant by contributing in the same way as working age adults, including as primary caregivers and/or through their economic contributions. It is akin to reliving their youth despite feeling overstrained. The loss of relevance of older persons within the family and community is a driving factor for neglect, violence and abuse against them which is against the ubuntu philosophy.

Methodology

The study was exploratory and descriptive, using experiences of older persons in Kabale District. Data were collected using interviews and focused group discussions. Data were analyzed thematically.

Results and Discussion

The focus of this study was to explore ubuntu as an effective strategy for improving the wellbeing of the elderly in Uganda. Some respondents defined the elderly as those with 60 or 70 years of age and their argument was based on the fact that, beyond 70 years of age, it means a person is going to die a bad death *("emyaka yokufwa kubi")*- (FGD 1). From the following themes which were derived from older person's responses, the study found strong acquaintances between ubuntu and older person's wellbeing. The study established that ubuntu is a very important aspect because it gives the elderly a sense of belonging, self-worth, respect, mutuality, life-satisfaction and achievement.

Sense of belonging

This includes family and community commitment to taking care of an older person. One older man revealed that much as he stays alone and is weak, he is not feeling lonely because his community members check on him every day and they also give him food and do house chores for him. He says "*I never feel lonely because I belong to a caring community*" (Older person, 80 years). This is a manifestation of ubuntu in the community that this older man belongs to. This saves the older man from age-associated challenges such as depression which is evident in many older persons as revealed by studies like UBOS, (2014) which discovered that older people living alone, especially older men, will often go hungry because they are unable to cook for themselves hence affecting their wellbeing.

Self-worth

This includes self-confidence, self-knowledge and resilience. "*As an older person, I know my worth and nobody else can take that away from me*" said older man, 75 years. This man narrated how he believes in himself that he still has a great value to the community he lives and besides, the community believes in him too. The community's trust in this older man and his confidence challenge the misconceptions many people have that once you are old you cannot do anything. There is actually much more older persons can do once they refuse to listen to the narratives of retirement and victimization by self and others. One scholar once wrote that "*I am the master of my fate I am the captain of my soul*" (William Ernest Henry). Therefore, older persons are encouraged to know their worth and this will open the eyes of other people to recognize their strengths and potential.

Respect

This includes both self-respect and respect for others. Much as the respect for elders has dwindled in some communities, some older people reveal that they are highly respected and this gives them joy and hope for the next day. The 80-year-old woman revealed that "*everyone in the community calls me*

"*mukaaka" (grandmother), even those I do not have a biological relationship with. This makes me feel loved and respected*". Besides, she says that he also respects herself as an older woman in the community. She states "*I do not get drunk with alcohol like others do, I do welcome everyone in my home and I am a prayerful woman*". This makes my family and community members respect me and love me immensely. Scholars, Poovan , Du Toit , & Engelbrecht , (2006) expressed that respect and dignity are considered the building blocks in the culture of Ubuntu and lead to an acknowledgment of the rights and responsibilities of every citizen. And so, every person should be treated with respect (Mohale , 2013). Moreover, the needs of others are considered to be equal to the needs of the individual. And thus no individual is holier than another. The respect of another's humanity is absolute (Ncube , 2010).

Mutuality

This includes trust, sharing, caring and responsibility. A 90-year-old lady notes that "*I am what I am because of my children, extended family and neighbors*. She expresses how they love each other, eat together, help each other in good and bad times and that makes her feel good. She prays that, that bonding continues through other generations. Scholars Chinouya & O'Keefe, (2006) confirm that mutuality is a cornerstone that upholds the values of mutual trust, caring, support, responsibility, and recognition. Relationships are paramount. Mutuality arises as a result of a relationship with others - a person is a person through other people. These relations are thus characterized by a spirit of mutual trust.

Life-satisfaction

The essence of generosity, caring and sharing makes older people happy. From FGD 1, many older persons revealed how sharing with others makes them feel so happy and satisfied with their lives. One of the respondents was quoted saying "*I feel satisfied when I share with others. Even I do not have much, it gives me great joy to share the little I have with others*". Moreover, even some business entities have started to realize that having ubuntu is much more

profitable than profits. The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) is on the leading edge of bringing communities together and keeping it local. BALLE believes in people over profits. They insist, building strong, local relationships trumps competition. It emphasizes that, "*Ubuntu, I am because of you. And that makes me happy*" (Sassaman, 2018).

Achievement

One of greatest ideas of ubuntu is "*achievement through others*". By virtue of this, many older persons believe that through harmony and cooperation with others, they have achieved much more than what could have been achieved alone.

> "I have been able to acquire more property through my friends and the group I belong to in my community. Two of my friends gave me cows, others goats, and then I was able to buy land using the money I borrowed in my community based Tweyambe (we help each other) group. I surely count this a very great achievement".

McGlamery (2020) ponders that,

> "as a species, humans are wired to be social beings, and we are actually able to become better than we already are through other people. While the successes we have as individuals are wonderful and can help us to feel good and can increase our own self-efficacy, what good are they if they aren't shared with someone else? As I think about the individual successes I have had, most, if not all of them really involve other people, either directly or indirectly".

Perhaps, if the entire world could embrace this concept and start living with Ubuntu, we could truly turn some things around because ubuntu reflects an open and welcoming attitude in a person who is willing to share, to be generous, and caring and full of compassion. The community provides the relational context and support that individuals develop and live by.

As earlier discussed, ubuntu emphasizes the values that are related to building relationships, such as sharing, compassion, understanding, reciprocity, kindness, solidarity, and sensitivity.

On the other hand, some critics have come up against the ubuntu philosophy. For example, Hailey (2008) questioned whether ubuntu can be used everywhere across cultures. However, it has been argued that it is not homogeneous, thus may not be universally applicable. Yet, some emphasizers have pointed out that the fact that globally accepted practices like democracy are by no means universally applied but have found their way into most communities, it is in the same vein that ubuntu must find its way into every society.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper concludes that the elderly can thus impart ubuntu values to the rest of humankind and the younger generation to ensure effectiveness in the practice of ubuntu across communities and generations. However, much as the older persons have continued to ensure "ubuntu", the current generation does not care about it that much.

It is apparent from the findings above that ubuntu plays a vital role improving the welfare of the elderly, particularly in enabling a sense of belonging; self-worth; respect for self and others; mutuality; life-satisfaction and achievement. Ubuntu is the essence of sharing and caring as established by many authors described above. It is a humanistic act. Moreover, Bishop Desmond Tutu and other noble winners such as Nelson Mandela have espoused ubuntu and this philosophy and principle must inform our today living if we want to improve the wellbeing of our custodians of knowledge (elderly). As such promoting the values inherent in ubuntu must be one of the core activities of families, neighborhoods and the bigger society.

This paper also believes that for ubuntu philosophy to address the challenges faced by the vulnerable older persons, the concept must be accepted and

embraced by all people in families and communities. This will pave way for universalism in addressing older persons' issues.

It is recommended that improving the wellbeing of the elderly does not require just one strategy but a combination of several strategies including involvement of all stakeholders especially the older persons themselves following the saying "*nothing for us without us*". Thus, family members, community members, caregivers, civil society, as government takes lead in promoting wellbeing.

Limitations of this article

The article relied more on the experiences of older persons in one district in Uganda. And so, many more ideas would have been missed, it is important that a comprehensive study be done across districts in the whole country to clearly understand "ubuntu" and the "elderly".

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Chapter 17

Ubuntu-Informed Care for the Elderly: Towards a Holistic Care for Older Persons

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Biographies
I am Prof Simon Murote Kang'ethe, resident and working in South Africa for more than a decade. I am currently researching on African cultures and their interplay with social work practice. This has made me to delve on theories of indigenization and decoloniality and researching how Africans and social workers can use Afrocentric values such as ubuntu to shape the social work curriculum and practices to better address many socio-cultural challenges that African face. I also wish to research on how to use the Afrocentricity and its embedded values address socio-economic challenges, as well as changing harmful cultural practices.

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Ndũngi was born in Kenya and is currently a senior lecturer and researcher in social work at Charles Sturt University, Australia. Ndũngi teaches a variety of social work subjects. He has a keen interest in Ubuntu and Afrocentric social work. His publications on these topics include Adopting Ubuntu in teaching

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Abstract

This chapter presents a theoretical discussion on how an Ubuntu-based approach could transform practices and policies in improving the lives of older people, their families, and their communities. Ubuntu calls for a society that is caring, sharing, respectful and compassionate towards all its members. Ubuntu underscores respect for the older persons who are the source of great wisdom. Based on the Ubuntu worldview, we argue for a holistic approach for older persons, their families, and communities. This also calls for societies to go back to the fundamentals of caring and call for the restoration of the social capital that sustained human societies in the past. Further, the book chapter criticizes the individualist approaches for inadequate support for older persons.

Keywords: *Oder persons; Families; Communities; Elder abuse; Traditional philosophies; Indigenization*.

Matemo

Gĩchunjĩ gĩkĩ kĩa ibuku rĩrĩ kĩronania ũrĩa meciria ma ũmundũ mangĩgarũra ũruti wa wĩra wa mũingĩ, mũtaratara na makĩria mĩturĩre ya andũ akũrũ, andũ a gĩthaku kĩao o hamwe na andũ a itũra rĩao. Ũmũndũ nĩ kũmenyerera mũingĩ woothe, gũteithania, kũheana gĩtĩyo na kũiguanĩra tha. Ũmũndũ ugaga andũ akũrũ maheo gĩtĩyo kĩao, tondu nĩma nĩo makuĩte ũgĩ na ũmenyo wa ndĩra cĩao. Ũmũndũ ugĩte andũ akũrũ na andũ arĩa maĩkaranagia mamenyererwo. Naithuĩ andĩki tũkoiga tũcokie maitho maganjo tũmenye nĩha twateire ikinya. Nĩ tũreganĩte na mĩtugo ya mũndũ gwĩtũgĩria tondũ nĩkuo gũtũmaga tũriganĩrwo nĩ aciari aitũ .

Conceptualizing Ubuntu

While originating in Africa, Ubuntu is now recognized globally as the humanitarian wisdom which stands for people living in harmony with each other and with their social and physical environment. It connotes living in love, unity, sharing, embracing mutuality and reciprocity (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020). The concept of Ubuntu resonates with many African scholars as they advocate for the indigenization of their countries' wisdom and philosophy, mostly in their educational curriculums, social work practice, and other social service professions (Gray et al., 2014; Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2008). The recognition of Ubuntu arises from the search for solutions to the current problems besetting African countries, and a realization that most post-independence educational curriculums are failing in addressing the continent's issues such as poverty, inequality, corruption, and violence - including gender-based violence (GBV) (Kang'ethe, 2014a). A good example is a case of South Africa with the highest levels of inequalities in the world (Ventura, 2022), with more than one third of its population relying on welfare grants, including older persons' pensions (Batlala, et al., 2014; Gutura & Tanga, 2014).

An Ubuntu-based policy in a country should address inequalities and cater for livelihoods where all are provided with the basic needs of life such as food, clothing, shelter, and a life with dignity. This means fulfilling at least two ladders of the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs - physiological (air, water, food, clothing) and safety (personal security, employment, health, property) needs (Aruma & Hanchor, 2017). At the global level, movements like Black Lives Matter (Swannell, 2020) and #Metoo (Bhattacharyya, 2018) have demonstrated how our societies are fractured and the need for a healing approach that replaces hate with love, kindness, and solidarity. These researchers believe that this can be achieved by reinforcing cultures that foster love, unity, togetherness, mutuality, and reciprocity - the values embedded in the philosophy of Ubuntu (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020).

Some proponents of the indigenization of curriculum in African education such as Gray et al. (2014), Kangethe (2014b), and Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2008) suggest that indigenization should be viewed as a first step in reclaiming traditional knowledges that have been critical for the survival of the African people. The other reason for doing so is the fact that most of the operational curricula in African countries are Western-oriented and colonial in origin and not geared to meet local needs (Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2008). Failure to adhere to coherent Indigenous approaches such as Ubuntu has left much of Africa in a state of poverty, with limited welfare programmes to protect vulnerable individuals and communities. Since the poverty of the main adult heads of families affects the welfare of children and older persons, there is an urgent need for such people to have a reliable income. Failure to achieve that creates an environment that is not conducive to the older persons aging in dignity, as the families are not able to support their aging parents due to their own financial stress (Aruma & Hanchor, 2017; Cattell, 1997). The question is whether Ubuntu could offer a solution to this dilemma created by entrenched poverty and unresponsive policies.

Unequivocally, Ubuntu has been identified by many scholars as well as African leaders, as the authentic Indigenous African philosophy and worldview. Mugumbate and Chereni (2020) argue that Ubuntu represents values and practices that the black people of Africa or of African origin express their humanity. It is the heart and symbol of African identity that also clearly connects African people and other people of the world. This cherished worldview needs to be studied more and more comparative studies with other worldviews held by Indigenous societies could help us trace the values that unite us as humans. For African people, Ubuntu implies a collective value of being there for one another, providing emotional and spiritual support for one another, providing a shoulder for one to lean on, a hand to prop up one who is falling, and generally being of mutual assistance to one another (Alexander & Grant, 2009). These are also values that characterize social work as a helping profession though that is complicated by a client-professional

relationship with implied boundaries and restraints (Mungai et al., 2019). With the application of these values embedded in Ubuntu to the care of older persons, societies would aim for the treatment of older persons with kindness, love, and human-to-human bonds. Old age would also mean an opportunity to be given the deserved attention, as well as holding adults and younger generations responsible for the basic needs of older persons. The mutual benefit from this friendly environment and Ubuntu values means that older persons will feel respected and appreciated and in return share their wisdom and confer blessings to the younger generation (Kang'ethe, 2018).

While the Ubuntu philosophy has an African origin, it is important to explore how it is called in various corners of the African continent. The concept is referred to as *Cimuntu* in Angola, *Botho* in Botswana, *Maaya* in Burkina Faso, *Ubuntu* in both Burundi and South Africa, *Utu* in Swahili (Kenya and Tanzania), *Umunthu* in Malawi, *Bantu* in Rwanda, and *Unhu* in Zimbabwe (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020). Many more such examples exist, such as *Búmùntù* in the Kiluba language in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Sephton, 2020) There is a strong feeling that one of the interventions to strengthen social work is to ground it in Ubuntu (Mungai, 2021). This means that social work interventions will convey the values of love, trust, mutuality, reciprocity, togetherness, and collective consciousness. The adoption of these values will make social workers and their interventions more easily accepted and embraced by the people they work with. Further, recognizing the role of culture is important in many geographical locales where communities may have been reluctant to identify with what they see as foreign cultural ideas (Duncombe, 2007). The challenge is that these values run counter to the current pervasive spread of neoliberalism, which dictates that people pursue their lives individually without concern for one another (Arowolo, 2010).

Inopportunely, the African elites, and political leaders tend to eschew African cultures and instead maintain structures left behind by colonial

governments, which are then reinforced by multilateral funding bodies such as IMF and the World Bank. They find this easier than the challenging path of rediscovering their cultural roots and foundations. Kang'ethe (2014c) therefore regards the elite as being responsible for the process of cultural betrayal. Instead of the elite being on the frontline to educate and advocate for a paradigm shift toward Africans reclaiming their traditional values, they have abandoned, demeaned, and undermined the African cultural values represented by Ubuntu (Kang'ethe, 2013; Somjee, 2021). This could, at least in part, explain why the place and space of the older persons have deteriorated. In South Africa, there are reports of older persons having their social welfare grants forcibly taken by their children and grandchildren (Kang'ethe, 2018). This is clearly elder abuse, but it also reflects the level of poverty and the need for a whole community approach to addressing poverty and deprivation. Unfortunately, many African countries cannot afford to offer their older people any welfare grants, thus creating an environment that can lead to early death for the older persons (Kang'ethe, 2018; Lombard & Kruger, 2009).

Methodology

In this chapter, we have adopted a literature review approach to explore the role that Ubuntu plays or can play in the care of older persons. The ideal methodology is to conduct a systematic literature review. However, this is not feasible as the topic is very broad and resources for conducting such a review are not available. Instead, a semi systematic review is adopted where the authors searched for topics such as Ubuntu, care for the elderly, and care of the elderly in specific geographic regions. The authors have also researched Ubuntu before and have brought across the knowledge and experience gained thus far. It is generally accepted that a literature review is useful where the aim is to present a broad overview of a given issue (Snyder, 2019).

To compare notes and brainstorm ideas, the authors held weekly discussions on the issue as researchers on this topic and consulted with colleagues who have an interest in promoting the understanding of Ubuntu. This approach is

popular in the Delphi method that solicits the views of experts and works best when the objective is the understanding of a problem, the opportunities, and solutions (Skulmoski et al., 2007). These discussions have been useful in identifying areas to focus on and where to do further literature search or consult with other colleagues interested in either Ubuntu and/or the care of older persons.

Decolonizing practice to facilitate the care of the older persons

In championing Ubuntu, South Africa has led the way in decolonizing approaches to public policy and reclaiming African traditional values that had been suppressed through European colonization. Ngũgĩ (1986) discusses the concept of decolonizing the minds of African people as a process of reclaiming the traditional wisdom, including language and oral literature (or orature), that the colonizers suppressed for centuries. Embracing Ubuntu can be the first step in decolonizing the social work curriculum and practice (Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2008). This also means viewing African development through African cultural lenses which is informed by the authentic needs of Africans. This is the process of indigenization that many African social workers are continually advocating (Gray et al., 2014). These social workers believe proper indigenization will take root when societies admit to having been misled into adopting the dominant Western capitalism and culture (Nomngcoyiya, 2018). The first president of Tanzania Julius Nyerere advocated for Ujamaa, a form of African socialism based on the African extended family, and the moral principles that go with it (Fouéré, 2014). If African people are to have a chance to decolonize their minds and practices, the societies need to rediscover the values embedded in Ubuntu (Kang'ethe, 2013). This could, for example, include social work dropping the Western-centric cultural orientation of individualism, and instead embracing the culture of love, trust, mutuality, community spirit, and reciprocity as found in Ubuntu (Arowolo, 2010; Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020). These are the values that will restore hope to the aging population by restoring their rightful place of respect, leadership, repository of culture, wisdom, and morality. Thus,

Ubuntu-led indigenization will strengthen the role of the older persons in shaping and guiding the worldview of the younger generation, a role that is currently contested by Western-oriented social media and Western-oriented institutions. Optimistically, the younger generation is to benefit from the wisdom and blessings from the elders, when they are appreciated and restored to their place of respect. This approach of recognizing the leadership role of the elders is consistent with the practices of major global religions such as Judaeo-Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, and other Indigenous cultures and beliefs (Kang'ethe & Rhakudu, 2009).

Ubuntu and the challenges of aging

There is a fundamental difference between the way old age is viewed in Western countries when compared to African and other traditional non-Western societies. In the West, youth and beauty are presented as desirable while old age is associated with infirmity, decline, and being unproductive. It is also regarded as unattractive and something to be avoided where possible (Agugu, 2022; Mungai et al., 2016). Studies have shown Western negative cultural attitudes towards aging compared to other cultures with Asian people, for example, having more positive attitudes towards aging compared to the Westerners (Löckenhoff, et al., 2019)

In the traditional societies of many countries, such as those from the African continents and Indigenous Australians, old age and being old is associated with wisdom, as well as being the custodian and repository of the community's wisdom and secrets. This can be useful in guiding the younger generation to navigate the many challenges in life. They are also productive in different ways, including raising and educating younger generations (Kang'ethe, 2018). In traditional cultures, education was carried out by members of the community including parents and older siblings and the elders had a very significant role in the most sacred knowledge and rituals (Bangura, 2005, Mungai, 2021). With the advent of Western-based

education, these values and practices have been displaced by colonization, Westernization, modernization, and globalization (Kang'ethe, 2014d)

Ubuntu has an intricate relationship with spirituality and for traditional African people, everything is imbued with spiritual significance. Mbiti's (1970) seminal work on African religions shows that spirituality is an integral part of Ubuntu and the lives of African people. Death in the African tradition is not an end by itself, but a transition to the next phase of living as spirits. In this continued life as "living dead', communion continues with the departed through the rituals of libation where the "living dead" are made offerings in the form of alcohol or other libations (Pobee, 1976). The libation rituals that are common in Africa and other traditional societies thus create a bond in the cycle of life and connect the living with the dead as well as the unborn (Mungai, 2021). This is important as it means that no phase in one's life is regarded as being of less importance. Indeed, it has been argued that the most venerated phases are infancy and old age – infancy as one has just arrived from the spirit world and old age as one who is about to enter that world (Schiele, 2000). Perhaps it needs to be borne out that it is the older persons who were the custodians of managing this interconnectedness between the living and the dead. This is because they were endowed with wisdom and were therefore believed to act on behalf of the societal deities (Kang'ethe, 2018). They were therefore leaders and beacons of harmony and connectedness for all in the society. They ensured that Ubuntu was maintained for the benefit of all.

Ubuntu conceptualizes people as being connected rather than autonomous and self-sufficient individuals. Mbiti (1970) captures this in the widely popular phrase "I am because you are". This implied sense of solidarity between individuals across generations, and is also underscored in the Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on aging (United Nations, 2002) which states:

> We recognize the need to strengthen solidarity among generations and

> intergenerational partnerships, keeping in mind the particular needs of both older and younger ones, and to encourage mutually responsive relationships between generations. (Political Declaration Article 16).

The strong bonds between family members of all ages in Africa are nurtured in the spirit of Ubuntu which engenders mutual support and reciprocity (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020). The younger generations have the energy to support the older persons. They can use this energy to physically support the older persons and run errands for them such as fetching firewood and water, especially in rural settings. On the other hand, most older persons have the knowledge and material wealth accumulated in their lifetime. Traditionally, the elders were expected to counsel and offer words of advice, and therefore help to settle disputes in their community. However, it is important to note that the observance and practice of Ubuntu among the traditional people, especially in Africa, were disrupted by colonialism, wars, and migration, thus leaving societies with weaker bonds of trust, love, togetherness, and reciprocity (Arowolo, 2010). Rural-urban and out-of-the-country migration has especially had a devastating knock-on effect on the lives of older persons. The outcome is that older persons are left behind in rural areas with little traditional family support and in urban areas, they are at risk of being isolated and living in chronic poverty (United Nations, 2002). The environment has suffered too as the elders led in protection of the sacred forests and animals (Maathai, 2009).

It is important to understand how the application and practice of Ubuntu offers solutions to the life of older persons. For example, to overcome the lack of family support in urban areas, the Japanese have come up with creative solutions. They have created families of unrelated people which forms a platform for assisting older persons.

> [A] concrete example is the "Under one Roof Project" facilitated by NPO Matching Hongo in Tokyo's Bunkyo Ward. Seniors with spare rooms open their homes to university students, with the two generations coming together several times a week to share a meal (Kittaka, 2019, p.114).

This example from Japan shows that despite the change in family and community structure, the values espoused in Ubuntu can still be maintained with some adjustment. It just requires some degree of intuition, creativity, and a commitment to advance what is good for humanity. Kittaka (2019) shows other examples, also from Japan, that demonstrate how linking older persons with children, even when they are not their biological children, improves their quality of life. A similar programme in the Netherlands supports university students in their early twenties to live with older people in their eighties and nineties. In exchange for free rent, the students provide 30 hours of support and teach new skills such as using social media (Harris, 2016).

Some older persons find that after retirement, there is not much for them to do in urban areas when the focus had been their employment for decades. In the traditional rural societies, there is of course no such thing as retirement and people continue contributing to the family livelihood for as long as they have the strength to do so. For example, as they age, they may take on duties like caring for their grandchildren or looking after livestock. They are also recognized for their contribution in adding to the family wealth, which they can pass on to their adult sons and daughters (Mugedya et al., 2020). In fact, since the aging of the older persons is usually linked to retirement for those in employment, this is complex as retirement age varies from country to country. The retirement ages for those in formal employment around the world range from 49 years in the United Arab Emirates to 70 years in Libya (Baker, 2018). An alternative task that older persons usually offer is volunteering to assist the needy. Volunteering in Australia is vital for essential emergency services such as fighting bushfires. There are research studies that show that there are psychological benefits from volunteering, especially when the motivation is a concern for others (Morrow-Howell et al., 2003; Okun et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2010; Yeung et al., 2018). Where volunteering is possible, it is therefore one way of increasing social interaction and reducing social isolation for the older persons (Hughes et al., 2022). In Africa and many

traditional communities, elders volunteer informally in settling disputes and performing community rituals though these activities have diminished in the more urbanized or Westernized areas.

Global agenda aligned with Ubuntu care of the elderly

The Global Agenda, whose cardinal aim is to strengthen social work and its agenda, has a special place for the care of older persons in different regions of the world (Carvalho, 2012). Social workers have a responsibility of ensuring that all the people, including children and older persons, are accorded an environment of peace, happiness, dignity, and hope for a better future. While this had evolved to be a norm in traditional societies, lives are becoming disrupted and uncertain in modern African settings (Arowolo, 2010). In support of the Global Agenda, societies must be innovative and learn to pay attention to Indigenous knowledge that is sustainable and consistent with people's livelihood. The Global Agenda calls for imperatives to seek locally based solutions to their problems (Gray et al., 2014). When development or practice is locally or context-bound, it considers the local characteristics and harmonizes the needs of the different stakeholders (Lennert et al., 2015). This is indeed the concept of indigenization that several scholars have called for (Mungai, 2015; Spaneas, 2012; Yan, 2006). The Global Agenda calls for social work to be Indigenously-grounded. This view is consistent with adopting Ubuntu as the African Indigenous philosophy that resonates with other Indigenous worldviews. This points to the efforts to strengthen families, and care for the children and the older people. The elders' place as repositories and custodians of morality and cultural wisdom is almost universal in Indigenous communities (Nomngcoyiya, 2018).

Although the Global Agenda stresses the importance of adopting technology through advocacy of the Fourth Industrial Revolution – a fusion of technologies that blurs the lines between physical, digital, and biological spheres (Mohapi et al., 2021), it respects innovation, especially through indigenization. This, therefore, calls for the application and embracing of the Ubuntu worldview emphasizing togetherness, respect, trust, sharing,

mutuality, and reciprocity. It is the waning of these values through westernization, modernization, and globalization that have led to societies abandoning or neglecting their responsibilities and obligations to older persons. This has prompted some older persons to seek refuge in the homes for the elderly but other times this could be due to high medical needs, and loneliness (Batlala et al., 2014). However, an Ubuntu-informed approach points toward caring for older persons in the community by a caring family and society.

Vulnerability of the elderly in an African setting

The roles of the older persons as counsellors, advisors, peace advocates and mediators are waning in African countries. It is being replaced by a culture of modernity with professionals and government-mandated courts (Kang'ethe, 2018). The cultural erosion, which started with colonization and conversions to Christianity and Islam, among other religions, has disrupted the care systems that supported the older persons in communities (Nomngcoyiya, 2018; Kang'ethe, 2018). Elder abuse is a global phenomenon and leaves older persons traumatized (Carvalho, 2012). World Health Organization (WHO) notes this plight of the older persons through neglect, abuse, and violence and defines elder abuse which includes physical, psychological, emotional, and financial abuses and affect one in every six people who are 60 and above years old (WHO, 2021)

Many countries have pensions and other legislation to cater for older people. In South Africa, the older persons are catered for under the 2006 Older Person's Act which provides for an older person's grant. However, cases of the children and grandchildren forcibly taking the grant have been reported (Kang'ethe, 2018). WHO notes these challenges in the UN Decade of Healthy Aging (2021-2030) and states that to "foster healthy aging and improve lives of older people and their families and communities, fundamental shifts will be required not only in the actions, but in how we think about age and aging" (WHO, 2022, Decade Action Areas, line1). This holistic approach is consistent

with Ubuntu as older persons are part of families and communities, even though in some cases, due to poverty and other life challenges, these families and communities may have left the older persons lonely and isolated.

Ubuntu and residential aged care

While residential aged care (RAC) may seem alien to many people in Africa, these facilities play an important role in developed countries. These facilities are important as places that people needing a significant level of assistance move into. Even in a developed country like Australia, there are diverse views on RAC. Hughes et al. (2022) note that some might like the idea of the support provided and not being a 'burden' to their relatives. Others dread the prospect based on the bad accounts of neglect they have noted in the media and highlighted in numerous commissions of inquiry. In Australia, about six percent of those aged 65 years and older use long-term residential care, but this figure rises to 20 percent for those aged 80 years and over (Dyer et al., 2020). This is higher than in most developed countries.

From an Ubuntu perspective, aging in the community with the family is the ideal and indeed even in developed Western countries, most of the aged population (over 65 years of age) live in the community. It would make sense to still have RAC as an option for two basic reasons. One is that people should have choices and RAC can be one of the options for people, if being cared for by their families is not feasible. The second reason is that sometimes people need specialized care due to high medical needs or lack of support in the community. Since RAC is an expensive option, there is a need to consider what an Ubuntu-informed RAC would look like.

Based on the importance of family, community connections, respect for the elders, and meeting cultural and spiritual needs, an Ubuntu-informed RAC would look more like a community hub than a sterile institution. Residents would maintain contact with their families and community and their culture and beliefs would be considered a fundamental right. Kittaka (2019) has provided glimpses of what this would look like in the Japanese example

above that attempts to recreate families in RACs where children or young people establish relationships with the older ones. A way of remaining connected with their families and nature – land, plants, and animals – should also be considered where appropriate or desirable. These considerations would ensure that the older persons continue feeling valued and connected despite not living with their natural families. Governments have an obligation to ensure older persons are supported to live dignified lives, which they live with their families, or in residential care.

Justification for using Ubuntu

Using Ubuntu as a traditional African philosophy to guide the present and future is best explained by the Akan symbol of *Sankofa* which represents going back to the past to build the future. *Sankofa* is often represented with a bird in flight that is also looking back. The symbol is associated with the Akan proverb: It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten (Kanu, 2007). *Sankofa*, therefore, represents the connection between the past and the present, a reverence for the ancestors and respect for the elders, taking what was good in the past and admitting past mistakes to create a better future (Temple, 2010). Adopting Ubuntu is not the same as being stuck in the past. The opponents of Ubuntu suggest forgetting the past and adopting modernity and scientific rationalism. They argue that the past is gone, and people have moved on (Bar-On, 1999; van der Walt, 2010). However, there is ample evidence that modernity has resulted in major problems like climate change, global pandemics, and a crisis for modern civilization (Rozin, 2020). On the other hand, the values of Ubuntu offer hope to the world. Ubuntu connects the past, present, and future as an unbroken circle; advocates for interdependence and interconnection; binds people to care for each other, their God (however conceived), their ancestors, themselves, and the universe (Chisale, 2018). Nevertheless, the struggle for a clear definition of Ubuntu remains elusive, and local and global understanding and application remain a work in progress (Praeg, 2014).

Contrary to those who suggest that Ubuntu values belong to the past, the current interest in Ubuntu in a wide range of disciplines such as peace studies, social work, sociology, and politics, demonstrate an enduring relevance. Cattell (1997) notes that African people are taught the principles of Ubuntu from infancy and these ideals remain strong. However, there have been other influences that challenge or even undermine Ubuntu. The challenges facing Ubuntu include economic and political systems that lead to consumerism, urbanization, poverty, migration, conflict at family, community, and international levels, and domination of Western cultures. These challenges have led to the decline of the values encapsulated in Ubuntu. Unequivocally and imperatively, reclaiming Ubuntu will not work without addressing these challenges at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Implication of adopting Ubuntu in social work practices

During the World Social Work day on 16th March 2021, 'Ubuntu: I am because we are' was chosen as the first theme of the 2020-2030 Global Agenda for social work and Social Development by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). This singular honour encouraged the global community to focus on the meaning of Ubuntu in social work. Miller and Grise-Owens (2021), for example used the theme to reflect on self-care and noted how self-care did not contradict concern for the whole community, but rather prepared one to care and appreciate the humanness of the others.

Social work implications are mentioned or implied throughout the Chapter. Ubuntu offers a platform from which social workers can anchor their practice, especially in the care of the older persons. Social workers are called upon to embed the values of ubuntu such as love, interconnectedness, community spirit, humanism, dignity, empathy, mutuality, reciprocity in their interventions especially to older persons (Mugumbate and Chereni, 2020). These values will enable the older persons navigate their lives with hope, confidence and more able to "bless" the younger generations for their treatment and improve the inter-generational relationships (Kang'ethe,

2018). When the society is inclusive of the older persons it encourages them to share their accumulated knowledge, skills and wisdom for the benefit of the community. This means that the social work application of ubuntu values will bring back the often-neglected values of interconnectedness among family members and the communities in general.

Social workers using Ubuntu will find that a lot of social work practices align with Ubuntu. These include anti-oppressive practices, ecological social work approaches and eco-social work practices. Social work values of unconditional positive regard for all human beings also resonates with the Ubuntu concept of I am because you are. What Ubuntu adds is the importance of recognising traditional knowledges, the importance of bonds between people, valuing the wisdom of the elders and the spirituality that is imbued in all beings.

Conclusions and the way forward

Embracing Ubuntu in aging care responds to the need for indigenization in education curricula and in government policy formulations. Beyond Africa, the African spirit of sharing means that this humanitarian philosophy is a gift to be shared without reservations. IFSW has demonstrated that it is time to apply the spirit of Ubuntu to show kindness to older persons who deserve to live in genuine human dignity like everyone else. The ideals of Ubuntu are very clear: when people are old, there is an obligation to care for them (Cattell, 1997). What challenges the achievement of this ideal is the poverty, migration, and other modern pressures that rapture the natural bonds and create physical distances between family members. These are challenges social workers need to address as poverty and dislocation erode human dignity.

The notion of caring for vulnerable people, including children and older persons, found in Ubuntu also finds support from virtually all the literature of the main religions. The concepts of filial piety and filial responsibility in Asian

countries, influenced by Confucianism, are very strong, and young people are expected to care for their parents and ancestors (Miyawaki, 2015). In Canada, there is growing recognition of the need to include the "Aboriginal worldviews" of the First Nations, but also the best that the modern Western technology has to offer (Poonwassie & Charter, 2001). This sense of duty and obligation is also found in practically all societies at differing levels with the more traditional societies experiencing greater obligation than the Westernized ones.

The idea of reciprocity in Ubuntu and other traditional philosophies implies that parents care for their children who in turn care for them in their hour of need as they age. The spirit of Ubuntu also calls on the younger generation to love their parents and elders as they were loved while growing up. These beliefs and practices embedded in Ubuntu represent values that the younger generation needs to learn to afford good care to older persons. For social work practitioners, it is important to understand these values amid the barriers to their realization posed by modern lifestyles. It is clear therefore that good care for the older persons needs to be part of a caring society and government policies need to ensure that no one is forgotten or neglected. Ubuntu offers much to inform these essential developments at all levels—individual, family, community, and government.

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Chapter 18

Ubuntu: A Cultural Method of Dementia Caregiving in Africa

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Biographies

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Abstract

Stigmatized notions of dementia are prevalent globally and constitute barriers to health care in Africa and most regions globally. While there exist frameworks for understanding dementia from the global north, they are

ineffective approaches to dementia caregiving in the African region. However, there is an African philosophy called Ubuntu which holds the promise of showing different ways of supporting families of persons with dementia and their caregivers. This chapter focuses on the historical origin of Ubuntu, reflecting how Ubuntu may be adopted for caring for persons with dementia in the African region. As social workers, we need to see possible ways of incorporating the ubuntu philosophy into supporting persons with dementia and their caregivers. A culturally sensitive message to reduce the stigma associated with caregiving for persons with dementia is essential

Abstract translation into Yoruba (Nigeria)

Awọn imọran ti o ni idiwọ ti iyawere wa ni agbaye ati pe o jẹ awọn idena si itọju ilera ni Afirika ati ọpọlọpọ awọn agbegbe ni agbaye. Lakoko ti o wa awọn ilana fun agbọye iyawere lati ariwa agbaye, sibẹ wọn jẹ awọn isunmọ ti ko munadoko si abojuto itọju iyawere ni agbegbe Afirika. Sibẹsibẹ, imoye Afirika kan wa ti a pe ni Ubuntu eyiti o ni ileri ti iṣafihan awọn ọna orișiriși ti atilẹyin awọn idile ti eniyan ti o ni iyawere ati awọn alabojuto wọn. Ipin yii da lori ipilẹṣẹ itan ti Ubuntu, ti n ṣe afihan bi Ubuntu ṣe le ṣe itẹwọgba fun abojuto awọn eniyan ti o ni iyawere ni agbegbe Afirika. Gẹgẹbi awọn oṣiṣẹ lawujọ, a nilo lati rii awọn ọna ti o ṣeeṣe ti iṣakojọpọ imọ-jinlẹ ubuntu sinu atilẹyin awọn eniyan pẹlu iyawere ati awọn alabojuto wọn. Ifiranṣẹ ifarabalẹ ti aṣa lati dinku abuku ti o ni nkan ṣe pẹlu abojuto abojuto fun awọn eniyan ti o ni iyawere jẹ pataki.

Abstract translation into Twi (Ghana)

Adwene a εyε animtiaabu a εfa adwenemhaw ho abu so wɔ wiase nyinaa na εyε akwanside ahorow a εmma wontumi nyε akwahosan ho nhyehyεe wɔ Afrika ne mmeae dodow no ara wɔ wiase nyinaa. Bere a nhyehyεe ahorow wɔ hɔ a wɔde bεte adwenemhaw ase afi wiase nyinaa atifi fam no, nanso εyε akwan a entu mpɔn a wɔfa so hwε adwenemhaw wɔ Afrika mantam mu. Nanso, Afrika nyansapε bi wɔ hɔ a wɔfrε no Biako ye a εkura bɔhyε sε εbεkyerε akwan ahodoɔ a wɔfa so boa nnipa a wɔwɔ adwenemhaw ne wɔn a wɔhwε

wɔn mmusua. Saa ti yi twe adwene si Ubuntu abakɔsɛm mu mfiase so, na ɛkyerɛ sɛnea wobetumi agye Ubuntu de ahwɛ nnipa a wɔwɔ adwenemhaw wɔ Afrika mantam mu. Sɛ́ asetra mu nsɛm ho adwumayɛfo no, ɛsɛ sɛ yehu akwan a ebetumi aba a yɛbɛfa so de ubuntu nyansapɛ no ahyɛ nnipa a wɔwɔ adwenemhaw ne wɔn a wɔhwɛ wɔn a wɔbɛboa wɔn no mu. Nkrasɛm a ɛfa amammerɛ ho a wɔde bɛtew animtiaabu a ɛbata nnipa a wɔwɔ adwenemhaw a wɔhwɛ wɔn ho no so ho hia.

Abstract translation into Shona (Zimbabwe)
Mafungiro anoshorwa edementia akatekeshera pasi rose uye anoita zvipingamupinyi kuhutano hwehutano muAfrica nematunhu mazhinji pasi rose. Kunyange paine hurongwa hwekunzwisisa dementia kubva kuchamhembe kwepasirese, asi nzira dzisingashande dzekuchengeta vanhu vane dementia mudunhu reAfrica. Zvakadaro, kune huzivi hwemuAfrica hunodaidzwa kuti Ubuntu hune vimbiso yekuratidza nzira dzakasiyana dzekutsigira mhuri dzevanhu vane dementia nevachengeti vavo. Chitsauko ichi chinotarisa nezvekwakabva unhu, zvichiratidza kuti Ubuntu hunogona kutorwa sei mukuchengeta vanhu vane dementia mudunhu reAfrica. Sevashandi vezvemagariro evanhu, tinoda kuona nzira dzinogoneka dzekubatanidza huzivi hweubuntu mukutsigira vanhu vane dementia nevanovachengeta. Mharidzo inocherekedza tsika nemagariro ekudzikisa rusarura inoenderana nekuchengeta vanhu vane dementia yakakosha.

Introduction

The increasing prevalence of dementia and dysfunctional supportive services for people with dementia highlights the continued requirement for familial and communal approaches. The rising number of people with dementia constitutes a public health priority, with over 50 million people living with dementia globally (World Health Organisation, 2018). Dementia is a progressive non-reversible condition known to impact individuals, families, and communities (Corriveau et al., 2017; Prince et al., 2013). Different caregiving approaches across African countries are based on settings and

socio-cultural situations. However, there has been evidence from the region that indicates that caregivers of persons with dementia experience psychosocial sequelae like depression, isolation, and stress (Annestedt et al., 2000; Gurayah, 2015; Kane et al., 2021; Musisi, 2015; Nwakasi et al., 2019; Nwakasi et al., 2021; Pinquart & Sorensen, 2003; Tam-Tham et al., 2016). It is becoming an increasing concern in regions such as Africa; while the African philosophy of Ubuntu appears to offer a promising lens from which the conceptualization approaches dementia support and care, to the best of our knowledge, this concept has not been applied to understanding dementia in Africa.

Ubuntu is an African cultural practice premised on showing compassion, dignity, humanity, reciprocity, and mutuality in the interests of shared values, justice, and mutual caring (Khoza, 2006; Mangaliso, 2001; Van Breda, 2019). Ubuntu can also be described as sacred, tactful, and embedded in practice, rituals, and relationships (Muwanga-Zake, 2009). Ubuntu is an African philosophy that respects humanity from a holistic view and in all totality (Tschape, 2013; Tutu, 2000). The concept of ubuntu/ unhu/ botho is age-long, and it is an integral part of African ethics and practices. (Dolamo, 2013). Ubuntu emanated from sub-Saharan Africa among the Bantu community as a philosophy of humanness and humanity. The opposite of Ubuntu is Umhuka, which implies acting like an animal (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). The main point is that Ubuntu has a strong cultural place to understand better caregiving for persons with dementia in the African region if well explored. Although one of the critical tenets of Ubuntu is peaceful coexistence with one another and commitment to sharing local resources, ideologies, and customs within their social environment for the attainment of collective gain (Rankopo & Diraditsile, 2020), however, stigma, ostracization, and social exclusion of families of persons with dementia has made Ubuntu loses its purpose in the African region (Brooke & Ojo, 2020; Epps et al., 2018; Spittel et al., 2019)

Although western principles and approaches to caregiving have attempted to offer some effective solutions to the challenges facing caregivers of persons with dementia from the global north for example: (the person-centered approach)(Fazio et al., 2018; Barbosa et al., 2015; Chenoweth et al., 2019; Parmer et al., 2021; Vernooij-Dassen & Moniz-Cook, 2016);, relationship-centered approach (McCormack et al., 2010; McConnell & Meyer, 2019; Morrison et al., 2019; Witt & Fortune, 2019), yet, these approaches might not be applicable in all situation of caregiver's challenging experiences in the global south where stigma and discrimination are prevalent (Nwakasi et al., 2019; Nwakasi et al., 2019; Ogunniyi, 2018). These western approaches to solving caregiver's challenging experiences are not a complete fit for addressing the everyday challenges of caregivers of persons with dementia in African communities; this is because of the diversity in culture and religious affiliations (Bekhet, 2015; Gurayah, 2015; Napoles et al., 2010; Oyinlola & Olusa, 2020; Hansen et al., 2019). Hence, the need for an Afrocentric approach to caregiving for people with dementia.

Although stigma and social exclusion of persons with dementia and their caregivers continue to persist, most literature informing service provision in the area of dementia care comes from the global north where care and understanding of dementia differ tremendously (Gureje, et al, 2011; Nwakasi, et al, 2021; Ojagbemi, et al, 2018). Therefore, whilst there are frameworks, they don't hold much meaning within the African context. Taking a concept that is culturally accepted and using it to challenge current practices of dementia care may be an effective way of changing attitudes. The tenets of Ubuntu that appear helpful in the understanding of dementia caregiving in the African region are compassion, family solidarity, survival, respect, and dignity.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no literature focusing on the use of Ubuntu to illustrate caregiving practices for persons with dementia. We, therefore, considered this chapter as the first step to

introducing Ubuntu as an ontological underpinning for caregiving practices of persons with dementia in the African region. We begin by briefly discussing the historical origin of Ubuntu, and reflecting on how Ubuntu is situated in dementia caregiving in the African region.

Dementia Caregiving in Africa

Africa has one of the fastest-growing rates of older persons worldwide (Kinsella & Phillips, 2005). The number of people living with dementia in the region was projected to increase by 30% in the next ten years (Gureje et al., 2011; Ogunniyi 2018; Ojagbemi et al., 2018). Given the complex care needs that arise as dementia progresses and the exponential increase in the prevalence of dementia, this population's caring needs are also increasing. Due to the changes in behaviour and emotions tied to dementia can make caregiving particularly difficult for the caregiver to manage (Larson & Stroud, 2021; Ogunniyi 2018).

The absence of comprehensive government-assisted and well-structured home support programmes for older adults in the Sub-Saharan African region has made caregiving fall mainly on families, hence the need for family strengthening (Aboderin & Hoffman, 2015; Keating, 2011; Therborn, 2006). Previous empirical findings suggest that caregiving for persons with dementia can be challenging as it accompanies behavioural and emotional changes in the person with dementia (Ivey et al., 2013). This could also cause a significant decline in the caregiver's physical health (Roth et al., 2009), social isolation (Brodaty & Donkin, 2009), and financial burden (Brinda et al., 2014). Family members may not understand the health condition of their older adults at the early stage of dementia, which is exacerbated by the non-existence of diagnostic services for dementia in the region (Dias et al., 2008; Patel & Prince, 2001). In most typical family settings in Africa, informal caregivers are predominantly female relatives (Asuquo & Akpan-Idiok, 2020). These caregivers are often middle-aged, or spouses of the person diagnosed with dementia (Brodaty & Dokin, 2009) who do not have

professional training in caregiving and sometimes experience low socioeconomic status (Etters et al., 2008; Yakubu & Schutte, 2018). Although a large body of literature exists illuminating the caregiving experiences of persons with dementia in the global north (Bangerter et al., 2019; Change et al., 2015; Langa et al., 2017; Pratt & Johnson, 2021; Tam-Tham et al., 2016), there is a lack of empirical and theoretical literature on how caregiving for persons with dementia is experienced in countries of the global south, where the stigma of family caregivers is high, health and social care resources are scarce for people with neurocognitive impairments like dementia. For example, some African countries ascribe dementia to witchery and punishment for previous evil deeds, which often result in alienation and exclusion for persons with dementia and their families (Alzheimer's Disease International, 2017;).

Devaluation of status and social exclusion from the public was reported in Uganda (Ainamani et al., 2020a), and among healthcare professionals, pity, intolerance, and irritation were also reported in Nigeria (Gureje et al., 2011). In some regions of Africa, families of someone with mental illness must go into seclusion for some number of days or are forced to relocate from the community (Aina, 2006; Esan et al., 2019). The families of people with dementia may be subjected to intergenerational labeling such that "no one must marry into such a family" (Kehoua et al., 2019). According to Werner et al., (2019), some health professionals are likely to attribute blame to family caregivers of people with dementia for late presentation in the hospital. These serve as a means for healthcare workers to distance themselves from certain conditions (Werner et al., 2019). This is most common when the healthcare professional is not working closely with the family member of an individual with dementia, however, this situation is often underreported in Africa (Musyimi et al., 2021; Jacobs et al., 2022). Within African cultures, although family caregivers play significant roles in supporting older adults with disability conditions like dementia, they nonetheless feel embarrassed by public comments and are afraid that their family members are being

subjected to harmful traditional practices such as beating, shackling of legs and compulsory sunbathing (Brooke & Ojo, 2019; Ogunniyi, 2018; Jacobs et al., 2022); as well, many family caregivers may suffer from untreated anxiety for supporting people with dementia which might lead to poor quality of life for the caregivers (Kehoua et al., 2019). This is an essential gap because (1) the incidence of dementia caregiving is expected to grow in developing countries, and (2) culturally embedded meanings shape experiences of caring for people with dementia. Hence, approaches and solutions from the global north may be ill-suited for the African context for example strong family ties, family concealment, and oftentimes, female-head assumes the role of home carer. Hence opening dialogue discussion on the utilisation of Afrocentric philosophy such as Ubuntu that offers support for addressing the burden of treatment coordination for family members with dementia (Jacobs, 2022; Ogunniyi et al., 2005). Also, it is unclear how family caregivers can participate in the care-decision making, especially for people with dementia and other forms of disabilities, in terms of care coordination and opportunities (O'Connor et al., 2018). Doing so will allow caregivers to build positive relationships, and harness opportunities for growth while they support their loved ones with dementia.

Philosophy of Ubuntu

Ubuntu emanated from the term Xhosa, and several scholars have seen it as a common language of the Bantu community of South Africa; this is evidenced by the existence of suffixes-ntu (for ub-untu), -thru (for uMun-thu), and the -nhu for hu-nhu), which has common linguistic roots (Mangena, 2016). So, in practice, the ideologies of Ubuntu have not been utilized in dementia caregiving in the African region because stigma is still an issue in dementia caregiving. This is still an issue because there is a disconnect between the principle of Ubuntu and how dementia caregiving is understood in the African region. For example, in Nigeria, where most epidemiological studies on dementia in the West African region are conducted, one of the many misconceptions is that people living with dementia are witches

(Ogunniyi, 2018). There are cases in urban cities where older women are openly beaten or stoned and are pressured to say they are witches (Falodun, 2020). Therefore, these 'witch' beliefs about dementia make families and caregivers hide from seeking help (Mkhonto et al., 2017). In South Africa, Nelson Mandela made a speech during the 2014 World Mental health day that the quest to overcome fears and hatred of people labelled witches is not a deliberate act that requires pity. Still, it is an act that calls for personal righteousness and justice (Leff, 2014).

There had been limited empirical evidence suggestive of Ubuntu's contributions to the field of health care, social work, and other professions (Chigangaidze, 2021; Mabvurira, 2020; Du Plessis, 2019; Zvomuya, 2020). Although, works examining the promise Ubuntu holds for social work fields such as mental health, children and families, and generalist practice are starting to emerge. However, we have no works which have explicitly examined the potential of Ubuntu to challenge stigma in the area of dementia caregiving (Mabvurira, 2020; Mupedziswa, Rankopo and Mwansa, 2019; Mugumbate and Chereni, 2019; Rankopo and Diraditsile, 2020; Van Breda, 2019; Zvomuya, 2020). The concept of Ubuntu has further been used in psychology and nursing science. For example, the concept of Ubuntu has been identified to provide a positive impact on family connectedness in caring for persons with dementia (Engelbrecht & Kasiram, 2012). Ubuntu philosophy is utilised in fighting health disasters like COVID-19 because it promotes interconnectedness in its worldview and has been shown to enable families and communities to support each other throughout the process of the disease condition (Chigangaidze et al., 2021; Omodan, 2020; Estifanos et al., 2020; Mpofu, 2020). In preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS in countries like South Africa, Ubuntu was reported to serve as a spiritual foundation for communities to fight against discrimination and stigmatization because the communities saw each in themselves (Tarkang et al., 2018). Our thinking is that if Ubuntu can be utilized in other clinical issues like HIV/AIDS and

COVID-19, Ubuntu holds a promise for understanding a dimension of caring for persons with dementia in the region.

Ubuntu philosophy was utilised in disseminating COVID-19 vaccine education in the community (Homma et al.,2021). So, compared to western worldviews that speak of the individual and the family but focus a lot on family caregiving, the Ubuntu offers a way of looking more broadly at how communities can support persons with dementia and their caregivers and perhaps navigate how persons with dementia can still contribute to communities. The concept of personhood discusses how one person can help or inhibit the expression of another person's personhood. It speaks about dyads. Relationship-centered care does broaden the perspective and suggests that care is considered good if persons with dementia, families, and health providers all receive care and compassion because if they receive it, they can offer it. Ubuntu broadens the lens and speaks to how communities benefit from principles of mutual respect (this level of specificity to offer what Ubuntu offers as different is very good). Also, when applied to the African context, Ubuntu offers invaluable insight into the local realities of supporting persons with dementia and illuminates potential solutions for addressing current challenges.

The philosophy of Ubuntu can imply that it builds checks and balances when making decisions about caregiving for persons with dementia. Decisions and actions about caregiving for persons with dementia in Africa are not about individuality and separateness but an explanation of the interrelationship among families and communities where an individual with dementia resides. Although Ubuntu places significant emphasis on holistic caregiving for persons with dementia and other neurocognitive disabilities, most African countries still view people with dementia and other neurocognitive disabilities as behaviour that often conflicts with the philosophy of Ubuntu (Edwards et al., 2004). This is because when such individuals exhibit aggressive behaviours, it is regarded as a disconnect from the social values

and norms of the community. Therefore, the person and their families are ostracized from participating in social activities in the community. African cultures adopting the philosophy of Ubuntu should use interdependence and interpersonal responsibilities to reduce threats, stigma, and cultural taboos on persons with dementia and their families. So, the philosophy of Ubuntu is leading us to have better ways of caregiving for persons with dementia using its principles and tenets of relation, compassion, and reciprocity which are entrenched in Ubuntu, and will be discussed extensively in the next section of this chapter.

Application of Ubuntu in Dementia Caregiving

Today, the ideals of African families about Ubuntu remain strong, but these families are under great stress. African families are central to providing caregiving for persons with dementia but have become less stable due to the extensive economic and political changes, increasing poverty, civil wars, famine, HIV/AIDS, and other problems (Kelly et al., 2019). Furthermore, migration and urbanization have spontaneously separated family members physically. Modern-day education and diverse life experiences have intellectually separated generations (WHO, 2015). Almost everywhere in the African region, families increasingly have trouble coping with the daily needs of their family members, including individuals with disabilities and older adults (Hughes et al., 2007; Silverstein & Giarrusso, 2010). In African culture, it is an acceptable practice for families to be embedded safely in their community because older adults are considered a vulnerable group in the community. Therefore, in accordance with the philosophy of Ubuntu, persons with dementia should be well cared for and adequately supported by families and their community. Hence, we are presenting this section of the chapter to position the four (4) philosophical tenets of Ubuntu in dementia caregiving according to Poovan et al. (2006): survival, solidarity, compassion, respect, and dignity. All these will be explained in relation to caregiving for a person with dementia in the African region:

a. Shared-Survival

This is the ability of people to sustain and survive relationships in the face of distress, difficulty, and hardship. This is not through self-reliance but through "brotherhood and care." In the context of caregiving for persons with dementia in the African region, shared survival is seen as a shared burden (i.e., families and primary caregivers do not struggle with dementia alone). When communities live according to the philosophy of Ubuntu, they develop a sense of shared will to survive through the journey of caregiving for persons with dementia through personal responsibilities, sacrifice, service, and accountability (Poovan et al., 2006). Evidence suggests that family caregivers of persons with dementia in the African region are made to undergo struggles, stigma, and social exclusion because persons with dementia are viewed as witches and wizards (Brooke & Ojo, 2020; Kane et al., 2021; Adedeji et al., 2022). Also, literature has suggested the negative impact of the stereotypic behaviour of caregivers on stigma experiences for people with dementia (Gureje et al., 2011; Musyimi et al., 202; Kehoua et al., 2019). Therefore, addressing stereotypic perceptions toward people with dementia is critical to realizing shared survival in older adults with dementia. Also, communities in the African region should be aware of the daily experiences of families when coping with the burden of dementia by seeking assistance instead of hiding. This will enable the human spirit in the community to aid the family to be exonerated from stigmatization (van Breda, 2019). Therefore, the survival of the caregiver is possible when the persons with dementia are regarded as human with similar needs, dignity, respect, and care, just like anyone else in the community. (Poovan et al., 2006)

b. Solidarity

Solidarity in African communities is a spirit that pertains to the combination of human efforts toward sustaining and serving the community. Bayertz (2009) conceptualizes solidarity as a relational concept about the perception of mutual obligations between individuals and community members. Solidarity in the family caregiving context implies mutual obligation in daily

activities or the practice of engagement and support for other family members who need care (Meulen & Wright, 2012). Although this is often a non-professional way of providing care and support without restrictions and rules set up by a central agency, the burden of caregiving for persons with dementia is on the increase, and the demographic process is reducing the number of people available to provide informal caregiving roles for persons with dementia (many children of an older adult with dementia have migrated away from their parents to other cities or region, build their own life, have a new family or are divorced). Therefore, the philosophy of Ubuntu is considered important because solidarity will provide an avenue for communities to bond together to care for someone with dementia in the absence of immediate family members (Engelbrecht, 2006).

c. Compassion

Compassion is one of the critical elements of Ubuntu and has been widely recognized as an integral part of good quality caregiving, although it is commonly utilized in the healthcare sector, the construction of compassion has multiple definitions and is complex (Sinclair et al., 2017). Compassion is defined as the virtuous response seeking to proffer a solution to an individual's suffering and needs through relational understandings and actions (Sinclair et al., 2016). Compassionate caregiving can be quick and could be as easy as a gentle look or touch of reassurance (Chochinov, 2007). Although there are positive aspects associated with providing caregiving for persons with dementia (Quinn & Toms, 2019), studies have suggested adverse outcomes associated with dementia caregiving among families, including depression, burden, and anxiety (Schulz et al., 2020). Compassion is an essential philosophy in Ubuntu, as it can assist the persons with dementia and their caregivers to be integrated and assisted in communal life. This is described as the African caregivers' ability to reach out in friendship to others through a humanistic spirit in a delicate and artful way (Poovan et al., 2006). Through compassionate listening and sharing of life stories, respect is built, and the humanness of the person with dementia and their caregiver is

activated in the community where they reside. If the compassionate care aspect of Ubuntu is implemented, it will pave the way for harmonious and meaningful human coexistence in dementia caregiving in the African region.

d. Respect and dignity

Respect and dignity for persons with dementia and their caregivers is part of the WHO Global Action on the Public health response to dementia 2017-2025 which proposed that persons with dementia and their caregivers should live well, receive the care and support needed them to fulfill their potential with the sense of respect, dignity, autonomy, and equality (WHO, 2017). However, most African countries that are signatories to this global plan for dementia do not have a nationally representative dementia care plan or policy for individuals and their families with dementia. Since dignity and respect are essential components of dementia caregiving, it has also been recognized as a critical element of Ubuntu because it underlines the true definition of humanity. Among Africans, dignity and respect for others is not just something that an individual can create but a reality created in common humanity. By affording persons with dementia and their caregivers a social place in the community and following the rules of respect, the humanness in African dementia caregiving will be restored. Although individuals might experience challenges with meeting their daily living, the humanness of an individual with dementia must be respected as this is spelt out in the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Ubuntu emphasizes the importance of community, interconnectedness, and compassion for others, which can provide a foundation for healing and well-being. Similarly, healing involves restoring or promoting physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, which can be supported by the principles of Ubuntu. When applied to dementia caregiving in Africa, Ubuntu and healing can involve a range of interventions and strategies that promote the well-being of individuals with dementia and their families. This may include community-based care models that rely on the support and guidance of local

community groups and organizations, as well as person-centered care approaches that prioritize the individual needs and preferences of individuals with dementia. Ubuntu can also help to address the stigma and misconceptions surrounding dementia in some African communities, which can be a significant barrier to effective caregiving. By promoting a sense of interconnectedness and compassion for individuals with dementia and their families, Ubuntu can help to create a more supportive and inclusive environment that promotes healing and well-being.

The implication of Ubuntu to Dementia Care in Social Work Practice

Social workers recognize individuals as equal. Social work advances social change, development, social cohesion, empowerment, and emancipation of people. It is also based on the principle of social justice, the rights of individuals, respect for diversity, and collective responsibilities (International Federation of Social Workers, 2018). Interestingly, Ubuntu was recognized as the first theme of the new Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development (The Agenda), which commenced in 2020 (Mayaka & Truell, 2021)

People with dementia and their families are often in need of social services to cope with the demands of providing care services. Family caregivers play a critical role in supporting persons with dementia globally (Ogunniyi et al., 2005; Brodaty & Donkin, 2009). As social workers, it is our role to understand and support their experiences to improve their circumstances and the circumstances of the persons they care for (Damron-Rodriquez et al., 2013). While the global north has begun to develop programs and services to support caregivers, these solutions may not be sensitive to local realities among the African population. Social Work should be part of the advocacy movement that promotes intervention program for family caregivers of people with dementia in Africa while attending to various cultural misconceptions and concepts about dementia and people with the condition in Africa (Oyinlola & Olusa 2020)

As social worker advocates for decolonization, the principles of Ubuntu can provide a framework for social workers to approach dementia caregiving in Africa with compassion, empathy, and a commitment to community-based care. By working in partnership with individuals, families, and communities, social workers can help to promote the well-being of older adults with dementia and their families and advance the principles of social justice and human dignity that underlie the Ubuntu philosophy. (Kgatla, 2016). For social workers, humanness, social justice, respect, and dignity is critical to supporting caregivers of persons with dementia, this is because one of the maxims states that when one is situated to decide between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human, Ubuntu subscribes that one should opt for the preservation of life. Ubuntu can be seen as a guiding principle for social workers in their work with individuals and families affected by dementia in Africa.

Social workers who adopt an Ubuntu-based approach to their practice recognize the importance of the community in providing care and support for individuals with dementia and their families. This may involve working with local community groups and organizations to provide education and support for caregivers, as well as advocating for policies and programs that promote community-based care models. The code of ethics obligates social workers working with persons with dementia to be culturally competent, therefore, Since traditional, faith-based, and community healing centers seem to be closer to family caregivers supporting people with dementia, hence engagement in dialogue toward addressing harmful practices like shackling and ostracization of caregivers would encourage community-based support services to older adults with dementia and their families in Africa. Social workers are rightly positioned to use family therapy to educate the family member about dementia and mend broken relationships that eroded during the early stage of the symptoms.

Limitation of Ubuntu as a philosophy in dementia caregiving

There is no theory, philosophy, or concept without flaws. Given the complexity of African culture, Ubuntu philosophy cannot be used as the ultimate cultural solution to the caregiving challenges of persons with dementia and their family members. Ubuntu does not have a robust framework or measuring scale for assessing Ubuntu in African culture (Nzimakwe, 2014). Firstly, the concept of Ubuntu is not universal across all African cultures, and there may be variations in how it is understood and applied in different contexts. Therefore, social workers need to be culturally sensitive and responsive to the diverse needs and perspectives of the communities they serve. Secondly, social workers in Africa may face a number of structural and systemic barriers to providing effective dementia caregiving support, including limited funding and resources, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and a lack of government support for social work services.

Additionally, social work as a profession may not be well-known or widely accepted in some African communities, which may limit the ability of social workers to provide effective support and advocacy for individuals and families affected by dementia. Finally, the stigma and misconceptions surrounding dementia in some African communities can be a significant barrier to effective caregiving. This can lead to delayed diagnosis and treatment and can also contribute to social isolation and discrimination for individuals with dementia and their families.

Overall, while the principles of Ubuntu and social work can be valuable in promoting dementia caregiving in Africa, it is important to recognize and address the various limitations and challenges that can impact the effectiveness of these approaches. By working collaboratively with communities and stakeholders, social workers can help to overcome these barriers and promote more effective and compassionate care for individuals with dementia and their families. The core principles of Ubuntu hold promise in challenging some of the current practices and reactions. The authors think

the first step is opening up dialogue with communities about these issues of dementia caregiving in Africa and connecting them to Ubuntu principles.

Conclusion

This article situates Ubuntu as a philosophy relevant to improving dementia caregiving in the African region. As caregivers experience many struggles in overcoming the effect of caring for persons with dementia, Ubuntu is a philosophy that lies in promoting faith, justice, hope, temperance, fortitude, wisdom, and several potentialities in individuals and their communities. To protect indigenous knowledge systems and healing for caregivers of persons with dementia experiencing social exclusion in their communities, Ubuntu is a critical cultural method of promoting mental health, caregiving, and humanness. As discussed in this article, Ubuntu can be revived in the African region to survive and restore dignity for persons living with dementia and their caregivers.

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Chapter 19

The Utility of Ubuntu or Hunhu Theory in Fighting Corruption in Zimbabwe: The Cocial Work Implications

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Biography

Cornelius Dudzai is a PhD student for Social Work at the University of Wollongong in Australia. He holds a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in social work from the University of Zimbabwe. Cornelius's major research interests lie in environmental social work, human rights, corruption and anti-corruption management and social justice in relation to Ubuntu. As per Cornelius' view, Ubuntu can be used to address majority of Africa's problems that are linked to corruption, the environment, human rights and social injustice.

Abstract

Corruption is one of the challenges bedevilling Zimbabwean society today. Ostensibly, there is a dearth of academic literature on the role of ubuntu or hunhu theory in fighting corruption in Zimbabwe. Ubuntu is critical in enabling different communities, groups, and individuals to identify themselves as one people. This means that Ubuntu is the panacea through which people of diverse backgrounds are bound together; that way, they can

identify themselves as a people facing one challenge; a societal challenge, opportunities, and goals. It is through Ubuntu that society can have one vision. With its power of bringing different groups of people into one people, Ubuntu or Hunhu theory becomes a fundamental tool that pro-development professionals such as social workers can capitalise on in organising society against contemporary challenges bedeviling society such as corruption.

Abstract translation into Nzwisa (muChishona)

Huwori nderimwe rematambudziko anoshungurudza nyika yeZimbabwe. Parizvino, hakuna zvinyorwa zvakawanda uye zvakadzama zvinobudisa kubatsira kungaita Hunhu kana kuti Ubuntu mukupedza dambudziko rehuwori munyika yeZimbabwe. Hunhu inzira inobatsira vanhu venzvimbo dzakasiyana siyana, zvikwata uye vanhu vanozvimiririra kuti vaite muwonera pamwe chuma chemuzukuru. Zvinoreva kuti Hunhu igwara rinobatanidza vanhu vakasiyana siyana uye vanobva kwakasiyana siyana; kubatanidzwa ikoko kunoitwa neHunhu kunopa vanhu muwono wekuti vakatarisana nedambudziko rimwe chete; dambudziko rinotambudza nharaunda yose, mikana uye zvinangwa. Hunhu ndihwo hunoita nharaunda yavanhu ive nemuwono mumwe chete. Kubudikidza nesimba rekubatanidza zvikwata zvakayisana siyana zvichiita chirwirangwe, Hunhu chombo chinokwanisa kushandiswa nevanoita zvebudiriro yenzvimbo vakafananana neva Batsiridzi mukuwunganidza nharaunda kuzorwisa nekupedza dambudziko rehuwori.

Introduction

The 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International Zimbabwe rated Zimbabwe as the 157th least corrupt country out of 180 countries across the globe. Corruption in Zimbabwe has reached monumental levels. This corruption is existent at varying levels; among government bureaucrats, public departments such as the Zimbabwe Republic Police, the rest of the Civil Service, the private sector, and general

citizens. Presently, corruption has now been accepted to be a normal way of getting along the harsh economic conditions that are characterized by galloping inflation and increased costs of living. In this chapter, it is my argument that the high levels of corruption at different levels in Zimbabwe are to some extent a result of the erosion of the Ubuntu/Hunhu Spirit within individuals who after losing the values that make them humans become corrupt. Corruption itself implies individuals and a society that is rotten of values and integrity. Corruption is a direct indicator that society has departed from Ubuntu/ Hunhu spirit and values. Departure from the Hunhu/Ubuntu spirit and values sees people caring less about the welfare of others while caring more about their own welfare. In the Shona Language, munhu ane huwori ane humbimbindoga uye ane makaro which means that a corrupt individual is selfish and greedy.

As per my argument, the genesis of corruption in any individual is when they seek to benefit at all costs at the negligence and cost of other people's welfare. Self-profit is key to corrupt individualism. The bone of contention for this chapter is that when the values of Hunhu or Ubuntu get lost in society, high levels of corruption become prevalent. The chapter, therefore, attributes high levels of corruption across different sectors in Zimbabwe to a societal departure from the values of what constitutes a complete African. A complete African is comprised of different components or ingredients, collectivism, accountability, integrity, honesty, love and care for suffering, and humaneness. On the other hand, excessive individualism leads to an individual caring less about the wellbeing of others while ensuring that he or she benefits from every opportunity and resource at the expense of others. In this chapter, I also hold the view that to some extent, it is the cultural philosophy of Ubuntu or Hunhu in Zimbabwe and other African states alike that leads to high levels of corruption. This chapter, therefore, comprises the background, importance of Ubuntu in addressing corruption, Ubuntu/Hunhu as a driver of corruption, and implications for social work.

Background

In Shona Language, corruption is referred to as huwori. Huwori means being rotten. A corrupt society in the Shona language means nyika yakawora kana kuti nyika ine vanhu vakarasa hunhu. A corrupt individual in Shona loosely means Munhu akaora nekuda kwehumbimbindoga nema makaro and in English this means an individual with a rotten character due to selfishness and greed. Corruption is defined differently by different scholars. Nye (1967, p.419) defines corruption as "behaviour by a public office bearer who deviates from normal public responsibilities to pursue private interests." The deviation from normal prescribed public duties by a public official lead to the office bearer converting his or her office into a money-generating machine as is now the common phenomenon in Zimbabwe (Tizor, 2009). The World Bank (1997) and United Nations Development Programme (2000) also consider corruption to be an abuse of a position of power characterized by greed and the absence of transparency within individuals and institutions concerned with private gain.

Moyo (2014) also regards corruption as a scenario in which power and influence of the public office is used for personal gain which may or may not be monetary at the expense of the common good and in violation of established laws, principles, regulations, and ethical considerations. In this chapter, I define corruption as a decay of the quality that makes a human being humane within an individual be it a public official or a private citizen and this decay in the quality of being humane within individuals at different levels leads to selfish behaviour which frequently manifests itself in forms of greed, being inconsiderate of others and unending desire to benefit from public resources at the expense of the public. Cheating and stealing are all forms of corruption. A student that cheats in an examination is grooming himself or herself into being a professional that cheats on his/ her profession, the public, and clients. Cheating is a manifestation of being dishonest. A partner that cheats in a relationship or marriage is a corrupt individual. As per African cultural values, all such practices are condemned. A person that

cheats at a micro level such as in an examination or in marriage holds the capacity of cheating on a large scale; that is cheating an entire nation if they are given public power and responsibility. An individual of rotten values and character takes away what belongs to the public or what is not theirs. In Shona society, such individuals that cheat and steal are termed as matsotsi nembavha which means crooks and thieves. A corrupt individual lacks the Ubuntu values of honest behaviour, selflessness, and concern and care for others. A corrupt individual is solely concerned about maximizing their own benefits either in monetary or non-monetary terms. A corrupt individual deviates from the set societal standards, rules, and procedures in order to satisfy their selfish desires which disadvantage the masses. When a community reaches a point where more and more individuals are concerned about their selfish desires over communal good, this results in communal corruption. When all communities collectively become inhumane to the extent of normalizing and celebrating selfishness and ill-gotten wealth, this creates a societal problem; societal corruption which then leads to a national problem of corruption. Arguably, high levels of corruption in Zimbabwe whose genesis is briefly explained below can be said to have started at individual levels until the ripple effects spread to different sectors, and to date, corruption is now a national problem.

The high levels of corruption in Zimbabwe are justified and evidenced by a popular Shona saying that mbudzi inodya payakasungirirwa which loosely means a goat grazes where it is tethered. This statement implies that one must steal from the resources within their workspaces. Corruption is also confirmed by many reports of corruption by public officials and despite overwhelming evidence of the public officials being proven guilty, none of them has been sued.

The situation whereby public officials steal national resources while further pauperizing ultra-poor citizens and households without facing legal charges is arguably clear evidence of the extent to which the governing

administration has lost the values of Ubuntu. According to Mugumbate & Nyanguru (2013), leaders at different levels owe their leadership to the people that they lead. This is adequate to say that had the political leadership in Zimbabwe owing their leadership to the people, they would always strive to crack down on all forms of injustice that threaten the lives and wellbeing of the poor such as corruption by public officials.

Before delving more into the different cases of corruption in Zimbabwe since the country's independence in 1980, it is crucial to note that the national challenge of corruption in the country has always been pervasive during the country's colonialism from 1890 to 1979. This implies that high levels of corruption in Zimbabwe can be partly attributed to an escalation of practice and philosophy that was introduced by colonialism. In Shona, colonialists are referred to as Vapambevhu kana kuti vapambepfumi which loosely means powerful people that use force to rob the weaker of their wealth and land. History confirms that when the British colonialists settled in Zimbabwe in 1890, they used force to take away fertile land and livestock from the indigenous population. Indigenous people were then driven off to unfertile lands with unconducive climatic conditions called reserves or maruzevha. On its own, colonialism of Africa by the British, the French, Portuguese, and Germans was a form of corruption because the colonialists took away land, minerals, and livestock that were not theirs.

Colonialism itself is large-scale stealing and massive robbery. To some extent, colonialism introduced large-scale corruption to Africa. This argument is supported by Moyo (2014) who posits that colonialism set a culture of bureaucratic corruption as getting into public office by Africans was not based on merit but was reward of being loyal to the British settlers. This means that instead of working on skills and qualifications as avenues to be public office bearers, one had to show submissive behaviour to the colonialists as an alternative qualification. Consequently, clientelism and patronage became common phenomena (Gatsheni, 2009, 2011, and Tizor,

2009). However, all the large-scale corruption exhibited in Zimbabwe cannot be solely attributed to colonialism. History also confirms that before colonialism, tribal wars were existent among indigenous people and these meant that stronger tribes would take away what was not theirs from weaker tribes.

Having fought an armed struggle for sixteen years (1963-1979) in a quest to address inequalities over access to rights such as land and voting, Zimbabwe which got her independence on 18 April 1980 continued to witness worsened cases of corruption soon after independence. This was despite the fact that the nationalists had fought for independence to address corrupt tendencies such as inequality towards access to national resources such as land. In the year 1987, high-level officials were involved in gross abuse of funds in what is known as the Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company Blast Furnace Scandal.

The high-ranking officials included Samuel Mumbengegwi (former Indigenisation and Empowerment Minister and formerly Minister for Industry and International Trade who was in charge of the Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company), Joyce Mujuru (former Vice President from 2005-2014), Olivia Muchena (former Minister of Small to Medium Enterprise Development), Gibson Munyoro (former MP for the ruling ZANU PF party), Gabriel Masanga (former Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company Group Managing Director), George Mlilo (former Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Transport), Stan Mudenge (former Minister for Higher Education) and Tirivanhu Mudariki (former businessman and ZANU PF Member of Parliament) (Pindula News, 2018). The ZISCO Blast Furnace Scandal saw public officials claiming exorbitant allowances from the company after traveling on personal business trips that were not linked to ZISCO. The case also involved taking cash from the state-owned company for private use and abuse of credit cards for hotel bookings and entertainment allowances. Though the named individuals were found guilty, none of them faced legal disciplinary action from the Mugabe administration which was in charge at

the time. Those that were ministers continued to serve in Mugabe's cabinet till their deaths. There is also another famous case of corruption by public officials called the Willow gate Scandal that took place in 1988. The Willow gate Scandal saw Ministers and Members of Parliament under the Mugabe administration using their political power to obtain preference to buy cars from Willow vale Motor Industries at discounted prices and they would sell the cars at inflated prices. Other cases of corruption in Zimbabwe include the 1994 War Victims Compensation Scandal, the 1998 Harare City Council Refuse Tender Scandal, and the 1999 VIP Land Grabbing Scandal.

In 2016, while interviewing on his 92nd birthday with Zimbabwe Broadcasting Television on 05 March 2016, the late former president of Zimbabwe, Robert Gabriel Mugabe claimed that about US$15 billion in revenue generated from diamonds in the Marange community in Manicaland Province had been siphoned through corruption though he did not exactly explain how and who was involved. He made the following claim as quoted by Banya (2018);

> "We have not received much from the diamond industry at all.
>
> Not much by way of earnings. I don't think we have exceeded $2 billion or so and yet we think that well over 15 or more billion dollars have been earned in that area.
>
> So where have our carats been going? The gems? You see, there has been quite a lot of secrecy in handling them and we have been blinded ourselves. That means our people whom we expected to be our eyes and ears have not been able to see or hear what was going on and lots of swindling, and smuggling has taken place and the companies that have been mining have virtually, I want to say, robbed us of our wealth. That is why we have decided that this area should be a monopoly area and only the State should be able to do the mining in that area."

According to Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa (2021), in 2019, the then Minister of Public Service, Labour, and Social Services, Prisca Mupfumira was reported and arrested for having stolen over US$90 million from the

National Social Security Authority's pension fund during her term of office. Despite having spent two months in Prison under comfortable and luxurious conditions never afforded to other inmates, she was granted bail after two months. Presently, there is silence over the issue.

The 2021 report by the Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa also shows that in June 2020, the former Minister of Health Obadiah Moyo was arrested and charged with criminal abuse of office over the alleged awarding of a US$60 million contract for COVID-19 supplies. Obadiah Moyo used his ministerial powers to award a US$60 million contract for supplies of Personal Protective Equipment at inflated prices and this was done outside the due process of obtaining the consent of the Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ). The issue came to light after investigative journalist Hopewell Chin'ono exposed the grand corruption. Instead of the then Minister of Health and Child Care being tried and charged, the journalist who exposed the case got persecuted by the state under frivolous charges of trying to destabilize the country.

In May 2022, there were reports that Zimbabwe's cabinet endorsed the Pomona Waste to Energy Project, a deal between Harare City Council and a Netherlands-based company called Georgenix BV (Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, 2022). According to Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (2022), Harare City Council has to hand over Pomona dumpsite in Harare to Georgenix, and Harare City Council is entitled to collect and deliver to the site 1000 tonnes of waste per day at a fee of US$40 per tonne which amounts to US$40 000 per day being paid by Harare City Council to the contracted company. The thirty-year deal entered into also indicates that even if Harare City Council fails to deliver any waste to Pomona dumpsite daily, Harare City Council is mandated to pay US$22 000 per day for waste not delivered. Georgenix Company is said to be aligned with the country's current president, Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. Such a deal shows misplaced priorities since Harare City Council is already failing to deliver high-quality services such as clean water but that

same local authority is required by the cabinet to pay US$ 40 000 per day for dumping waste to another company. This only further burdens the poor residents in Harare who will be tasked to pay inflated rates to Harare City Council.

It is worth noting that of the different cases of corruption that have taken place in Zimbabwe, the perpetrators never get imprisoned, and neither does the state forfeit any stolen national resources from them. Even if they get arrested, investigations and prosecutions take a long and eventually, they get acquitted despite overwhelming evidence that they would have committed acts of corruption. This shows that as a nation, in its different forms at varying levels, corruption has been accepted as a normal way of doing business in Zimbabwe. This is supported by Tizor (2009, p. 26) who argues that corruption has become an accepted and almost expected way of doing business, especially in the public sector to the extent that civil servants go to work not because they are motivated by salaries but by the opportunities to enhance their paltry incomes with corrupt acts using the organisation's resources.

The personal gains versus the national cost of corruption

As a personal gain to a corrupt official and corrupt citizen, corruption sometimes cuts bureaucracy and red tape, particularly in bureaucratic organisations. Processing of papers in most public institutions normally takes a long since papers have to move from one office to another and the period during which papers await signatures and stamps in those offices may comprise of many days, weeks, and months. Since government institutions still work with hard copies for record-keeping purposes, some of the papers may risk getting misplaced or lost in the process. In order to fasten the process and pace at which one's papers get processed, one may resort to bribing public officials so that they can fasten the process. This becomes an advantage to the bribee and the bribed as the bribee manages to fast-track his or her papers and the bribed earns some money within a short period. A

typical example of a government process which under normal circumstances must take a reasonably long time comprising about two weeks is the vetting of fingerprints which is the sole responsibility of the Criminal Investigation Department's Head Office in Harare. Because obtaining police clearance takes a long time, it has become a norm that individuals either bribe Criminal Investigation Detectives or get extorted by the Criminal Investigation Detectives so that the police clearance certificate which ceteris paribus is obtainable in fourteen working days can be obtained within a few hours. Arguably, this works to the advantage of both parties as the citizen can obtain a police clearance certificate earlier which could be urgent to their circumstances while the Criminal Investigation Detective who extorts or gets bribed can get an extra income of up to US$10 per bribe or extortion.

Besides shortening long government processes, corruption could also establish working relationships between concerned parties. A corrupt public official versus a corrupt citizen can easily establish rapport as payment of kickbacks before rendering and obtaining an informal service might leave both parties satisfied. In other words, payment of kickbacks may help bring satisfaction to both parties. The other party needs to obtain a service from an official and the other party needs an appreciation for them to wholeheartedly render their services to a client. That appreciation may come in form of bribes or extortion fees. To some, corruption can be a sign of collegiality such that whenever one needs service in the future, they may always receive preferential treatment.

Arguably, there are also other instances whereby corruption can assist in settling matters between and among citizens. Certain misunderstandings or wrongdoings may be easily forgiven after the party perceived to be wrong pays a bribe and it is after payment of bribes that one may be forgiven. A common example nowadays in Zimbabwe includes cases of minor road accidents between civilians in which motor vehicles get minor damages. Instead of reporting each other to the police which will see the wrong party

being fined, civilians may decide to settle the matter on their own with the one accused of being wrong paying a bribe or being extorted. In Shona Language, they say "pachedu" which implies that we can work out a solution on our own without involving law enforcement agencies. Possibly, this might be done in the spirit of finding each other and protecting each other from the full wrath of the law. There are also common instances whereby after committing certain criminal offenses, a civilian may seek to bribe a public official such as a police officer in an attempt to prevent facing further legal charges and processes which may take some time before they are officially settled.

Despite being associated with a few individual advantages, corruption has a multiplicity of disadvantages. On its own, corruption is a form of human rights violations and through corruption, various human rights enshrined in the constitution and international statutes are violated. Initially, when national resources are siphoned for private pecuniary ends by public office bearers, it is poor citizens that bear the burden of the increased cost of living. As a way of compensating losses arising from stolen national resources, the government might increase taxes on the citizens. Increased costs against the citizenry imply an increased cost of living which in turn makes economic survival difficult. In Zimbabwe, the current high cost of living that is characterized by hyperinflation can be attributed to corruption facilitated through the country's cartels.

According to a report of cartel dynamics in Zimbabwe by Maverick Citizen on 09 February 2021, in 2019, a fuel company owned by Kudakwashe Tagwirei who is alleged to be President Emmerson Mnangagwa's ally received an illicit payment of Z$3.3 billion from country's Ministry of Finance and Economic Development instead of Z$330 million which was his actual due payment. Faced with a shortfall of Z$3,299,996,7 in national income after the illicit payment to Sakunda Holdings, it is reported that the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe printed more money in 2019 which led to an overnight

devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar by 90%. Consequently, the incomes and savings of millions of Zimbabweans are said to be eroded. Since then, inflation rose from 10, 61% to 255, 29% in 2019, and from 255, 29% to 557, 21% in 2020. In all this, it is the general citizens earning meager salaries and wages who continue to be plunged into further abject poverty. High levels of inflation arising from corruption then lead to individuals and families cutting on household expenditures by foregoing other basic necessities. Arguably, corruption in Zimbabwe has thus become the biggest sanction against the generality of the citizenry as poor individuals and families fail to access basic household goods and services.

The effects of corruption as a human rights violation are also felt in its effects of depriving the poor of access to different rights. Among the rights that are denied to the poor as a result of corruption is the right to health. The right to health care is enshrined in terms of section 76 of Zimbabwe's constitution. Of particular interest in this case is section 76 (1) which states that every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has the right to have access to basic healthcare services, including reproductive healthcare services. Given the grand corruption involving the then Minister of Health Obadiah Moyo in 2020 under which he allegedly awarded a US$60 million tender to a shelf company called Drax International to supply Personal Protective Equipment, the Government of Zimbabwe lost a huge amount of money that could otherwise have been invested in the quality of health care in Zimbabwe. Under the deal, Drax International is reported to have invoiced the government US$28 million for disposable face masks whose price was under US$4 million from reputable local suppliers (The Africa Report, 2020). In this case, I argue that the extra US$24 million could have been channeled towards improving the quality of healthcare provisioning in the country in an endeavor to improve access to the right to basic healthcare services for the poor. Currently, Zimbabwe's health system is in shambles as hospitals and clinics do not have medicines and equipment yet a government minister had to award a hefty US$60 million supply contract to a non-existent company

called Drax International while Zimbabwe has no single working cancer machine. From an Ubuntu perspective, this shows a lack of the Ubuntu value of care and concern for others, particularly the poor who do not have alternative sources where they can access basic health care and services. When public official has no Ubuntu spirit, they become selfish to the extent that millions of dollars can be siphoned from public coffers towards pecuniary selfish ends at the expense of the citizenry whose basic right to health is deprived. To make matters worse, when public officials comprising the ruling class fall sick, the majority of them are treated overseas in countries such as China, Singapore, and Malaysia while back home, they preside over collapsed institutions that are riddled with corruption. In indicating the state of affairs in Zimbabwe's public hospitals, the Parliament Portfolio Committee on Health and Child Care report (2015) makes the claim;

> "The infrastructure in hospitals is dilapidated. Most of the central hospitals are overcrowded, with broken beds and benches, and obsolete hospital equipment. The buildings are falling apart and all need a face-lift. There is a water shortage because of old leaking pipes. There is also a lack of linen and staff accommodation. However, Chitungwiza Central Hospital is an exception with its phenomenal infrastructure, cleanliness, and ambiance which it has achieved through the effective application of the Public-Private-Partnership (PPPs) ventures." (p.8).

Given public officials that are filled with the spirit of Ubuntu, one may argue that it will be a priority for the government to prioritize improving the state of affairs for public health institutions to assist in preserving lives. As part of its values, Ubuntu prioritizes human life over everything else (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013).

In addition, corruption is costly to a nation as a whole since it increases the cost of doing business for both local and international companies (Urien, 2012). The cost of doing business is exacerbated through bribing and paying extortion fees to public officials that may be responsible for awarding operating licenses to businesses. In other words, corruption is an extra cost to

individual business people and companies. As an aftermath, companies and individuals wishing to operate businesses in a country affected by corruption may consider closing their operations or due to corruption, companies may experience hefty losses and shut down their operations. A typical example of a company that experienced losses due to corruption by public officials who were claiming underserved and inflated allowances is the Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company in 1987 (see explanation in the background section). To date, attempts to revive the once-vibrant company are not yet successful. In such circumstances, it is poor individuals and families that always feel the worst consequences of corruption as employees get laid off. In turn, as direct and indirect effects of corruption, the right to employment which is enshrined in terms of section 64 of Zimbabwe's constitution gets violated. International investors may also label a country as a bad investment destination if there are high levels of corruption. This implies that investor confidence is lost and due to reduced investments, the Gross Domestic Product remains low. In my view, high levels of corruption are responsible for the high level of unemployment in Zimbabwe which is estimated to stand at 90% (Wamara et al. 2021).

At institutions of high learning such as public universities, corruption is also prevalent as some unscrupulous male lecturers may award marks to female students in exchange for sex (Mafa et al. 2021). In this chapter, I refer to scenarios whereby a perpetrator seeks to award favours to a weaker partner of the opposite sex in exchange for sex as sextortion. I define sextortion as the use of force or threats by an individual who has some form of power to obtain sexual rewards from a weaker partner of the opposite sex. A study by Mafa & Simango (2021) shows that the "thigh-for-marks" phenomenon is now a common scenario in Zimbabwe's public universities. This implies that lecturers may ask for sexual favours from students of the opposite sex and in turn, such students are awarded high marks. On its own, sextortion is a form of corruption that results in gender-based violence. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2022), gender-based violence

refers to harmful acts in different forms such as sexual, mental, physical, and economic harm directed to an individual based on their gender. Besides sextortion being a form of gender-based violence at institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe, its other negative effects include the production of incompetent graduates. Incompetent graduates affect productivity levels in institutions that they join later in life. Again, practices such as sextortion are a clear sign of being Ubuntuless or Hunhuless. Threatening anybody for sexual favours in exchange for any rewards demonstrates that the perpetrator has no sisterly or brotherly concern for the next person. If one has sisterly and brotherly love, they will consider anybody they render a service to as their sister and brother. In Africa, it is a taboo to seek sexual favours from your sister or brother. Instead, one will always seek to protect their sister and brother as their responsibility which is done out of love, care, and concern for their well-being and security. Such a behaviour negates the values of humanness as one of the cardinals of Ubuntu or Hunhu philosophy (Samkange & Samkange, 1981). Besides, unethical practices such as sextortion make it difficult to attain Sustainable Development Goal number 5 on gender equality.

Furthermore, Zimbabwe's high levels of poverty can also be attributed to corruption. According to Maverick Citizen Report (2021), 67% of Zimbabweans are poor with 60% of the total population having no access to electricity, 33% having no access to a toilet and 20% do not have access to improved sources of water. It can be argued that high levels of poverty are due to a government that is Ubuntuless/Hunhuless since it does not owe its authority to the people it governs. In Shona I can say hurumende yeZimbabwe haina hanya nevana veZimbabwe uye ine makaro pamwe chete nehumbimbindoga. Ubuntulessness or Hunhulessness of the Government of Zimbabwe is witnessed in the misplaced prioritization of national objectives. For example, in the year 2017, the ruling ZANU PF party imported motor vehicles worth millions of dollars in preparation of the 2018 harmonised elections. This was done in spite of the fact that most of the public hospitals

in Zimbabwe have few or no working ambulances. The government also imports motor vehicles for senior government officials such as Principal Directors, Permanent Secretaries, Deputy Ministers, and Ministers every few years. This shows that the government prioritizes politics and power over the welfare and wellbeing of the people as delivery of most social services continues to be shoddy and the rest of the civil service is earning meagre salaries. From an Ubuntu/ Hunhu perspective, misplaced priorities are a demonstration of collective selfish behaviour by individuals of authority in the government. Prioritization of consolidation of power over the welfare of the masses is a form of corruption. Collective corrupt tendencies exhibited through misplaced priorities make it difficult for Zimbabwe to attain Sustainable Development Goal number 1 of no poverty. Aidt (2009) supports this argument by stating that corruption is not only for the general public but mainly for the poor as resources are diverted from benefiting them.

Social services delivery and related policy are distorted if social services resources' allocation and prioritisation are determined by bribes. This implies that a few will benefit at the expense of many deserving clients and claimants. This reinforces existing socioeconomic inequality while making the poor more vulnerable (Carrier, 2008). Urien (2012) concurs with the above claim by insisting that corruption leads to a deepening of poverty, which in turn leads to the ordinary man in the villages finding it hard to survive. The poor man cannot survive on his income. In this scenario, this implies that poor people will not be able to acquire basic goods and services for survival with dignity because of the increased cost of living due to corruption (World Bank, 2010). Poverty is also linked to corruption since the unemployed will struggle with failing to access basic needs and services through being excluded from employment opportunities as a consequence of high levels of nepotism. In turn, political instability is engendered through a breakdown of the law (Urien, 2012). According to Pillay (2011), when poverty is deepened through inequalities, the rule of law is undermined, and democratic governance, accountability, and sustainable development are in turn distorted. Therefore,

the contract between citizens and public officials is breached and in turn, there are grave consequences for successful governance.

With high levels of corruption in Zimbabwe which see corrupt public officials and private citizens accessing economic gains through unorthodox means, the extent to which corruption has been embraced in Zimbabwe shows that people have normalized ill-gotten wealth. Ayandiji (2007) states that corruption implies a socio-cultural context. This is because apart from engendering poverty, corruption changes the social values of society (Urien, 2012). Individuals, groups, and communities will with time fail to appreciate the virtues of good morale, conducts, and practices. Urien (2012) posits that many studies that were conducted in Nigeria show that corruption has instilled in people a dangerous and wrong lesson that it does not pay to be honest, hardworking, and law-abiding. With the youthful population in Zimbabwe facing unemployment challenges while at the same time witnessing individuals enjoying economic gains through corruption, a wrong lesson that corruption pays off is most likely to be instilled within Zimbabweans. This creates a continuous societal rot.

Ubuntu as a driver of corruption

Among the different factors that can be argued to be responsible for fueling corruption in Zimbabwe is Ubuntu or Hunhu. By Ubuntu or Hunhu, I mean the demonstration of humanity to other people. According to Khoza (2006), Ubuntu can be described as the capacity of African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity, and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities with justice and mutual caring. According to Prozesky (2003), Ubuntu or Hunhu has ten qualities or features and these are humaneness, gentleness, hospitality, empathy or taking trouble for others, deep kindness, friendliness, generosity, vulnerability, toughness, and compassion. According to Mligo (2021), Ubuntu is also premised on the principle of reciprocity. My analysis of some of the qualities or principles of Ubuntu or Hunhu such as friendliness and reciprocity show

that such qualities and principles can facilitate corruption between a service provider and a recipient of services. Service recipients after obtaining services from a friendly official may feel grateful to the extent of wanting to show some form of appreciation to that official. Such appreciation could be in form of monetary rewards or other material forms, and these can be offered to an official as a way of reciprocating good service and good treatment from a friendly official. Due to the Ubuntu or Hunhu principle of reciprocity, an official such as a social worker who is a person of the people and a person from the people (Munhu akabva kune vanhu) is expected to accept appreciation from clients. Failure to accept appreciation in its different forms may be negatively judged as pride or disliking of the person attempting to show appreciation. Declining monetary or material appreciation from a satisfied client may harm the self-esteem and confidence of that person and in the future, that client may shun services offered by the official and his or her agency.

In Shona, they say that hukama igasva hunozadziswa nekudya implying that rapport can be enhanced by both practitioner and client eating together and sharing resources. While accepting monetary and material appreciation is regarded as friendliness and conformation to the principle of reciprocity, it breeds corrupt tendencies as a client who appreciates a practitioner in different ways may prefer favourable treatments in the future. Such relationships may jeopardize service provision as loyal clients may expect to receive services even when they do not deserve them. Other values of Ubuntu such as generosity may also lead to corruption and it indebts of reciprocation. In Shona, they have the saying that "kandiro enda. Kandiro dzoka" or "kandiro kanoenda kunobva kamwe" which loosely translates to the hand goes, the hand comes. The reciprocation that involves a villager and a public official or a practitioner such as a social worker is such that a public official may use public resources to reciprocate acts of generosity and kindness from villagers. It may also create an ethical dilemma to an official who receives monetary

and material appreciation to maintain fairness and transparency in service provisioning. Such ethical dilemmas are the genesis of corrupt behaviour.

By cultural nature, which is premised on Ubuntu or Hunhu, African communities believe in and thrive on collectivism. In Africa, no individual is an isolated entity. This means that a person belongs to the whole community. They are a child of all the elderly persons from their community and they are also a brother or sisters to all the young persons from their community. When such a person is in control of the provisioning of certain social services, community members from the community where they come from expect to have easy access to social services from their child, brother, or sister. Even when some of such community members do not qualify for the services, they nevertheless expect to obtain preferential treatment from someone who is one of them. Because an official who oversees the provisioning of certain social services will always one day come back to their village of origin, they may get tempted to render preferential treatment to their communal parents, brothers, and sisters. This is because, in Africa, a child belongs to every other adult person in the community (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). Therefore, to some extent, corruption is a result of collectivism which results in a lot of homeboism and homegirlism.

Ubuntu as a remedy to corruption

Even though Ubuntu or Hunhu practice may contribute towards the perpetration of corruption in various ways, by and large, the place of Ubuntu in the fight against corruption is critical. The prevalence of corruption in any society shows a broken societal system. A broken society has departed from the values of humanity. Such a society is rotten in terms of virtues and values. To that effect, anybody can do as they please. Corruption is an indicator of selfishness, greed, and cruelty which are all against the values and principles of Ubuntu or Hunhu. According to Dudzai (2021), collectivism as a value of Ubuntu can be manipulated to suit the interests of bringing communities together so that unanimously, communities can treat corruption as a societal enemy that divides otherwise united communities. Communities are divided

by corruption through the poverty and inequalities created through corruption. As such, communities end up having the rich and the poor. Civil Society Organisations and the social work profession must come together and enlighten communities that the greatest adversary which is anti-communal progress and unity is corruption. Collectively, communities can be used to dissociate themselves from individuals that exhibit corrupt tendencies. Communities may eject members that take part in corruption. This assists in cleansing communities. Communities become clean when corrupt individuals are exotified. According to Dudzai (2021), through collectivism, social workers may call community members to come together and take part in activities such as popular participation and active citizenship through anti-corruption campaigns.

Toughness is identified by Prozesky (2003) as one of the qualities of Ubuntu/ Hunhu. By toughness, it means individuals and communities will be having the ability to deal with hardships and withstand adverse conditions such as corruption. That ability to deal with the hardships of corruption at both micro and macro levels requires decisiveness. Decisiveness will require social workers as enablers to help community members to take bold steps against corruption and its perpetrators. Traditionally, African communities are responsible for handing down judgments against wrongdoings at village courts. Those that are found deviating from traditional norms may be asked to compensate in the form of paying a beast or beasts of cattle to the Headman, Chief, or the ones they would have wronged. This is meant to soothe the spirit of the victim and also paying compensation may help rehabilitate perpetrators from committing further crimes due to fear of continuous losses through paying compensation. In Shona, the practice is known as Kuripa. Corruption must be categorized as an act of wronging the entire community which attracts a hefty fine for compensating everybody in that community. This is because the hazards of corruption are dire to the entire community and corruption also makes a community dirty. In Shona, corruption means huori which translates to something that has decayed.

From the community level up to the national level, a person that takes part in any actions that make society rotten must never be condoned. Hefty punishments which will require paying a fine to the entire society must be associated with such acts. That way, people will shun corruption as the costs of engaging in corruption will be outweighing the benefits. Communities must therefore also identify perpetrators of corruption in various forms and summon them to the village courts for pressing charges. Traditionally, some African communities such as in Uganda would ask individuals accused and proven to be associated with witchcraft to leave the village. Since corruption also happens even at the village level, communities must be empowered to be able to understand and identify corruption. At the village level, corruption must be classified as a form of witchcraft and to that effect, communities can consider the corrupt as outcasts. When individuals understand that their communities can make tough decisions of disowning them due to corruption, they may desist from corruption.

Toughness as a quality of Ubuntu or Hunhu must also be demonstrated by political leaders and institutions of law such as the judiciary. These must make tough decisions against corrupt public officials. Such tough decisions may involve subscribing to life-long imprisonment for all forms of corruption by public office bearers. However, for this to happen, the political class must be ethically smart. An ethically smart political class assists in creating a national ethic of transparency. However, it is the citizenry during elections who must be ethically conscious to the extent of being able to elect individuals of political integrity into public office. Presently, the Ubuntu/ Hunhu quality of toughness against corruption is absent among the different institutions of law and the ruling political class. This is evidenced by different cases of corruption whose perpetrators are still moving scot-free. For instance, on 26 October 2020, Henrietta Rushwaya was caught at Robert Mugabe International Airport trying to smuggle fourteen bars of gold weighing 6.9kg out of Zimbabwe on a flight to Dubai and this gold was worth US$400 000. In June 2021, the same person was elected to become the

President of the Zimbabwe Miners Federation. This shows that both institutions of law in Zimbabwe and the citizens are not tough against corruption and not being tough implies a lack of Ubuntu/ Hunhu. Also, it shows that the Ubuntu value of accountability is lacking among public perpetrators of corruption.

Ubuntu is also necessary for addressing corruption since its principles of compassion, care, and brotherly and sisterly concern can be significant in instilling the desire to serve the people while foregoing selfishness and rational egoism. If such values are instilled during continuous on-the-job training, it may result in a workforce that prioritizes serving the people. Ubuntu is about love for others (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013).

To build a national ethic of Ubuntu/ Hunhu, there is a need to instill the values of Hunhu in individuals through the education system. Like Mathematics and English Language, Ubuntu/ Hunhu must become a compulsory subject in Zimbabwe and Africa right from primary school up to tertiary education. This means as part of indigenising the African education system for it to provide African solutions to African problems such as corruption, Ubuntu/Hunhu must become a taught subject at all levels of education and training in various sectors. In Zimbabwe, the revolutionary ZANU PF party established Chitepo School of Ideology where party youths are trained about the values of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle as a way of instilling patriotism. To build an ethically upright society, there is also a need to build an Ubuntu Ideological School where public servants intending to serve as cabinet ministers, the army, police officers, and the judiciary have to go for a reasonable time before they graduate. This will assist in instilling virtues of selflessness, and toughness against societal rot through corruption and transparency. In disciplines such as social work, there is also a need to introduce Ubuntu/ Hunhu as a module or course that is taught. This may assist in social workers gaining a better appreciation of Ubuntu/ Hunhu and the need to adhere to it when serving individuals, groups, and communities. This will make them

better prepared when confronting challenges associated with kushaya hunhu in their fields of practice.

Implications for Social Work

Given the potential of Ubuntu/ Hunhu in fostering an ethically upright society, there is a need for social workers to advocate for the inclusion of Ubuntu as a compulsory subject and module or course within the education system. This will aid in the Ubuntuing process (Dudzai, 2021). This could be done by reviewing the teaching and learning of social work programs in universities. Such a process is key in terms of decolonisation of the social work profession (Osei-Hwedie & Boateng, 2018)

Social workers also need to tap into the collectivism feature of Ubuntu by mobilizing community members against corruption whenever a case of corruption is recorded. Communities must be mobilized for all forms of constitutional social action which hold perpetrators of corruption to account and also may force the government and state institutions to take tough actions against corruption. Mobilisation of communities for social action is a form of Ubuntu/Hunhu as it shows care and concern for future generations. It must therefore be noted that Ubuntu is not solely concerned about the present generation but also the wellbeing of future generations matter. Corruption as a societal rot threatens the wellbeing of future generations as it steals from them. A corrupt generation only thinks of itself. Social workers must therefore show care and concern for the wellbeing of generations to come by mobilizing community members to take part in social action and active citizenship. Social action after any reportage of corruption ensures that justice prevails and this justice itself besides being a principle of social work is also a foundational principle for Ubuntu.

Lack of political consciousness is one of the factors that is leading to the continuous breeding of corruption in Zimbabwe. By lack of political consciousness, it means that citizens that elect public officials such as the

President, Members of Parliament, and Councilors are not awakened to their true political role and identity. Due to a lack of political consciousness, corruption takes place during times of election campaigns through vote buying. In both rural and urban areas, the electorate can be bought using items such as maize, mealie-meal, and money. It is political unconsciousness that leads to community members accepting and tolerating vote buying. In some instances, community members end up showing political support and reciprocity by voting in large numbers for a politician who takes part in vote-buying exercises. That way, community members will be accepted to be laboratories under which the litmus test of corruption can be done. Vote-buying is an indicator of the politician's corrupt identity. Since social workers are themselves educators (Engelbrecht, 1999), they need to engage in community education as a way of politically concretising community members. This exercise can be done alongside other professionals in Civil Society Organisations and Lawyers in honour of the Ubuntu principle of solidarity. Educating communities will empower them with the intellectual capacity to choose leaders that are not associated with corruption. Having been empowered, communities will not condone acts of corruption but will hold their leaders to account. Empowered community members can also use various means to call for the resignation of corrupt public officials which in the process assists in creating a corruption-intolerant society. Community education must aim to conscientious citizens on how corruption deprives them of their basic rights to health, employment, education, and access to safe, clean, and portable water.

Conclusion

Having won independence from colonial governments, Zimbabwe and her sister African countries are still confronted with the last liberation struggle which concerns the war against corruption. Corruption is a serious socio-economic pandemic that impedes economic growth and development in Zimbabwe and Africa. Like what happened during Africa's liberation struggle whereby nationalists worked together in fighting for each other's

independence, there is a need for African governments, Civil Society Organisations, and professionals to work together in designing mechanisms and strategies for eradicating corruption. This starts with strengthening institutions of governance in Africa. Institutions of governance can only be strengthened by the citizens making sure that all individuals that occupy public office are ethically clean. Anyone who is alleged of having committed corruption must be recalled from public office by the citizens. Institutions themselves are weakened by corrupt individuals that occupy them. This must also be followed by institutionalisation of the Ubuntu/ Hunhu philosophy in Africa. Ubuntu/ Huntu must therefore transcend from being a mere philosophy to being a national identity across Africa.

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Chapter 20

The Centrality of Ubuntu in Child Safeguarding in Zimbabwe: Personal Reflections

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Wilson Zvomuya is a passionate social worker with interest in the indigenisation of social work and transformative approaches to social development and child safeguarding. He believes in developmental social work where indigenous systems, resources and networks are at the core of all solutions to problems presented by clients for sustainable interventions. Through ubuntu philosophy, it is not late for Africa and the world to realise meaningful transformation of respective local communities.

Mulwayini Mundau is a qualified social worker with specialisation in developmental social work and indigenisation. He strongly advocates for the adoption of indigenous and context-specific practices in social work for the realisation of effective and sustainable social interventions. Afrocentric philosophies like ubuntu are central to the indigenisation quest and emancipation of social work from the heavy influence of the traditionally biased, rehabilitative and curative professional orientation.

Abstract

The ubuntu philosophy has been largely central to all child safeguarding interventions in Zimbabwe. There is much evidence to support the modelling of some of the child protection policies in Zimbabwe along with the ubuntu values and principles. The chapter presents various contexts which reflect the provision of child safeguarding services following Ubuntu principles and values in Zimbabwe. Among these are case management processes, early help for abandoned children, and adoption. It also covers educational support services, health support, food aid, cash transfers, and public assistance. In conclusion, the chapter provides a way forward to the promotion of Ubuntu in child safeguarding.

Keywords: Child protection, child safeguarding, indigenisation, Ubuntu

Abstract translation into Shona language

Kuratidza hunhu kuri pakati pezvose zviri kuitwa pakuchengetedzwa kwevana mu Zimbabwe. Pane humbowo hwakawanda hwunotsigira kuumbwa kemimwe mitemo yekuchengetedzwa kwevana muZimbabwe zvichienderana nezvinokosha uye musimboti wehunhu. Chikamu chino chinoratidza mashandisirwo ezvirongwa zvechengetedzo yevana maringe nezvinokosha uye musimboti wehunhu muZimbabwe. Pakati pezvirongwa izvi pane huronga hwamafambisirwo enyaya pakubatsirwa kwevanhu, kubatsirwa kwevana vanenge varaswa uye vanenge vopihwa vabereki vatsva zviri pamutemo. Chikamu ichi chinoratidzawo rutsigiro rwedzidzo, rutsigiro rwezvehutano, rubatsiro rwechikafu, rubatsiro rwemari pamwe nekubatsirwa kweveruzhinji. Pakupendera, chikamu ichi chinopa zvingaitwa kuti hunhu hukurudzirwe mukuchengetdzwa kwevana.

Introduction

The wholesale importation of social work interventions by former colonial masters like Britain has clouded the place of local philosophies, and child safeguarding was not excluded. Child safeguarding activities in Zimbabwe

appear to be modelled along the western orientation yet the foundation appears well engraved around ubuntu philosophy. Decolonisation of child safeguarding interventions in the country strengthens a clear understanding of how the philosophy is key in the formulation of policies, interventions, guidelines, and social work training. Despite inevitable bottlenecks, all thinking around child protection, care and support for orphans and vulnerable children requires locally-oriented responses. In this chapter, the authors used their reflections to clarify the place of ubuntu in child safeguarding activities for the promotion of safe environments, prevention of exploitation, abuse, and neglect, and protection of children at risk of and/or in actual harm.

Background

An increase in child safeguarding interventions became clear in the 20th century. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recognised rights for all individuals regardless of their age. However, this was associated with a lack of formidable efforts to protect children from various forms of vulnerability and the absence of clear guidelines on the enforcement of these rights among minors. A global move in guaranteeing children's rights and protection was done in 1989 when nations ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). As with other social work areas of interest, the child safeguarding issues in the African context cannot be holistic without referring to the ubuntu philosophy. This philosophy has become the pinnacle of culturally relevant, contextually appropriate, and locally-oriented social work interventions.

Overview of Child safeguarding

Child safeguarding refers to measures that are put in place to protect children from maltreatment and impairment of their development, and the promotion of safe and effective environments for their welfare. This entails policies, guidelines, and interventions meant to avert abuse, exploitation, and neglect among children. In this digital era, it should not be forgotten that

issues to do with cyberbullying, human trafficking, and child labour are also rampant and children need protection from such malpractices. In Zimbabwe, there are many child safeguarding measures put in place for children in need of care and conflict with the law as presented in the Children's Act (Chapter 5:06). The Department of Social Development is the custodian of all children in their respective areas of jurisdictions ensuring that they get the minimum basic services for the promotion of their welfare.

In Zimbabwe, child safeguarding involves the promotion of children's welfare and protection from harm through the Pre-trial Diversion Programme (PDP), child safeguarding services are provided to children in conflict with the law. Evidence of the Public Assistance, Harmonised Social Cash Transfers (HSCTs), Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), Assisted Medical Treatment Orders (AMTOs), and food aid targeting households of vulnerable children is a true sign of the efforts by the country on child safeguarding. The provision of child protection services is done by the Department of Social Development through the Child Welfare section and other private voluntary organisations. Of note are organisations that include UNICEF, Childline, JF Kapnek trust, Legal Resources Foundation, Musasa Project, Zvandiri, Child Protection Society, and many others. However, one can argue that many of the services provided are reactive and not preventive. Hence efforts invested in the promotion of child welfare, prevention of abuse, exploitation and neglect, and independent living are not enough to guarantee robust child safeguarding in the country. Rarely do these organisations invest much in engaging parents and guardians on good parenting skills, referral pathways for reporting suspected maltreatment of children, and household economic strengthening.

Key concepts of the Ubuntu philosophy

Ubuntu is one of the growing African philosophies that has great potential prospects of internationalisation based on its capacity to address contextual and localised issues. Nzimakwe (2014) presents that ubuntu is a world-view

of African societies centered on respect, universal goodwill, and sharing, and contributing positively towards the well-being of other people. This philosophy has proven universal to address the needs of African societies across the whole world. Zvomuya and Muzondo (2021) presented that ubuntu has a variety of useful values that include the involvement of community and leaders, humaneness, respect for spirituality and cultural diversity, collectivism, respect for human rights, interconnectedness, collectivism, respect for environmental justice, cohesion, social justice, the norm of reciprocity and consideration for the needs of a future generation.

Ubuntu philosophy in child safeguarding

This section presents the various contexts of child safeguarding and how the Ubuntu philosophy can be pivotal in transforming the mechanisms. Among these are case management processes, early help for abandoned children, fostering, and adoption. Additionally, it also presents educational support services, health support, food aid, cash transfers, and public assistance.

Case management processes

Child safeguarding in Zimbabwe involves rigorous case management processes aimed at promoting the welfare and prevention of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children in need of care. Case management is a collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, care coordination, evaluation, and advocacy for options and services to meet an individual's and family's comprehensive needs through communication and available resources to promote quality and cost-effective outcomes. All these processes tend to take into cognisance the ubuntu philosophy of caring for each other and empathy. The Department of Social Development (DSD) has the legal mandate to lead the case management processes for both statutory and non-statutory cases. Case Care Workers (CCWs), being community volunteers, were entrusted with the critical work of safeguarding the rights of the child and provided with training in basic issues.

The DSD's services are strengthened by Child Protection Committees (CPCs) to assist the CCWs in identifying child protection issues and planning on local safeguarding measures (Muzingili et al., 2015). This spirit of volunteering shows compassion which is an inherent key aspect of the ubuntu philosophy. As a result, case recording, assessment, planning, review, and resolution are done with the "human face" in mind. As such, children are treated as individuals with equal rights and human dignity to be protected as to adults. Ubuntu has seen means-testing being done to promote social justice and fair redistribution of resources. The assessments are done for statutory cases that may culminate in fostering or adoption of children in need of care if need be and aim at protecting humanity and human dignity. The suitability of the prospective foster or adopting parents is measured against the expected standards and principles of a given society. Those individuals involved in criminal activities or deviant behaviors that likely jeopardise the welfare of children are disqualified from fostering or adoption processes.

Ubuntu philosophy embraces interdependence and solidarity in families or communities. Case conferences are conducted with family members to come up with case care plans for a child in need of care. Other key stakeholders including the police, health, education, and other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) may participate in these child protection conferences. The involvement of stakeholders and family members is in line with ubuntu's thinking that 'it takes a whole village to raise a child'. Stakeholders bring resources, ideas, and linkages that assist in tackling the presenting issues. From experience, the police are very instrumental when dealing with abuse cases and taking the child into a place of safety in terms of Section 14 of the Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) and the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC) staff members do medical examinations, age estimations and provide HIV prevention services for the abused. Family members foster the sustainability of agreed action plans as well as resilience in the process. The authors noted that families are different in terms of religious beliefs, norms, values, and systems all of which need to be respected by the family child

carers. This resonates with professional values of respect for diversity and humanity among social workers as well as clients' self-determination. Experience has shown that paternalistic approaches to child protection issues wherein the family is not involved failed to solve the problems at hand. With ubuntu philosophy, it is easy to use the strengths-based approach to child safeguarding.

Early help for abandoned children

The support that is provided to abandoned children in Zimbabwe reflects a strong ubuntu philosophical thinking. Respect for life is sacrosanct in the African context, and this thinking seeks to foster the infusion of this humane disposition. No individual is expected to contribute to the loss of life in whatever circumstances. In this case, the community and the nation at large had the mandate to ensure that children with no known parents are taken care of and enjoy the same rights as everyone else. Anecdotal evidence showed that strangers report cases of children abandoned at bus stops, in the toilets, in litter bins, and in other public places. Newly born babies are abandoned by their mothers for various reasons ranging from arguments with the alleged father of the child to unplanned pregnancies and anticipated failure to provide basic services. In line with the ubuntu philosophy to save a life, each individual feels the pressure to report the incident to the right authorities.

There is clear evidence that ubuntu philosophy is central to the Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) of 2001. The state is obliged to take all the necessary measures in ensuring the needs of children in need of care in terms of Section 2(a-p) of the Children's Act (Chapter 5:06). The promotion of children's welfare is extended to unborn babies who are at risk of neglect and abuse. From the authors' experience, pre-birth planning arrangements are done to promote the welfare and safeguard the well-being of unborn babies if the social workers or clients themselves find a need for such decisions. Common pre-birth planning measures are taken in respect of clients who are victims of

abuse, incest, incarcerated, mentally challenged, or unwanted pregnancies. Unborn babies to these clients are protected by the law through long-term fostering or adoption. This is done through placement of these children at nurseries where they are provided with early child support, lactating products, and appropriate medical attention as provided for under Section 14 of the same Act. The care for these children is provided to fulfil their physiological needs that include food, shelter, and clothing as presented in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Fostering

Support for orphans and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe is done in line with ubuntu expectations by society. There is a common African principle that "it takes a whole village to raise a child". This motivates locals to show solidarity, have compassion and foster mutuality when it comes to fostering. Muchenje (2014) notes that orphans in Zimbabwe were traditionally taken care of by members of their extended families. Often times, private fostering is practiced by communities upon the death of a child's parent(s). Members of the extended families are very instrumental in deciding the custody of children after the death of their parents. Normally, the maternal relatives are given the mandate to ensure that the child finds a new "mother" because they are considered to care more than the paternal side. This practice has seen the majority of children being cared for and staying with grandmothers or maternal aunties without proper documentation. Hence, ubuntu has overshadowed the formalisation of community fostering something which can only be picked up at the time when the child is entitled to benefit from social welfare or child protection programmes.

The ideal but lowly practised system for child fostering is regulated by the Department of Social Development. According to the National Care Policy Zimbabwe of 1999, fostering is third in the 6-tier system for the care and protection of orphans and vulnerable children. This entails temporary measures, for instance, when child custody is given to an individual who is

either the child's biological mother, father, or member of an extended family, to ensure that they are protected from the environment that endangers their lives and welfare. It has been observed that some foster parents do foster as part of social responsibility and use it as an alternative care system in that regard. In the best interest of the child, the Child Care Workers (CCWs) include such children in social welfare programmes like the Harmonised Social Cash Transfers (HSCT) for their households. Despite structural and other operational bottlenecks, ubuntu philosophy informs the targeting of fostered children categorised as in need in terms of section 14 of the Children Act (Chapter 5:06) benefit from education, health, economic strengthening, and livelihood programmes.

From an Afrocentric perspective, it is an acceptable case that a child is part of the whole community in line with the principle of interdependency. The ubuntu way of thinking prompted individuals to apply for fostering children from residential institutions. This arrangement is increasingly being recognised as an alternative safety net for orphans since it provides a family set up with values, moral principles, ethics, and effective socialisation required of a 'cultured' individual (Muchinako et al., 2018). Foster parents provide children from orphanages with an opportunity to experience life outside residential care institutions. Court orders are prepared for children to leave these institutions during school and public holidays or weekends so that they stay with their foster parents. Through this arrangement, children learn new life skills, values, and self-discipline, feel part of the family, and even gain resilience strategies. One of the values in the fostering process is respect for diversity in religion and sexual orientation. In this sphere, fostered children have a right to attend their religious denominations even when they are different from those of foster parents. This shows that love, compassion for other individuals, and respect for family associations are indispensable core aspects of the ubuntu philosophy. The same line of thinking is apparent in the reports that the community makes to the police or child protection

service providers regarding abuse, exploitation, or neglect among fostered children.

Adoption

Approval of adoption by the Department of Social Development gives an impetus for a close link between ubuntu and all related processes. Just like fostering, the push factors for adoption in Zimbabwe range from social responsibility, infertility, religion, and social companionship. In terms of Section 71 of the Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) of the Republic of Zimbabwe, individuals that adopt abandoned or neglected children are allowed by the law to change the personal details of the adopted children. This aligns with the rights for the family name, care, and support enshrined in Section 81 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. Family associations fulfill the human inherent needs of love and belonging presented in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Without fulfillment of these needs, adopted children struggle to reach the self-actualisation stage as they suffer from low self-esteem, self-rejection, self-discrimination, and self-isolation.

Educational support services

Support for educational services among vulnerable children is one of the salient rights enshrined in the Constitution of Zimbabwe and aligns well with the spirit of community ownership. According to Section 81(f) of the constitution, all children have a right to education, healthcare services, nutrition, and shelter. In Zimbabwe, several programmes were introduced by the government and non-governmental organisations that targeted the provision of educational support among vulnerable children. These included Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), Educational Transition Programmes (ETRP), and the Girl Child Network among others. It is also interesting to note that some business communities that include Econet Zimbabwe, banks, and other local organisations even provide scholarships for talented but disadvantaged children to fulfill their corporate social responsibility. This kind of social investment is commendable in the African

context and aligns well with ubuntu thinking wherein all stakeholders have a role to play in supporting child safeguarding in respective communities.

The educational support for children in need in Zimbabwe is a commendable development. It is worrisome to note that some of the children who are eligible for educational support are not benefitting as per the dictates of ubuntu philosophy. Cases of corruption in the selection of beneficiaries for the educational services offered by NGOs, BEAM, and other business communities led to some deserving children not benefitting. To address such challenges, mobilising the ubuntu principles of equality for all and the responsibility of everyone in raising a child will bring in a collective quest for children's access to education.

Health support

The provision of health support among children is designed along the ubuntu way of doing things. This is to preserve life and protect humanity among all the community members. During the pre-colonial era, it was the duty of the adults to organise traditional medicines if their children fell ill. Traditional healers, spirit mediums, and other community elders were instrumental in the provision of medical support for the ailing children. Globalisation brought with it an increase in the use of modern medicine at the expense of traditional/African healing methods. Health support for children in Zimbabwe is supported by pieces of legislation that include the Children's Act and the Constitution of Zimbabwe. Section 19 sub-section 2(b) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act (No.20) of 2013 provides that the state should come up with policies and measures that ensure children's access to shelter and basic nutrition, health care, and social services. This is also covered in Section 76 of the same Act which addresses the type of services that every citizen and permanent resident is entitled to access health-care services, including reproductive healthcare services.

Respect for interdependence in raising a child is the bedrock of community intervention on matters related to health access in Zimbabwe. Based on the African mantra that, 'it takes a whole village to raise a child', the rights of children to health are also guaranteed by the available systems. A child denied access to health services is considered to be in need of care in terms of Section 2 of the Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) as read with the Health Service Act which promotes access to quality health care regardless of age and social, economic and political status. Hence, ubuntu values prompt the community members to take a lead in caring for or reporting the case of the child who is found neglected in terms of Section 7 of the Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) so that he/she gets health-care services.

The provision of health assistance in Zimbabwe targets populations. Assisted Medical Treatment Order (AMTO) is provided to cater to the health needs of vulnerable individuals who undergo means-testing. The order covers medical bills at government institutions that claim or redeem their vouchers from the Treasury. Travel warrants can also be issued for those clients given AMTOs so that they use public transport to make medical trips. Unfortunately, both AMTOs and travel warrants are often rejected by service providers, even public institutions, due to the failure of the government to pay for bills accrued in the past years. In this regard, the ubuntu philosophy recommends the community ensure equality, and ensure fair use of resources.

Food aid

Access to food is one of the rights that children enjoy. Ubuntu teaches Africans that one cannot go and sleep with a full stomach comfortably whilst neighbors or others are dying of hunger. Hunger is not only a violation of human rights but a deprivation of the physiological component of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The government and other humanitarian organisations initiated drought relief programmes during the 1982 drought and this was maintained with varying magnitudes (Mudimu, 2004). The Food Deficit Mitigation Programmes (FDMP), formulated in response to food insecurity

during the 2009/2010 agricultural season, is a commendable intervention by the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) to mitigate the negative impact of climate, hunger, and destitution among vulnerable households in both rural and urban settings. The FDMP is meant to ensure food security among the Zimbabwean population to see no one dying of hunger. This also protects children from abuse and exploitation and aids child safeguarding interventions.

However, as it stands, opportunists may capitalize on gaps or loopholes that exist in the current systems for their selfish interests. In Zimbabwe, this has become a security issue considering the impact that this area has on the electoral field. However, grain has been weaponised for political scores and used as a tool for winning the hearts of the electorate, especially in rural areas where vulnerable households are targeted by the Food Deficit and Mitigation Programmes (FDMP). The joint report by Environmental Management Agency (EMA), GoZ, and United Nations (UN), in 2019, noted that both the National Policy on Drought Management and The National Policy and Programmes on Drought Mitigation was not finalized and not in the public domain. According to Mundia and Mfundisi (2017) in their United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) draft report reviewing SADC Mitigation policies, strategies, and management plans noted that the National Contingency Plan of 2012 and the Drought Mitigation and Resuscitation Policies for the Agricultural Sector in Zimbabwe of 2005 has no direct impact to drought mitigation. All these gaps greatly impact child safeguarding due to a lack of transparency, accountability, and duplications.

Public assistance

Munro (2003) notes that Public Assistance (PA) is a permanent programme in Zimbabwe mandated by the Social Welfare Assistance Act (Chapter 17:06) of 1988. According to Kaseke et al. (1997) in Munro (2003), the objective of PA is to relieve distress and prevent destitution among poor households. This is

done through the provision of safety nets targeting vulnerable people and enabling them to access basic services. Under this programme, pauper burial assistance is provided for people in destitution. Other transfers include assistance with travel warrants for people in need and the repatriation of foreign nationals from poor backgrounds to their countries of origin. Under Public Assistance, monthly maintenance allowances are given to vulnerable persons to cater to their welfare. In the past, PA pay-outs were made as cash but electronic money is now being used to transfer these monies into the mobile wallets of the beneficiaries. However, such problems as inflation, corruption, and delays in making payments are affecting the effectiveness of PA in meeting basic human services in households with vulnerable children.

Cash transfers

Harmonized Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) is a social protection programme for ultra-poor households that targets children and aims to capacitate them economically. The idea behind the programme is to assist such households out of life-threatening poverty, alleviate poverty and reduce vulnerability. Currently, a total of 55,000 households have been enrolled since 2012 to receive unconditional bi-monthly social cash transfers averaging US$20 per month. Partners are assisting 40,710 households and the Government of Zimbabwe is assisting 20,037 households. HSCT is a very empowering programme for poor households and plays an indirect role in averting such social ills as child marriages, child labour, and gender inequalities. It can be argued that a developmental approach is required when providing social welfare services to ensure that the money from the programme is put to good use. There were cases of beneficiaries of this programme using the cash received for drinking beer or other illicit activities. Follow-up on the HSCT is required to prevent such misuse of social welfare benefits and empower beneficiaries in translating the funds into social investments such as education.

Harmonised Social Cash Transfers (HSCTs) are part of the efforts that are made by the Government of Zimbabwe to promote child safeguarding in the country. The transfers entail cash, hampers, aid, and even the use of cards to access food or other basic services among households of children that need care. The fact that the support covers the households speaks volumes about the realisation of the interdependence between children and their families. This ecological understanding is engraved around the ubuntu philosophy which points to the impact that households have on children. Households selected to benefit from the cash transfer programme are chosen based on their level of vulnerability, their capacity to meet basic needs and services, and the risks that deprivation can cause to the welfare of the child. Considering the residual model to the provision of social welfare in Zimbabwe, cash transfers promote some form of dependency as there is no developmental component in the support that households of children in need of care get.

The authors discovered that the cash transfers are usually funded by UNICEF and the programmes are implemented in selected districts. Over-reliance on donor funding, as is the case with many social welfare programmes undertaken by NGOs, leads to underdevelopment. The critical analysis points to gaps in this form of social assistance which is not developmental in nature, especially in the context of the current volatile economic conditions. As such, the social development approach to cash transfers is expected to contribute greatly towards self-sustenance and reliance among supported or vulnerable households. These cash transfers should be provided with the intention to empower beneficiaries so they can start new projects such as poultry, piggery, or backyard shops. This will help service users to be independent and self-sustenance even when the programme stops because they will continue to generate income on their own by selling their products. This takes the strength-based approach of intervention where social workers focus much on the abilities of individuals rather than their deficits. Social workers can also

utilise the assets-based approach where they utilise the resources readily available in communities rather than exporting from outside

Promotion of safe environments for children

Ubuntu respects ecological justice for all people, and children are not an exception to this entitlement. The inspection of prospective places of safety for children is a noble idea for the attainment of safe environments for children. The Department of Social Development has the mandate to inspect and supervise all institutions that are meant for children. Section 31 of the Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) provides for the registration of such institutions and de-registration procedures. The supervision of children's homes, crèches, schools, and other institutions for children aims at checking if these institutions meet expected standards on health, social welfare, and the environment. For example, the minimum requirements for preschool institutions look at the availability of water, a safe environment in terms of cut grass, disability-friendly service for children in need of early help care, reasonable space to accommodate a certain number of children, and safe child-play environments among many others. Before registration of the institutions for children, the Department of Social Development and the Ministry of Health and Child Care conduct inspections to check on their suitability and qualified workforce to deliver child-friendly services. The notion behind such an arrangement is to ensure that places of safety and remand homes are ecologically safe for the promotion of the welfare of children.

Care for children in residential institutions

The National Residential Care Standards of Zimbabwe of 2010 were put in place to protect children and promote their well-being in residential institutions. According to residential care standards, dorm-like set-ups have been discarded and replaced by family structures. This promotes interdependence, family systems, and respect for the community through mother and father figures. This surrogate parenting is very important in

fostering ubuntu principles among children in institutions. As a result, they learn both professional and personal skills expected of a human being. Doing household chores and actively participating in institutional activities instill a sense of hard work among children. This hard work is what ubuntu recommends such that individuals learn to survive on the produce of their sweat and not through stealing. The latter activity is a calibre of lazy individuals who deviate from ubuntu philosophy.

In line with Standard 5 of the National Residential Care Standards of Zimbabwe of 2010, "children and young people admitted or placed in residential child care facility shall be supported through a process aimed at preparing them to be independent and active members of society. This can be done through providing children with a supportive, protective and caring environment" (Government of Zimbabwe (2010:18)). The approach ensures that children in the institutions are taught ubuntu and prepared to live independent lives after their discharge. Involvement of the family members is not only done at the discharge of the children after turning 18 years but starts as they are committed. This inclusive approach makes it easy to facilitate the reunification of children into mainstream communities. For abandoned children, this process may involve holiday placements with their foster parents where they learn a lot of skills and knowledge. As part of the child's family, the probation officers show that they care for discharged children by continuously checking on them in new families or childcare facilities (Gomba, 2016; Government of Zimbabwe, 2010; Muwoni, 2011). It is critical to note that these residential standards have greater prospects of fostering expected societal behaviour, values, and principles among children through good planning.

Pre-trial diversion services

Support for children in conflict with the law is one of the tasks of the Department of Social Development which forward ubuntu philosophy. In terms of Section 2(f-g) of the Children's Act (Chapter 5:06), a child who cannot

be controlled by a parent or guardian and a truant child are both considered to be in need of care. These children would have sometimes gone against the dictates of the Sexual Offences Act (Chapter 9:12), and Dangerous Drugs Act (Chapter 15:02). Following the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act (Chapter 9:07), all individuals who would have committed an offense should be prosecuted. However, due to child safeguarding issues, delinquent children are provided with pre-trial diversion services with the expectation that they are counseled and become pro-social again. Ubuntu philosophy always gives a chance to children because they still have the capacity to reform and mixing them with adults further worsens their anti-social behaviours. Before the banning of corporal punishment in the country, juvenile delinquents were given some strokes as punishment for their crimes. This has since been replaced with counselling and support by probation officers. However, some serious crimes are committed by children who are 17 years and can result in them standing trial after turning 18 years.

Way forward

In line with the decoloniality agenda across the African continent and communities, it is clear that more needs to be done in embracing the place of ubuntu philosophy in child safeguarding interventions. In social theory and practice, there is a need to emphasise how current social policies and interventions targeting children are emulating philosophical thinking. In crafting the new interventions and child safeguarding guidelines, ubuntu should be at the centre of planning, implementation, review, and evaluation processes. This also applies to all proposed programmes to be implemented or rolled out by the NGOs and the Department of Social Development for their effectiveness. The inclusion of key stakeholders at the local level should be the pinnacle of all child-centered policies and interventions for social work educators, practitioners, and students on fieldwork attachments. Ubuntu has great prospects to become an all-rounder when it comes to refocusing all players in child safeguarding towards social work principles.

Conclusion

Social workers must view ubuntu as an enabling philosophy and not just a mere concept. This philosophical thinking is at the centre of all children safeguarding measures in Zimbabwe. Despite some selfish behaviours shown by individual organisations and entities coupled with resource constraints, ubuntu has proven to be the only avenue that can deliver social justice, and fair redistribution of resources and protects children from harm. Ubuntu principles always stand out to guide all key players in child protection on what is good and bad when dealing with children in need of care. More need to be done in social work training and practice the embedding this philosophy in strengthening systems and improving the quality of services for the best interest of the child.

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SECTION II

UBUNTU FROM PRACTITIONERS ELSEWHERE

Chapter 21

Ubuntu as an Ethic of Responsibility to Support Others: Learning from Participants' Stories

Warren A. Thompson

Contact

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Abstract

The chapter suggests that elements of the African philosophy of Ubuntu are evident in cultural retentions in the African diaspora in the Caribbean. Narratives from interviews conducted with eighteen female leaders of voluntary community organizations were used to theorise an ethic of responsibility to help and support others as a morality that fits squarely within Ubuntu philosophy. Elements of the ethic of responsibility to help and support others included being a community person, having a sense of purpose, and helping others. These elements were then used to construct a reflective framework with key reflective questions for use by aspiring Ubuntu practitioners.

Biography

Warren A. Thompson is the Director of Children and Family Programmes at the Child Protection and Family Services Agency in Jamaica. He is also a doctoral researcher and adjunct lecturer at the University of the West Indies, Mona campus in Jamaica. In addition to his work in child protection, he maintains an interest in community development and social work

professionalization and regulation in Jamaica. Warren serves the Jamaica Association of Social Workers (JASW) as project leader for efforts towards Social Work professional regulation. He views Ubuntu practice as a professional and culturally appropriate concept that has potential to help to unite social workers and strengthen social work professional identity within communities in the African diaspora, and specifically the Caribbean.

Introduction

The Global Social Work community has looked to the continent of Africa for the first theme for its 2020-2030 Global Agenda for Social Work and Development. The theme, Ubuntu, represents a recognition of the value of indigenous philosophy to contemporary theorizing within social work, and the value of indigenous knowledge in defining what we call social work in these times (Mayaka & Truell, 2021). The application of Ubuntu philosophy to social work challenges the western ways in which social work has always been defined (Mugumbate and Nyanguru, 2013), and suggests a different understanding grounded in our common humanity, and the importance, and interdependence, of both 'the one' and 'the community'.

For professional social workers in the African diaspora, the theme presents us with a number of opportunities. Firstly, it presents an opportunity for us to re-connect in more than a tokenistic and nominal way with one of our ancestral philosophies from which we were separated due to the over four hundred years of the global trade in enslaved Africans by European colonial powers. Yet, centuries of colonial violence against African culture, religions, and customs, in the new world was not enough for complete erasure of African culture in the diaspora. Consequently, there is significant retention of African culture and practices in the Caribbean and North America, including elements of Ubuntu philosophy. The theme therefore also provides, secondly, an opportunity for professional social workers in the diaspora to confidently name as belonging to social work, those beliefs and values we have held and those activities we have carried out when we say we 'practice'

social work, but which we have not seen in the social work texts published in the North, the West, or in Oceania where the global social work power holders seemed to be. Thirdly, the theme affirmed for us, our practices and approaches which we already deemed legitimate, but for which social work scholarship and theory were yet to catch up. Finally, the theme allows us an opportunity to look to the community for knowledge and understanding of social life that can help us to improve our practice.

In this paper, I use the narratives of Jamaican women who lead voluntary community organizations to articulate an alternative understanding of morality in the form of an 'ethic of responsibility to support others.' I discuss the ethic of responsibility to support others as a particular expression of Ubuntu philosophy in Jamaican community life, and its impact on my own reflections on social work values and the feminist ethic of care. Finally, I propose its use as a reflective frame for the striving Ubuntu practitioner, especially community social workers and others who engage in a non-clinical practice.

Defining Ubuntu

The African philosophy of Ubuntu emphasises the importance of community. In popular discourse, Ubuntu is translated as "I am because we are" and refers to a shared humanity, best explained by an isiZulu phrase which translates as "a person is a person through other people" (van Breda, 2019, p. 439). Mugumbate & Chereni (2020, p. vii) and Mugumbate & Nyanguru (2013, p.84) cite Samkange & Samkange (1980) who articulated three tenets of Ubuntu, which succinctly and aptly explains the concept. These are: Human relations - to be human is to affirm one´s humanity by recognizing the humanity of others; Sanctity of life - one should always opt for the preservation of the life of another over personal gain; and People-centred status – a leader's status and power are due to the will of the people under him. In other words, Ubuntu refers not only to the importance of the collective in shaping one's identity as a human being, but also the importance

of each individual's actions to support others and strengthen the collective by extension. Ubuntu therefore refers to both the qualities and the status of what it means to be a fully human being (King et al, 2017). This is consistent with Gade's (2012) conclusion from interviews with over fifty South Africans of African descent. Gade (2012) found that there are two meaning clusters for the concept of Ubuntu: Ubuntu as the moral quality of a person (qualities), and Ubuntu as an ethic or moral philosophy by which all persons are connected and come to personhood (status).

What are these moral qualities? Mugumbate & Nyanguru (2013) make some suggestions by way of English words used to describe the presence of Ubuntu, words such as generosity, compassion, benevolence, caring, inter-dependence, among many others. Mayaka & Truell (2021), also offer some qualities to which Ubuntu refers, but there is a strong possibility that we may never arrive at an exhaustive list. Perhaps for this reason, one critique of the concept is that it has no solid framework and what it means cannot be theorized (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). However, there may not be a need for a specific exhaustive list of moral qualities, but rather an understanding of the moral quality of a person as the source of varying and diverse personal qualities which may develop over time. Mayaka and Truell (2021) suggest something similar:

> "It [Ubuntu] emphasises that people's identities are continuously developing in the context of their reciprocal relationships with others, and thereby, through supporting and nurturing others, one's own identity and life quality are enhanced. Ubuntu focuses on the inclusivity of everyone within a community, their responsibility to others and to the wellbeing of the environment to ensure success for their own and future generations (p. 3).

Ubuntu and Care ethics

Ubuntu philosophy articulates a particular morality that is defined by connectedness, relationships and the responsibility of the one for the other. There is therefore a significant alignment with a well-known feminist concept – the ethic of care. Various feminist scholars (Gilligan, 1982/1993; Noddings,

1984/2013; Ruddick, 1989/1995) have theorized that women are guided by an ethic of care, a moral responsibility to care for others (Gilligan, 1982/1993). This goes beyond being selfless in terms of love labour (Lynch, 2007), to having a sense of obligation to act in the best interest of others. The ethic of care has been advanced as a more ideal moral position for all humanity; in contrast to men's ethic of justice and individual rights which is at the heart of the neoliberal political philosophy with its values of individualization and privatization, and which has formed the base for the currently globally dominant neo-classical economic model. Care ethics research has focused on gender influences on ethical and moral decision-making, and some studies have shown that women are rated higher as ethical and moral decision makers (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2013). But what makes a decision, or even a person, ethical or moral? For Gilligan, the moral person is one who "helps others…meeting one's obligations and responsibilities to others, if possible without sacrificing oneself" (Gilligan, 1993, p.66). Women's care work has often been associated with the maternal experience, (Ruddick, 1989/1995; Noddings, 1984/2013), but this has been rejected by some feminist scholars on the basis that the maternal experience has historically been used as the basis for women's oppression (Brison, 2017). Regardless of this rejection, women are known to be particularly active in engaging in love, care and solidarity work and activism around community issues because of their maternal experience. Consequently, some scholars refer to women's 'activist mothering,' (Naples, 1992, 2013) 'other mothering' (Hill-Collins, 1990), or community mothering (Gilkes, 1986). The connection between Ubuntu and mothering / maternal thinking requires further exploration.

Care ethicists such as Lynch and Walsh (2009) suggest that human life consists of care relations occurring in three contexts – primary care relations (love labour occurring in family contexts), secondary care relations (care work with extended relatives, neighbours and co-workers) and tertiary care relations (solidarity work with unknown others, for example in state driven social welfare services or voluntary service aimed at the social and economic

development of others and their communities). As a philosophy of human relations, it is a logical conclusion that Ubuntu articulates a moral position which encapsulates care relations in all three contexts and the obligation or sense of responsibility to each other manifested in works of love, care and solidarity. Social Workers, especially those working in community contexts, see these care relations and networks, often promote them, and rely on them, especially in contexts where state resources are limited. For example, Crean (2020) has demonstrated how community development in Ireland has both a social action component and a care component. She also argued that the care component of community development has been compromised by the neo-liberal market economy. This imbalance has been referred to by Lynch et al. (2009) as 'affective inequality' – a situation in which there is a reduced capacity to develop and rely on relations of love, care and solidarity. This reduced capacity is usually because of a number of factors including increasing value of individualism, increasing demands for adults to work outside the home, breakdown in voluntarism, and limitations in state funding for community based support programmes.

The Ubuntu Practitioner

A number of scholars have recently begun to theorise and apply Ubuntu philosophy to Social Work, and have looked at frameworks within which social work services may be delivered, and considerations that need to be made in light of Ubuntu philosophy. Many of these discuss the similarity between social work values and Ubuntu values such as social justice, respect and dignity (Mupedziswa et al., 2019) or broadly describe the presence of Ubuntu principles in micro, mezzo and macro practice (Mupedziswa et al., 2019; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). Mugumbate & Chereni (2020) provide a useful overview of theories, frameworks and perspectives on Ubuntu social work, which will not be covered in depth here. These include Rankopo et al.'s ubuntu social justice framework (2007), unhu ethical model of the Council of Social Workers in Zimbabwe (2012), ubuntu as a pan-African framework for social work (Mupedziswa et al., 2019; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013), the

Tswana Kagisano framework articulated in Botswana's Vision 2016 development plan, van Breda's ecological and eco-spiritual perspective (2019), and Mugumbate & Chereni's integrated framework (2019).

In addition to the foregoing, Chigangaidze (2020; 2021a) has also argued for the application of an ubuntu framework within social work as a part of a humanistic-existential practice focusing on particular features such as holism, self-awareness, self-determination, social justice and human rights, human dignity, social cohesion, motivation, spirituality, and death. Chigangaidze (2021a) also demonstrates the application, or perhaps more so the relevance, of some of these features in an Ubuntu social work response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although he does not name Ubuntu as a guiding philosophy, Garavan's (2013) essay on the centrality of dialogue in humanistic social work interventions – dialogic social work - supports Chigangaidze's thesis that Ubuntu social work is a part of the humanistic-existential approach. Dialogic social work recognizes the importance of relationship, connection and dialogue, and redounds to the interconnectedness that is central in Ubuntu philosophy. To move the point even further, Garavan (2013) treats with the importance of connection in defining one's personhood; he cites Buber (1984) who contends that "a person makes his appearance by entering into relation with other persons" (p. 10).

Mupedziswa et al. (2019) point to the concept of 'community' as an organizing principle both in social work theory and Ubuntu philosophy. A central contribution of social work theory to the behavioural sciences has been the articulation of the person in environment (PIE) perspective and the strengths based approach which both look to the social, physical, natural and spiritual ecosystems (intricately woven in community) for the source as well as the solutions to individual and community problems. While Mupedziswa et al (2019) and others have not named PIE or the strength's perspective, the connection is readily apparent. As they explained, "Ubuntu has adopted the ecological notion in explaining its worldview of the human person"

(Mupedziswa et al., 2019, p. 30). Chigangaidze (2021b), with a strong micro-practice focus has also identified Ubuntu alignment with the bio-psychosocial model and the ecological systems perspective. Much more than this, however, is the evident importance of connection to the natural environment within Ubuntu philosophy. This is perhaps most articulated by van Breda (2019) who contends that, within Ubuntu philosophy, the environment is also a part of our community. Most of these works, however, do not define what professional qualities define the Ubuntu social work practitioner. Mayaka & Truell (2021) offer a brief definition. For them, the Ubuntu practitioner is one who "constantly engage[s] people to work together to remove the social, psychological and structural barriers of inclusion for everyone's development, the emphasis of rights constantly being considered or reconsidered as social situations evolve…" (p.3). Is it enough to say that the Ubuntu practitioner is guided by Ubuntu philosophy? And if so, what does this mean?

A Diasporic conceptualization

In Jamaica and the wider Anglophone Caribbean, professional social work developed as a colonial response to the labour unrests, political agitation and protests of the 1930s (Maxwell, 2003) across the region, most notably in Jamaica. Prior to this, communities coordinated their own social protection activities, and self-help initiatives were encouraged. The state response in Jamaica included the introduction of state coordinated social welfare services in the 1940s (with social welfare officers appointed), and a programme of community development (with community development officers appointed). There was significant focus on the establishment of community councils tasked with community governance, and directing and initiating self-help activities for local development. Over the years, community councils in Jamaica have gone through a number of epochs which have been described by Levy (1995, 2013). The current iteration of these community governance structures is the Community Development Committee (CDC) which forms a part of Jamaica's participatory governance framework. Community

Development Committees identify community priorities, and are able to access funding from local and international development partners for actions focused *inter alia* on local economic development or environmental conservation. Osei (2010) discusses this approach to local development and conceptualizes the approach as a 'Community Leadership Model' in Jamaica. Community Development Committees have representatives on the Development Area Committee (DAC), and Development Area Committees have representatives on the Parish Development Committees (PDC). Parish Development Committees serve as civil society advisors, representing local community priorities and plans to the local government authority (municipal corporations) within the parish, and lobbying for resources for local communities where they are available.

Historically, although women are known to be particularly active at the level of local communities, it could be observed that women were still less likely than men to serve as president of their community development committees. As a practitioner with experience in community social work, I was interested to find out what it took for women to become CDC Presidents and what motivated them to engage in that form of voluntary work. I wanted to arrive at a model of community leadership engagement for women. The self-funded Women's Community Leadership study was designed and received ethical approval by the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus Ethics Committee. Eighteen women who were serving, or had served as CDC presidents were engaged in conversational partnerships which included multiple interviews and telephone conversations. It is important to note that participants in the study referred to what they did in communities as 'community work'; it was not a professional endeavor but one they considered as work. In fact, based on their community engagement, at least one participant developed an interest in social work, completed a paraprofessional 'four months course in the principles and practice of social work' offered by the University of the West Indies, Open campus, and eventually completed a bachelor's degree in social work. My work with

communities has mainly been as the professional outsider, but as I reflected on participants' experiences, I began to reflect on my professional self, and sought to use elements of their experiences to strengthen my own practice. I offer these elements as a starting framework for the development of an Ubuntu practice at all levels.

In their accounts participants pointed to a morality, a framework of being, that fits squarely within Ubuntu philosophy, and which led me through a process of reflection on my own professional ethic as a social worker. Based on participant narratives, I articulate this morality as an ethic of responsibility to support others. While participants referred to helping others, their narratives can be interpreted as not only helping, but also supporting others in a more general sense; supporting involves helping. Elements of this ethic which are useful for the Ubuntu practitioner can be situated in three clusters – being a community person, having a sense of purpose, and helping others.

Getting at the "Responsibility"

Participants conceptualized their leadership as being about people, and being about responsibility, rather than being about position or power. Participant's leadership was focused on people - putting people first, thinking of them, being there for them, respecting them, listening to them, and valuing their opinions. Leadership was also about taking responsibility – being accountable – 'knowing that the buck stops with you', but also being accountable to others; being people focused - taking responsibility for responding to the concerns and needs of others; and being competent – having a vision for a better future, getting things done. So the focus of participants' leadership is to help others and to demonstrate responsibility in doing so. This is a development on Weber's (1946) ethic of responsibility which refers to the act of owning up to the consequences of one's actions as a leader. This is opposed to an ethic of conviction where the leader ascribes the responsibility for actions to an external force that drives their conviction, a god for example. In addition to owning up to the consequence of one's

actions, the one with an ethic of responsibility to support others finds himself in a situation where they are convicted by a sense of responsibility to support others, whether or not that sense of responsibility comes from an intrinsic or extrinsic source. For the Ubuntu practitioner, the ethic of personal responsibility to support others ought to come both from the internal conviction which called them to the profession in the first place, which is grounded in a sense of connection to all humanity, especially to those we support or help, as well as the external edicts, values, ethical codes and principles of the profession.

Cluster 1 – Being a Community Person

> Yes ahhmm the love of the community… I don't want my community to be less than any other community, whatever it takes. I want if we go to a meeting… and they are talking about a community we must be in it…I was a community person, I like to see things happening in my community… (Janet)

The community person has a strong sense of being connected to community (people and place) – various sources have referred to this strong sense of positive connection to the community as community attachment and affective community sentiment (Yen, et al., 2012; McKnight, et al., 2017). The community person was motivated by a passion for the people, and a passion for the physical environment of the community (place). For example, one participant, Ruth, expressed that she remained active as the leader of her CDC because she had an interest in people and their development, while Kerone shared that it is because she loved interacting with people why she established an organization in her community, which morphed into the CDC. The community person is therefore understanding of the experiences, concerns and needs of people and has patience. The community person is committed to working with others to enhance the wellbeing of the community – people and environment.

> So with my passion. I decided that I'm not going to give up until somebody else takes reign and even when somebody else takes the reign I'll still be

> involved in it cause I want to see that my community is first class even though we're in the country. (Kerone)

This passion for people seems to be based on love. Love has been receiving more attention in recent scholarship. In social work, compassionate love, armed love, and 'Love in community work' (Godden, 2016) are a few of the terms being used. Godden's study on 'love in community work' with community workers in Timor-Leste found that participants conceptualised love as both a feeling and an action which includes,

> processes of knowing, trusting and helping others, working together and strengthening unity, communication, responsibility, respect, participation and consultation, celebrating, sharing and 'developing ideas with people that are not alike by appreciating differences of opinion (p.10).

Within Godden's framework, love in community work is love as action for social change to achieve happiness, freedom and democracy, emphasising connectedness, participation, and values based service (Godden, 2016). This extends hooks' (2001) concept of a 'love ethic' by which all members of a community can transform even the most troubled communities.

An important aspect of being a community person was identifying a connection with the community. For participants in the women's community leadership study, maintaining connections was an important aspect of their community involvement and leadership. Connections were built around two things – relationships and issues. Relationships included familial, fictive kinship, and affective bonds. Connections around issues were connections established for collective action on any short or long term issues. Within the CDC, there is a constant identification of issue around which the collective can continue to work. Of course, the two types of connections are not mutually exclusive. With reference to her involvement in the alumina council in her community (which is represented at the CDC) Ruth explained a double connection which she believed was natural or organic,

> Bauxite is a part of me, because bauxite came into the area when my families were here already. So, when bauxite came into the area, we had families that worked with the company, so it is, naturally, one of our economic development in the community…It has been a part of my family. Because my father has been working at the company from as early as when it started. So, it's natural.

Cluster 2 – Having a sense of purpose – being a bridge

A sense of purpose was very evident in participants' narratives. This sense of purpose had more than one type of origin. For some it was based on spirituality (conviction) and for others they were taught by their parents or extended family to see meaning and purpose in helping others (responsibility). As van Breda (2019), Chigangaidze (2021b) and others have shown, spirituality is important in Ubuntu philosophy. Some participants expressed their belief in a divine purpose on their lives to make a difference in their communities. One participant, a Christian, even described a spiritual experience – a vision - in which she was chastised by the Angel Gabriel, and thereafter became committed to making a difference in the lives of others in her community. Another stated,

> "And I said those hardships or bad life whateva you term it as that I was brought up into, I think God was moulding me for this purpose to be strong for my mother, to be strong for the community, to be strong for my children… So you know I just said that God have me for a purpose; I'm like a bridge… I see myself as a bridge, you know when you want to get over on the other side of the road and there is a big river in order for you to go over is either you are going to go through the water or there's something for you to walk on… Right so I see myself as a bridge that somebody can reach somewhere."

Another participant believed that God inspired her to write so that her community could benefit. To date she has published seven books through the publishing house operated by her denomination. Some participants therefore experienced and expressed their community leadership as 'doing God's work', as doing 'ministry.'

Other participants learned a particular kind of morality which guided them to attend to the needs of others. Ruth explained,

> I learned to care. I see them [her older sisters] as caring persons and wanting to achieve an independence. And that is something I received from my father, because for him, he always encouraged us girls in the family to be independent and always fostered that as part of our development in our family.

Ruth saw her father and older sisters as caring persons, and caring for others is a significant factor in her understanding of leadership and the lessons she learned about leadership. Similarly, Sharon expressed a sense of obligation to her community, a trait which she observed from her father:

> So I thought I would continue that trend. So even though I didn't have the skills [referring to community organizing], I could offer my time in terms of training youths in education since I had the skills in that area.

A sense of purpose is also accompanied by a sense of personal responsibility to act on behalf of others, and a personal responsibility to lead the community organization for the benefit of residents. The community leader therefore had to have a 'press or push' (determination/drive) to ensure that things happen, to ensure they responded to community concerns and a willingness to take responsibility for decisions made. However, this sense of personal responsibility and acting on it sometimes required that participants give up something, their time, their finances, and romantic relationships among other things; participants expressed this trade off as 'serving at a personal cost.'

> The responsibility is that I took up the challenge and if certain things are needed and I can fund it I fund it, if I can do it I just do it and don't ask any questions.... Sometimes my husband would say "you taking up all your money on people 'ray ray ray' [blah blah blah]" and I would say "look here I am doing what I am doing, and doing it with no regrets." That's me – (Shernette)

Cluster 3 – Helping Others

As mentioned earlier, participants perceived the aim of their community leadership as 'helping others' which may be better understood as providing support to others. Helping others was manifested in a number of ways, facilitating the participation and empowerment of others, and delivering and getting things done.

Facilitating the participation and Empowerment of Others

Participation is a key component of community, and inclusive community governance. Study participants lamented a breakdown in volunteerism and community involvement, which they had to fight against and reverse. They facilitated participation by listening to others and facilitating dialogue.

> "yuh have to realise that being a community person, I have to deal with the community, I have to talk to the community, I have to listen to what they are saying…" (Karen)

Through dialogue residents are able to contribute their views, raise concerns, discuss issues, and through listening, the community leader is able to appreciate these views, concerns and issues and ensure they are represented in decision making exercises where participants are not able to directly contribute in decision making fora. Through this dialogic partnership, the community leader is also able to build relationships with constituents, gain their confidence and build credibility.

Participants used the term empowerment loosely, but the meanings they attached to it were clear. By facilitating empowerment of others, participants motivated others towards self-help and self-efficacy. Participants therefore made effort to motivate residents towards collective action – the indicator of self-help and community empowerment. In addition to promoting and motivating others towards collective action, participants also motivated individuals towards self-efficacy, often through serving as brokers for their enrollment in various training programmes organized by state and non-state entities, and by organizing developmental and information sharing sessions.

Participants served as gatekeepers to mobilise persons for various initiatives, and to connect them with various resources.

> [W]hen TRN just came into Jamaica, tax registration number - and we put up some strategical location in the community, and we did sign-up for persons and they [the external entity] were saying that 'Miss P, the people dem nah fill out the form!" And I seh, "Dem not filling it out because of the way you are talking [to them]. They can't r-e-a-d so good, so don't tell them seh "write your name here", say "you want me to write your name for you? tell me how do you spell your name?" Just put in the name for them and…read it back to them, ask them if they understand and let them sign. So, being a leader you have to know people's weak points, and know their strong points, know where to put them and where not to put them because you can put them somewhere and it embarrass them." (Karen)

From Karen's account, the community leader also serves as a gatekeeper because of their intimate understanding of the community and their connectedness to, and respect for residents. The connectedness requires that they communicate with residents in a way that does not dishonor, disrespect, or embarrass them.

Delivering – getting things done

The CDC is intended to carry out initiatives to foster the social and economic development of the community and to ensure that community priorities are represented in the Loval Government's parish development plans. The CDC president therefore had an unwritten contract with the community to initiate, lead, coordinate and implement actions, projects and events in this regard. Therefore, in addition to having a vision, participants spoke of having to 'deliver' on this agreement by '*getting things done*, *being proactive*, *taking initiative*, *doing what needs to be done*, *showing up*, and being persistent. The process of getting things done is nuanced. Firstly, by their positional leadership, participants are given legitimacy to act on the community's behalf, but they in turn must act so as to gain credibility and strengthen their legitimacy. Secondly, delivering and getting things done was more likely to

be successful if participants actively formed and maintained personal and professional relationships and networks with others within the community or external to the community and through which resources (technical, financial, human) could be mobilized.

Reflecting on Ubuntu as an ethic of responsibility to support others

The data presented above provide a snapshot into the intrapsychic processes that Jamaican women experience when they engage in voluntary community action and leadership. We may logically conclude that these processes have been influenced by women's outlook and women's morality which is reflected in their sense of responsibility to others. Ubuntu may therefore be operationalized as an ethic of responsibility to help or provide support to others. What the care ethicists have not been able to agree on, is the source of this moral imperative to help and support others. Ubuntu fills this gap, certainly for African and diaspora communities, by taking a perspective that may be considered metaphysical. For Ubuntu, there is something that connects us, a shared humanity that is defined by one's connection to the whole (the community) and which in turn obligates one to actively ensure the maintenance of the whole. One way in which the whole is maintained, is by each individual's commitment to help and support another.

The concepts arising out of women's narratives of their engagement in voluntary community action and leadership, which is aligned to both care ethics and Ubuntu philosophy (an Ubuntu morality) has caused me to reflect on my own practice as a social worker. For this reason, I suggest that the Ubuntu practitioner is one who has an ethic of responsibility to help and support others, and whose practice is defined by connectedness, passion for people, a sense of purpose, the participation and empowerment of others (including through dialogue), and getting things done. These features provide a good starting point for practitioners to begin to reflect on their practice and to ask themselves key questions, with the aim of pursuing or

strengthening the ethic of responsibility to support others as a professional and moral obligation. Table 2 below provides some guiding questions within this reflective framework. The questions are by no means exhaustive and represent an initial attempt at theorizing a reflective framework for the Ubuntu Practitioner.

Cluster	**Feature**	**Reflective Questions**
Being a Community Person	Connectedness	• Do I feel a part of this family/group/community? • Do I feel connected to this client? • To whom or what do I feel connected in this moment?
	Passion for People	• What do I feel passionate about? • Do I have a passion for people in this moment? • Do I have passion for the group/community? What aspects? • Do I have any passion for this client?
Having a Sense of Purpose	Sense of Purpose	• What is my purpose? • What is the source of my purpose? • Does my purpose align with what this client requires of me/needs from me?
Helping Others	Dialogue / Dialogic Participation	• Am I listening and hearing what clients are expressing? • Is my speech respectfully responding to what clients are expressing?

	Participation and Empowerment	• Are my actions helping/supporting the clients/community/family to begin help themselves? • Do my actions help clients to participate / to be included? • Am I connecting the client to needed resources and services that will benefit them and the wider community?
	Delivering – Getting things done	• Do my clients have confidence in my ability to get things done? • Am I getting things done?

Table 2: Reflective Questions – Ethic of Responsibility to Help and Support Others

Implications for Social Work practice and education

Although I have used empirical data from a community context to extrapolate a reflective framework for the Ubuntu practitioner, the framework is not specific to social workers working in community contexts. Its questions can be tailored for use by social workers working in varied contexts across micro, mezzo and macro levels of practice. It can also be used for personal reflection with any desired frequency, or may be used as a reflective tool during Social Work supervisory sessions.

Furthermore, very often the act of helping or supporting often gets lost in the 'tasks' of social work, especially when Social Workers work in bureaucratic organizations, and have to interact frequently with courts, police officers and other statutory systems. This is also often the case in regions like the Caribbean where Social Work is not regulated, and where many persons employed in Social Work roles are not trained Social Workers. In these kinds

of contexts, the 'helping' and 'supporting' in Social Work often gets lost, even though it is known that Social Work is a helping profession. Losing a focus on helping and supporting others also occurs in environments where Social Workers have very high caseloads, as is the case in Caribbean territories like Jamaica, where Child Protection caseloads are in the hundreds. The use of a reflective framework like the one presented here, therefore enables Social Work managers and Social Workers to consistently put 'helping' and 'supporting' at the core of their day to day work experiences by (re)focusing on passion, purpose, dialogue, participation, connection, and relationships. The reflective framework helps the aspiring Ubuntu practitioner to make an effort at striking a healthy balance between these features/values, and the task of 'getting things done.'

This kind of reflective exercise is therefore important for professional maturation, and is certainly helpful in the formation of an Ubuntu practitioner; that is, a practitioner who is guided by an ethic of responsibility to support others. Social Work Educators, field supervisors and Social Work managers who have an interest in promoting Ubuntu philosophy within Social Work will play a crucial role in engaging students and qualified practitioners in supervisory sessions using the Ethic of Responsibility to Support Others as a guide for reflection and case planning in pursuit of an Ubuntu practice.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I used empirical data, taken from eighteen women who engage in voluntary community leadership in Jamaica, to articulate the ethic of responsibility to support others. The chapter firstly showed the alignment of Ubuntu philosophy with feminist care ethics demonstrating that Ubuntu provides a worldview, or philosophical orientation within which the ethic of care can be better understood. Secondly, I have used the data to advance the notion that the ethic of responsibility to support others is a specific way of understanding and expressing both the ethic of care and Ubuntu philosophy

and principles. Thirdly, features of Jamaican women's experiences and the sense of being connected to others, have been used to present a reflective framework that may be useful for practitioners seeking to develop an Ubuntu practice. Through this exercise, this chapter not only contributes to the nascent scholarship on Caribbean Social Work, but fills a clear gap in respect of the absence of indigenous practice models, and supervisory and reflective frameworks. Even further, this chapter establishes a clear connection between an African diasporic experience and an African philosophy and highlights the value of this connection to strengthening Social Work practice within the diaspora in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean.

By way of recommendations, future work should include efforts at testing and refining the reflective framework presented here. There are also opportunities for further exploration around the connections between Ubuntu and the ethic of care, and the role of maternal experiences in engendering Ubuntu. The ethic of responsibility to support others is a specific expression of Ubuntu and the ethic of care originating from the experiences of women in the African diaspora, Jamaica in particular. Further research may therefore focus on testing the reflective framework in other contexts, as well as synthesizing it with features emerging from data originating in Africa and/or other regions.

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Chapter 22

The You (and Me) of Ubuntu: Individual Self-Care as Essential for Collective Care

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Dr Grise-Owens, Ed.D., LCSW, MSW has extensive experience in community, administrative, and clinical practice, as well as faculty and administrative roles in social work education. Building on decades of social work practice and substantive scholarship, she initiated The Wellness Group, ETC., which promotes a professional culture of well-being. In the ubuntu spirit, her current work is dedicated to contributing to practitioner self-care and organizational wellness thus, strengthening the professional community and sustaining its mission.

Dr. Miller is the Dean and Dorothy A. Miller Research Professor in Social Work Education at University of Kentucky. Amongst myriad contributions, Dean Miller founded The Self-Care Lab (SCL), which is the first known lab

specifically dedicated to empirically studying self-care among helping professionals. Last, but not least, he is a loud and proud foster and kinship alum. Through his work, Dr. Miller demonstrates his commitment to the profession and ubuntu principles of sustainment and strengthening community.

Dr. Mindy "Dr. BE" Eaves is Chair and Program Director of the School of Social Work at Kentucky State University, Kentucky's only public HBCU. Her passion is equity, teaching, and sustainability of social workers. In her role as a social work administrator in higher education, ubuntu principles inspire her collaborative leadership approach that values collective work and encourages personal and professional self-care. Dr. BE's research areas include the experiences of women educators in higher education, disparity, identity, and self-care.

Together, Drs. Grise-Owens, Miller, & Brooks-Eaves are the co-editors of The A-to-Z Handbook for Social Workers and Other Helping Professionals.

Abstract
In advancing ubuntu practice, social work must intentionally address the damaging, normative approach that discounts self-care as contradictory to collective care. Ubuntu translates as "I am because we are." There is no collective Ubuntu, without individual "you." In this chapter, we draw attention to how interconnected ubuntu of "we" must encompass attention to the "me", i.e., caring for the individual self. We articulate how self-care is integral to and essential for the fullest expression of ubuntu, sustainment of the profession, and attainment of human rights. We (re)conceptualize wholistic self-care through an ubuntu lens, reclaiming indigenous interdependent connections that embrace self. Grounded in research and practice, the chapter provides both philosophical and pragmatic guidance for integrating self-care into ubuntu practice.

Ubuntu is the first theme of the new Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development (IFSW, 2020). As Mayaka and Truell (2021) explain, "Ubuntu is philosophy and practice that resonates with many cultures around the world and is consistent with the values of social work" (p. 660). Ubuntu has multi-faceted possibilities for exponential impact in the profession of social work and its global mission. To achieve its highest potential, this theme requires critical exploration and creative implementation from myriad angles.

In advancing ubuntu, social work must intentionally address the damaging, normative approach within the profession that discounts self-care as contradictory to collective care. Revered global leader, Archbishop Desmond Tutu was perhaps the most well-known ambassador of ubuntu. Tutu defined ubuntu as the essence of being human; he expounded on how individuals are inextricably interconnected with others and the world in one wholistic entity (Tutu, n.d.). As Mugumbate and Chereni (2020) explain, whilst the nuances of ubuntu may vary across contexts, at core, ubuntu is about how "an authentic individual human being is part of a…relational, communal, societal, environmental, and spiritual world" (p. vi). Ubuntu is often translated as "I am because we are."

Typically, the emphasis of this ubuntu translation is on the "we", i.e., communal. Certainly, in important ways, that emphasis is necessary because hegemonic forces—such as patriarchy, capitalism, and colonization—have suppressed Indigenous perspectives of interdependent, collaborative collective and, instead, privileged individualism, competition, and hierarchy. Yet, there is no collective ubuntu, without individual "you/me." The essence of being an authentic human engages interconnection. This interconnection encompasses individuals. Tutu (n.d.) instructed his audience members to "live to your highest potential…*Be who you are*." One cannot achieve this aim without attending to one's own well-being. Thus, the fullest expression of ubuntu—being authentically human—requires self-care.

In this chapter, we draw attention to how interconnected ubuntu of "we" must encompass attention to the "me", i.e., caring for individual self. We articulate how self-care is integral to and essential for fullest expression of ubuntu, attainment of human rights/responsibilities, and sustainment of the profession of social work. We (re)conceptualize wholistic, expansive self-care through an ubuntu lens, reclaiming and highlighting interdependent, systemic connections that embrace self. Grounded in research and practice, the chapter provides both philosophical and pragmatic guidance for integrating self-care into ubuntu philosophy and practice, as it pertains to the well-being of practitioners.

What is Self-Care and Why is it Crucial in Social Work?

In order to discuss the importance of self-care, we must briefly define self-care and articulate why self-care is crucial for social workers to sustain in the profession, and, iteratively, for the profession to sustain itself. As will be elucidated below, we define self-care as a wholistic, expansive approach to caring for/attending to oneself, as a human being. This attention includes both personal and professional self-care.

The profession of social work has been historically dedicated to the overarching aims of human rights, social justice, and human well-being; more recently, environmental care and sustainability have expanded these core commitments (NASW, 2021; IFSW & IASSW, 2014). With this laudable and crucial mission, social work is a consequential, meaningful, and multi-faceted profession. Social workers practice within increasingly complex and stressful environments and demanding expectations (e.g., Acker, 2018; Cox & Steiner, 2013; Maclean, 2011). As such, the professional role requires high levels of engagement and competencies of practitioners. Yet, the profession does not justly attend to the well-being of the humans who fulfill the roles necessary to the profession's mission (e.g., Miller, et al., 2020; Smullens, 2021).

In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) designated burnout as an urgent occupational phenomenon marked by exhaustion, energy depletion, increased mental distance, and feelings of negativism. Social work, and other helping professions, experience high levels of burnout (e.g., Bloomquist, et al., 2015; Cox & Steiner, 2013; Miller, et al, 2020). Social workers' experience with stress, compassion fatigue, moral injury, and vicarious trauma are typically related to working directly and/or indirectly with trauma (e.g., Diaconescu, 2015; Dombo, et al., 2013; Reamer, 2020; Regehr, 2018). As noted above, social workers practice in challenging contexts to address complex phenomena. Because these experiences and contexts are so pervasive, the warning signs of burnout are often not recognized early enough to prevent catastrophic outcomes (Smullens, 2021). Without wholistic intervention, these conditions lead to "professional depletion" (Greville, 2015), declining social worker wellness, and an untimely exit from the social work profession. Thus, this depletion applies not only to the individual social worker, but ultimately to sustaining the profession, itself (e.g., Grise-Owens & Miller, 2022). Professional depletion is an international problem (e.g., Diaconescu, 2015; Miller, et al., 2021). *However, integrating the ubuntu philosophy and practice ensures* we are not alone. Together, with the spirit of ubuntu, we can build a global network of self-care (Grise-Owens & Miller, n.d.).

Increasingly, self-care—along with macro systemic responses—is being understood as essential for addressing the inimical conditions and consequences, such as burnout. Sustaining the profession requires attending to practitioner well-being, which compels attention to self-care. (Cox & Steiner, 2013; Greene, et al., 2017; Grise-Owens, Miller, & Eaves, 2016). Self-care is a competency that underlies the effectiveness of social work practice and, by extension, the viability of the profession (DeMarchis, et at. 2021; Grise-Owens, et al., 2018; Grise-Owens & Miller, 2022; Lewis & King, 2019; Miller, 2020; Newell & Nelson-Gardell, 2014).

As such, progressively, the social work profession is giving serious attention to self-care (IFSW, 2004; NASW, 2008; NASW, 2021). The profession is embracing a more expansive conceptualization of self-care (e.g., Brown, 2020; Grise-Owens & Miller, 2020; Powers & Engstrom, 2020; Pyles, 2018; Salloum, et al, 2015). That is, in the past, meaningful implementation of self-care was significantly hampered by simplistic conceptualizations that focused on one-dimensional aspects, such as physical activity. Similarly, self-care has been commodified as a consumeristic luxury. These limiting misperceptions of self-care has led to dismissive interpretations and diminished effectiveness.

However, emerging conceptualizations engage a wholistic understanding of self-care—which is particularly congruent with ubuntu. Like ubuntu, an expansive conceptualization of self-care addresses every aspect of authentic human-ness as interconnected facets of wholeness (e.g., Butler, et al, 2019; Grise-Owens, Miller, & Eaves, 2016). In this framing, self-care is not limited to an activity (such as yoga or tennis) or a commodity to be purchased (such as spa visits). Rather, self-care is "a lifestyle—a way of being in the world" (Grise-Owens & Miller, 2022, p. 30).

This expansive self-care entails multiple domains. Lee et al. (2020) describes two overarching self-care domains: personal and professional. That is, self-care is not merely something to be done after work; it is part of the professional role. As such, self-care is integral to doing the work in ways that enhance practitioner well-being. In addition, this wholistic, expansive conceptualization of self-care engages multi-dimensional facets (e.g., Butler, et al., 2019) Dorociak et al. (2017) defined self-care as a "multidimensional, multifaceted process of purposeful engagement in strategies that promote healthy functioning and enhance well-being" (p. 326). Comprehensive self-care involves "integrated attention to multiple domains associated with overall human well-being." (Grise-Owens & Miller, 2022, p. 31). Simply put,

self-care is "how we take care of ourselves" as a human being (Grise-Owens, n.d., a)

Reconceptualizing Self-Care through an Ubuntu Lens

Unless examined critically and engaged constructively, the ubuntu perspective could seem to be unrelated to self-care and perhaps even antithetical to it. Actually, ubuntu is remarkably congruent with wholistic self-care. Western conceptualizations tend to frame the world in delineations, such as either/or; whereas, ubuntu promotes a wholistic both/and worldview. The either/or argument is implicitly and even explicitly promoted in prevalent messages, like the popular social media meme: "We need community (or some other collective) care, *not* self-care!"

A corollary destructive message is to give *selflessly* to the collective. A dominant message—especially in social work—is that attending to one's own needs is selfish. Especially as a helping profession, social work conveys (albeit, often implicitly) that practitioners must help others—even to the detriment of our own well-being. In contrast, self-care fosters self-*full*ness, not selflessness; through self-care, we can become more fully human (Grise-Owens, n.d., b.). Self-care counters these harmful messages and explicitly attends to the well-being of practitioners. In doing so, it nurtures Tutu's ubuntu message to "live to your highest potential…*Be who you are*."

The essence of ubuntu is interconnection. Ignoring or denigrating self-care as an aspect of that interconnection is not merely an innocuous oversight, it has serious implications for the ideals of ubuntu and aims of the profession. For the fullest potential of ubuntu and the sustaining of the profession, we must challenge these (ironically) disconnected interpretations. Instead, let's explore how self-care is integral to and essential for the fullest expression of ubuntu and, thus, its potential impact for social work.

This exploration can begin with asking, who is the "we" of ubuntu? In actuality, "we" is made up of a mixture of "I"s. That is, individuals comprise the "we" of ubuntu. Thus, the collective—group, family, community, organization, movement, humanity, universal—reflects the characteristics and synergy of the individuals in it (Grise-Owens & Miller, n.d.). Mayaka and Truell (2021) write that ubuntu as a philosophy is grounded in values, such as justice, responsibility, equality, love, respect, caring, trust, integrity, and the like (p. 651). These aspects are not produced by an amorphous alchemy. Rather, the collective is formed by the individuals. In significant ways, the collective is only as strong, healthy, effective, sustainable, loving, and caring as the "I"s who comprise the "We."

Thus, our interdependence *depends* on the energy, inner-workings, and characteristics of each individual who shows up in shared spaces, connections, and relations. Ultimately, the "we" of ubuntu is the exponential expression of all the "I"s. Literally, the quality and impact of inter-dependence is significantly defined and determined by the collective power and essence of the individual. Yet, without intentional awareness, it can be presumed there's some mythical, unrelated "we" that is somehow separate and distinct from our individual selves.

Understanding the "I" of this interdependence is imperative for our social work aims *and* our authentic ubuntu humanity. If I [as an individual] show up exhausted and empty due to overcommitments and unattended needs/wants, then my "I" negatively affects the "We." If I don't attend to my basic human needs for sleep, nutrition, reflection, and so forth, this lack of attention affects my interactions and effectiveness. Unaddressed trauma, lack of self-awareness, and just general self-neglect shows up exponentially in the collective.

Without attention to/care of self, I can project my needs onto the work and others in unhealthy—and even harmful—ways. The stress of oppressive

structures, systemic toxicity, and general dysfunction that occur in "we" spaces requires even more so that I am clear, grounded, healthy, and nurtured in self. The overwhelming demands of the work and mission can serve to distract from this essential connection to self and the complexity of self-care.

Ubuntu is most powerful and effective when every "I" in the interconnection is, in turn, connected to themselves in healthy and caring ways. Ubuntu encompasses the individual human mind, body, and spirit. Thus, self-care includes connection to the inner-self as not separate from the universal. Engaging in one's own self-care is perhaps the most crucial, impactful way for each person to contribute to a strong, caring collective. The interdependence of "we" depends on the "I am. Practicing self-care ensures that I am increasingly likely to honor my humanness, which allows me to honor the humanity of others. Self-care generates a fullness that enables me to bring healthy, empowering energy to the collective synergy. Self-care is the activation of self-compassion (Miller, et al., 2019), which flows into the interdependent communal. Literature delineates three core components of self-compassion: (a) self-kindness vs. self-judgment, (b) common humanity vs. isolation, and (c) mindfulness vs. over-identification. Notably, self-compassion involves active reflection on one's connection with others through our shared human experience—as contrasted with feeling isolated and alienated—which includes pain, suffering, joy, and goodness (Neff, 2015). Thus, ubuntu's emphasis on interconnectedness is congruent with self-compassion, which is activated through self-care.

Ancient Sufi wisdom challenges and clarifies, "You think because you understand one you understand two because one and one equals two. But, you must also understand the *and*." Applying this Sufi wisdom to this discussion leads to "I am because we are." *And*. "We are because I am." The interconnectedness of ubuntu requires understanding, valuing, and

attending to the *And*: Communal/collective care *and* Self-care. (Grise-Owens & Miller, n.d.)

The simple, powerful word—*And*-- bridges the reciprocal, systemic synergy between self and community. This synergy nurtures ubuntu interconnection in its most expansive conceptualization and activation. Self-care is complementary with collective care—not contradictory or competitive. Self-care embraces the individual and communal aspects of human well-being. That is, individuals have both the right *and* responsibility to care for themselves *and* others.

Micro versus macro has been a dynamic tension within social work throughout its development. In myriad ways, this tension stymies the profession's effectively practicing from a systems perspective. Expansive frameworks are necessary to fully conceptualize and operationalize the systemic practice needed in a global, complex world (e.g., Grise-Owens, et al, 2014; Musikanski, et al., 2021). In important and interesting ways, ubuntu has the potential for reclaiming, reinforcing, and revisioning social work's traditional emphasis on a systems perspective. Like all facets of social work, a systems approach pertains in activating self-care (Grise-Owens & Miller, 2022; Newell, 2020). Congruent with ubuntu, a systems approach emphasizes interconnectedness and reciprocity. As brown (2017) insightfully observes, "What we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for larger systems." Thus, self-care sets the pattern for collective care; ubuntu offers an expansive perspective that encompasses that both/and interconnection.

Pragmatic Applications and Critical Implications

What does this expansive self-care—informed by ubuntu—look like for practitioners? It is essential, wholistic, and multidimensional. This self-care challenges the pervasive, consumeristic misperception of self-care as commodified. One of the most harmful myths about self-care is that it is a luxury for the privileged. Actually, self-care is an essential for authentic

human experience, not a selfish extra luxury. Wholistic self-care is a lifestyle to be practiced for human well-being. As such, congruent with ubuntu principles, self-care is multidimensional. The interconnectedness of ubuntu includes connection to one's self, as a full human being—physically, psychologically, socially, spiritually, and so forth. Self-care engages all these dimensions. Starting with "I," self-care involves understanding of self as a practitioner, along with being considerate of the impact of my actions on the wellbeing of "we," as it affects our outcomes and potentials as humans and professionals.

This engagement requires that self-care is an integrated lifestyle, which necessitates intentional and ongoing attention to professional and personal care. This kind of self-care does not just happen. Like any worthwhile and consequential endeavor, it requires thoughtful planning, practical implementation, and critical evaluation. We recommend that practitioners use a structured self-care plan that incorporates universal aspects of self-care (Grise-Owens, Miller, & Eaves, 2016). For instance, the plan should include common, universal, and fundamental dimensions, such as physical, mental, and so forth. Also, each self-care plan must attend to unique aspects of the individual's values, interests, and circumstances. The plan needs to designate accountability measures for ascertaining how each self-care goal will be accomplished. These plans are iterative and organic. That is, through ongoing assessment and development, the plans are updated and improved.

Self-care can be deeply restorative practice when implemented professionally and personally across all dimensions using structured goals and accountability measures. Contrary to popular metaphors, self-care is not merely a mask to be worn when the plane crashes or a bomb shelter for refuge after life implodes. Rather, self-care is integrated life breath; it is a "liberatory sociopolitical act of being fully human" (Eaves, 2021).

Self-care begins now, in this moment, and is an ongoing commitment. As a strategy to implement and sustain self-care, use these reflective questions: *How can I rest, reflect, move, and feed myself in ways that allow me to show up fully and in healthy ways? How can I attend to my mental health, spiritual aspects, psychological needs/wants? How can I set healthy boundaries that allow me to refill and nurture myself? How can I connect to self, nature, community, and meaning? How can I honor my authentic human <u>being</u>? How can I practice self-care as an intentional and integrated lifestyle?* The right time to start self-care is now; the *right* way is the way that works for the individual practitioner.

Sustaining oneself in the profession requires self-care; concomitantly, sustained self-care strengthens the collective. Thus, wholistic self-care requires ongoing attention, and, like any professional competency, it requires investment in professional development. Self-care is an ongoing practice, a lifestyle journey—not a product to be completed or a destination to be reached.

Samkange and Samkange (1980) suggested that ubuntu is reflected in leaders that exemplify servant leadership qualities such as openness and shared decision making. In social work education, social work faculty may discuss their personal self-care journey with students to exemplify the importance of lived experiences and wisdom. Lived experiences, particularly from elders, are valued in African social work services, administration, and research (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013, p. 96).

In generalist practice courses, social work students may complete self-care plans with attention to all dimensions of self-care. In particular, the social and spiritual dimensions align with ubuntu philosophy of interconnectedness as humans. This attention is particularly important in social work education settings, where students begin professional socialization into the profession.

Tutu noted that ubuntu fosters resilience that enables survival and humanness despite dehumanizing circumstances (Tutu, 2000). Social work practitioners through integration of self-care find greater commitment to the profession, thus, avoiding untimely departure from the profession. This sustainment is particularly important, in considering the ubuntu practice of valuing elders and the commitment to deepening community.

In this chapter, we have emphasized that self-care must be considered and approached wholistically as social work engages the philosophy and practice of ubuntu. It encourages respecting oneself, being considerate of individual well-being through self-care for both the most effective contribution to the 'we' and the achievement of one's full potential. An indigenous framework, ubuntu has significant potential for expanding social work's impact for social development, social justice, and social change. These social aims emphasize the collective; concomitantly, these social aims intend the authentic well-being of *all* human beings. Thus, consistent and serious attention to self-care has critical implications. The ubuntu framework can only be most effective, meaningful, and humane if it attends to the well-being of the humans enacting these aims, i.e., social work practitioners.

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Chapter 23

Decolonising Social Work: Ubuntu as the Spearhead for Change

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Biography
Omar Mohamed is a recently graduated, new social worker in England and works with children and families in his practice. Omar also maintains links with research, teaching and activism on workstreams that promote social justice, such as decolonising social work, anti-racism, and exploring indigenous knowledge. Ubuntu is found within a personal and professional relationship for Omar which is explored more in his chapter, such as his cultural identity as well as the commitment to Ubuntu values in social work on both a global and local scale.

Abstract: This chapter explores the reflective narrative of a social work student's journey during his experiences of the social work curriculum and practice knowledge in England as well as undertaking activist work on decolonising the social work curriculum. From the perspective of an Asian British male with lived experience of social work, being born and raised in London, with parents born in East Africa and ancestry from India: critical reflections are explored through an approach of decolonising one's own knowledge, experiences, and engagement with social work, and how this

relates to the wider social work sphere in the aims to value indigenous knowledge such as Ubuntu on a local and global scale.

Abstract translated in mother tongue (Gujarati):
Aa prakaran England ma samajik karya abhyaskram ane practice gyan Anubhav temaj sāmājik kārya abhyāsakram ane decolonise karva par kāryakartā kārya hāth dharva daramiyān sāmājik kārya na vidyārthīnī musāfari na pratibimbit varṇan ni shodh karē chē. Pūrva Africa ma janmēlā mātā-pitā anē bhāratanā vanśh sāthē London ma janmēlā anē ucharēlā, sāmājik kārya no jīvant anubhav dharāvatā Asia na British puruṣh na pariprekshya ma: Pōtānā gyan, anubhavō anē sagāi ne dūr karvana abhigam dwara nirṇāyak pratibimbōnī shodh karavāmā aāvē chē. Sāmājik kārya sāthē, anē tē sthānik anē vaiśhvik starē Ubuntu jēvā swadesi gyan ne mūlya āpavānā udeshya ma vyāpak sāmājik kārya kshetra sāthē kēvī rītē sambandhit chē.

Introduction

This chapter explores the reflective narrative of a social work student's journey during his experiences of the social work curriculum and practice knowledge in England as well as undertaking activist work on decolonising the social work curriculum. From the perspective of an Asian British male with lived experience of social work, being born and raised in London, with parents born in East Africa and ancestry from India: critical reflections are explored through an approach of decolonising one's own knowledge, experiences, and engagement with social work, and how this relates to the wider social work sphere in the aims to value Indigenous knowledge such as Ubuntu on a local and global scale.

Ubuntu

Ubuntu is described by Mugumbate and Chereni (2020, p. 5) as

> 'a collection of values and practices that black people of Africa or of African origin view as making people authentic human beings. While the nuances

> of these values and practices vary across different ethnic groups, they all point to one thing – an authentic individual human being is part of a larger and more significant relational, communal, societal, environmental and spiritual world.'

Mayaka and Truell (2021) furthers this understanding of Ubuntu as a guide for structural change that enables an enhancement of sustainability and enrichment of individuals, families, and communities within a global context.

The beginning section of this chapter will explore my journey through my identity and how this was developed through acculturation and racism, cultural differences, and impacts throughout my childhood. These filter through my journey into social work and experiences of the social work curriculum which results in demanding a decolonisation of the curriculum. I will then explore Ubuntu as an indigenous philosophy linking in with the importance of decolonisation and the importance of valuing indigenous knowledge within the global social work agenda.

Identity

At the time of writing this, I am a social work student at the University of Birmingham in England. I am proud of my ethnic heritage. My family is originally from Gujarat, India. My parents were born in East Africa and spent most of their childhood immersed in Ugandan and Kenyan culture. In 1972, my family were forcefully displaced when President Idi Amin of Uganda at that time expelled all Asians out of Uganda. My family and ancestry were split all over the world, and my parents and grandparents moved to England. Growing up, I always recognised I was 'Brown', living in a majority White society with a strong sense of British national pride. My ethnic identity is strong in being Asian British, and I prefer not to identify with a social construct of race around being 'Brown'. Although, I was living in a society that my parents and grandparents were not at home with their language, culture,

roots, philosophies, understanding, traditions, and practices. Their experiences ultimately had an impact on my own identity.

Acculturation & Racism

My parents and grandparents experienced racism in all its forms. The acculturation process that my family went through consisted of a removal of traditional norms and values, and an integrated British Asian way of living. My parents soon disconnected from my wider family network, which is abnormal in Indian culture, and attempted to fully assimilate into British culture. This included experiences of removing the close-knit family from religious beliefs, cultural understandings of parenting, education, health, social systems, social networks, and relationships. From speaking with my parents recently, it was clear that their experiences of facing racism on entering England and throughout their childhood, where they were described as 'dirty', 'paki', 'poor', 'monkey', amongst other racially abusive terms whenever they would overtly practice their culture and express ethnic roots. For example, when my father ate using his hands at lunchtime at an all-boys school that was majority white in the 80s, he ensured that he would never eat with his hands again due to being shamed for this cultural difference. When my mother experienced others not pronouncing her name correctly, she ensured that all her children would be named with 'simple', 'plain', and short names. This ultimately had an impact on my upbringing.

Childhood

Growing up for me was an experience impacted by intergenerational trauma and integration processes from my family. I engaged in British language, culture, roots, philosophies, understanding, traditions, and practices. This was through everyday living, friendships, education, social institutions, and within my own family. The one difference would be the food at home. Diversity in England was something that was always a conflicting matter for me. I could see, appreciate, and celebrate multiple diverse cultures, languages, and knowledge from others who had a stronger sense of cultural

identity. However, I felt out of place, as I was expected by others to speak my mother language of Gujarati, I was expected to know about my ethnic roots and history, I was expected to share my cultural identity. However, this felt impossible. I knew of others that were from culturally diverse backgrounds, and would fully assimilate into British culture, for example, ministers in UK government such as Priti Patel, Rishi Sunak, and Sajid Javid. However, I felt unable to do this as well. I was out of place.

Journey into Social Work

My childhood also consisted of experiences of poverty, child abuse, neglect, trauma, and homelessness, which resulted in 16 years of social work involvement. Most of my social workers were white, middle-class, females, and their involvement spanned through multiple different local authorities in London due to moving houses and boroughs as many times as I had social workers, which was around 15 changes. I experienced social workers that were unaware of understanding my complex cultural identity, needs and preferences. This ultimately had a negative impact on their practice as a lack of cultural competence meant that I was never seen and worked with holistically. This experience of social injustice drove me into social work.

Wanting to be the difference, make a change, and promote the core values that I found was important within my complex cultural identity. Social justice, human rights, empowerment, equality, equity, inclusion, and fairness. These were the values ascribed to me through my culture, and social work was found as the outlet and driving force for a future of being able to meet these values. Community has always been an important principle, and this is what I hoped to promote through social work.

Social Work Curriculum

On entering social work, I was faced with a curriculum that drew upon knowledge, approaches, and models of social work within a Eurocentric, White, and Western lens. There was not a single mention of the role of social

work from other countries outside the West, and there was little focus on values outside the West too. What I learned was how to work with individuals, not communities. I learned how to build independence, not interdependence. Principles of family and kinship networks, promoting cultural diversity and inclusion, and combating forms of discrimination around race, ethnicity, and culture, were minimal and not credited to the global majority knowledge base.

Decolonising Social Work

I felt that the social work curriculum was not sufficient in preparing me with a global understanding of social work and was not fit for purpose of my future practice. This feeling exemplified on reflection around my own social workers' lack of cultural competence around working with racially minoritised people. I decided to act. This individual act soon became a collective act. Other social work students and I staged a campaign to decolonise the social work curriculum. This was empowered from a drive to decolonise curriculums across the UK, however more work was needed to understand what this meant.

Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2013) explore decolonising as 'critically evaluating the impact of colonialism on social work education and taking action to rebalance the social work curriculum'. This was the first stage to understanding that the social work curriculum is impacted by a colonial legacy where non-Western knowledge bases that are likely to be former colonies are deliberately unheard and silenced, otherwise known as 'epistemic injustice' which can be both discriminatory and distributive in nature (Fricker, 2017; Coady, 2017). This understanding enabled me and other students to understand that the social work curriculum needs to be rebalanced, and that non-Western knowledge and indigenous practices, philosophies, and ways of being, doing and knowing, need to be strong within the social work curriculum.

Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie (2011) explore the concept of indigenisation as 'valuing indigenous knowledge and placing this at the forefront of social work education'. This gives meaning to how as social work students from racially minoritised backgrounds, we felt that the curriculum was not meeting our understanding of indigenous and culturally diverse knowledge. This demanded an exploration of indigenous knowledge in social work. Jaswal and Kshetrimayum (2022)'s recent review of indigenous social work knowledge around the world highlights the importance and value of embedding this in social work practice globally, however, authors have highlighted the continued dominance of Western paradigms and influences on social work (Gray and Coates, 2010; Gray et al., 2007; Gray and Fook, 2004).

Africanisation is explored by Mupedziswa, Rankopo and Mwansa (2019) as embedding the principles of African knowledge in the forefront to ensure social work is culturally relevant. This links in with the recent move for Ubuntu to impact the international social work profession (Mayaka and Truell, 2021) and as Zvomuya (2020) explores, the implementation of Ubuntu has strong benefits internationally.

Therefore, within the UK, our approach to decolonise the social work curriculum was to critically reflect and evaluate the social work education and curriculum where there was a lack of indigenous and culturally diverse voices in the research, texts, and teaching provided. The next step was to learn and reflect on the value of indigenous knowledge and how this can benefit UK social workers, and as the benefits were identified, action as taken to ensure that social work education and practices in the UK were culturally relevant to meet the needs of culturally diverse individuals, families and communities in the UK. Our action was to mobilise other social work students to demand for diverse social work texts and resources to be implemented in our curriculum, which was successfully achieved through thousands of pounds of books from racially minoritised authors bought into the library, as well as ensuring these are included as part of a curriculum review.

Ubuntu in the United Kingdom

Achieving Ubuntu in the UK has been an interesting journey including significant reflection. Ubuntu signifies the importance of communities, being connected, and appreciating the value and meaning of relationships - something that social work is embedded in. My first interaction with Ubuntu in social work was as a result of the International Federation of Social Workers having Ubuntu as the Global Agenda theme for 2021, however Ubuntu was also a part of my ancestral knowledge base. In seeing Ubuntu within the social work lens, I loved how Ubuntu challenges an individualistic idea of society and promotes the idea that we are interconnected and together as one human race - The philosophy of Ubuntu reminds me that it is okay to ask for help and support and to work with people. It reminds me that we all have personal issues, however we also can work together in partnership and build a collective stand inclusive of all to achieve true social transformation.

However, we have to recognise and call out that the UK is a racist society built upon colonisation, racial injustice, and individualistic and selfish ideologies. Thinking about where the UK is today, there is a lack of global interconnectedness - for example when the murder of George Floyd was shared globally, our American colleagues were on the frontlines protesting for Black Lives Matter - yet the UK social work profession was silent. For me as a social work student committed to social justice, the silence was deafening. If it wasn't for social work students that challenged the social work professions' silence and lack of action, I do not believe the UK social work profession would have spoken up. We now have many statements and pledges for the UK to strive towards racial equality, inclusion and both national global social justice. However, we are nowhere near where we must be. With increasing experiences of children being taken into care and the push for adoption by powerful policymakers, an increasing overrepresentation of racially minoritised people in social work services and increasing experiences of racism and social injustice in the UK, we fail to achieve Ubuntu. We fail to recognise the strengths, heart and soul of

communities. Growing up with Ubuntu principles within a multicultural and diverse council estate strengthened within community development and cohesion, I know how social solidarity feels. However, this is not the same for those in power and privilege, with the resources to impact and take the UK forward towards Ubuntu. The COVID pandemic was another opportunity for the UK to show national and global solidarity, however the disparities for racially minoritised people during the pandemic that went unchallenged tells me that the UK still has a long way to adopt Ubuntu as a philosophy. The UK has taken enough from Africa already, so if we are to truly adopt an Ubuntu philosophy, we need a radical overhaul of our entire social structures and a move from an individualistic, racist society to a community-based, connected, and empathetic society.

Decolonising Myself

In order to truly understand the benefits of Ubuntu and other forms of indigenous knowledge, I needed to understand that colonization has a legacy that lives on within myself, and decolonisation includes my own knowledge, experiences, and philosophy. Jaswal and Kshetrimayum (2022) explore how Western knowledge focuses on individualisation where self-determination, self-reliance, and meritocracy are the core values and principles within society. This is the opposite of my ancestral roots of knowledge around cultural, communal and spiritual values, and Ubuntu has reminded me of deconstructing my knowledge and ways of being in order to reconnect with my ancestral roots and values. Ubuntu has enabled me to reflect on just how unfit Western society is for their racially minoritised and Indigenous communities. Ubuntu reminded me that if my own social workers were aware of indigenous knowledge and non-Western practices, and this was promoted in the UK, then I may have had a better experience of social work services as a child.

Way Forward, Ubuntu

In order to achieve Ubuntu, we must understand that the UK and other Western societies are built upon the complete opposite grounds of what Ubuntu means. The West need to take hold of indigenous philosophies such as Ubuntu, with a strong sense of action to critically reflect and deconstruct our ways of thinking, rather than a tokenistic inclusion of Ubuntu from performative actions. Ubuntu reminds us that the West has knowledge that overpowers other forms of knowledge, and that Ubuntu is a way forward in unpicking the richness of non-Western knowledge. Ubuntu speaks to the experiences of many African people as well as people from African descent, and with the significant levels of migration and superdiversity in the UK, social work needs to take a stand to connect with indigenous knowledge such as Ubuntu in order to better work with and support racially minoritised people.

Chigangaidze et al. (2022) highlights how relevant the Ubuntu philosophy is for global social work practice, linking this in with the International Federation of Social Workers (2014) global definition of social work. These authors explore how Ubuntu enables relationship-based practice and has a role to play in all fields and methods of social work practice. Ubuntu enables the decolonisation of social work education and research to provide insight into knowledge production and the value of Ubunutology, described as using Ubuntu to accelerate the production of literature in this area. These authors also highlight how Ubuntu can advance social change and development, social cohesion, the empowerment and liberation of people, social justice and human rights, collective responsibility, respect for diversities, and addressing life challenges to enhance wellbeing.

Having attended the International Federation of Social Workers 2021 Conference in the African region, it was clear from all African social workers that there is so much beauty and value in indigenous knowledge and practices within African social work. However, the challenges remain that this

is not documented enough, and it is not considered in the wider global social work knowledge base, due to the dominance of Western thinking. Moving forward, we need to document more indigenous knowledge and practices, and we need to give time, space and value towards this through deconstructing our knowledge in the West as well as in all contexts to rethink our relationship with Western knowledge and to place value on indigenous knowledge and practices. Ubuntu has started this significant development, and the hope is that indigenous knowledge will add to the global pool of social work knowledge to better support indigenous and racially minoritised communities across the globe.

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Chapter 24

Ubuntu & Human Rights: Contributions of an Indigenous Philosophy to the Training of Portuguese Social Workers

Teresa Escabelado Martins and Antonela Jesus

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Biography

Teresa Escabelado: My name is Teresa Escabelado, I´m from Lisbon, Portugal. Right now, I'm finishing college in Universidade Católica Portuguesa with a degree in Social Work. In my 4 years of college, I was always interested in other communities with different cultures than mine and always wonder what was like to practice professionally with them, side by side. I knew that Social Work wouldn't be the same and, by that logic, I couldn't be the same professional. And as a future Social Worker I knew that I needed to expand my knowledge. And this work reflects that.

Antonela Jesus: My name is Antonela Jesus, I'm from Madeira Island, Portugal. I have been a social worker for about 10 years, with experience in different contexts of action. Today, as a PhD in Social Work, I teach the subject of International Social Work. Issues of indigenisation, imperialism and universalism are addressed. Equally, I have been involved in recent years in work related to Social Work, Human Rights, and Intercultural Relations. Finally, I am Portuguese. I therefore assume responsibility in the formation of

the following generations in the attention to the legacy left by our colonial path.

Abstract

In a time when global politics has shown a growth of governments with oppressive ideologies, Ubuntu highlights the interdependence of all people and their potential in co-constructing more dignified social realities. Through the realization of focus groups with Social Work students and new graduates, we intend to demonstrate (i) the alignment of Ubuntu with SW' central values; (ii) the understanding of current Portuguese Social Work undergraduate and graduate students about indigenous knowledge; (iii) the integration of these meanings in readings of social reality, the contributions and limits associated with such philosophy; finally, (iv) the participants' reflection around the influence that social structures associated with imperialism bring to life trajectories. Contributions are given around education and practice in Social Work with a proposal to review and update community Social Work under the Ubuntu philosophy.

Keywords: *Ubuntu, Indigenization, Human Rights, Social Work, Imperialism*

Resumo [Portuguese – authors' native language]

Numa época em que a política global tem mostrado um crescimento de governos com ideologias opressivas, o Ubuntu destaca a interdependência de todas as pessoas e o seu potencial na co-construção de realidades sociais mais justas e dignas. Através da realização de grupos focais com estudantes de Serviço Social e recém-licenciados, pretendemos demonstrar (i) o alinhamento do Ubuntu com valores centrais à profissão; (ii) a compreensão dos atuais estudantes portugueses de Serviço Social de licenciatura e recém-licenciados sobre o conhecimento indígena; (iii) a integração destes significados nas leituras da realidade social, as contribuições e limites associados a tal filosofia; finalmente, (iv) a reflexão dos participantes em torno da influência que as estruturas sociais associadas ao imperialismo exercem sobre as trajetórias de vida. Contribuições são dadas para a

formação e prática em Serviço Social, com uma proposta de revisão e atualização do Serviço Social comunitário sob a filosofia Ubuntu.
Palavras-Chave: Ubuntu, Indigenização, Direitos Humanos, Serviço Social, Imperialismo

Introduction

The demand to build a Social Work adapted to the different social, political, and cultural contexts in which it intervenes, referring to a culturally sensitive practice, has increased in recent years. In this context, today more than ever, a conscious and non-oppressive intervention is expected from Social Work (SW), always considering the specificities of the person-context relationship, in this case, person-cultural context.

The effort that has been made aims at a multicultural intervention and an intervention predominantly with the indigenous population which requires a careful look, due to cultural and even moral and ethical differences. It has been a challenge because there are cultural differences that distinguish Western Social Work from Indigenous Social Work. These differences represent obstacles in the intervention with the indigenous population.

Ubuntu is a concept that has been highlighted in the 2020 to 2030 Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development. According to Mayaka & Truell (2021), Ubuntu has represented a global message through the Social Work profession. It has been configured as a current theme, as it is not only aligned with the same ideals of Social Work - such as social solidarity and social justice - but also by the very valorisation of indigenous wisdom (IFSW, 2020) and, finally, also because it brings benefits to Social Work practice, related to the assurance of a more human vision, respect, and preservation of a sense of community.

With all this in consideration, this paper seeks to explore the relationship between Social Work-Human Rights-Ubuntu by putting the topic under discussion with students and new graduates in Social Work.

Ubuntu: Principles of a humanistic philosophy

Ubuntu is linked to the relationship created between people and their interdependence - "I can only be a person through other people". A concept with a humanistic character as there is a logic of collective rationality behind it (Mabota, 2019:187). The same states "whatever happens to the whole group, happens equally to the individual" (Mabota, 2019: 188).

Ubuntu is a manifestation of African philosophy (cf. Mabota, 2019: 187) and emerged in the context of apartheid (Gil, 2010: 17). According to Nyaumwe & Mkabela (2007, in Breda, 2019: 439), Ubuntu is a concept that refers to humanization among people in a community. However, according to John Volmink (in Ubuntu Leaders Academy, n.d.), "(...) the Ubuntu philosophy has deep African roots, but (...), it extends beyond borders".

Ubuntu, as a philosophy, is based on values of justice, responsibility, equality, collectivity, reciprocity, love, respect, caring, trust, integrity, altruism, and social change. There is a notion of "community" that is important when we are referring to this philosophy. Community is not an impersonal structure or system, but rather a collective, a network of people, whose well-being and functioning are intrinsically interconnected (Breda, 2019, p. 442).

Ubuntu can be referred to as a pattern of interconnectedness between people (Breda, 2019, p. 440). It emphasizes that people's identities are constantly developed in the context of their reciprocal relationships. It focuses on the inclusion of everyone within a community, co-responsibility, and the well-being of the environment, with the aim of ensuring the success of current and future generations.

Social Work, Human Rights and Ubuntu: A perfect triad

The proximity of Social Work to Human Rights is not only recognised through the global understanding of the profession that exists today (IFSW & IASSW, 2014). In 1992, with the *Manual Human Rights and Social Work*, the United Nations recognised that SW places in a position to influence the promotion and protection of Human Rights:

> "The fact that the activity of these professionals focuses on human needs reinforces their conviction that the fundamental nature of these needs demands that they be met, not as a matter of choice, but as an imperative of basic justice. Thus, Social Work is moving towards considering human rights as the other organising principle of its professional practice. The passage from an orientation focused on needs to an affirmation of rights was becoming necessary since important and tangible needs had to be met. A substantive need can be translated into an equivalent positive right, claiming the enjoyment of that right before the State and other entities". (p. 22).

Therefore, besides the history of linking this profession to human rights, also the "target groups" reflect the various human rights conventions, namely the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and also the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Staub-Bernasconi (2018) when proposing the Triple Mandate Theory comes to tell us that in addition to the mandate to support and control, we have a third one composed of several elements: the commitment to a scientific basis; a guiding code of ethics where human rights are the basis of its legitimation:

> "Human rights also form the basis for an independent critical analysis of national and international law" (Niehoff, 2022: 106).

However, the current state of human rights education has been perceived as imposing a cultural approach focused on individualizing principles,

privileging competitiveness, and meritocracy, which has contributed to disinterest on the part of indigenous communities:

> "The indigenous communities perceive human rights as a paradigm that marginalises indigenous values and a monoculture that is gradually eliminating their way of life" (Metz, 2011).

With the aim of reversing this dominant view led by Western countries, Western institutions historically led mainly by men, Ubuntu emerges as a potential ethical guide for human rights education, guided by moral values such as humility, conformity and empathy. In the indigenous African context, the individual's sense of duty and responsibility is more primordial to the notion of individual human rights. As such, the adage "I am because we are" emphasises the importance of the individual-community relationship, since this is also rooted in the principle of solidarity and in ensuring the well-being of others (Lim *et al*., 2022; Mkabela, 2007).

Research design

This article arises from a work previously started within the scope of a 4th year subject of the bachelor's in social work of a Portuguese University. This is a subject which addresses international issues in its course, based on a commitment to local-global dialogue. In this sense, the concepts of Indigenization, Universalism and Imperialism are addressed.

To give substance to the work, we followed a qualitative methodology, of an inductive nature, by means of a focus group composed of three groups of students: 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year undergraduate students of Social Work "of this" University, as well as three recent graduates. For all the above reasons, this article is a case study.

We opted for this type of sampling because we considered, on the one hand, that in these years of training there is already a more solid presence of these contents in a more transversal number of subjects. On the other hand, by

involving “new Social Workers” we could count on “fresh” perspectives that would allow the bridge between higher education and recent entry into the labour market.

The choice of focus groups is related to their potential as a qualitative data collection technique, where the emphasis is on the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without this interactive process (Morgan, 1988).

Here, the interviewer-researcher's main task is to prevent individual participants or partial groups from dominating the interview and, consequently, the group. It is also his/her task to encourage the more inhibited participants to engage in the interview and give their opinion, as the aim is to obtain answers from the group, allowing for a greater comprehensiveness to the topic (Flick, 2011; Patton, 2002). Indeed, we defined the objectives of the focus groups as explore and analyse the level of apprehension about (i) the origins and foundations of Ubuntu, (ii) its alignment with values central to Social Work; (iii) the understanding of current Portuguese undergraduate Social Work students about indigenous knowledge, crossing with their own definition and with what they learn during their training; (iv) the integration of these meanings in readings of social reality, the contributions and limits associated with such philosophy; finally, (v) to problematize the different levels of oppression, stimulating participants' reflection around the influence that social structures associated with imperialism exert on personal and cultural life trajectories.

Data processing involved all the steps inherent to a content analysis process, from transcription of the focus group to the creation of categories of analysis.

Findings and Discussion

The data presented in this section emerges from the content analysis process undertaken. It is organized according to the identified categories, which is listed below.

Bringing to the table the debate and reflection around an indigenous philosophy requires, in our understanding, debating themes within the triad Imperialism-Universalism-Indigenisation. In fact, while Social Work seeks to maintain a common identity, efforts to internationalise SW raise challenges to universalisation, which are compounded by international efforts that quickly become imperialistic, depending on what is presented or proposed as "universal".

So, the first category of analysis derives from the discussion around the updating of the international definition of Social Work in which the support of indigenous knowledge, allied to the knowledge of SW theories and social sciences, was introduced, and from the reflection around the global understanding and the proposal of global standards for Social Work education: are we facing a contradiction?

I. Updating the international definition of Social Work: Social Work underpinned by indigenous knowledge

Most of the participants revealed the acknowledgement of Western countries domination in the (re)construction of perspectives on the Person and Society. Hence, reference was made to the importance and urgency of adapting the reading and the orientations of these lines of thought to the contexts:

> "in practice with certain groups we should learn about the culture of that population" (RL1); "each intervention should be designed to the local culture (...) there is no universal model" (RL2); "different cultures deserve different looks (...) and not with that colonialist look "this is how it has to be" (E1).

Effectively, Social Work education in Portugal is - naturally – dominated by Eurocentric knowledge, theories, and beliefs, that led us to a one-sided narrative [1].

II. A universal understanding of the profession?

On the proposal of a global understanding of the profession, there seem to be two lines of interpretation, which apparently generate some contradiction: on the one hand, there is a discourse based on the recognition that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proposed and constituted by organisations from the "Global North", led by white men, which seems to have implied a certain superiority of Western countries over the others. Thus, the UDHR itself seems to refer to a utopian horizon when it considers in its very 1st Article that *"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"*. Merging the Ubuntu philosophy with this thought, we can consider that the struggle against colonisation in African countries comes from a people who defend and reaffirm their right as a group to autonomy and freedom.

On the other hand, we saw reference to the importance of the global definition of SW not remaining closed or sealed and that it should be open to future revisions and inclusion of perspectives, as this is *"the only way to build something truly universal"* (RL1).

III. The knowledge of indigenous philosophies: understanding Ubuntu

In general, we can say that study participants revealed that the concept of Ubuntu are well known to participants. In fact, Ubuntu was the only indigenous philosophy that the participants referred to know. They associate it with the sense of community, with the construction and reconstruction of dialogue within and with the community - *"who I am for the community, how my life and decisions influence the community"* (E1). Here we seem to present a

[1] Similar to what Chinwe U. Nnama-Okechukwu & Hugh McLaughlin (2022) found in their study about social work education in Nigeria.

theorization of Social Worker intervention close to a systemic and ecological approach, which does not seek to change the system, but rather the influences of individuals and environments within the system (Mullaly & Dupré, 2019). However, they attribute weaknesses to this engagement, which appears to be closer to the individual-level view of the social problem –

> "a person has a problem, but because they live so much in a community, the community thinks they have to solve it (...) and, maybe, it doesn't go so much through working in a community but working with the person in question" (RL2).

Proximities are established here with the thoughts of Reasons & Perdue (1981) presented by Mullaly & Dupré (2019):

> "poverty and crime, for example, are blamed on some defect of the person and what emerges is a biographical portrait that separates the individual from society" (p. 8).

This recognition of Ubuntu arises tied to three reasons: (i) alignment of training with the international definition of the profession and the very celebrations of the International Day of Social Work in 2021 - *"Ubuntu: I am because we are. Strengthening social solidarity & Global Connectedness"*; (ii) efforts at changing the dominant narrative, i.e. a commitment to reversing a reproduction of individualistic discourse according to the neoliberal context that presents itself to us - *"in 2019 all the controversy with the Amazon (...) the greed of the material was beyond a people (...) we were putting Human Rights on the table and we found that most people do not consider them"* (E3); (iii) the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic, which showed us that *"we could not be doing well seeing others doing badly*" (RL2). Also, it is important to note that was already in this context that Ubuntu assumed itself as a reason to celebrate the international day of the profession.

IV. Indigenous knowledge in Social Work education

Since Ubuntu is configured as an indigenous philosophy, it seems appropriate to question the presence of these aspects in SW education. So, we asked about the presence and learning of concepts related to indigenisation, universalism, and imperialism during their education in Social Work. The response managed to be positive among the participants. However, there seems to be a diffuse understanding of them, namely between colonialism versus culture versus ethnicities versus social minorities, let us see:

> "Working with a Gypsy community is very different in terms of process" (E1);
> "We are all different, but we are all equal, we all deserve rights, but the way we are going to act is going to be different from culture to culture" (E3).

Bringing the Gypsy ethnic group into the discussion can seem agreeable to us because they are an ethnic minority, and here we find space for a "co-existence" of anti-oppressive practices. However, indigenous people have been considered to be a vulnerable group in the context of globalisation and climate change. They continue to be forcibly evicted from their ancestral lands, persecuted and intimidated, racialized, and excluded. Also, talking about indigenous peoples implies talking about European colonization, an historical process allied to the transatlantic traffic, responsible for the construction of racialized and subjugated identities (Damasceno, 2021).

Different levels of oppression are evident here - individual, cultural, and structural - not forgetting that each of these levels influences and reinforces the others (Mullaly & Dupré, 2019). Therefore, it seems evident to us that we are calling for clarification and perhaps greater depth and understanding of such concepts, which will organically call for a political position of the social worker that will contribute to a counter-hegemonic way to unequal policies and ideals of coloniality as power:

> "(...) Social Work was constructed over the years, so for there to be Social Work there had to be something before that helped to construct it (...) it is important not to have a colonial perspective that Social Work is a Western thing" (RL1).

Returning to Ubuntu, in our understanding, ignoring the Ubuntu philosophy will mean rejecting a way of life that has sustained the vanquished indigenous peoples in processes of colonization.

V. Lessons from the non-imperial south

The last question launched for the group was from a thought by Santos (2016), asking them to reflect on its meanings, namely "To overcome the epistemological condition of the Global North it is imperative to go South and learn from the South, not the imperial South (which reproduces in the South the logic of the North taken as Universal), but the anti-Imperial South" (p. 42). The discussion took course right from the very conception of human rights: *to what extent are they universal since the organizations that established them are from the dominant North?*

Notwithstanding such questionings, one cannot fail to note concerns between the influences of the colonizing capitalist North on a "Global South":

> "I think we still think that it is the countries of the North that have to impose (...) access to health (...) I saw a study that in Cape Verde country only now 80% of the people were vaccinated with the first dose of the vaccine for covid" (RL3); "(...) poverty in Africa is a product of years and years of exploitation and exploitation by the more advanced countries of the colonies (...) if we want to change the status quo we have to think of different strategies than those that are established, of what is "usual and normal" (RL1).
>
> "The reproduction of a capitalist society, guided by mercantile ideals, seems to be another idea (...) the countries of the North want to make a photocopy for the South and we are going to lose the precious culture of a sense of people" (E3),

a statement which seems to be in line with Santos' concept of the Global South:

> "The South is rather a metaphor for the human suffering caused by capitalism and colonialism at a global level, as well as for the resistance to overcome or

minimize this suffering. It is therefore an anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, anti-patriarchalism and anti-imperialist South. It is a South that also exists in the geographical North (Europe and North America), in the form of excluded, silenced, and marginalized populations, such as undocumented immigrants, the unemployed, ethnic populations or religious minorities, and victims of sexism, homophobia, racism and Islamophobia" (Santos, 2016, p. 18-19).

Final Reflections: contributions to Social Work practice

The Ubuntu humanist philosophy involves a set of principles such as interdependence and co-responsibility, combined with values of respect, mutual help and which, from a Social Work's point of view, brings the ideals of social solidarity, social cohesion, and social justice.

It emerged from a context of segregation and hatred and brought a vision of reconciliation and a more cohesive and human world. Nowadays it is used with the same objectives, to unite cultures, regions, and the various countries of the globe, by advocating living in community, which means living for each other, instead of living only for oneself. In so doing, it seeks to break down barriers whether cultural, racial, or ethnic, so that the world can come together as one and, at the same time, that all people have the same rights and opportunities.

Considering this, we can list clues for education and practice in Social Work at two levels:

1) The data show us the importance of reinforcing the exploration of these concepts in undergraduate Social Work. We consider that in the case of Portugal, this theme is urgent given our colonial heritage. Within the scope of the social worker's political practice, it is our commitment to contribute to the discussion and definition of social policies that compensate for years of exploitation, violation, discrimination, and insufficient political participation. The European Union itself should give more prominence to the situation of these communities in its foreign policy, especially in its dialogue with third countries on human rights, cooperation, and development agreements.

2) Contributions of the Ubuntu philosophy to Social Work intervention, not only of an ethical nature but also of the intervention strategies themselves. Social Work practice on the Western side of the world focuses on individualism, values the person, his/her capacity, and potential to make his/her own decisions and to act autonomously. However, a Social Work practice under this philosophy will in turn have a focus on the collective, the good of the community and doing for and with the community. Self-determination may be limited, as decisions will not be taken by the "person alone". Parallels are thus established with the intervention of Social Work with groups and communities, putting its premises back on the table.

   If until the 30/40's of the 20th century Social Work valued group and community intervention programmes, the truth is that in the post-war period, with the creation of the European social welfare systems, individualised intervention, close to a therapeutic method, became a priority. Therefore, our proposal is to take up again the legacy of the pioneers and theoreticians of Community Social Work and articulate it with Ubuntu, since the latter can emphasise the vital importance of taking the 'We' seriously. In practice, this would mean a multiplicity of dialogues between cultures and traditions that promote an intercultural philosophy for the improvement of mutual understanding and the defence of human life.

Furthermore, Social Work education needs to be contextually oriented (Nnama-Okechukwu & McLaughlin, 2022). So, rather than depend only on Western theories and models, we have the duty to take part in the cooperation between Western ideologies and indigenous knowledge. This can be a way of decolonizing social work education and opening horizons for "privileged" Social Work students and practitioners.

To conclude, if we assume practices committed to Human Rights and human dignity, we must remember them as unquestionable, inviolable, regardless

of each person origin, gender, social and economic position. It should be enough to "Be" for such an ideology to be realized.

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Chapter 25

The Utilisation of Ubuntu Outside Africa: Voices from Frontline Social Workers in China

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Biographies
Having been brought up and educated in Hong Kong SAR, Charles has been participating in the role of teacher, supervisor, mentor, consultant, coach and researcher for social work development across the regions of China since 2006. One of his initiatives throughout the years has been to promote and ensure the effective use of professional knowledge in local settings. Consequently, he is now leading a series of studies regarding the utilisation of Ubuntu in rural China. It is expected that the results will also be useful for places sharing similar socio-cultural contexts, especially for the developing regions in the Global South.

Having been brought up and educated in Guangdong (South China), Chao is now deeply involved in local social work development in the role of programme evaluator, teacher and supervisor. As a member of the Hakka people, one of the ethnic minority groups in Guangdong, Chao truly values the indigenous aspects of helping knowledge and practice. Cultural identity as well as related practices have inspired him to come into the area of indigenous social work. Consequently, he believes that being engaged in the

utilisation of Ubuntu offers a precious opportunity to advance a cultural agenda through which the indigenous voice of helping can be articulated and valued.

Yu Xiang, from Nanchong, Sichuan (Southwest China), is a social work teacher working at the campus of Beijing Normal University in Zhuhai city. He is also the director of the Zhuhai Jing Shi Social Work Centre. His major areas of research are rural development and community work. He came to know the Ubuntu philosophy during his doctoral studies, and found that this is helpful in terms of reconceptualising the professional helping relationship. He also believes that there are similarities between Ubuntu and some of the ideas of traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, he believes that it is possible and viable to utilise Ubuntu with regard to social work practice in China.

Abstract

This chapter aims to unveil the utilisation of Ubuntu beyond its original socio-cultural context. The authors argue an alternative understanding of how the African philosophy can be utilised, especially in regions where the social work profession is developing. A prominent programme, which aims at building rural communities in China, is therefore chosen for deliberation. The authors interviewed the direct practitioners of the programme and analysed their viewpoints to illuminate the uses of Ubuntu in the local context. It is found that their understanding was generally consistent with the ideas stated in the literature. The implications for professional development and training needs were also discussed. Nevertheless, the difficulties and challenges with regard to utilising Ubuntu in local practice were also identified.

Abstract (Chinese)

本章旨在揭示Ubuntu (**仁爱**) **在其原始社会文化**处景外的利用。作者们提出，特别是在社会工作专业仍在发展中的地区，对于如何利用这种非洲哲学的不同理解。为此，一个用作建设中国农村社区的知

名项目被选取审议。作者们采访了该项目的前线社会工作者，并分析了他们的观点，以说明仁爱在当地处境中的使用。研究发现受访者的理解与文献中论述的想法大体一致。对于专业发展和培训需求的启示也讨论了。然而，在当地实践中使用仁爱的困难和挑战也被发现。

Introduction

The promotion of Ubuntu knowledge is aligned with the international discourse of indigenous social work, representing the academic efforts to decolonise knowledge in the social work profession. The conception of indigenisation in social work development was initially simply perceived as a linear 'from-the-west-to-the-rest' process; the people involved in the process simply aimed to adapt, adjust and modify standardised theories and methods to the recipient areas (Walton & Nasr, 1988). However, there is currently a body of literature questioning this approach, arguing that it was based on euro-centrism and failed to take specific context and cultural appropriateness into account (Gray et al., 2008). Some further argued that the pre-existing helping knowledge and practice in the recipient areas were unnoticed and overlooked, and called for an alternative indigenous social work perspective to incorporate indigenous peoples' and communities' ways of knowing, doing and being heard (Gray et al., 2008). As an indigenous package of knowledge and practice, Ubuntu undoubtedly offers a promising alternative to the dominant west-centred knowledge system, and significantly inspires colleagues working in both developed and developing regions.

Despite its voguishness, some of the local practitioners tended to be skeptical with regard to any imported knowledge promoted by western or international social work entities. For example, a few of Chinese academics preferred to narrowly define indigenous social work based on traditional

knowledge, and pledged to form a unique 'Chinese identity' in terms of social work (An, 2016; Yang, 2018; Xu, 2020). However, these efforts might neither benefit the diversity of social work knowledge, nor create fair and open dialogues and idea exchanges across borders. This is actually ironic in terms of the rationale of disseminating Ubuntu, in that it targets the emancipation of the professional imperialism of social work dominated by Western values.

Against such a background, this chapter aims to investigate how Ubuntu is interpreted for utilisation in a non-African context. After a review of the literature on current applications of Ubuntu in various area of practice, the authors will deliberate in terms of conceptual considerations and the corresponding questions raised by the study. They will then illustrate the methodological arrangements and highlight the features of the case studied. The qualitative findings relating to the social workers in China will be reported as an example of voicing out a frontline perspective with regard to utilising the African philosophy in a non-western and developing context. The practical and theoretical implications of further utilisation of Ubuntu in China and other regions with similar socio-cultural contexts will then be discussed. The authors will then identify the research limitations, and finally offer a conclusion.

The uses of Ubuntu in the social work literature

The prevalence of Ubuntu knowledge is mainly related to the global movement of decolonisation. It is viewed as one of the attempts to decolonise knowledge, offering an alternative to the dominant western thoughts, worldview and ethics in the era of post-colonisation. Mayaka and Truell (2021) depicted it as a philosophy revealing non-individualistic, reciprocal and holistic interpretations of human relationships. Higgs (2011) further characterised Ubuntu as communalism, and claimed that it was a profound indigenous body of knowledge aimed at achieving the renaissance of the African way of thinking, by countering the colonial impact of western individualism. Ubuntu knowledge has been globally applied in various areas

of practice, like politics (e.g., Abdullah, 2013) and education (e.g., Higgs, 2011), fostering decolonization. Regarding the practice closely related to social work, a wide spread of the Ubuntu concept stimulates the awareness of solidarity and interconnectedness, and amplifies some international non-governmental organisations' (INGOs) (e.g., Ivey, Ubuntu Global Initiatives) commitment to progressive issues (e.g., poverty alleviation, human rights protection, community development and sustainable development).

As discussed above, Ubuntu knowledge has had a significant impact on the international community with regard to social work, in terms of education, practice and policy-making. Some attention has been given to discussing the intrinsic connection between Ubuntu concept and social work. Mayaka and Truell (2021) stated that Ubuntu echoed the fundamental values of social work such as rights and empowerment. Van Breda (2019, p.439) claimed that Ubuntu is a concept of social work theory able to 'focus on respectful relationships with wider and more diverse groups of others (i.e., ethics), accountability to past and future generations (i.e., sustainable development), and a commitment to the earth (i.e., ecological or eco-spiritual social work)'. This African philosophy has already led to a revision of the international definition of social work, with a new highlight on 'collective responsibility' and 'indigenous knowledge' (Mayaka and Truell, 2021).

A review of the literature identified various discussions of the application of Ubuntu. For example, it could be utilised for decolonising the pedagogy of social work (Mugumbate, 2020). It could also be a human rights theory (Metz, 2011), an ethical decision-making guide (Mabvurira, 2020) appliable to modern society (Metz, 2014), as well as the global definition of social work (Chigangaidze et al., 2022). Various social work practices have also adopted it as a framework. These include clinical work (Chigangaidze, 2021; Mupedziswa et al., 2019) and environmental social work (Chigangaidze, 2022). Related studies have also been undertaken supporting the use of

Ubuntu for effective intervention with children (Mugumbate and Chereni, 2019) and developing social protection systems (Mayaka and Truell, 2021).

Although Ubuntu is currently being promoted in the social work discipline at the international level, it has not been widely utilised in different geographical and cultural contexts. Certainly, Ubuntu is a knowledge and practice system relating to social work that is rooted in African cultures. It illuminates how the capacity of indigenous knowledge can be developed and utilised, in contrast to the mainstream approach based on Western history and cultures. Nevertheless, as Mayaka and Truell (2021) remind us, it is necessary to examine the impact of Ubuntu on international social work communities. They further propose that people from different cultural backgrounds could also assess the appropriateness of utilising Ubuntu in their own contexts by reviewing the social services implemented in local communities.

A mediation framework of utilising Ubuntu across borders

As a response to assessing the utilisation of Ubuntu, the first author has formulated a mediation framework for the study. It is built on his continuous reflections, plus the research findings obtained across different socio-cultural regions of China (Leung, 2017; Leung & Shek, 2018). Its theoretical foundation is not only rooted in the tradition of a systems approach in social work (Chetkow-Yanoov, 1997; Healy, 2014) but has also adapted the conceptual considerations from related disciplines such as social programme evaluation (Patton, 2008, 2010), conflict management (Fisher et al., 1991; Midgley & Pinzón, 2011), and community operational research (Midgley & Ochoa-Arias, 2004). The crucial function of this framework is to articulate the stakeholders' ideas during the process of knowledge utilisation across contexts, to encourage real collaboration and impact. There are two types of stakeholders ideally considered in the framework: the initiators of the dissemination of new knowledge, and the people who could potentially utilise the knowledge in their local context. The mediation dynamics can vary depending on focal

changes in terms of the stakeholders' value judgements, and the different level of consciousness with regard to their respective concerns. In this framework, the dynamics have been categorised into the following quadrants: quasi-agreement, objection, masking, and negligence (See Figure 12).

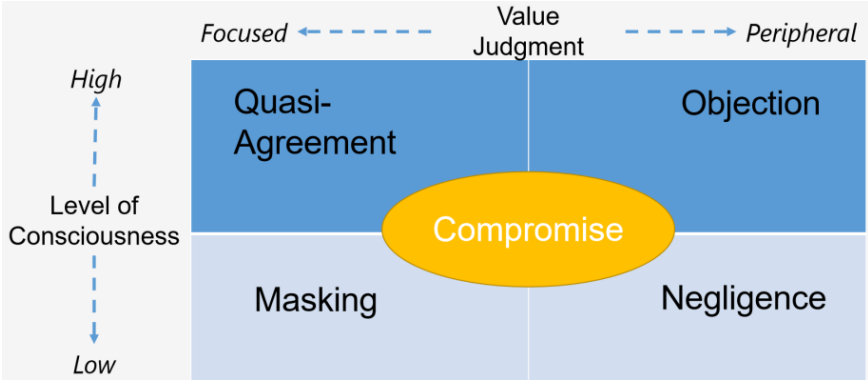

Figure 12: A mediation framework for utilising Ubuntu

Quasi-agreement means the consensus, if any, that has been arrived at on the part of the stakeholders. However, such a consensus might not be mature enough for putting effective measures into place. A typical example might be a scientific understanding of the service development approach supported by the best available evidence, or what we called evidence-based practice. Another possibility is that the knowledge is officially mandated for dissemination. For example, the Chinese version of Ubuntu and related materials were translated by the China Association of Social Work Education (CASWE), one of the official social work organisations in China (CASWE, 2021). The organisation continues to cooperate with IASSW in terms of sharing the progress in developing Chinese social work. As a result, an initial agreement has been reached between the local and international professional organisations in China to promote Ubuntu ideas.

Objection obviously means that the reasons for hesitation or resistance when it comes to utilising imported knowledge. Apart from the classical arguments relating to decolonisation and the anti-imperial perspective employed with regard to developing indigenous knowledge (e.g., Chigangaidze et al., 2022), we should understand what specific opinions are shared by local users when it comes to utilisation. However, unlike the well-documented justifications in the literature, their ideas would generally be presented in a subtle manner that could be hard to be realised without sensitivity to local rituals. As a result, the framework proposes two more areas for further exploration – masking and negligence – in which the stakeholders are commonly unaware of the issues.

Masking refers to the issues that support or impede the utilisation of imported knowledge in an unintentional or hidden manner. In the real-world setting of service delivery there would be various uncommon contextual issues that need to be deliberated in formal documentation, but significantly impact daily operations, such as the issues of bureaucratic requirements and economic incentives for service provision. A recent study conducted by the first author (Leung, 2021) revealed that brand building is an implicit ground encouraging the stakeholders to utilise imported knowledge in order to meet their respective professional and economic interests. Consequently, the success in terms of utilising Ubuntu across contexts 'is not simply determined by some configuration of abstract organisational dynamics; it is determined in large part by real, live, caring human beings' (Patton, 2008, p.69). In this chapter, a discovery of the frontliners' preferences and/or grievances when it comes to utilising Ubuntu in a Chinese context is thus expected.

Negligence refers to the possibility that the considerations of one of the parties could be overlooked by the other. This usually relates to the issue of power difference. In the case of knowledge utilisation, the initiators eager for disseminating Ubuntu, including the authors themselves, might be easily trapped in their own ambition, and thus unable to understand the local practitioners' opinions with regard to effective implementation. Therefore,

the discovery of frontliners' opinions in this study is a process not only for empowering the powerless, but also for encouraging the power holders to engage in critical reflection so as to arrive at useful decisions.

According to the foregoing framework, the three following questions are asked in this study: what are the similarities and differences with regard to the understanding of Ubuntu between the case study participants and the conception shown in the literature? What are the specific concerns of the case study participants when it comes to utilising Ubuntu in their own context? What are the contextual issues discovered for the utilisation of Ubuntu?

Research design and case illustration

This study aims to explore frontline social workers' perceptions and understanding of the concept of Ubuntu. A qualitative research approach is therefore most appropriate (Lune & Berg, 2017). Specifically, this study uses the 'Double Hundred Project' (DHP) involving Guangdong social workers as a case study, and consequently recruited a group of frontline social workers from the DHP to participate in the study. The DHP is a pilot project initiated by the Guangdong Provincial Department of Civil Affairs (GPDCA), in which 407 sub-district level service stations, each staffed with three to eight social workers, had set up in the underdeveloped regions of the Guandong province between 2017 and 2021. In 2022, based on the outcomes of the five-year pilot period, the GPDCA decided that the DHP was mature enough for replication, and increased investment to set up service stations on a province-wide basis. It is anticipated that the number of social workers working as part of the DHP will be boosted to more than 15,000 in 2022, all of whom will be employed by the sub-district authorities and guided by a community-based approach so as to deliver mandatory services to vulnerable groups (e.g., the disabled, the elderly, left-behind children and the unemployed).

Recruitment of participants

In order to recruit research participants, the authors firstly drafted an introduction in which the research purpose, process, usage of data and ethical considerations were detailed. Given the second and third authors' rich experience of evaluation and supervision in DHP, purposive sampling was elected to recruit the potential participants who were willing to be interviewed. The second and third authors sent invitations to service stations previously evaluated or supervised by them, and finally 25 frontliners from 10 stations joined this study.

Data collection and analysis

For data collection, the researchers used focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2015) and in-depth interviews (Seidman, 2006) as data collection methods. Focus groups were conducted at six social work stations, and in-depth interviews were conducted at four social work stations between March and April 2022. Before the interviews began, the researcher ensured that the participants had read the pre-provided research notes, which included a standard Chinese translation of Ubuntu undertaken by the researcher. The interviews then centred on the participants' understanding of Ubuntu, possible applications in practice, the applicability in local context, possible contributions and challenges, and other related questions formulated according to the research questions. The focus group interviews were all over one hour long, and the in-depth interviews lasted about 35 minutes.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was employed to analyse the collected data. All three authors firstly reviewed the original data and extracted some primary themes independently. The first author then identified five secondary themes, amongst which the logical connects were ultimately developed. The five themes were also reviewed and refined by the other two other authors for the report below.

Ethical considerations

This study strictly followed the social work research ethics code to ensure the quality of the study (Butler, 2002). First, prior to the interviews, the researcher explained the purpose and arrangement of this study in detail to the participants, ensured full knowledge of the study, and obtained their consent before recording. Second, when using the interview data, the researcher anonymised all information that could reveal the participants' identities to ensure that the participants were not harmed. Finally, after completing the research paper, the researcher returned the paper to the participants for them to check whether or not the expression of the authors was consistent with their understanding of the original meaning of the interview.

Research findings

Five themes were eventually summarised in order to answer the research questions. These are: (1) cohesive understanding of Ubuntu, (2) implications for professional practice, (3) the limitations of utilising Ubuntu, (4) the uses of Ubuntu for developing professional identity, and (5) suggestions for training and practice. The details are reported in the following paragraphs.

Cohesive understanding of Ubuntu

First, the interviewees commonly perceived their understanding of Ubuntu as collectivism, representing mutual care, and sharing resources with one another. They perceived that Ubuntu transcended an individual mindset, and shared the attributes of teamwork and holism. Ubuntu represents the team, the collective, and holistic spirit. It implies that team members are friendly, inclusive, and equal to each other. Other respondents shared similar ideas, and particularly mentioned that Ubuntu implies the interpersonal relationship is 'human centred':

> whether it's within our [social work] team members, or the community we are in, the environment and the people we serve, we are all one, we are all a team. This one [Ubuntu] can show the team caring spirit.

Second, the interviewees focused their understanding of Ubuntu on the relationship between people. In their opinion it represents the ideas of sharing, mutuality, integration, connection, and mutual agency. Every individual should give and take with regard to one another. Therefore, this is not a one-sided, but rather a two-way process: I work for others and these others would help me. One of the respondents expressed that 'We are in a social relationship and the concept of social service should be *ren ren wei wo, wo wei ren ren* (all people stand by me; I'm for everyone)'.

Third, the interviewees highlighted their understanding of Ubuntu in terms of the relationship between social workers and the service users they support. They believe that adhering to Ubuntu principles implies that social workers play the role of synergists, and that the interaction with service users is two-way, neither following the social worker's approach exclusively, nor forcing social workers to give in a one-way manner. The following quotation is an example for illustration:

> The relationship must be mutual, [the service user] encounters a dilemma that cannot be solved at a particular moment, and the other party [the social worker] faces it with him/her and they find a solution together. The connection that arises in this process is Ubuntu, and this is how I understand the concept of Ubuntu.

Fourth, the interviewees also expressed their understanding of Ubuntu in terms of the relationship between people and the environment. Some of the respondents shared their beliefs that the ideas of DHP, as in the case of community-based and people-centred approaches are consistent with Ubuntu's advocacy of the integration of people and the environment. Therefore, Ubuntu could inspire the social workers' current practice, as their daily practice should consider how an integration between people and the environment could be attained in a context of urbanisation and industrialisation. The respondents interpreted the environmental considerations of Ubuntu as consisting of both social and physical aspects, which interact with one another. The connotation of 'people and

environment' in Ubuntu inspired them to form a linkage with other professions to promote the improvement of the service users' personal and environmental conditions. The foregoing explanations can be represented in the following quotation:

> Environment can refer to the social environment, for example, urbanisation destroying the neighbourhood relationship between the elderly in the original community. Of course, it also includes the physical environment, for example, in the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation process, in order to build factory dormitories without more consideration for the convenience of citizens' daily lives, there is no public activity space in the community for residents to go to and interact, and I think this environment affects the neighbourhoods of the residents. In addition, the meaning of 'people and environment' in Ubuntu may emphasise the idea that social work is linked with other professions to promote the improvement of people and the environment.

Fifth, the interviewees' understanding of Ubuntu even talked about a connection between people across generations. In terms of the association with ancestors, there is a common practice in China promoting traditional cultural values to young people, and encouraging them to learn from the wisdom and spirit of the ancient sages. A following quotation could be representative of the foregoing viewpoint.

> Nowadays, many schools are doing activities to commemorate their ancestors, spreading the spirit of those outstanding figures and outstanding cultural traditions among primary and secondary school students, for example, learning from Lei Feng [a patriotic figure being promoted by the Chinese government]. There is also the Moving China programme [a TV propaganda programme], which often introduces some stories of ordinary but good people living nowadays. Many people watch it and pay attention to it, and they would like to pass on the spirit to others. There are also some idiomatic stories and fables that can be used to pass on the wisdom and excellent spirit of the people who came before us, such as Kong Rong Rang Li [cf. SGWMSCOG, 2022].

It is worth noting that although China promotes the transmission of learning about the spirit of the ancestors, it focuses more on the dimension of moral edification. This is the function with regard to guiding people to goodness, rather than advocating the worship of ancestors or gods. Additionally, the interviewees also shared another idea which was that Ubuntu was relevant to future generations. They believed that Ubuntu could fit in with the concept of sustainability, so that the residents' children and grandchildren would benefit from their support for developing and building good communities in the present day.

Implications for professional practice

Three themes emerged from the original data collected from the focus group and individual interviews. First, from the perspective of frontline practitioners, Ubuntu is mainly viewed as some kind of totem for the social work profession, rather than just a practical or technical conception. Second, most interviewees agree that Ubuntu knowledge could provide a holistic framework for understanding service users' situation, problems and needs. Finally, most participants are of the opinion that the Ubuntu philosophy could be practically utilised in terms of service users' empowerment, promoting equity in the process, and encouraging the use of empathy.

Ubuntu as a totem of professional development

Most of the interviewees spontaneously reached an agreement that Ubuntu could be a cornerstone for social work development. The frontline practitioners could constantly clarify the nature and value of social work in their own service settings, which were based on their common interpretation on Ubuntu. One of the respondents stated:

> Ubuntu demonstrates the professional values and spirit of social work. We do not practice as a machine. Instead, we practice for serving people and connecting people. It drives social workers to practice more actively to deliver a service to vulnerable groups, not just passively execute the mandate and follow the procedure.

More specifically, some respondents suggested that Ubuntu knowledge could provide a spiritual support to counter the negativity derived from being included as part of the bureaucratic welfare system. They stated that Ubuntu could stimulate the frontliners to keep reflecting on their actions for reclaiming their internal locus of control of their professional ambition formed at the beginning (*chu xin*). They also noted that such spiritual support might help prevent burnout and make their career more sustainable, as is pinpointed in the following quotation:

> 'Ubuntu manifests the value and mindset underlying social work practice, without which our practice could not be perpetuated.'

A holistic perspective for professional practice

Most of the interviewees were of the opinion that Ubuntu knowledge provides a holistic frame for them to advance their understandings of service users' situations, needs and issues. Specifically, some respondents expressed the view that Ubuntu knowledge would act as a reminder to alert the frontliners not to treat any service user as a 'single case', but rather as a 'genuine person' living in an authentic setting constituted by his or her family, community and social network. Accordingly, when it comes to practice, Ubuntu knowledge was believed to inspire the frontline social workers to develop a more systemic helping strategy to respond to the needs of service users at various levels (e.g., individual level, family level and community level).

Implications for every-day practice: empathy, equity and empowerment

Three elements – empathy, equity and empowerment – were extracted from the data to determine what implications Ubuntu have for the daily practice of the frontline social workers. The first two elements coincided in terms of how to nurture democratic, fair and professional boundaries between the service users and the frontline practitioners, while the last one focused on the nexus amongst the service users.

The first element is empathy. This was repeatedly mentioned by most interviewees when they recalled their interactions with service users. Some respondents suggested that the principle of emphasising solidarity and sharing identity in Ubuntu philosophy could be logically connected to their practical strategies for developing empathy with service users. We have chosen one of the related quotations for illustration:

> Personally, I think there is a connection between Ubuntu and empathy. It inspires me to think from the perspective of the service user. .....I think this concept [Ubuntu] is useful to our daily practice, just what I shared before. As an example, I often make home visits and deliver some stuff to the vulnerable. If I just treated it as a job, I would deliver the stuff and he/she would receive it, and we would be done. However, in practice, I take more time to observe whether and how he/she used the stuff, and do some further probing about his/her needs and situations.

The second one is equity in terms of stressing the need to build up a fairer and more equal professional boundary with the service users. Some interviewees sensed that there might be an unbalanced relationship between social workers and service users in the DHP context, in that the social workers would be treated as naturally superior to the service users. This is because the social workers are employed by the local authority to provide a mandatory service. As a result, some respondents suggested that Ubuntu could help them become more sensitive to such an unbalanced relationship, which would allow them to then diminish the potential oppression inherent in service delivery:

> 'Personally speaking, oppression cannot be 100% eliminated from the professional practice, hence, social workers should remain self-awareness repeatedly.'

The last but certainly not the least element, is empowerment. This shows that the interviewees' ideas on the utilisation of Ubuntu comes to transcend the practitioner-user relationship, moving toward the nexus amongst the service users. Most of the interviewees noted that Ubuntu philosophy could provide

a framework for organising the process of empowerment. Specifically, some of them sketched out the idea that the holistic perspective underlying Ubuntu would inspire frontliners to treat the service users as 'communal beings' rather than as 'individual beings', and to pay more attention to nurturing and amplifying the nexus amongst those experiencing similar suffering. Ultimately, the service users would be empowered by the support originating from such a communal nexus.

The limitations of utilising Ubuntu

Three limitations and challenges with regard to utilising Ubuntu in the Chinese context were identified and are reported below. The first limitation is an insufficient understanding of Ubuntu knowledge since, to date, it has not been well promoted and discussed in China. The second one is the cultural obstacle, as Ubuntu is basically viewed as a form of indigenous knowledge rooted in African culture. The third one is the different contextual consideration of social work practice.

'We don't actually understand Ubuntu very well'

Numerous respondents expressed the view that it would be more feasible for them on how to utilise and develop Ubuntu in daily practice if they could develop a more systemic understanding on this approach to social work. For example, during the interviews we tried to encourage the interviewees to develop a connection between Ubuntu and their practice. However, most of them found this difficult to do. Some respondents expressed the view that Ubuntu was so abstract that it could not be directly utilised. They suggested that some practical and culturally-relevant techniques based on Ubuntu philosophy should be developed and validated for their daily use.

Cultural inappropriateness

The findings revealed that Ubuntu was perceived as some kind of culturally-bound indigenous knowledge system which, however paradoxically, led to a challenge involving Ubuntu utilisation beyond its original socio-cultural

context. The interviewees generally agreed that the African-cultural root of Ubuntu knowledge would inevitably lead to cultural inappropriateness. Accordingly, numerous respondents suggested that it should be very difficult for them to directly utilise Ubuntu knowledge in a sophisticated way. The quotation below showed a shared reasoning which pinpointed the colossal cultural differences between the original areas and recipient areas.

> If this concept [Ubuntu] wants to be used in China, it must be converted into the expression our Chinese colleagues can understand. We read the introduction [the Chinese translation of Ubuntu's meanings] you sent to us in advance. Frankly speaking, we've just understood it literally. The cultural difference is quite obvious and we feel it difficult to figure out the connection to our own culture and practice. It [Ubuntu] might be useful, but firstly should be reinterpreted in a local way so that our Chinese colleagues can easily understand.

Nevertheless, the findings also showed that some interviewees were not hung-up with such cultural tension, and still remained open-minded and receptive to the utilisation of Ubuntu knowledge. This group of respondents tended to put the cultural difference aside, and were willing to experimentally select and utilise some elements of Ubuntu. They shared a preference to try to synthesise the elements with local practice through a spiral process full of dialogue and reflection:

> 'I feel quite open to try. If we utilise and develop every cross-space-and-cultural stuff, we will definitely find something which could be mutually shared.'

The challenges derived from bureaucratic procedures

The last practical obstacle that emerged from the interviewees is the limited opportunity for service innovation within the existing administration of the case under consideration. Many of the respondents expressed the view that the existing bureaucratic circumstances of the DHP is a challenge in that the service effectiveness had been set to be measured in a standardised fashion. They are therefore stuck with heavy and well-defined workloads and other

cumbersome procedural requirements. All these had reduced the frontliners' enthusiasm and endeavour with regard to service innovation:

> 'Too many procedural requirements and constraints, while very little support. [I think] there is no room for service innovation, for example, utilising Ubuntu knowledge.'

Furthermore, the tensions between two categories of practical approaches were noted. Some interviewees expressed the view that Ubuntu knowledge is fundamentally based on a bottom-up or community-based approach, which might be in conflict with the top-down or policy-based approach of DHP. As most of the respondents commented, the DHP social workers basically acted like welfare technocrats and were required to deliver a mandatory service to vulnerable people (e.g., individuals, families and groups). Consequently, there was little opportunity left for the social workers to mobilise communities' internal resources and assets, and to foster the reciprocal and co-existing connection between service users. This can be seen in the following comment:

> In an African context, Ubuntu highlights the connection between individual and community. That is, community is a place where a human is born, belongs and grows up. In return, the people should offer his or her contribution to the community. However, the DHP is basically dominated by the local authority, and the social workers are required to deliver mandatory service to marginal groups; such an [community-based] approach might then be unfeasible.

The challenge originating from social change

Some interviewees expressed the view that the social change driven by urbanisation would be a challenge to the utilisation of Ubuntu, since the change had significantly reshaped Chinese people's way of thinking, doing, and, more crucially, being connected. Some of the respondents further suggested that the trend of individualisation and isolation associated with urbanisation had weaken the interpersonal connections and decreased the willingness to provide mutual aid, in both urban and rural areas. Those

phenomena deriving from the social change would impede the efforts to utilise Ubuntu. However, other respondents tended to the view that such a change would also provide an opportunity for the frontliners to justify the need for Ubuntu, and ultimately advance its utilisation:

> Such communal nexus and spirit are naturally scarce in an urban neighbourhood filled with strangers. Social worker must try to connect different kinds of residents by serving them. Such an endeavour will have some far-reaching impacts, becoming some kind of shared memory, and even developing a new culture.

The uses of Ubuntu for developing professional identity

The findings further revealed that the presentation of the research participants' understanding of Ubuntu tended to reveal a different comprehension with regard to the social work professionalism developing in the West. For example, one of the respondents would like to utilise the Ubuntu idea of 'I am because we are' to justify allowing the service users to be able to contact them out of office hours. Numerous interviewees also mentioned that Ubuntu could foster a situation in which both the service users and the social workers benefitted each other by firstly working on their respective needs.

Perhaps the respondents have not fully understood the Ubuntu philosophy in terms of its original meanings. Consequently, an introduction to this social work philosophy would allow the frontliners to legitimate their own considerations in practice. We summarised the responses collected into three sub-themes: traditional cultures, socialist beliefs, and contextual uses.

Traditional cultures

The most popular interpretation mentioned in the interviews regarded Confucianism. Most of the interviewees tended to firstly perceived Ubuntu as *ren ai* (kindheartedness), which generally means benevolence or commiseration. We quote one of the social workers' sharings below, as it was true to the ideas documented in the Confucian canon.

> We witnessed many times when go to the countryside, there are some disabled or older people who are left unattended by the roadside. Whether we go to help them or not has little impact on us. However, as a human being with love we will certainly take the initiative to help these kinds of people. So, I think this [Ubuntu] is a new driving force for social work practice.

The Confucian understanding of Ubuntu however, reflects a hierarchical interpersonal relationship based on kinship. One of the respondents even shared the following classical quotation supporting the idea:

> Treat with the reverence due to age the elders in your own family, so that the elders in the families of others shall be similarly treated; treat with the kindness due to youth the young in your own family, so that the young in the families of others shall be similarly treated. (Source: Chinese Text Project, n.d.)

Apart from Confucianism, some of the interviewees mentioned other traditional Chinese cultural perspectives for their interpretation. For example, they employed an idea of Mohism called *jian ai* (universal love), and pinpointed the rituals of some traditional festivals (e.g., the dragon-boat festival) memorialising the great people in Chinese history for relating the Ubuntu's idea of building human solidarity across generations.

Socialist beliefs

The understanding of Ubuntu, which is based on socialist ideas being promoted in the local context, is another significant category revealed during the interviews. In terms of this kind of interpretation, the interviewees expressed the view that the utilisation of Ubuntu in the local context should be closely linked with the ideals of communism: that social workers were not professionals in a superior position, but individuals who should devote themselves to the people they are serving; it is also an obligation for them to align various resources in the community. Some of the respondents even quoted Chinese propaganda jargon such as 'a community of shared future for

mankind' and 'harmonious society', to support their arguments. Nonetheless, an alternative was also found as a scaffold for understanding Ubuntu. We found a segment of dialogue in which the interviewee quoted the concepts promoted by Sun Yan-Sen, a respected person in contemporary Chinese history, and the founder of the Chinese sovereign state before socialist China was established in 1949:

> In fact, it [Ubuntu] is very similar to Sun Yat-Sen's philanthropic spirit tian xia wei gong for serving the public. His spirit namely is, uh, I am because we are. My existence is because of the existence of everyone. Tian xia wei gong, that is to say, I am for the people of the world, and everything I do is based on the concept, and not for ourselves.

Contextual uses

Regardless of the aforementioned Chinese reasoning for understanding Ubuntu, the interviewees further shared how their interpretations of Ubuntu could inform practice in the local context. They wanted to highlight their own responsibilities and roles in the community. The frontline workers could be either setting themselves up as role models helping others, or organising the local people as volunteers to serve the community together. One of the interviewees even stated that it would be possible to sacrifice oneself for a greater good in terms of their professional practice:

> The education we have received from childhood is that there is no home without the protection of our country. That is, I will think like this. If it is for our country, or for our national rejuvenation, I think it will be okay and no problem. For example, some time ago town S [a location not being served by the social worker] was suffering from a serious epidemic and needed some volunteers. I told my colleagues that I really wanted to work for it, and then everyone [the colleagues] also talked about the issue. Why would I like to do it, and what exactly do I want to do it for? In fact, I believe there is a moment when I am needed by this country. I think this is the way we were educated since childhood. That is the meaning of 'I am because we are', and not living only for myself. Yes, I think like this.

The interviewees also pinpointed the importance of perceiving the service users as family members. They generally believed this could be useful to actualise an inclusive relationship of professional practice embraced in Ubuntu. To attain a family relationship, some of the responses suggested the ideas of cultural sensitivity and place-based connection for a better inclusion in locality. A different opinion, however, was also identified when two challenges to the formation of pseudo-family relationships were pointed out: How were frontliners to handle the dependence of the service users, and how could we tackle the social workers' feelings of helplessness in conditions in which they could not effectively help the service users.

Suggestions for training and practice

In the interviews, the research participants commonly expressed the need to receive training in Ubuntu. First, the interviewees talked about how such training should be practice-oriented. They felt that Ubuntu was more of a value-based philosophy. Therefore, they wanted to learn the know-how knowledge of Ubuntu through training. Second, they mentioned that Ubuntu training should be a comprehensive training package that includes top-level values, mid-level intervention models, and micro-level practical skill sets. The respondents expected that the training package would be very helpful to their daily practice. Third, they suggested that training in Ubuntu should be conducted through experiential learning. Their preference for this approach stemmed mainly from their past experiences with training. For example, one of the respondents said:

> When I first started training, I didn't really understand the concepts, or I didn't know much about them. But after I had been doing the actual work for a while, I looked back at those concepts, and I found that I could use examples of what happened in the actual work to understand those concepts, and those concepts were more impressive in my mind, and I knew more about what those concepts meant.

Fourth, the interviewees suggested that training in Ubuntu should be conducted through the case study method. They believed that training

should use specific service cases to illustrate how to understand and apply Ubuntu, and promote learning and reflection through real case experiences. In addition, they believed that practical cases should be related to local contexts, preferably local practice cases and local stories, and especially linked to the practical experience of DHP.

Suggested steps for utilising Ubuntu in local practice

The interviewees talked about how to apply Ubuntu to DHP. First, they proposed that applying Ubuntu requires developing empathy for understanding the plight of the underprivileged. Second, they mentioned a need to apply the inclusive feature of Ubuntu to every aspect of the helping process, so as to facilitate their professional progress. Third, some of the respondents advocated the use of Ubuntu to sensitise the community and to encourage ecological perspectives for professional practice. For example, they highlighted the importance of identifying shared concerns in the community for promoting an interconnection within the community. The social workers could then connect with different groups by building a service system in which services which were relevant and related to the targeted people would be provided. Consequently, various connections could be developed in terms of relationships, resources, and ideas by sharing among different groups. The connections could then be accumulated as social capital in the context of DHP. Expected outcomes of this accumulation of social capital included a development of neighbourhood relationships as well as an expansion of the support network. As a result, it would also be possible to promote an inter-connectedness between the government, social workers, communities, and social organisations involved. As one of the respondents described it:

> Social workers should take the initiative to integrate into the social network of the service users. We social workers are doing grassroots work and are in contact with the people. Social workers are more like a bridge between the people and the government, conveying the needs of people's livelihood to the leaders above, passing on policies and dealing with the people in need of support.

Discussion

The study reported an attempt to examine how Ubuntu could be utilised beyond its original context. The authors have interviewed the frontline social workers of a rural development programme in China. They believe that the resulting findings have provided empirical support for effectively utilising Ubuntu in this non-African context, or any other region sharing similar socio-cultural characteristics, in the following three areas at least.

As reviewed in the paragraphs above, social work colleagues from around the world have strongly endorsed Ubuntu, and argue that it can provide an alternative to the dominant individualistic and therapeutic approach originating from the Western culture. This is because Ubuntu knowledge emphasises the interconnectedness between individuals, the external environment, and across generations. This argument is generally justified by the findings. Although the research participants' understanding of Ubuntu before the interviews was limited, the picture depicted from the findings is one of general cohesive with the conceptual development of Ubuntu reviewed in the literature. Regarding the variations in the interviewees' opinions, they mainly related to the inadequacy and difficulties with regard to understanding Ubuntu ideas. The issues of cultural relevance, in terms of both traditional and contemporary values shown in the findings, is also a concern. However, the findings also reveal that all of the challenges should be manageable on condition that appropriate resources and administrative arrangements could be offered for the utilisation of Ubuntu. This is indeed echoes the pragmatic approach to indigenisation proposed in the social work literature (Yan, 2013; Lei and Huang, 2017). Apart from continuing the popularisation of Ubuntu knowledge, the findings further imply that it necessary to identify the stakeholders who adopt the pragmatic mindset for utilising Ubuntu in real-world settings.

A use of Ubuntu for developing the professional identity of the research participants is another significant finding of the study. The development of

professional identity on the part of Chinese social workers is noted in the recently published literature. The topics generally include the gains and losses associated with working as a social worker (Niu and Haugen, 2019; Tang, 2020), the strategies and tactics in handling of the challenges of professional development (Lei and Huang, 2018; Xu et al., 2020), and the turnover intentions or retention in the social work profession (Mo et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021). The latent relationship of utilising imported knowledge such as that relating to Ubuntu, means that supporting the professional development of Chinese social workers would enrich the academic discussion. Although similar ideas for facilitating professional development has not vanished in the literature (e.g., Yan and Tsang, 2008), the empirical findings from the perspective of frontliners should better provide direct and practical implications for further disseminating the utilisation of Ubuntu.

One of the possible action plans is to design and implement a training programme based on the frontliners' suggestions revealed in the study. Based on the research findings, the training should be embedded within the working context and the requirements of the frontline social workers. All of the learning and supervision activities with regard to Ubuntu should directly inform the need for room for improvement of existing practice. The social workers being trained in the programme should have the power to design and adjust the arrangements to ensure effectiveness in the local context. In this case, a participatory action/practice research approach (cf., Ku and Ho, 2020) is recommended for managing and evaluating the entire process of such a training initiative.

Conclusion

The chapter is one of the pioneering attempts, if not the first one, to empirically examine the utilisation of Ubuntu in a non-African context. The single case in rural China reported in this study can provide lessons for those who would utilise Ubuntu in a similar context to that of the study (cf. Yin, 2014), even though the results are not statistically representative. The

research participants selected were also solely chosen from the authors' social networks. The findings however have highlighted the voices of frontliners who are interested in the utilisation of Ubuntu for professional development. The sampling was perhaps not the most rigorous arrangement, but must be of some uses for those who are willing to establish a real collaboration with local people, in terms of utilising Ubuntu in such a way as to have a notable impact. The research results have even illuminated a potential direction in terms of utilising Ubuntu with the aid of participatory action/practice research. The authors hope that their efforts will support further academic and professional initiatives for effectively utilising Ubuntu in particular contexts.

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Chapter 26

Bridging Ubuntu and Trauma-Informed Approaches in Training and Research from a Social Work Perspective

Tamarah Moss and Andrew M. Muriuki

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Biographies

Tamarah Moss, PhD, MPH, MSW. Dr. Moss has a PhD in social work from Howard University and is currently on the faculty of the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research, Bryn Mawr College. Dr. Moss's scholarship is at the intersection of health and mental health service delivery, culturally responsive and equitable evaluation, community-based practice and training, and pedagogy. As a community-engaged scholar, she has administered trainings on trauma-informed approaches for multidisciplinary practitioners and is working toward more explicitly integrating principles of Ubuntu in work with communities in the Caribbean region, South Africa, and the United States.

Andrew Muriuki, PhD. Dr. Muriuki has a PhD in social work from the University of Missouri–Columbia and did his postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Center for Addiction and Behavioral Health Research. His research and evaluations with Save the Children USA and other organizations have centered on humanness. He continues to utilize Ubuntu principles in evaluating African youth embeddedness in the family, community, and larger society and the role of culture and traditional

practices on intervention outcomes. His current work engages with African mental health practitioners and researchers on needs and culturally sensitive mental health programs for students.

Abstract

The word Ubuntu is African in origin and relates to humanity and human connection. While established broadly in African culture, Ubuntu has significant relevance in the Caribbean as part of the African diaspora seeking to incorporate Indigenous integrity into social work practice through training. This chapter offers critical reflection from social work trainers to illustrate the embodiment of Ubuntu in their training in the Caribbean and research in Africa that bridges Ubuntu and trauma-informed approaches. SAMHSA's framework for a trauma-informed approach includes safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues. Humanity and interconnectedness underscore the nature of Ubuntu as both a philosophy and practice well suited to social work.

History and Definitions of Ubuntu

Ubuntu is an African word that is rooted in humanness (Chigangaidze, 2021a, 2021b; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2013) describe Ubuntu as the idea of an individual seen through others, while Chigangaidze (2021a) uses an ecological model to express how the individual is embedded in the family, community, and larger society. This puts the individual at the center of understanding in the relationship with family, community, and society (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019; Van Breda, 2019). This idea that the treatment and interaction of individuals should be based on dignity, social justice, and the common good is deeply rooted in African culture and traditions that can also be found in the African diasporic community in the Caribbean and the Americas (Bent-Goodley et al., 2017). The idea of family, community, and common struggles or benefits is linked to the humanness in the way that individuals treat each other (Chigangaidze,

2021b). Van Breda (2019) uses this same layered idea to suggest that Ubuntu is rooted in the African idea of interconnectedness with others.

If the individual is part of family and community, then using Ubuntu creates the potential to decolonialize social work practice and embrace the idea of mutual aid and support to help an individual or a community to succeed (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). People help each other in a spirit of solidarity. The social work profession identifies the importance of the person-in-environment. The person exists in the context of their family, community, and larger society (Norton, 2009). The way in which people engage and perceive the environment is critical. This recognizes social work roots that are held deeply in empathy and individual empowerment that is connected to family and community (Norton, 2009).

The idea of Ubuntu helps social work to uplift and protect the rights of the individual by focusing on the humanity and compassion with the understanding that the individual is part of layered interconnectedness in the community (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013; Norton, 2009; Sambala et al., 2020).

Relevance of Ubuntu in the Caribbean

African diasporic communities in the Caribbean and the Americas continue cultural traditions from Africa (Archibald, 2011; Norton, 2009). While many traditions have been integrated into the multiple cultures found in the Caribbean, the unique idea of humanness is ubiquitous. The family, cultural tradition, storytelling, and foods are very much African. All this blends to create a unique Caribbean that is deeply rooted in African culture. The idea of Ubuntu remains significantly relevant in the Caribbean as part of the African diaspora seeking to incorporate Indigenous integrity in social work practice through training.

Positionality of Authors

The author Moss is a Bahamian American who identifies as a community-engaged scholar. She has provided training over the years, most recently on trauma-informed care in various settings. Dr. Moss has engaged in community-based training through providing skilled, knowledge-based training on trauma-informed care. It should be noted that Ubuntu emerged for Dr. Moss through training plans and implementation. While Ubuntu was not originally intended as an approach in the trainings, upon reflection, Dr. Moss recognized the alignment with Ubuntu and the need for explicit integration to remain culturally responsive as a social work trainer.

The author Muriuki is an African research scholar who has worked with different African populations in both the eastern and western parts of sub-Saharan Africa. He has had the opportunity to document and evaluate projects that support vulnerable populations but also observe gaps due to projects ignoring cultural traditions. Embracing Ubuntu and a person-centered approach with an African lens has helped him to improve the evaluation process and successfully complete projects. Successful projects have embraced the human-centered approach to working with communities and using their strength to have an impact on the groups that they want to serve. In terms of the approach to training and research, Dr. Muriuki brings both professional and personal experience with Ubuntu and provides historical perspective and context that frame applications in the Caribbean and Africa.

Training and Research Reflections that Bridge Trauma-Informed Approaches (TIA) and Ubuntu

Reflecting on domestic violence and intimate partner violence training, the plans and implementation bridge trauma-informed approaches that ultimately align with Ubuntu. According to a report in 2021 by the World Health Organization, over their lifespan, one in three women face physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner

(WHO, 2021). This number remains unchanged over the past decade. Referred to as the "shadow pandemic in the Caribbean" (Sayed & Bland, 2020), domestic violence and intimate partner violence have persisted during the COVID-19 pandemic. One way to address issues related to domestic and intimate partner violence is through the training of community and service providers (Etherington et al., 2021).

As a part of these planning and implementation processes of training, Ubuntu and the trauma-informed approaches are bridged. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration in the United States has developed a framework for a trauma-informed approach that includes six key components: safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues (SAMHSA, 2014). Participants of these trainings were social work practitioners, caregivers at children's homes, police officers, and volunteers. While these components may appear elementary in nature, there are ties to the process that relate to the philosophy and practice of Ubuntu.

More specifically, the necessity of bridging Ubuntu and TIA was apparent in the development and delivery of trainings on domestic violence for a police district. While working as a scholar in residence at a Caribbean national organization that focuses on prevention and intervention services for domestic violence and child abuse and neglect, the author Moss received the request from a police chief and superintendent to carry out a training for their uniformed staff on domestic violence. The station had observed a national uptick of domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and child abuse since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and throughout fluctuating surges within the larger community.

From the planning stage, a presentation is developed that encompasses addressing the needs and strengths of participants—not only who they are as

police officers, volunteers, and service providers but also who they are as people participating in an activity that enhances community health and well-being in dealing with domestic violence and intimate partner violence. This aligns with the key component of TIA related to *trustworthiness and transparency*.

Then there is agenda setting, which is important to creating a training and learning environment supportive of engagement. This aligns with the component of *safety* in TIA and the importance of creating a safe space. Following is the establishment of community agreements that guide the way that participants and facilitators communicate with each other. This aligns with the component *empowerment, voice, and choice*. As a reminder, the focus, and topics of focus of the trainings were domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and the disparate case of women and girls related to the gender-based focus of the violence. This aligns with the component of *cultural, historical, and gender issues*.

Finally, are action steps and strategies that promote good practice of prevention and intervention, agreed upon by training participants to apply in their various settings. This aligns with the TIA key component of *collaboration and mutuality*. The relevance of Ubuntu is clear where Ubuntu as philosophy and practice is clearly aligned, given the key components of TIA bridging, to Ubuntu: "oneness of humanity, a collectivity, community and set of cultural practices and spiritual values that seek respect and dignity for all humanity" (Goduka, 2000, p. 72).

Another example in the alignment of Ubuntu and TIA is in the foundational training of volunteers at the same Caribbean national organization that focuses on prevention and intervention services for domestic violence and child abuse and neglect. While the police training integrated Ubuntu and TIA more explicitly since the main trainers were Moss and a long-standing medical Caribbean social worker and co-trainer, the planning and

implementation for the volunteers was more emergent in nature. The purpose of the volunteer training was to orient volunteers to the issues of domestic violence in all forms as well as child abuse and neglect. The TIA was more apparent, and it was necessary to be more explicit about the Ubuntu principles.

Volunteers represented different sectors of the country, not only social and mental health services. They were government workers, local entrepreneurs, parents, educators, and communication and marketing specialists, among others, who were all committed to supporting the country in alleviating the negative experiences of violence. In planning for the training with an initial concrete idea for the integration of trauma-informed approaches, the need for Ubuntu principles became more apparent and explicit integration became necessary.

It was essential to connect the volunteers, who all were nationals, not only to the issues related to violence but also to their perceptions of nation building and the importance of engagement with each other and the community of service. This is the point in the training design where using Ubuntu creates the potential to decolonialize social work practice and provides an opportunity for volunteers to embrace the idea of mutual aid and support to help an individual or a community to succeed (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). By the end of the training, participants understood the significance of the humanity of community as "people first" which made for a deeper connection to their work and each other.

When it comes to research, studies that focus on vulnerable populations in Africa should use Ubuntu as the overarching framework to guide and integrate TIA. Together, Ubuntu and TIA centre on individual and collective well-being and outcomes. In further consideration based on the work of author Muriuki in Côte d'Ivoire and Ethiopia, there continues to be a need to centre on the population needing support in evaluation and/or research that

focuses on orphaned and vulnerable children. In evaluating an intervention that was used, the approach found that community caregivers had a positive impact on vulnerable households/children in Côte d'Ivoire receiving support and services.

This approach used the original social work model that puts the person receiving support at the centre in the context of their family, community, and larger society (Norton, 2009). Community caregivers were members of the community, and they lived in the area they supported. Having community caregivers made a significant impact on vulnerable households/children's lives, improving social and clinical outcomes. They were able to navigate cultural traditions and ensure that the children's needs were met (Muriuki & Moss, 2016).

Putting the children at the centre of intervention made the community caregivers–supported intervention culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and successful. The study found that children with caregiver support were more likely to be connected to social support groups and were satisfied with the support they were receiving. The importance of interconnectedness became central to understanding the experiences of the young people, and the relevance of Ubuntu was highlighted.

Additionally, a different study that investigated the migration of young girls from rural to urban areas in Côte d'Ivoire found a need to centre the support on girls and families. The study findings indicated that family members were a contributing factor in many girls ending up on the street. While poverty and HIV/AIDS have had a negative impact on children's safety nets, family members exploited traditional values to move the children from rural to urban areas for domestic work (Muriuki et al., 2018).

About fifty percent of the girls were brought to the city by an aunt with a promise of a better life and education but ended up working as domestic

servants. These findings indicate the need for understanding the embeddedness of the youth in the family with an Ubuntu approach and the importance of determining generational and historical trauma contexts in providing intervention strategies for the girls to improve their state of health and well-being.

Working with families and the communities they came from reduced the migration and improved social protection for the girls. Supporting the girls and families was crucial not only to stop the migration but also to reintegrate the girls back into the families from the street. A significant component was the training of the community support person to utilize Moss's approach to integrating Ubuntu and TIA. Traditions can prolong trauma, while having a community caregiver with tools that look at individual, family, and community can help alleviate trauma.

The two themes common to all the training and research examples are humanity and interconnectedness. Ubuntu is integrated as both a philosophy and practice. The alignment with cultural context and the embraced notion of individual and collective forms of care as important make Ubuntu principles a culturally responsive consideration to strengthen the priority of community empowerment, voice, and choice, which also fits the values of trauma-informed care approaches.

Ubuntu in Social Work

The influence of Ubuntu in social work practice in terms of training and research is clear. The examples provided in the regional contexts of the Caribbean and Africa feature the essential nature of Ubuntu as a consideration before implementing a training or research. The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development 2020-2030 (IFSW, 2022), launched in 2010 by the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the International Council on Social Welfare, and the International Federation

of Social Workers, presented an overarching framework of *co-building inclusive social transformation*.

In addition to this overarching framework, the first two years are committed to *Ubuntu: strengthening social solidarity and global connectedness* (Jones & Truell, 2017). While the experiences of the authors do not present an exhaustive review of the integration of Ubuntu and trauma-informed approaches in social work, the examples mentioned point to the alignment that is in some ways similar to Mugumbate and Nyanguru's (2013) notion of the twin responsibility of social work.

This responsibility related to Ubuntu includes embracing its values and including when it comes to peers and clients. The authors call for an "Ubuntuing" of social work. Zvomuya (2020) describes "Ubuntuing" as a point of "…rationalization and alignment of professional as well as operational activities in any given context" (p. 64). "Ubuntuing" may then be seen as "…a form of indigenizing Social Work so that the challenges faced by Africans and those of African descent are addressed" (p. 64).

Authors Moss and Muriuki hope to encourage the same embracing of Ubuntu and values in training and research from a social work perspective. The practice of Ubuntu should be more overt for Caribbean and African social workers and others in the African diaspora, especially since Ubuntu as a philosophy and practice "…can expand our understanding of the social work profession's principles, focusing them on human relationships, making them more holistic, not just to the individual but also to what every individual needs: A community that cares for them" (Mayaka & Truell, 2021, p. 660).

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Chapter 27

Ubuntu Model as a Child Protection Mechanism: A Comparative Analysis of Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh

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Casmir Obinna Odo is a teaching assistant and researcher at the Department of Social Work, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and a Masters's student in the

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Perfect Elikplim Kobla Ametepe is an international student pursuing his master's degree in Social Work with Families and Children at the University of Stavanger, Norway. His research and practice interests are in the field of child protection and migration. Given his African background and practice experience in Ghana, he is a staunch advocate of Ubuntu theory and practice as it is based on the principle of human relations which embraces caring about others and has by far been the most effective social safety net for individuals, families, social groups, and communities.

Uche Louisa Nwatu is a researcher and a master's student in the Department of Social Studies, University of Stavanger, Norway. My research interests are aging, climate migration, and child protection. My practice experience in my country Nigeria spurred my interest in the Ubuntu philosophy, working in contexts where the sense of family, sense of community, and the "we consciousness" has proven to be the most effective approach to addressing issues at the individual, family, and community levels, with a unique emphasis on the importance of human relationship.

Md Shahriar Kalam Bosunia is currently pursuing master's in social work with Families and Children from the University of Stavanger, Norway. He has worked for BRAC (the largest NGO in the world) and PRERONA, Mental health service, and Human rights of children and families as well as migrants. His major research interests comprise child protection, international migration and public policy. His personal interest in Ubuntu theory and practice has grown ideally working with migrants left-behind children in a

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Ade Putri Verlita Maharani is a graduate student in the Social Work program. Her previous work includes becoming an education facilitator in a rural Indonesian elementary school, working with a Singaporean philanthropic organization on the development of early childhood education, and most recently, joining UN Migration as mental health and psychosocial support to work with refugees. She has also initiated a social platform that aims to improve mental health among mothers. Throughout her journey, she strongly believes that the Ubuntu principle is central to the protection of children through family, and community networks.

Abstract

The popular African maxim “it takes a community to raise a child” clearly reflects the crucial role of the Ubuntu value system in facilitating the processes of communal child-rearing obligations. More so, the family, community, spiritual and environmental perspectives inspired by Ubuntu models of social work with children have continued to gain prominence and have the potential to provide children with protection, counselling, support, and mentorship. This comparative article, therefore, examines the role of Ubuntu in child protection in the contexts of Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh. The discussions build on how far social work with children from these contexts has incorporated the concept of Ubuntu in their practices. The analysis would be an important guideline for academicians, social work students and practitioners, and policymakers.

Keywords: *Bangladesh, Child protection, Ghana, Nigeria, Social work, Ubuntu*

Abstract in Igbo Language (Nigeria)

Ihe kacha ewu ewu n'Africa "ọ na-ewe obodo ịzụ nwa" na-egosipụta n'ụzọ doro anya ọrụ dị oke mkpa nke usoro uru Ubuntu n'ịkwado usoro nke ọrụ ịzụ ụmụaka. Ọzọkwa, ezinụlọ, obodo, echiche ime mmụọ na gburugburu ebe

obibi na-akwado ụdị Ubuntu nke ọrụ mmekọrịta mmadụ na ụmụaka nọgidere na-enwe ọganihu ma nwee ike inye ụmụaka nchebe, ndụmọdụ, nkwado, na nduzi. Ya mere, akụkọ atụ atụ a na-enyocha ọrụ Ubuntu na nchekwa ụmụaka na mpaghara Nigeria, Ghana, na Bangladesh. Mkparịta ụka ndị a na-adabere na ọrụ mmekọrịta ọha na eze na ụmụaka site na ọnọdụ ndị a etinyela echiche nke Ubuntu na omume ha. Nyocha ahụ ga-abụ ntụziaka dị mkpa maka ndị ọkà mmụta sayensị, ụmụ akwụkwọ na-arụ ọrụ na-elekọta mmadụ na ndị na-eme ihe, na ndị na-eme iwu.

Abstract in EWE Language (Ghana)

Afrikatɔwo *fe* nyagbɔgblɔ xɔŋkɔ si nye "ebia nuto aɖe be woahe ɖevi" ɖe akpa vevi si Ubuntu *fe* asixɔxɔ *fe* ɖoɖoa wɔna le ɖeviwo hehe *fe* agbanɔamedzi siwo le nutoa me *fe* ɖoɖowo me la fia kɔte. Gawu la, *f*ome, nutoa me, gbɔgbɔ me kple nutome *fe* nukpɔsusu siwo wotsɔ Ubuntu *fe* hadomedɔwɔwɔ kple ɖeviwo *fe* kpɔɖeŋuwo ʋã la yi edzi le ŋkɔ xɔm eye ŋutete le wo ŋu be woana takpɔkpɔ, aɖaŋuɖoɖo, kpekpeɖeŋu, kple mɔfiame ɖeviwo. Eyata nyati sia si wotsɔ sɔ kple wo nɔewo la dzro akpa si Ubuntu wɔna le ɖeviwo takpɔkpɔ me le Nigeria, Ghana, kple Bangladesh *fe* nɔnɔmewo me me. Numedzodzroawo tu ɖe alesi gbegbe hadomedɔwɔwɔ kple ɖeviwo tso nɔnɔme siawo me tsɔ Ubuntu *fe* nukpɔsusu de wo*fe* nuwɔnawo me ɖo la dzi. Kukuɖenuŋua anye mɔfiame vevi aɖe na agbalẽnyalagãwo, hadomekpekpeɖeŋunadɔsrɔ̃wo kple dɔwɔlawo, kple ɖoɖowɔlawo

Abstract in Bangla Language (Bangladesh)

জনপ্রিয় আফ্রিকান প্রবাদ 'একটি শিশুকে বড় করতে হলে একটি সম্প্রদায়ের প্রয়োজন' স্পষ্টভাবে শিশু প্রতিপালনে কমিউনিটির ভূমিকা উবুন্তু মূল্যবোধ ব্যবস্থায় অত্যন্ত সুচারুভাবে প্রতিফলিত করে। শিশু সুরক্ষা সমাজকর্মে উবুন্তু মডেল পরিবার, কমিউনিটি, ধর্মীয় ও পরিবেশগত প্রেক্ষাপট বিবেচনায় প্রাধান্য বিস্তার করে চলছে এবং শিশুদের সুরক্ষা, কাউন্সেলিং, পৃষ্ঠপোষকতা এবং পরামর্শ প্রদানে এই মূল্যবোধের গুরুত্ব অপরিসীম। এই নিবন্ধটিতে উবুন্তু মডেলের আলোকে শিশু সুরক্ষা নিশ্চিতে বাংলাদেশ, ঘানা এবং নাইজেরিয়ার প্রেক্ষাপট তুলনামূলকভাবে আলোচনা করা হয়েছে। শিশু সুরক্ষা সমাজকর্ম অনুশীলনে উবুন্তু প্রেক্ষাপট উল্লিখিত দেশগুলোতে কতটুকু অন্তর্ভূক্ত করা হয়েছে তা এই নিবন্ধে বিস্তারিত তুলে ধরা হয়েছে। এই নিবন্ধটি শিক্ষাবিদ, সমাজকর্মী, সমাজকর্মের ছাত্র/ছাত্রী এবং নীতি নির্ধারকদের জন্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ গাইডলাইন হিসেবে ভূমিকা পালন করবে।

Introduction

Ubuntu is one of the global social work agendas for the 2020-2030 period and represents the current theme for the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development (Willmore et al. 2022). This article attempts to compare the application of the Ubuntu model in Bangladesh, Ghana, and Nigeria. Ubuntu philosophy, which is often symbolized by communal relationality, communal values, and human excellence, is a part of the knowledge and wisdom of how African communities and families nurture their children. Relationality is a fundamental factor for human achievement, as the widely accepted maxim, '*Because we are, I am*'; '*A person is a person because of other people*'. This implies that children, like every other family member, grow up through other persons, meaning that they learn to possess communal values and build harmonious connections with others (Metz, 2016).

Another core concern that the paper considers is the famous African proverb, "It takes a community to raise a child", implying that for children to achieve human perfection, they must have meaningful relationships with extended family members and the wider community outside the family. Conversely, adults play critical roles in establishing the relational environments that allow children to recognize their humanity from this perspective (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). As a result, in African contexts, Ubuntu surely informs ideal child-rearing approaches. Given the emphasis on the strength's perspective in social work, one is more prone to believe that social work practice with children in Africa should connect with Ubuntu on principle. The ability to assist a child's growth can be influenced by the child's immediate environment and they exclusively grow in tandem with their surroundings. Ubuntu entails universal life values, including love and respect and reciprocity, equality and justice, integrity and accountability, care sharing and trust, unselfishness, and social change (Mayaka & Truell, 2021). It emphasizes the principle of reciprocal interactions and thus helps to create and nurture one's own identity and improve the quality of life. Ubuntu picturizes each and everyone's place within the community and explains their

responsibilities towards the greater community and its people to ensure current and imminent generations' prosperity.

As noted by UNICEF child protection is a way to prevent and respond to any forms of cruelty, exploitation, and abuse against children which includes sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation, child labour and slavery, trafficking, and any other harmful traditional practices, e.g., child marriage, genital mutilation, etc. (NY, 2006). Moreover, Save the Children explains that child protection work aims to prevent, respond to, and resolve violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation experienced by children throughout their lives (Children, 2007). Both explanations emphasize the importance of prevention and response in the definition of child protection. Furthermore, combining child protection with the Ubuntu model leads to indigenous and community-based child protection. The mechanisms are local or grassroots networks, groups of individuals, or community-managed organizations that prevent and respond to child protection and vulnerable children in both normal and emergencies (Chilwalo, 2020). In this way, the child protection sector is balanced with a bottom-up approach as well as a top-down approach.

Extended family, community care, and faith-based organizations (FBOs) are three indicators that will be examined further in this article while discussing the Ubuntu model as a child safety mechanism in three different country contexts. The six-tier system was created such that biological or nuclear families came first, then extended family (kinship care), community care, official foster care, adoption, and ultimately a residential child-care facility. When the immediate family is no longer present or unable to care for and safeguard children, the extended family should be the first alternative, followed by community care, and finally foster care, according to the six-tier system (Kurevakwesu & Chizasa, 2010). In traditional African and Asian communities, especially in Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh, the responsibilities for taking care of children do not solely rest with the

biological parents; rather, the extended family plays an active role (Amos, 2013). Essentially, the Ubuntu philosophy has been applied indirectly to different continents and countries including Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Ghana for years. With some of the indicators mentioned earlier, children might receive care and protection from their immediate environment before being handed over to the authorities as a last resort.

Countries from the global south like Nigeria (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019; Ugiagbe, 2014), Ghana (Abdullah et al., 2020; Owusu & Baidoo, 2021), and Bangladesh (Ball & Wahedi, 2010) share almost similar approaches and values in terms of child protection where, extended family in addition to parents, community people, and organizations, and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) underneath Ubuntu model play significant roles in childcare and protection in absence of proper governmental care. Though there are pieces of literature available on how extended family, community people, organizations, and FBOs work in child protection in these countries, it is hardly possible to find literature that explains these indicators under the Ubuntu model. Further, there is no comparative literature from the global south, especially from the African and Asian contexts on how the Ubuntu model works in child protection mechanisms. Considering the knowledge gap in the literature, the paper is potentially the first to document how the Ubuntu model has been safeguarding children in Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh, explaining three specific indicators, ideally extended family, community-based care, and FBOs.

Ubuntu and Child protection in Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh

The African Ubuntu in Child welfare and child protection in Nigeria

In emphasizing the important place of the Ubuntu Model of childcare in the Nigerian community, phrases such as "it takes a community to raise a child" come to the limelight just as it applies in other traditional African societies (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). This phrase conveys the fact that adults are

crucial in generating the relational conditions that allow children to realize their humanness, that is, meaningful connections between the child, family, and friends, and even outside the family group are required for children to achieve human greatness. According to Mbah, Ebue, and Ugwu (2017), the traditional Nigerian culture is based on a web of blood or marital links, with everyone acting as their brother's keeper. Families lived in peace and tranquillity, with a strong sense of belonging, blood ties, and affection. Friendship, kindness, hospitality, generosity, honour, and respect for the elderly and the vulnerable were instilled in the people's socialization, education, belief, and practice knowing that there is no policy framework for the support and protection of the aforementioned groups (Ugiagbe, 2014). Therefore, it becomes clear that the Ubuntu philosophy provides the basis for childcare and child protection in Nigeria through the collective efforts of immediate family, extended family, faith-based organizations, and the community in general.

The extended family system

The extended family is one of the historical agencies according to Akintayo (2021), responsible for providing care and proper upbringing for children and young people in most communities in Nigeria. In African Ubuntu, for instance, the responsibility of child adoption lies in the hands of extended family members or relatives such as uncles, aunts, grandparents, and stepparents, among others, devoid of the western approaches involving the court, professionals, and other social welfare agencies (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). The above situation is also applicable in Nigeria whereby uncles, aunts, stepparents, and grandparents see to it that the children of their deceased family members are well taken care of and protected from all forms of vulnerability. The "umunna", (clan)"ogbe", (neighbourhood)"ikwu-na-ibe" (extended families and friends) and the age-grade institutions are among these institutional arrangements and mutual aids instrumental among the Igbo community in Nigeria (Obikeze, 2000), also known as 'Owe' or 'Aro' among the Yoruba tribe of southern Nigeria and 'Adashi and 'Gwandu' is peculiar to the Hausa tribe of Northern Nigeria (Okunola, 2002).

The duties of the extended family members to children are properly guided by the belief systems existent in Nigerian society, the members of the extended family are collectively parts and parcel of childcare activities, especially in terms of the resources involved (time, money, emotions and so on) (Okoye, 2013). In line with the basic provisions of the Ubuntu principles, the Nigerian community perceives the child first as belonging to the family and sharing blood ties and the same identity. The case of the care of orphans and vulnerable children is a clear example of the effectiveness of the Ubuntu philosophy in the Nigerian traditional childcare system as opposed to the western models; institutionalization and or legislated child adoption (Eneh et al., 2018; Mtetwa & Muchacha, 2017). It is common for orphans and vulnerable children to be adopted by extended family members who are saddled with the responsibility of providing childcare and provision, under Ubuntu values, which include care, protection, responsibilities, and belonging to the community.

These close family members are generally responsible for the care and support of orphans at the demise of their parents, as well as vulnerable children in the event of abandonment or other unforeseen circumstances. Typically, one of the extended family members takes on the major caregiver position, with others contributing resources as secondary caregivers on a periodic basis (Nnama-Okechukwu & Okoye, 2019). This is also in line with the guidelines for the alternative care of children by the United Nations, which emphasizes the informal care and protection of children; here vulnerable children are cared for by family members, friends, and relatives in a family environment (United Nations, 2010).

Community-based care

Community-based care is another important alternative informal intervention in childcare and protection in Nigeria, this practice offers vulnerable children access to resources within the community. Contrary to the formal intervention approach (institutional/residential facilities) to childcare, community-based care provides an opportunity for beneficiaries to

become part of a family and maintain a good level of sibling's relationship (Better Care Network, 2010). Communities go about their businesses with the notion that they are equipped with resources to deal with problems relating to both vulnerable children and the needs of their respective families; this aligns with the Ubuntu principle; indigenous African beliefs that a child belongs to the entire community, not only to their immediate family (Akintoya, 2021; Isidienu, 2015; Olaore & Drolet, 2016). To a very great extent, this African value system and the 'we consciousness' becomes the basis upon which community members collectively share in the responsibility of caring for vulnerable children in the community, including their families (Nnama-Okechukwu & Okoye, 2019). Some empirical studies have confirmed the positive impact of these value systems on the well-being of vulnerable families in Nigeria; findings reveal that community-based care is a powerful and effective tool in the care and protection of orphans and the most vulnerable children within the community (Olaore & Drolet, 2016).

The above clearly shows that the community plays an all-important role in protecting children, socializing, and creating an identity for them (Mtetwa & Muchacha, 2017). This provision of care and protection in the Nigerian context is inspired by the indigenous practice which views children as not only belonging to the biological family but to the community at large. In addition, the 'Zakat' (Almsgiving) system among Muslims is also used as an alternative to child care and protection; this Zakat system is a form of the obligation of the adherents of the Islamic religion, which is an informal system used to provide adequate support for children who are vulnerable and needy, especially as a panacea to the 'Almajiri' (Islamic students who survive and depend on the street begging for survival) problem in northern Nigeria (Kazeem, 2011).

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) and child protection in Nigeria

Just as faith-based organizations are rated one of the largest humanitarian agencies in the world and have shown their commitment to childcare and protection through their support of children and their families (Connelly &

Ikpaahindi, 2016). Religious institutions in Nigeria are notable for providing services for the care of orphans and vulnerable children through various organs and organizations in the church (Azebeokhai, 2021). Islamic religious groups are also not left out, as they accord children their right of being treated with equity and benevolence (Kazeem, 2011). For instance, the missionary church has achieved greatly in the aspect of protecting the right of children from the inception of Christianity in Nigeria, notable among these feats were the abolition of some obnoxious cultural practices that violate the rights of children such as the killing of twins, care, and child slavery. (Ede & Kalu, 2018).

On a general level, churches and other religious institutions have always lent their voices in a wide community and grassroots campaign against all forms of child abuse as well as appealing to the government and other relevant authorities to stand up to their responsibility for childcare and child protection (Kaigama & Martins, 2012, Odedeji, Adewunmi & Akindolure, 2014). In addition, these groups have taken practical steps to ensure that abused children are rehabilitated, Habitation of Hope is a faith-based organization in Lagos Nigeria responsible for the care and protection of street children (Burgess, 2012), and this organization was very helpful in saving young girls on the street from sexual exploitation and scavenging. Genesis House and House of refuge are also similar religious foundations committed to working with street girls who are into prostitution, forced labour, drug addiction, and working with young street boys with the issue of drug addiction respectively.

The discussions on the role of religious organs in the care and protection of children cannot be exhausted without bringing in discussions on the all-important role of the churches in Nigeria to ensure the protection of children through pastoral care and solution-based approach to combating child abuse in Nigeria (Essien, 2013); by providing shelter for abused children who are either in the street, abandoned or accused of witchcraft, education, feeding, and integration into the society. The Handmaid of the Holy Child Jesus

Orphanage in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria presents a clear picture of this intervention; the orphanage scholarships, education, and healthcare and makes vocational skills available and easily accessible to abandoned children.

The Islamic religion is as well not left out in the care and protection of children in Nigeria, this religious sect contributes its own quota by providing alternative care to children through what is referred to as the Islamic Kafala (Assim & Sloth-Nielson, 2014). The word Kafala is an Islamic terminology for adoption which means "to feed". In the practice of Kafala, children who are vulnerable and in need of care are provided with foster care by family relatives or other close family members; in the process of fostering, support and care are provided to vulnerable children as a fulfilment of their Islamic duties and the foster families are required to maintain the child's original family identity (Abubakar, Lawan & Yasi, 2013; Olowu, 2008). The practice also includes the care of children who are abandoned or whose families are incapable of providing parental care while the child maintains a relationship with his or her biological family (Assim, 2009; Assim & Sloth-Nielson, 2014). The rationale for this practice among Muslims is centered on the belief that those who have been blessed by Allah with material wealth should provide for others as a matter of obligation and this practice is a perfect substitute for the stereotyped institutional care in Nigeria (Assim & Sloth-Nielson, 2014; Nnama-Okechukwu & Okoye, 2019).

Ubuntu model as a child protection mechanism in Ghana

Social work practice continues to gain relevance in the professional arena; thus, the role of social workers cannot be overemphasised as they play a significant role in helping the vulnerable and marginalised, advocating for social change and just policies. However, it has been argued that practitioners over-rely on the Western model at the expense of the native and traditional model, which does not suit the cultural values of the country of practice. Consequently, there has been a clarion call for the indigenisation of social work practice, especially in Africa. Even though practitioners in Ghana

sometimes apply the Western model in their service delivery and interventions, it is important to note that indigenous practice of welfare and social services is a strong value upheld in Ghana, especially in the field of child protection. Care by extended family, community care, and the role of faith-based organisations in child protection are the key concepts to be discussed hereinafter.

Extended Family and child protection

Care by extended family is an everyday cultural practice in Ghana (Abdullah et al., 2020; Imoh, 2012; Cudjoe, Abdullah & Chiu, 2021) and a substitute for children's home which houses young people who are susceptible to abuse (Abdullah et al., 2020). This practice is controlled by customary family norms and supervised by the "Abusuapanyin" (head of the family) without the engagement of child protection practitioners (Kuyini et al., 2019; Abdullah et al., 2020b). Extended families are of the view that it is their duty to cater to children of relatives who need support as a form of kinship assistance programme (Abdullah et al., 2020) and as a means of promoting family relationships and ties (Imoh, 2012). Thus, kinship care in Ghana serves as a safety net for vulnerable children. For example, In the instances of divorce and separation, when single mothers are unable to take care of their children, kinship care provisions are made for the children (Abdullah et al. 2020b). This form of child protection enables the child to grow in a family environment where they have greater stability as opposed to institutional care, which negatively affects the social behaviour of the child and causes the child to experience emotional attachment disorder. As noted by Cox (2014) in cases of poor parental mental health, and housing instability, grandparents take the responsibility of caring for the children. Thus, grandparents show concern for the safety of their grandchildren especially when they sense that the home of the children is not safe for their development, hence they take custody of their grandchildren. This corroborates the findings of Vandermeersch and Dan (2002) who assert that children between ages zero and six (0-6) in Ghana are usually catered for by their grandparents. Also, in times of abuse of children by parents, their uncles and aunties come to rescue by moving them

from their parents' homes to their homes which suggests that the culture of safeguarding a child from abuse is embedded in the extended family care practice in Ghana (Abdullah et al., 2020).

Kinship caregivers also provide a significant role in the protection of orphan children in Ghana. Orphan children have several needs, such as security and nutrition need, and it takes the intervention of the extended family to meet those needs (Maundeni & Malinga-Musamba, 2013). As rightly put by Abdullah et al. (2020) extended family care help to avert extreme form of child neglect and contributes to social assistance for children. As a result, the involvement of extended family members in child protection is deemed important, and as such kinship care needs to be reinforced and supported (Zuchowski et al., 2019). This resonates with the work of Hickmann et al. (2018) who posits that informal kinship care practice in Ghana must be supported as substitute care for youngsters. It is important to also note that the extended family system in Ghana plays a crucial role in filling in the gap by offering reliable and sustainable protection when the government fails to provide social protection such as family and child benefits to vulnerable families (Owusu & Baidoo, 2021), hence the importance of extended family in the protection of children.

Community-based care

Like kinship care, it is also usual practice for community members to offer protection to children in Ghana (Chilwalo, 2020; Frimpong-Manso, 2014). Members of the community are dedicated to the well-being of children as they maintain that it takes a community to bring up a child (Frimpong-Manso, 2014; Nukunya, 2016; Case, Paxson, & Ableidinger, 2004; Chilwalo, 2020; Kurevakwesu & Maushe, 2020). The findings of Ansah-Kofi (2006) also echo that due to cultural values, the community feels obliged to provide care and protection to children especially those without biological families. In 2006, Ghana enacted the care reform initiative (CRI) policy which gives the Department of Social Welfare the power to encourage community-based child support since it is regarded as a more suitable way of child protection

(Frimpong-Manso, 2014). Traditional rulers are the initiators of community-based child protection in Ghana as they help to mobilize community networks to protect vulnerable children.

As eloquently stated by Frimpong-Manso (2014) Queen mothers in Ghana have taken the initiative to provide community-based protection for parentless children and children at risk of abuse and neglect. They take it upon themselves to cater to orphan children and bring them up as part of their families. According to Aryeetey et al. (2012), it was recorded in 2012 that 371 queen mothers were taking care of 1,035 children. The chiefs were also acknowledged for massively supporting community-based child protection interventions (Mabeyo & Kiwelu, 2019), especially in rural areas. With the help and support of the chiefs, community-based child protection mechanisms such as the payment of huge fines have been put in place to punish and deter parents who give out their teenage daughters for marriage (Chilwalo, 2020). These community-based mechanisms have helped reduced school dropouts among teenage girls. In addition, traditional leaders in collaboration with various schools in the community organise guidance and counselling workshops for parents and teen girls. The workshop encourages the young girls to report any act of sexual abuse and educates the parents against early child marriage and teenage pregnancies. Gwanyemba, Kiwia, and Zuberi (2016) also opine that the elders of the community are those who resolve cases of domestic violence and child battering. When children are physically abused particularly in rural areas, it is reported to the traditional and community elders who summon the perpetrators and counsel them on how to discipline children. The children are also admonished to always put-up good behaviours which prevent child battering, hence safeguarding children from violence and abuse. Due to the sense of community ownership, the mechanisms are extremely useful, suitable, and domain specific (Mabeyo & Kiwelu, 2019). Also, migrant and left-behind children rely on the community for survival and protection (Wu, 2020) since the government lacks infrastructure and has a low budget for child protection.

It is typical of wealthy community members in Ghana to cater for school-going-age children who hawk, sleep, and beg for money on the street. For example, children get sponsorship from community members to go to school from the basic school level through to the tertiary level, thereby protecting children from neglect. According to Daro and Dodge (2009), mutual reciprocity among community members is a strong value upheld by various communities and Ghanaian communities are no exception. This is to say community members in Ghana live by the principle of reciprocity, where residents jointly engage in helping each other and in safeguarding children. Community organisations such as "mmaa kuo" (women association) are common in all Ghanaian communities and their main activities include teaching good parenting skills and helping needy members, and in line with their objectives, they provide shelter for neglected and abused children, particularly children of single mothers which are funded through monthly dues and donations of the association.

Faith-Based Organizations

The role of faith-based organisations in child protection in Ghana cannot be overstated. Bunge (2014) and Garland and Chamiec-Case (2005) assert that faith-based organizations are a positive force in providing care and protection to children, and they team up with child protection organisations such as Save the Child to help solve issues of child marriage and child abuse and to provide food and medical services to neglected children (Bunge, 2014). This is evident in Ghana as churches such as the Catholic Church, the Church of Pentecost, and the Methodist Church Ghana, just to mention a few offer special services and support to children, particularly orphans and street children. For example, the Nazareth Home for God's Children is a shelter set up by the Catholic Church in Ghana to house street children and children at risk of abuse. The children are raised by the nuns and other church members who treat the children as members of their family, thereby giving children the feeling of family upbringing. Also, the Church of Pentecost – Ghana, collaborates with religious families to provide voluntary services to help families in distress. Thus, the religious families who are usually church

members serve as host families by offering safe, and temporary homes for young ones while their parents resolve their issues. This prevents families experiencing a crisis from abusing and neglecting their children and preserves the children in a safe environment.

The findings of Muzingili and Mushayamunda (2015) elucidate that faith-based organisations believe that taking care of orphans is their responsibility which they draw from the bible in the book of James 1:7, which reads that to God, pure and true religion means looking after orphans and widows. As a result, the Faith Roots International Academy, which is a faith-based organisation in Ghana works to rescue orphan children and offers high-standard and Christ-focused education to parentless, neglected, and trafficked children (City of Refugees Ministries, 2017), which serves as a protection against neglected children. Bethany Christian Services is also a faith-based organisation in Ghana that focuses on preserving families, adoption, and foster care (Better Care Network, 2021). They give support to families such as assisting them to pay children's school fees and providing free health care, and nutritional needs, and their services are structured in a way that allows children to remain in their family homes when possible (Better Care Network, 2021). It is also noted that Christian non-governmental organisations like Compassion International Ghana collaborate with churches to embark on child protection campaigns. According to Koomson (2022), the Ankwansu Anglican Church and Youth Development Centre receives funding from compassion Ghana to organise sensitization programs aimed at educating parents, guardians, and community members on the need to protect young ones from abuse and encouraging them to report abuse cases. Church elders, youth leaders, and traditional leaders are attracted to join the campaign and they go to various homes in the community to educate parents on the repercussions of exposing children to all forms of abuse. In addition, they equip carers and parents with knowledge and skills by organising child-caring workshops for them. Considering that church leaders have or show high moral standards in society and have trusted

relationships with the people (Palm & Eyber, 2019), they influence caretakers and community members to desist from maltreating children, hence protecting children.

Ubuntu model as a child protection mechanism: Bangladesh context

As an Asian and emerging welfare nation, Bangladesh also depends on family, kith and kin, community, and faith-based organizations to provide protection when a child is born into the family.

Extended family

In Bangladesh, extended family generally consists of the uncle, aunt, grandmother, grandfather, cousins, and even close friends who are also viewed as family members. The role of the extended family can be divided into many parts such as providing emotional and financial support, helping for solving individual family members' problems, educating, and protecting the children of the family, and so on. The extended family is considered an asset rather than divided into nuclear families where Ubuntu values such as cooperation, love, and collective responsibility work as one of the sources of a child protection mechanism (Mayaka & Truell, 2021; Chilwalo Michelo, 2020). As a child protection mechanism, Crozier & Davies, (2006) showed extended family as a fantastic factor for balancing children's safety and controlling their activities in Bangladesh. Child protection and care start with extended family members in Bangladesh when a woman in the family becomes pregnant. When the child is born, every family member welcomes the baby warmly and works together in protecting him or her from any harm. If the biological parents are not present to take care of the children, then other family members rear the child carrying the value of responsibility and love. For example, if the parents are unable to take care of the child due to an unstable financial situation or unforeseen reasons, other relatively solvent family members take care of and bear the expenses of caring for the child. In Bangladesh, many children have one of the happiest memories with their grandparents as they are emotionally attached to them from the very beginning of their childhood. Child protection covers different aspects of a

child such as prevention from abuse, mistreatment, abandonment, harmful practices, and viciousness against children, where extended family members in Bangladesh save children from all these odd situations. Overall, the extended family works as a safety net for children until they become self-reliant persons one day.

Community care

Community-based care child protection mechanism is an informally recognized and supported way to address the problems and solutions of different communities in Bangladesh. This child protection mechanism includes local culture, knowledge, attitude, and network managed by recognized and respected people at the local level mostly political leaders and respected elderly who simultaneously protect and react to children, who are in vulnerable situations. Likewise, the community members also teach children how to obey elderly people, socialize with the community people, and follow the norms and values of the society which are founded on a communal approach to child safety issues (Chilwalo, 2020). For instance, neither a school-going teenage boy nor a girl is expected to go out with friends nor both boys and girls are expected to stay together after the evening in the Bangladeshi community except with their guardians. Children learn these manners from the beginning of their childhood in the community, followed by family, and this process helps them to get protected from any kind of unexpected incident such as kidnapping, teen pregnancy, and so on. Thus, the child protection mechanism through community care is derived from the indigenous values and norms that are more fruitful for protecting children than the individualistic approach of western theories.

More so, children who are living away from their parents or cannot be taken care of by biological parents due to their death or imprisonment, or divorce are taken care of by the community after there is no kith and kin to take care of them. Community-based child protection consists of practicing cultural activities, social networking, and recreation. Children are given education and training, as well as an understanding of their legal rights and obligations,

within such a system (Islam, 2020). The local community of Bangladesh protects children through different activities within the local system. In the rural area where about 73% of children live with or without parents, they are protected by the village court. The locally elected authority such as the chairman and members along with respected elderly supports children who face any kind of violence or abuse or neglect. Different youth clubs at the community level also help children with issues like drug addiction and sexual harassment. For wider child protection community care is an indispensable factor that has been working for many years. What a child gains from the community are home, love, care, protection, training, education, support, and local cultural values that create safeguarding through collective responsibility.

Faith-based organization

Temples, mosques, churches, and synagogues are recognized worldwide as FBOs, where these different faith-based groups have been providing community services based on their religious views. Children, the elderly, the impoverished, orphans, and women are among the beneficiaries of these services (Ali et al., 2021). Many orphanages have been built in Bangladesh as secure shelters, where orphans are being raised at the initiative of an individual or group of individuals because of the rigorous guidelines given in Islam to take special care of orphans (Ali, et al., 2020). As a Muslim-majority country, Bangladesh has millions of mosques that are employed not only as places where religious rites and rituals are done but also as places where activities promoting development and faith-based social welfare are carried out. Mosques in Bangladesh not only provide religious education to the children but also deliver social norms and values to them. Apart from children, most mosques also show responsibility to illiterate young and old people by teaching them social norms and values, basic religious education, and how to be kind and behave toward children. These learning activities show immense safeguarding for the children and awareness among the rest of the community members.

One of the powerful activities is done by the imam of mosques on various occasions, especially at Friday prayer, delivering sermons against drug abuse, child marriage, child abuse and maltreatment, child and orphan rights, and punishments for breaching these religious codes from the religious point of view. Besides these activities from mosques, temples, and churches of Bangladesh also teach religious lessons to their community people through different religious activities, where child protection topic always gets extra emphasis to secure a safe social life for the children. Buddhist religious welfare trust, Young Men's Christian Association, Al Markazul Islami Bangladesh, Allama Fazlullah Foundation, Quantum Foundation, Christian Service Society, Islamic Aid Bangladesh, Islamic Relief Worldwide, CARITAS, World Vision, Muslim Aid, etc. are some national and international FBOs in Bangladesh which work for a diverse community with different development programs including orphan protection and community-based child protection. What extended family members, community people, and FBOs do for child protection mechanisms in Bangladesh are from their own beliefs, values, native thinking, and practices, and are more relatable to the Ubuntu model.

Discussion

The overall objective of the paper was to analyse child protection mechanisms in Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh in light of Ubuntu Philosophy. Considering differences in cultural norms and values, the nature and extensity of psycho-social issues, and the deficiency in state capacity in protection measures in the global south, there is a call for decolonization of social work practice, education, and research (Ponnuswami & Harris, 2020; Swepaul & Henrickson, 2019). Ubuntu, holing the notion of social justice, love and respect and reciprocity, care and trust, and accountability, is the current agenda within 2020-2030 to identify how people are intertwined and how their destiny is interlinked (IFSW, 2020), and bears an urge to deconstruct and decolonize social work education and practice. To this end, the paper, focusing on three specific indicators: extended family, community care, and FBOs' role, is potentially the first to sketch the comparative child protection

mechanisms underneath Ubuntu philosophy, entailing the popular African maxims, “it takes a community to raise a child” and “I am because we are”.

Country experiences from Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh, as shown above, show that they share almost similar child protection mechanisms with respect to all the three indicators taken for granted for this paper where, the underlying philosophies of the Ubuntu model, though not well addressed academically, widely exist. While child protection mechanism in western countries is mostly run by formal institutions, ideally by the state and private run institutions (Adamson & Bennett, 2008; Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019; Gromada & Richardson, 2021), extended family members and relatives play significant roles in providing care and upbringing children as alternative care in the global south (Shang, 2008; Ringson & Chereni, 2020). Grandparents, uncles and aunts, and nearby relatives, for example, take care of children while parents are out for work or deceased or separated or single, especially in Nigeria, (Akintayo, 2021), Ghana (Abdullah et al., 2020; Imoh, 2012; Cudjoe, Abdullah & Chiu, 2021), and Bangladesh (Ball & Wahedi, 2010).

In addition to providing care and support, extended families spend time together by playing and passing knowledge on different issues that children find interesting (Ball & Wahedi, 2010), collectively play role in safeguarding them from all forms of vulnerabilities, e.g., abuse, abandonment, or harmful practices, etc. (Abdullah et al., 2020), share resources involved in care activities (Okoye, 2013), and shower love and compassion. Extended family members also take custody when they feel an unsafe environment for children, e.g., shifting children from an abusive environment to a safer environment (Abdullah et al., 2020), sheltering orphan children provided with basic needs (Maundeni & Malinga-Musamba, 2013), and decision-making regarding child adoption, and so on. As explained, the child is considered as belonging and an identity to the family, and "Umunna", "ogbe", "ikwu-na-ibe" among the Igbo community (Obikeze, 2000), ‘Owe’ or ‘Aro’ among the Yoruba tribe, and ‘Adashi and ‘Gwandu’ to the Hausa tribe

(Okunola, 2002) are well known for alternative childcare in Nigeria. Customary family practices are supervised by "Abusuapanyin" (head of the family) in Ghana (Kuyini et al., 2019; Abdullah et al., 2020b) and by “Khana Prodhan” (household head) in Bangladesh, where extended families cater for the role of alternative care for children.

While child protection mechanisms run under institutional care in the west, it has been claimed in recent years that family and community-based care is better than institutional care (Costa and Giraldi, 2014). Community-based informal childcare system, in addition to extended family care, is another key that is run by community members to offer protection to children in Nigeria (Olaore & Drolet, 2016), Ghana (Chilwalo, 2020; Frimpong-Manso, 2014) and Bangladesh (Islam, 2020). Nigerian culture and value systems consider children as not belonging to the immediate family, but rather to the whole community where they, the whole community, equip vulnerable children and their families with resources to sort-out problems (Akintoya, 2021; Isidienu, 2015; Olaore & Drolet, 2016), collectively share care responsibilities (Nnama-Okechukwu & Okoye, 2019), and cater socialization and identity (Mtetwa & Muchacha, 2017). Ghanaian people, likewise, Nigeria feel obliged to provide care and protection to children due to the cultural value system where, the government enacted Care Reform Initiatives (CRI) supporting community-based childcare considering its efficacy (Frimpong-Manso, 2014), and the traditional rulers and ‘Queen Mothers’ mobilize community-based resources to ensure child protection (Aryeetey et al. 2012; Mabeyo & Kiwelu, 2019). Despite ratifying 33 conventions and initiating an appreciable number of laws and policies relating to child labour and protection by the Government of Bangladesh (Abusaleh, et al. 2021), on the other hand, children's rights are often infringed yet where, community people, in addition to extended family members, play significant roles like Nigeria and Ghana. They educate and train children, transfer norms and values, and safeguard them emotionally and economically (Islam, 2020).

In general, community-based informal childcare in these countries helps to provide safeguard children from vulnerabilities (Gwanyemba, Kiwia & Zuberi, 2016), deters teenage marriage (Chilwalo, 2020), sponsors ensure education and reduces school drop-out, and educates about sexual health and teenage pregnancy and community standards. Further, community-based organizations, e.g., youth clubs, charity organizations, and community libraries, etc. are also active in child protection mechanisms through education, training, and awareness of different issues in Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh (Manion, et al., 2021). The notions of 'We Feelings', 'Community Ownership', and the 'Principle of Reciprocity' widely exist at the community level in the stated countries that idealize the rationality of 'community contribution' in raising children. Zakat (purifying wealth by donating a specified portion) system in the Muslim religion in Nigeria (Kazeem, 2011) and Bangladesh (Ali, 2019) also plays role in protection mechanisms through almsgiving to vulnerable and needy children.

In the premodern era, social welfare and individual protection activities were mostly run by Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and the welfare reform discussions in the 1990s raised the line to provide support for FBOs by the government (Bielefeld and Cleveland, 2013). FBOs, e.g., temples mosques, trusts, churches, synagogues, etc. have been marked as a positive force in protecting children, orphans, the impoverished, and other vulnerable peoples in Nigeria (Connelly & Ikpaahindi, 2016; Azebeokhai, 2021), Ghana (Bunge, 2014; Garland and Chamiec-Case, 2005) and Bangladesh (Ali, et al., 2020). FBOs are highly involved in the abolition of despicable cultural practices and raise voices against all forms of oppression against children to ensure their rights and protection, e.g., killing of twins, child slavery, sexual exploitations, abuse and neglect, child marriage, teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, and drug, etc. in Nigeria (Ede & Kalu, 2018; Kaigama & Martins, 2012), Ghana (Bunge, 2014) and Bangladesh (Costello, 2016). Church and church members in Nigeria and Ghana ensure child protection based on solution-based approaches: host vulnerable families with children, provide

Christ-focused education, execute adoption and foster care, pave the way for free education and vocational training, aware through campaigns and awareness, rehabilitate abused children, ensure health care, organize parental counselling and training on parenting, etc. On the other hand, imam (leader) of mosques, community-based religious organizations, and their leaders in Bangladesh and Nigeria deliver sermons, in addition to religious codes, regarding child and orphans rights, child abuse, unprotective sex, and abortions, and take actions against harmful social practices, e.g., child marriage, juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, etc.

Taking care of children and orphans is inscribed in the Holy Bible and the Holy Quran as well, and FBOs, getting inspired by the sacred, take action for their care (Carroll, 2001; Islam, 2015). Housing street children and children at risk by Nazareth Home for God's Children in Ghana, rehabilitation of abused children by Habitation of Hope in Nigeria (Burgess, 2012), and running orphan childcare projects by Al Markazul Islami Bangladesh in Bangladesh (Ali, et al., 2020) are liveable examples. Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh share almost similar cultures in terms of childcare and protection, and Ubuntu philosophical notions like 'it takes a whole community to raise a child' are quite fit within the child protection framework in these countries. Extended family members in addition to parents, community-based informal care by community members, and the role of FBOs in child protection mechanisms underneath Ubuntu philosophy is quite present among the three countries that distinguish them from the Western institutional childcare and protection mechanisms.

Implications for social work

The recognition of the Ubuntu principle as the global agenda for social work spanning from 2020 to 2030 (Willmore et al. 2022) as highlighted above has further ignited discussions among scholars on the need for the indigenization of social work. Ubuntu principle which emphasizes on an individual in a collective existence and reciprocal exchange of care and support has big

prospects and implications for social work practitioners, especially in contemporary child welfare and protection. A critical examination of the above narratives regarding the relevance of the Ubuntu principle to child protection in the contexts of Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh shows overwhelming commonalities in how community members consider the welfare and protection of children a shared responsibility as well as a moral obligation. Extended family members, for instance, remain viable options when children do not have biological parents to take care of them. In this context, social workers always need to identify close family and community resources to offer care and protection.

In Ghana, social workers who encounter situations such as this in practice could explore the 'wofade' (Children Inheriting and being cared for by uncles) family care network which places children under the care of maternal uncles. As Broodryk (2008) puts it, the African culture of mutual care, reciprocity, compassion, and communal interest is well-reflected in the Ubuntu principle. Facilitation and mobilization of these resources for the common interest of protecting and caring for children become one of the core responsibilities of social workers at various levels. Social workers should be at the forefront of mobilising community efforts and resources as well as strengthening child protection mechanisms and values especially in contexts where these values are fast eroding (Eneh et al., 2018; Nnama-Okechukwu & Okoye, 2019; Odo et al. 2022; Rankopo & Diraditsile, 2020). This is to say that social workers should be actively involved in promoting the uniting ideals of Ubuntu principles at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels.

The findings of this article echo the uniting force of the ubuntu principle in ensuring that the care and protection of children are considered a collective obligation of community members as obtainable in Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh. For example, almsgiving in the name of Zakat, donations, and community charities in Bangladesh, Ghana, and Nigeria becomes major pillar of childcare and protection when the government shows state

incapacity due to insufficient funding or effective policy. Social workers, while working with children in this context, will always need to identify community resources and be aware of crowded funding to ensure care and support to children in the streets through a community-based approach (IASWW, 2018).

This interestingly aligns with the principle of 'collective responsibility' and the 'importance of human relationships' which are core mandates of social work as espoused in its global definitions (IFSW 2014, 2020). As noted by Chigangaidze (2021), social workers are keen on the interactions and relationships which shape the identity and behavioural norms of people. Analysis of this article also highlights the overarching importance of culturally competent social work which Mayaka and Truell (2021) argued is essential for productive, result-oriented, and engaging social work. In other words, social workers should recognize, acknowledge, and promote unique ubuntu principles obtainable in their local communities or contexts such as communal disciplining, care, and protection of children regardless of biological parenthood.

In practicality, the ubuntu principle enjoins social workers to embrace indigenous knowledge anchored on reciprocity and interconnectivity as well as a locally sourced solution which in most cases provides workable and relatable solutions to childcare and protection. Indigenous social work ideology strongly believes that the welfare and protection of every child should be considered a community-shared obligation and social workers should tailor their practice in a manner that engenders equity, social justice, and human rights. For instance, in parental separation and child protection after divorce in Bangladesh, issues in most of the cases first come to village court or village arbitration, instead of going to formal court like in the west. In this case, local members comprising local influential stakeholders whose voices are heard by everyone in the community usually come together to decide who will take charge of the children, either father or mother or mutually, and how expenses will be met. In this context, social workers

always need to be aware of how the village court works and should ensure that children are not excluded from care and protection regardless of their situation. Social workers could explore these local child protection mechanisms and ensure that the best interest of the child is protected (Wessells, 2015; Wessells et al., 2012; Columbia Group, 2011).

In Nigerian contexts precisely from the eastern part, a family meeting involving close family members (Umunna) is usually organized to deliberate on the care and protection of children in divorce situations. Social workers could seek the support of these networks in making decisions regarding where children should be placed when their parents are separated. Community advocacy as noted by Fraust (2008) in contexts where children are vulnerable to social exclusion becomes inevitable for social workers. Lastly, social workers can also be crusaders of the Ubuntu principle through community education and town hall meetings. Through this channel, social workers can strengthen the collective efforts of community members toward child protection and care.

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Chapter 28

Ubuntu and Social Work: Advancing A Global Lens and Language in Healthcare

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Biography
Jean E. Balestrery holds a Joint Ph.D. in Social Work and Anthropology from University of Michigan, a MA in Anthropology from University of Michigan, a MSW from University of Washington and a BA from Brown University. Dr. Balestrery is an interdisciplinary scholar-practitioner and Spirit of Eagles Hampton Faculty Fellow with many years of combined experience in research, teaching and practice. She collaborates with marginalized groups across diverse settings to advance health equity. Dr. Balestrery has presented research nationally and internationally, currently serves on the National Association of Social Workers National Committee for LGBTQ+ Issues and is a selected member engaged in Study of Environmental Arctic Change / SEARCH Co-Production of Knowledge discussions. Google Scholar.

Abstract
Ubuntu advances a heart-forward global humanity and contributes to a global social work lens. This chapter centres language in healthcare as a site for embedding Ubuntu, which is viewed as a gift for social work practice throughout the world. Notably, in the field of healthcare, language is culturally circumscribed. For example, from diagnosis to disease, the language of Euro-American, or Western, healthcare exists within context of a distinct cultural paradigm, namely biomedicine. A framework for a global social work glossary is presented here to advance a global social work perspective and humanistic care in social work practice everywhere.

Ubuntu and Social Work

Ubuntu, what does it mean? It's a concept from Africa and depicts a worldview that can be generally translated into the English language as follows: "I am because of you." Notably, Ubuntu is described as a gift to the West. The word originates from the phrase *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which means: 'A person is a person through other persons.'

As a phrase only first noted in written records

> in the mid-1800s among Nguni-speaking peoples, it's much older and has had different meanings through time and space. But one contemporary translation from Archbishop Tutu explains: 'My humanity is inextricably bound up in yours.'" (Weeber, 2021)

Tutu and other leaders, including Nelson Mandela, promoted this idea of Ubuntu as a healing philosophy for South Africa following the end of apartheid (Mayaka & Truell, 2021; Weeber, 2021). Apartheid was based on separation and Ubuntu is a contrasting notion based on community. Ubuntu has been described as a worldview which "revolves around the idea that a person cannot even consider themselves a whole human being without participating in the social fabric surrounding them" (Weeber, 2021). Ubuntu is premised upon interdependence and the understanding that none of us lives or acts in isolation.

The theme for the current 2020 – 2030 Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development is Ubuntu. This Global Agenda theme emphasizes mutual imbrications between Ubuntu and social work. The opportunity is now to expand and strengthen a global social work lens in alignment with this Global Agenda.

A heart-forward global humanity exists at the nexus of Ubuntu and social work. As explained by wa Mungai:

> "Ubuntu and social work share commonalities in being concerned with the welfare of people. There are also differences in that social work is founded on Western philosophies that tend to see the individual as existing autonomously from the community. There are also approaches in social work that focus on community and the collective though they may still fall short of recognising the interconnectedness envisioned in Ubuntu." (wa Mungai, 2021, p. 225)

Ubuntu strengthens social work values and practice by emphasizing a co-equal view of local community and indigenous knowledge alongside professional and institutional knowledge. In so doing, the social work practitioner draws upon Ubuntu philosophy to advance a global lens of humanistic care.

A Global Lens in Healthcare

This chapter presents an examination of language in healthcare to advance a global social work perspective in practice. Drawing upon Ubuntu philosophy, the foundation for a global social work glossary unfolds. This examination involves reframing a ubiquitous Euro-American, or Western, healthcare language term through social work values and then Ubuntu philosophy. It is Ubuntu philosophy that underpins a global social work lens. Hence, the power of language becomes evident. This examination illuminates an opportunity for social work practitioners to increase awareness about how language is a vector of power. It is an opportunity for becoming the Ubuntu practitioner.

Words matter and particularly in healthcare. Words comprise language systems that are embedded in cultural paradigms. In healthcare, most health systems "can be defined as monocultural, multicultural or intercultural:

> *Monocultural*: This is based on the concept of society being homogenous and privilege the dominant national culture over all other cultures. Though there may be some acknowledgement of ethnic or linguistic or cultural diversity, it is not reflected in policies and resource allocation.

> Further, data collection does not take into account any ethnic or cultural differences.
>
> *Multicultural*: This system welcomes and promotes different cultures in society. It is still insufficient if it fails to ensure equality among cultures.
>
> *Intercultural*: This goes beyond mere recognition to seeking exchange and reciprocity in a mutual relationship, as well as in solidarity among the different ways of life."
>
> (United Nations Department of Economic and Social A., 2015, p. 29).

Within context of this typology, and specifically monocultural health systems, the "dominant national culture" refers to Euro-American, or Western, ideology. Healthcare systems incorporate these cultural paradigms to varying degrees throughout the world. Relevant to healthcare and associated cultural paradigms, words we use "can reflect bias or challenge it, divide our teams or bring them together"; they can help us "be more inclusive in our communications and conversations" (American Medical Association and Association of American Medical Colleges, 2021).

As author, I currently reside in the United States (U.S.) yet have prior experience residing outside the United States. While my experiences have been diverse, I have many years of socialization in professional contexts that centre a biomedical model of healthcare, which are reflective of a Euro-American, or Western, ideology. As a result of all my experiences, I have developed acute awareness about how language is a site for (dis)empowerment. The following list of language terms and phrases in Euro-American, or Western, healthcare is reframed through Ubuntu philosophy to advance a global social work lens. This list is a representative beginning and is not meant to be exhaustive. Let us co-learn together in the journey of expanding our global social work language and lens – one that transforms dehumanizing language into a global foundation for humanistic healthcare.

A Global Social Work Glossary

This glossary is a beginning. It is not meant to be exhaustive nor conclusive. Rather, the intention here is to illuminate the power of language and its embeddedness in cultural paradigms.

This glossary presents a framework that transcends socio-political boundaries and territorial lines of separation. It does so by first drawing upon social work values and then second by embedding Ubuntu philosophy in language, specifically Euro-American, or Western, healthcare language. What follows are case examples of specific Euro-American, or Western, healthcare terms or phrases, which reflect the cultural paradigm of biomedicine, and then are viewed through social work values and Ubuntu philosophy to generate new meaning – new meaning based on humanistic care.

Transforming language through social work values and Ubuntu philosophy is exemplified with each case example presented here in this article. This framework aims to advance a global social work lens and language that advances global social work practice. In the framework that follows, the first column on the left lists a term or phrase in Euro-American, or Western, healthcare followed by a social work value in the next column. Then, a next step of embedding Ubuntu philosophy within context of the listed healthcare language term or phrase contributes to a humanistic reframing of the term or phrase. In so doing, the opportunity presents for increasing collective awareness about the potency of language and advancing a global social work lens.

A global social work lens centres humanistic care in the field of healthcare throughout the world. Ubuntu philosophy is a gift to global social work practice, particularly in healthcare. While Euro-American, or Western, healthcare language can be dehumanizing, Ubuntu philosophy elevates this language to be more humanistic.

Case Example #1

Euro-American, or Western, ideology in healthcare	Social Work Values	Ubuntu: A global language and lens in heatlhcare
Biomedicine & Biomedical model	Importance of Human Relationships	Whole-Person Care & Holistic Wellness

Table 3: Case Example #1

Biomedicine, or the biomedical model, is the dominant cultural paradigm of Euro-American, or Western, healthcare. Within this particular cultural paradigm, the individual is the primary point of reference. wa Mungai explains: "Because of its founding in the Western countries, social work is steeped in Western philosophy and thought. From this philosophical orientation, the individual is prioritised over community and society" (2021, p. 228). Notably, physical health is the primary focus of the biomedical model in healthcare.

Yet, physical health is only a part of a person's life. There are so many other aspects comprising someone's life: emotional, social, vocational, spiritual, familial, financial and so on. Yet, biomedicine "is estimated to account for only 10-20 percent of the modifiable contributors to healthy outcomes for a population. The other 80 to 90 percent are sometimes broadly called the SDoH: health-related behaviours, socioeconomic factors, and environmental factors" (Magnan, 2017). SDoH refers to social determinants of health. With its primary focus on physical health, the biomedical model in healthcare is reductionistic.

With this primary focus on physical health, biomedicine attends to physical distress and disease. Within this context, physical symptoms are labelled as a "disorder" and viewed through a lens of pathology. Combining these

characteristics, biomedicine is a cultural paradigm comprised of individualistic, reductionistic and pathological characteristics.

When reframed through social work values and Ubuntu philosophy, the perspective associated with the term "biomedicine" and the phrase "biomedical model" in healthcare expands to account for all aspects of being human. Diversity and inclusion are among social work values that expand a biomedical lens into a larger holistic perspective (for discussion on social work values see National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics). These values account for diverse knowledge systems, and their inclusion, within context of multiple understandings about what "medicine" means. For example, there are many communities that adopt an understanding of food as medicine, culture as medicine and language as medicine; among these are indigenous communities all over the world (Balestrery, forthcoming).

Ubuntu philosophy is humanistic. "Ubuntu is a human-centred philosophy that represents respect for all humanity and emphasises that human beings are primarily social and collective rather than primarily individualistic beings" (wa Mungai, 2021, p. 224). This emphasis upon the collective represents a holistic view.

Ubuntu-informed health conceptualizations advance a global lens and language in healthcare. Ubuntu philosophy reflects a cultural paradigm that is more humanistic. In this particular case example, the term *biomedicine* and phrase *biomedical model* transform into *whole-person care* and *holistic wellness*, which become more globally relevant (Jonas & Rosenbaum, 2021). Ubuntu philosophy is premised upon humanistic care and offers the social work practitioner an opportunity for becoming the Ubuntu practitioner.

Case Example #2

Euro-American, or Western, ideology in healthcare	Social Work Values	Ubuntu: A global language and lens in healthcare
Clinical & Clinical Differential	Social Justice	Contextual & Structural Differential

Table 4: Case Example #2

The terms clinical and clinical differential are in contrast to those of contextual and structural differential. Clinical and clinical differential refer to biological and behavioural data that present as physical symptoms to indicate a diagnosis. In contrast, context encompasses broader social structures that impact health and attends to structural forces in clinical medicine (Stonington et al., 2018). Structural differential includes the larger context and "delineates the social, political, and economic factors that may be influencing a patient's health and health care and facilitates responses to the modifiable factors" (Seymour et al., 2018). As Seymour et al. (2018) explain:

> "Clinicians can think critically about the structural forces that affect pathophysiology, therapeutics, and prognosis in the same way that they already develop differential diagnoses for unexplained symptoms. In particular, physicians' perception of a nonadherent patient or an intractable clinical situation could prompt them to turn to a structural differential to consider the social, political, and economic factors influencing the patient's health… Just as a clinical differential often leads to recognition of multiple concurrent issues, a structural differential may include multiple forces, ranging from international policy to clinic workflows."

Notably, the focus of a clinical differential is distinct from that of a structural differential yet the process for each is similar.

When reframed through social work values and Ubuntu philosophy, the term "clinical" and the phrase "clinical differential" in healthcare are viewed within a larger context. This larger context is one that accounts for structural and systemic factors, which include inequities, that impact health and wellbeing (Farmer et al, 2006). Consequently, the assessment frame expands to include the wide range of factors that influence health: SDoH and the structural determinants of SDoH. The language of *context* and *structural differential* emphasizes the conditions contributing to health and wellness, which reflect humanistic care in social work practice.

As a humanistic philosophy, Ubuntu emphasizes relatedness and connection. While "Ubuntu and social work share the commonality of concern for human welfare," it is important to understand "Ubuntu goes a step further in emphasising the intricate linkages between humans and nature in a non-hierarchical web" (wa Mungai, 2021, p. 224). This emphasis upon a "non-hierarchical web" underpins the importance of environmental responsibility and justice associated with Ubuntu philosophy. "Ubuntu calls for people to unite in their responsibility of safeguarding the environment, ensuring food security and leaving an improved Earth to forthcoming generations – all which are prerequisite elements of sustainable development" (Chigangaidze, 2022, p. 8). In advancing social justice and human rights, "Ubuntu connects justice to the ecological" (Chigangaidze, 2022, p. 9).

Ubuntu advances a perspective in healthcare that accords co-equal value to clinical *and* contextual information as it pertains to healthcare. Consequently, Ubuntu philosophy contributes to an intercultural health system rather than a monocultural or multicultural health system. Expanding beyond biomedicine as the central cultural paradigm in any health system, an intercultural health system values equally indigenous place-based knowledge and the many factors comprising social drivers of health.

Case Example #3

Euro-American, or Western, ideology in healthcare	Social Work Values	Ubuntu: A global language and lens in healthcare
Diagnosis & Diagnostic Formulation	Dignity and Worth of the Person	Socio-Cultural Formulation

Table 5: Case Example #3

The diagnostic process associated with Euro-American, or Western, clinical medicine has been influenced by the concepts of both culture and structure. To date, these two concepts have been framed as distinct in theory and practice:

> "Cultural psychiatry rooted in medical anthropology and structural competency rooted in social medicine. Structural competency was initially justified as a corrective shift away from a view of culture emphasizing interpretational and meaning-focused assessment to emphasize the centrality of social forces and institutions. However, these two orientations are neither mutually exclusive nor conflictual. Each yield complementary clinically relevant information about a patient's identity and life, the personal experience of suffering, setting, and how to formulate an effective salutary response. To link these two approaches more effectively, we recommend that the OCF be updated as a Socio-Cultural Formulation (SCF). Doing so harmonizes cultural dimensions of patients' experiences, located within specific sociocultural contexts of family and social networks, with the structural predicaments foregrounded in social medicine." (Weiss et al., 2021, p. 465)

It is noted that "OCF" refers to the "Outline for Cultural Formulation" that first appeared as a framework for cultural assessment in the Diagnostical and Statistical Manual, fifth edition (DSM-IV).

Engaging in strictly a cultural formulation of a particular case, or situation, in healthcare is myopic. Similarly, engaging in strictly a structural formulation of a particular case, or situation, in healthcare is equally myopic. To best serve a person's overall holistic health and wellness, adopting a comprehensive view in the assessment process is required. As explained by Holmes et al. (2020): "Physicians risk misdiagnosis when we fail to take social structures into account or misattribute their effects to biologic mechanisms or individual behaviours."

When reframed through social work values and Ubuntu philosophy, the term *diagnosis* and the phrase *diagnostic formulation* in healthcare are transformed into language that centres a person's storied experience of illness. Centering the storied experience of illness draws upon the social work value of *dignity and worth of the person*. This value is a foundation upon which Ubuntu-informed conceptualizations of health advance a global social work lens and language in healthcare. The reframing of diagnosis and diagnostic formulation to socio-cultural formulation advances humanistic care in social work practice.

Ubuntu philosophy is a lens through which dehumanizing language in healthcare transforms into humanizing language. For example, the term *diagnosis* and phrase *diagnostic formulation* refer to the process of labelling, which is associated with the objectification of a person. Rendering a person into an object through the process of labeling is dehumanizing. Ubuntu offers a reframing of these terms into language that emphasizes inter-connectedness and interdependence. A core aspect of Ubuntu is "that one's humanity is caught up or inextricably bound up with and intertwined in, that of others" (Ewuoso & Hall, 2019, p. 99). Consequently, healthcare language that encompasses the conditions that impact a person's health and wellbeing -a socio-cultural formulation- represents humanistic language. While it is noted that Ubuntu cannot be adequately translated into the English

language, there are common translations. Among these are 'personhood' and 'humanness' (Ewuoso & Hall, 2019, p. 94).

Case Example #4

Euro-American, or Western, ideology in healthcare	Social Work Values	Ubuntu: A global language and lens in healthcare
Disease	justice + equity social + cultural + environmental + structural	Illness

Table 6: Case Example #4

There are conceptual differences between the term's *disease* and *illness* in healthcare. "That distinction holds that disease in the Western medical paradigm is malfunctioning or maladaptation of biologic and psychophysiologic processes in the individual, whereas illness represents personal, interpersonal, and cultural reactions to disease or discomfort" (Kleinman et al., 2006). The difference between these language terms is: *disease* is based on constructing reality through physical signs and symptoms while *illness* is based upon constructing reality through sociocultural experience.

This is a significant difference because it often becomes the difference between dehumanizing healthcare or humanizing healthcare. As Kleinman et al. (2006) explains: "The moment when the human experience of illness is recast into technical disease categories something crucial to the experience is lost because it was not validated as an appropriate clinical concern" (p. 1674). Social work values serve as a foundation upon which to advance humanizing healthcare. Ubuntu philosophy builds upon this foundation to expand the perspective in healthcare to advance intercultural health systems.

Ubuntu is a gift to us all. As a call to action for social workers across the globe: let us live in the process of becoming whole human beings in relationship to one another. In so doing, we offer ourselves, each other, our communities, our nations and our world the opportunity to heal and co-create sustainable collective futures.

Today in healthcare, medicine means many things beyond a biomedical understanding. Today, the term medicine can refer to the following:

- food as medicine
- language as medicine
- culture as medicine
- prayer as medicine

Ubuntu philosophy is a lens through which language transforms to encompass a global perspective. In healthcare, Ubuntu is a gift advancing a humanistic perspective. In so doing, this gift yields a global social work glossary in healthcare. A work-in-progress glossary follows and is a site for our continued collective co-creation:

A Global Social Work Glossary in Healthcare

Euro-American, or Western, ideology in healthcare	**Social Work Values**	**Ubuntu: A global language and lens in healthcare**
Biomedicine & Biomedical Model	Importance of Human Relationships	Whole-Person Care & Holistic Wellness
Clinical & Clinical Differential	Social Justice	Contextual & Structural Differential

Diagnosis & Diagnostic Formulation	Dignity and Worth of the Person	Socio-Cultural Formulation
Disease	justice + equity social + cultural + environmental structural	Illness & Idioms of Distress
Disparities	justice + equity social + cultural + environmental structural	Inequities
Minority	justice + equity social + cultural + environmental structural	Diverse / BIPOC / LGBTQ+
Monocultural & Multicultural	justice + equity social + cultural + environmental structural	Intercultural
Patient-Centered	justice + equity social + cultural + environmental structural	People-centered & Person-centered
Signs & Symptoms	justice + equity social + cultural + environmental structural	Storied experience
Underserved	justice + equity social + cultural + environmental structural	Historically excluded

Table 7: A Global Social Work Glossary in Healthcare

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Chapter 29

Ubuntu and Social Work Practice in the United Kingdom: Reflections on Social Work Knowledge Transferability across Borders

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Biography
Respect Farai Mugodhi is an international Social Worker from Zimbabwe, and he is currently working as a social worker in England. Respect values African philosophy as it has shaped his worldview throughout his life. This contribution is his first one on the subject of Ubuntu and social work practice.

Abstract
In an increasingly globalised world, the global social reality of international social work migration continues to attract discussion in academic and professional circles. Central to these discussions is the transferability of social work skills and knowledge across borders. In this period, Ubuntu – an African philosophy – has also received global recognition as a social work practice philosophy reflected by the International Federation of Social Workers' global agenda for social work. In that regard, with the United Kingdom being a popular destination in international social work mobility, hosting 1544 Zimbabweans, 386 South Africans and 312 Nigerians (Social Work England, 2022), all coming from the African region, this article reflects on the applicability and relevance of Ubuntu, in social work practice across borders

and in the neoliberal context of the UK. The article furthers debates on the dialectical tensions between the local and global and exposes the limitations of Ubuntu in non-African contexts.

Pfupiso [Translation of Abstract into ChiShona]
Mupasi ririkushanduka zvikuru kudai, kuyambuka makungwa kwemaSocial Worker kwavambisa nhaurinano mumapoka ezvefundo nemumabasa. Mukuvhiya nyaya iyi mubvunzo mukuru unobvunzwa ndewekuti tsika yekushandisa Hunhu kana kuti HuMunhu iyo yatinoti Ubuntu sevashandi vekuAfrica inotendereka here mukushanda kumhiri kwemakungwa saSocial Worker. Panguva ino, Ubuntu iyo inova tsika yedu vanhu vatema chinhu chatanga kugamushirikawo mumapoka emaSocial Worker pasi rino rese kupfurikidza nebasa reInternational Federation of Social Workers. Nekudaro, sezvo nyika ye United Kingdom yakatora vashandi, 1544 kubva kuZimbabwe, 386 kubva kuSouth Africa uye, 312 kubva kuNigeria (Social Work England,2022), chinyorwa chino chinoongorora kuti zvirokwazvo tsika yedu yekuva NeHunhu kana kuti Ubuntu inoshanda here mumabasa kumhiri kwemakungwa. Chekupedzisira, chinyorwa chino chinoongorora makakatanwa aripo panyaya dzinoitika pasirose uye nemumatunhu nekuratidza zvigozhero zvingavapo pakushandisa mutiro netsika yedu yeUbuntu mubasa mhiri kwemakungwa.

Introduction

In my contribution to this important discussion on Ubuntu and social work perspectives, I should start by quoting the words of Thabo Mbeki, the former South African president derived from a famous speech he made at the adoption of the post-apartheid South African constitution on May 8th, 1996:

> "On an occasion such as this, we should, perhaps, start from the beginning. So, let me begin. I am an African" (Mbeki, 2005).

I will then quote the words of a prominent black public intellectual who has deeply influenced me by his thought:

> "To be human, at the most profound level, is to encounter honestly the inescapable circumstances that constrain us, yet master the courage to struggle compassionately for our own unique individualities and for more democratic and free societies" (Cornel West)

These two quotes from renowned black philosophers epitomise and define the significance and positioning of black identity, thought and the Ubuntu philosophy in this article. Indeed, they demonstrate the relevance of Ubuntu- being human- as a philosophy or worldview to myself and I believe to other African social workers. As such, it is important to highlight from the very beginning that as a philosophy, Ubuntu is widely acknowledged to be African (Mayaka and Truell, 2021, Chigangaidze, 2021). As the article will demonstrate, this is not an attempt to "personalise" this philosophy by constraining it to an African perspective on its applicability to international social work practice contexts.

In contrast, this article makes a greater case for a reflection on the philosophy's applicability in different contexts outside of Africa. The increased migration of African social workers to the UK as a case in point makes this reflection worthwhile. However, I argue that as a social work practice philosophy, in practice Ubuntu has limitations. Firstly, I argue that it is difficult to embed ubuntu in social work practice because for a long time it has not been considered as part of mainstream social work theory. This is not accidental. The social work profession has its roots in the West and has for a very long time been predominated by western theory and approaches. This to an extent has side-lined the adoption of indigenous approaches into the core social work knowledge base. Secondly, social work is a context-based profession (Healy, 2014). As such, debate on the recruitment of social workers internationally raises concerns about international social workers' ability to transfer their knowledge to address global issues and in local contexts (Simpson,2009). Finally, I reflect on the structural challenges that make the practitioner's ability to embed ubuntu in their practice difficult in the context

of the UK. I argue that the Neoliberal context in the UK is not fertile ground for Ubuntu and can be dehumanising.

Ubuntu- An African Philosophy

There is a broad consensus in reviewed literature that Ubuntu as a philosophy is underpinned by highly regarded African values of community or communal ways of living and of being interdependent (Nsabimana and Ndorimana, 2019; Asamoah and Yeboah-Assiamah, 2019, McDonald, 2010) espoused specifically by empathy or compassion i.e., to feel for others, solidarity - described by (Swanson, 2007) as "humble togetherness", harmony, collectivism among others. Importantly, Ubuntu as a philosophy emphasises that individuals are a product of their community and thus highly regards the importance of community in shaping the moral character, dignity, and wellbeing of individuals without which we cease to be humans. This reality is encapsulated in the saying "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" in Nguni (Swanson, 2007, McDonald, 2010) or "munhu, munhu navanhu" in Chishona. This literally means one's humanness-moral character, dignity, and wellbeing- are direct products of their interconnectedness to others around them. Therefore, according to Nsabimana and Ndorimana (2019) the focus of Ubuntu is on "human relations" and by doing so, it addresses the very deepest of our moral and spiritual enquiries on what it means to be human and to relate with others.

It follows that Ubuntu has spiritual connotations as it speaks to deeply ethical and moral issues of human existence, ways of being and ways of knowing (Swanson, 2007). In that regard, Nsabimana and Ndorimana (2019, 267) considered Ubuntu as "an ethical and moral theory which contains a philosophy of life in many parts of Africa." According to Nsabimana and Ndorimana (2019) and Asamoah and Yeboah-Assiamah (2019) Ubuntu is the basis upon which social policy, ethics in education and business sectors have been founded. It has also been a critical worldview providing insights in resolving conflicts and in promoting peace in Africa. It is not a coincidence

that the Truth and Reconciliation efforts in post-apartheid South Africa brought the philosophy of Ubuntu to the fore. Characters such as Arch-Bishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela, key members of that process are synonymous with the philosophy that has now become a theme in the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development. Therefore, with such eminent examples of its applicability in addressing everyday challenges, it is a shame, that in a world increasingly in crisis and where social work is part of the frontline professions, Ubuntu has not been established as a key social work theory. Absolute tragedy.

Ubuntu- One of the many indigenous philosophies

In this section, I briefly undertake to indicate that whilst Ubuntu has been adopted as the first theme of The Agenda, it is not the only other indigenous philosophy that can impact social work education and practice in an increasingly globalised world. I am conscious here that I am an African and whilst I may rejoice in the promotion of Ubuntu into the mainstream agenda of social work, there is more work that is required to integrate various other forms of Indigenous knowledge and approaches into mainstream social work practice. In addition, it is not lost on me that my positionality as an African social worker may render my views biased when discussing Ubuntu and its significance as an African philosophy and theory of social work practice.

To balance this out, I refer to Swanson (2007) who reckons that other African scholars have pursued the universalisation of African epistemology and sought to clearly show it as distinct to western knowledge and theory. Swanson (2007) further argues that this approach is problematic regardless of the importance attached to it. In that regard, whilst there is no doubt that it is critical to make a distinction between various epistemologies, such an approach often alienates other indigenous contributions to theory and practice (Swanson 2007). For example, Swanson (2007) considers that the binary view that anything African including knowledge and theory is organic and collectivist compared to anything western which is either 'materialistic or

individualistic' is problematic. Regardless, Swanson (2007) argues that indigenous perspectives have been increasingly accepted and recognised in the social sciences. He attributes this to postmodernism and post-colonial discourses which he argues, have offered a platform to which hegemonic views of knowledge have been disrupted and African epistemologies have been well articulated and contested (Swanson, 2007).

Ubuntu and social work theory

In the preceding sections, I expressed somewhat dramatically my vexation at how puzzling it is that Ubuntu had not been fully incorporated into social work education and practice. The adoption of ubuntu as the first theme for The Global Agenda of social work and social development is therefore a welcome development. It is such a huge step from a position of internationalising social work education, values, and practice.

On that note, various scholars highlight that Ubuntu as an African philosophy has gained wide acclaim in social work literature (Chigangaidze, 2021a; Chigangaidze, 2022; Mugumbate and Chereni, 2019). There is, therefore, an acknowledgment that Ubuntu is an explanatory theory/ worldview (McDonald, 2010) and that it is also a practice theory which means that social work practice can be guided by it. Previously, I highlighted how Ubuntu has deep ethical and moral components that may inform practice. Chigangaidze et al (2022) argue that Ubuntu and the values it promotes are aligned to social work ethics and theories. For clarity, Chigangaidze et al (2022) highlight the significance of Ubuntu and its application in social work theory and indicate that it has wider applications in various other fields and vocations due to its collectivistic approaches and principles. Other social work theories and perspectives aligned to Ubuntu according to Chigangaidze et al (2022) include:

a. The Person in the Environment perspective.
b. Humanistic perspective
c. Humanistic-existential theories
d. The Ecological systems theory

The extent to which Ubuntu is also closely linked to psychological theories is also debatable. However, whilst Ubuntu appears compatible with all mainstream social work theories, it maintains a distinct approach in that it values human relations and interdependence as a means to which individual and social problems can be solved. As a student of Cornel West, I would argue that Ubuntu has traits of Marxist-Humanism and in that regard, also offers critique to forms of domination in today's world. There has been a wider call for social work to be radical lately in the face of growing global inequalities and social problems and Marxist approaches have been recommended. Thus, in a world where individual case work is dominant, Ubuntu provides an alternative approach which is community and culturally sensitive. It also becomes an alternative approach to social workers who endeavour to decolonise social work practice and make it humane and more empowering.

The idea of decolonising social work emerges from the globally acknowledged position that social work as a profession emerged in the Global North and that therefore, social work education and practice is largely founded on western philosophies (Mayaka and Truell, 2021). It follows that the current models of social work practice globally are also mainly western in nature (Jaswal and Kshetrimayum 2022). As social work has developed and has become a global profession, western theories, and approaches to addressing global problems have been mainly applied even in non-western contexts. Esteemed scholars profoundly regarded this nature and development of social work in non-western contexts as "professional imperialism" (Midgley.1981) and as a legacy of colonialism (Mupedziswa, 1988). This unfortunate scenario alienated indigenous philosophies and approaches to addressing global problems and therefore, in many contexts limited social work's impact in promoting human welfare and dignity, in advancing human rights and in promoting social justice. Rather, social work became an instrument of social control (Kaseke, 1991).

Nothing much has happened to change this view. However, Jaswal and Kshetrimayum (2022) assert that social work as a profession has existed for a

lifetime, that it has developed and changed and, in the process, continued to adopt new values and approaches to practice. This paradigm shift in approach according to Jaswal and Kshetrimayum (2022) is in recognition of the need to adapt to the ever changing social-political and economic contexts. As such, social work education and practice has increasingly recognised and mainstreamed knowledge and values from non-western contexts. Jaswal and Kshetrimayum (2022) further assert that social work has adopted interdependence and collectivism to its current set of existing values.

However, whilst there has been an increased acceptance of Indigenous perspectives in international social work, there are concerns around how social work informed by these perspectives can be conceptualised. This has impacted on the social work profession's capacity to incorporate Indigenous perspectives in education and practice (Jaswal and Kshetrimayum, 2022). Ubuntu in my view, has been a victim of this ambiguity in its adoption in social work.

Ubuntu in Social Work Practice in the UK- Praxis

Transferability of Indigenous knowledge.

In examining the potential impact of the concept of ubuntu to international social work, Mayaka and Truell (2021) express a desire to see this philosophy applied in practice across diverse cultural contexts. They also invite discussion on how this new theme impacts on the normative approaches and dominant theories to social work practice that are largely western shaped.

Therefore, I believe that my contribution to this discussion is crucial. This is firstly on the basis that I am an African and one deeply socialised through an Ubuntu perspective and secondly because I am an African social worker practising in the UK. For clarity, I am one of the droves of international social workers who have taken the huge step to transition from practice in Africa to be social workers in the UK. Therefore, I intentionally examine the

transferability and applicability of Ubuntu in England where I currently practice.

The applicability of social worker skills and knowledge acquired from another context into everyday practice in another context is regarded by Trevithick (2012) as "utility." In my research on experiences of immigrant social workers transitioning to practice into the UK, there was consensus that skills learnt from abroad were transferable in the UK (Mugodhi, 2019). The transferability of skills is affected by various factors and one factor is that of the purposeful recruitment of social workers from similar cultural backgrounds such as the UK. This is discussed in the next section. However, according to Chigangaidze et al (2022) social work as a practice-based profession has standard ethical guidelines which direct how social workers relate to service users, colleagues, and agencies. It is my reflection that apart from the standardised international social work education and practice which is dominantly western in caricature, the ethical framework in existence facilitates easy transfer of skills in different contexts.

The question of the transferability of Ubuntu as an indigenous practice philosophy thus also follows. It should not rise though because as a practice philosophy, and as already discussed Ubuntu is widely acknowledged to inform social work practice and to be applicable to all social work methods (Mugumbate and Chereni, 2019). In reality, the question arises because Ubuntu has not been embedded in social work education or practice outside Southern Africa. In contrast, western frameworks of viewing the world remain dominant. On reflection, IFW's efforts to raise awareness on Ubuntu as a relevant framework to inform practice through The Agenda have not reached far and wide. In a recent conversation with my supervisor-White-British heritage- at work in the UK, I was not surprised to learn that they were not aware of The Agenda and that they also did not know about Ubuntu. It speaks volumes on the utility of Ubuntu as a practice philosophy in a social

work practice context where it is routine to utilise western theories to inform practice.

Social work is a context-based profession.

McDonald (2010) clearly indicates that Ubuntu is an African worldview and discusses the dialectical tensions of whether the philosophy is unique to Africa and African contexts or can be applicable across contexts. In that regard he concludes by asserting that "Ubuntu practices therefore vary across time and space and are dependent on (changing) social, linguistic, economic, and political contexts" (McDonald,2010, 142). Again, it is Mayaka and Truell (2021) who yearn to see Ubuntu applied in practice across different contexts. This is noble. However, I would argue that their desire comes from an appreciation of the context-based nature of social work and the understanding that ubuntu as a practice philosophy has not been embedded in international social work practice and education. Therefore, to have Ubuntu embedded across contexts of practice is a big ask. Firstly, the cultural specifics and values such as community, solidarity and interdependence are not universal. Whereas social work holds these values as universal, it is not always the case within the contexts that social workers practice in. In fact, social workers do not practise in a vacuum, but practice is heavily context shaped (Healy, 2014).

As such whilst globalisation has created a massive opportunity for migration of social workers to the UK (Mugodhi, 2019), there is less acknowledgement of unique aspects of social work education including indigenous philosophies or approaches such as Ubuntu from the source countries and on how they are applicable in the UK. Rather, recruitment of social workers in the UK is culture specific and, in that regard, targets social workers from mainly English-speaking countries or otherwise from countries with historical/colonial ties with the United Kingdom (Carson, 2010, Hussein and Clarke, 2011). What this entails, is that recruitment is tailored to suit the cultural contexts of the UK. Regardless of one's origin, it is an expectation that they have to practice in the

cultural context of the UK and therefore, their education should be transferable to the UK, and should be relevant and acceptable to UK standards. This is verified through the process of qualification recognition and comparison by Social Work England. Fairly so, and in my view, having obtained my social work qualifications in Zimbabwe and later in the UK and then transitioned to practice in the UK from Zimbabwe, there are glaring similarities in practice that I can highlight- from the model of social work practice to the methods of practice. It is not a coincidence, and as highlighted above, recruitment addresses that.

There is an argument by colleagues (Mayaka and Truell, 2021) that regardless of country differences in socio-economic and political contexts, there are elements in either context whose implications on social work are significant. These mainly relate to the increasingly privatised nature of welfare and social services and to the reduced role of governments in welfare provision which is global. The argument made is that this creates a case for a humane approach to social work as the current contexts are a creation of dehumanising ideologies. Utilising Ubuntu in this case may be an alternative approach to addressing the ever-increasing inequalities and social ills. This is because it puts the human first and where government is meant to be the provider of welfare and is non-existent, the community will take the critical role. My experience of social work practice in the UK though is that practice to an extent side-lines the significance of community in addressing individual or community problems. After all, the political rhetoric in the UK since the 1970s is that 'there is no such thing as community.' Therefore, there is a significant limitation to the applicability of Ubuntu in practice or in the decision-making processes of an ordinary social worker supporting a child or family in crisis. I recall cases where immigrant children and families without recourse to public funds have not been provided with services regardless of identified need. The approaches in the UK neglect the human needs of individuals or communities of immigrants for example and are concerned with their eligibility to support

and resources. Jolly (2018) referred to this dehumanising phenomenon as "statutory neglect."

Ubuntu and Neoliberalism- Values at odds.

There is not sufficient space to address in depth the opportunities and limitations of Ubuntu as a philosophy in social work practice in the UK. However, the discussion is not enough without addressing the glaring value clashes between Ubuntu and Neoliberalism/managerialism which informs the context of social work practice in the UK and in an increasingly globalised world. Dominelli (2010,602) argued that globalisation had promoted "business practices and market discipline" in social work, that it had a disempowering effect on social workers as it starved them of crucial resources needed for intervention, promoted performance based approaches to work that are more administrative, disrupted the relational aspect of social work, created services users who are consumers of services and promoted service user's individual choices and responsibility for meeting their own needs. Notably, globalisation according to Dominelli (2010) weakened the aspect of solidarity in services by cutting down on universal services.

In similar fashion, Swanson (2007) describes Neoliberalism as the ideology hugely responsible for current global socio-economic and political problems. Neoliberalism is seen by Swanson (2007) as a threat to the values and aspirations of Ubuntu as a philosophy because it undermines human interdependence and the value of community in addressing social and economic challenges affecting individuals or society at large. Rather, (van der Walt and Oosthuizen, 2022) argue that due to neoliberalism, economic and business principles are significant over any other consideration. In line with this ideological concern, social work in the UK is to a large extent process driven. In that regard, neoliberalism disregards the moral values that are deeply regarded in an Ubuntu (Nsabimana and Ndorimana, 2019) way of life and in this scenario to practice. Where in contrast, ubuntu would create an environment where community interests are not lesser in consideration to

process or individual interests, neoliberalism highly regards individual choice. Therefore, it is my reflection that Ubuntu, underpinned by strong values such as, interdependence, community, respect for humans and their dignity, social solidarity and collective action is difficult to apply in the UK. I have worked as a social worker with high caseloads and the challenges of applying Ubuntu in practice in the UK are not exaggerated. There is clear evidence that the opportunities are there, however, process focused social work in this context cripples the impact an alternative approach such as Ubuntu can have on social work practice and on the overall wellbeing of the service user.

Conclusion

I am a proud African social worker currently practicing social work in the UK. Every day I grapple with what it means to be human and do aspire greatly to make a difference as humanely as possible to service users. The adoption of Ubuntu as the first theme for The Agenda thus struck me as a noble thing and a demonstration of the strides that the global social work community has made in dismantling hegemonic social work tendencies in theory and practice and in the process, acknowledging the existence and utility of indigenous philosophies and knowledge in social work. Adopting indigenous philosophies such as Ubuntu to mainstream social work education and practice is thus surely beneficial as it offers more human approaches to dealing with the increasing and never, ending forms of domination which are facilitated by the processes of globalisation. Ubuntu in my view is aligned to Marxist critical theory and is an empowering approach if embedded in practice as it puts humanity at the centre and promotes rich values of interdependence, community, solidarity and collectivism which are all social work values.

However, my reflection shows that there are limitations to the applicability of Ubuntu in UK social work practice. The Neoliberal context of practice, which creates a process driven approach to practice, the dominance of

western knowledge in practice and the structural challenges of the UK make it increasingly difficult to be an Ubuntu practitioner. In fact, more needs to be done to mainstream Ubuntu as a social work philosophy so that it firstly gets embedded in social work education in order to have meaningful impact. Secondly, social work is context based and with the dominance of western theories and ideologies on practice, a call for an African worldview to inform social work practice appears to be an uphill task. However, it should be applauded as a conscious effort to 'humanise' increasingly dehumanising social work practice shaped by neoliberal ideologies.

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The Profession's Journey with the Gift of Ubuntu

Rory Truell

Biography

Rory Truell is the Secretary-General of the International Federation of Social Workers, an organisation with consultative status at the United Nations and comprised of 147 national associations of social work. He was born in Northern Ireland and grew up in New Zealand. In his current role, based in Switzerland, Rory works alongside elected officials facilitating global polices and coordinating the development of the social work profession. This job takes him to many parts of the world to engage with social workers, the communities they work in and their governments. He frequently writes and speaks on his observations, experiences and the practices that inspire the profession.

Rory's lifelong professional passion is in community self-led development. He advocates that social work's role, involves working beyond services, recognising that families and communities can provide the best primary care and support, and that social services need to be designed to support and enhance organic community social protection systems.

During the rainy season in Rwanda, there was a break in the sky and my social work colleague Emery Nduwimana and I took the opportunity to walk through a village on the outskirts of Kigali. The pause in the rain allowed steam to rise out of the red earthen roads and the lush foliage of the trees and bushes to sparkle in the sunlight. As we walked, we passed a group of women in vibrantly patterned dresses and brightly coloured head scarves. They were sitting around a handwritten ledger and on top lay crumbled Rwandan

Francs. They were deep in conversation as their children played football around them. A few minutes later we passed another group of women and then another.

As an outsider to African culture, one often doesn't understand what one sees. I needed my local host to explain what I was seeing to put the dots together for me. Emery told me that each village or group collect a few Francs each week from every house. The women record the deposits and collectively decide how the money and human resource should be used: "Emmanuel needs to pay for medicine. Maira's husband is away – she will need help in the fields. the rest can be put away for a rainy day".

It reminded me of visits to other African communities, such as the Empowerment Village in Zambia. This was set up by social workers in Lusaka in response to the decimation of a generation caused by HIV and Aids. It was a new village, where adults who were separated from their traditional support systems agreed to collectively adopt orphaned children. At the village entranceway, a sign read, 'Every child has the right to be loved'. On entering, one could interact with the children who belonged, who had plans for the future, who were safe and secure. The children along with their new parents (the village) also participated in the weekly meetings contributing to the discussions on who needed support that week and how the communal savings could be spent.

In 2020, the social work profession launched the global theme 'Ubuntu'. It was the first time we had ever used an indigenous word and many outsides of Africa had little understanding of its meaning and implications. This brought nervousness, particularly from IFSW's partners, who worried that social workers in other regions would feel excluded by a word that did not resonate with them. The concerned argued that we needed to use an English word, for example, 'solidarity'. But that was a few years ago now and it is wonderful to see those concerned people today arguing that we need to extend the theme

Ubuntu for an entire decade, and not for just a year. It is now understood that the word 'solidarity' does not convey the richness and depth of the indigenous philosophy of Ubuntu.

At the launch of the theme, African social workers gifted Ubuntu wisdom to their international colleagues. They also celebrated it. They had grown up in the culture and yet in many universities across the continent they were told to leave Ubuntu outside of the classroom, as the post-colonial shadows still gripped the education system. In their webinars, many African social workers spoke of the gained freedom to express the true nature of their practice and how they were taught case management approaches that had failed to harness the power of community.

Outside of Africa, social workers were also holding their Ubuntu webinars. Chinese practitioners talked of their cultural version of Ubuntu. They spoke of rural village councils, where all community members took turns to facilitate meetings that focused on everyone's welfare. Indian social workers spoke about the village economies that they supported, ensuring that no one was left behind. Scottish social workers described the communal gardens and how they create food security for all. Indigenous social workers worldwide talked of their practice as an integration of culture and the profession's principles. The list goes on. It was as if, by voicing this Nguni word 'Ubuntu', the Western yoke that had dominated for so long had been lifted just enough to let the global profession breathe and speak.

As the theme progressed, we outside of Africa, became the students. We learnt that Ubuntu is so much more than the popular phrase: 'I am, because we are'. We learnt I am because you are, and you are because of me. That we, as co-creators, must build from our interdependence and connection a pathway for our collective survival.

This of course extends beyond the human-to-human interdependency to our relationships of living equally and in balance with the eco-systems that we inhabit. Ubuntu has taught us that we are implicated in the other non-human lives, and they are implicated in our lives. Thus, our responsibility is extended, well beyond the expectations of modern Western living – where our responsibility is primarily focused on our own children – to our entire community, the land on which we stand, and the biodiversity of which we are part.

Our profession has been moved by Ubuntu. As a global group already committed to shared humanity, we were – almost at the 100-years point since the launch of the social work profession – ready to receive this gift. No doubt, African social workers had already wisely judged this and took the decision that such precious wisdom would not be used tokenistically. In reciprocity, social workers worldwide have dug into their own cultural heritages to find and share their own cultural forms of Ubuntu.

We, whose cultures have been eroded to individualism, are learning. We are learning that there is a difference between 'individuality' and 'individualism'. That we can celebrate a person's unique individuality, along with their and everyone's responsibility to each other and the wider world, without prioritizing the individual at the expense of the collective. We are learning that we need to change some of our professional language and the concepts behind our words. For example, since the Ubuntu theme, IFSW ethical leaders have called for discussion on the description of the profession's key principles.

Rather than talking of 'self-determination', they suggest should we talk of 'co-determination'. This year, IFSW members agreed to change our profession's concept of 'rights'. Rather than 'human rights', we have developed a 'rights framework' which integrate human rights with social and ecological rights. Instead of using the word 'empowerment' we are increasingly using the

words ‘mutual empowerment’. And there is more talk across the social work desks and in the world’s communities, talk of the indigenous gift in creating a pathway for the world’s sustainability.

At the time of this writing, COP 27, a meeting of the world’s leader on climate change, is taking place in Egypt. Their template involves each nation state reducing carbon emissions. It is not the first time they have met, and agreements have been made and broken over decades. As social workers we have always known that their approach is flawed. That one cannot reduce reliance on fossil fuels, without also addressing inequality and fostering a team approach of 8 billion – the whole world’s population – to work together for sustainable shared futures. But Ubuntu, and other indigenous practices, now offer tested renewed pathways: templates from our past for our futures.

Social workers have an important role in the development of this pathway. By tapping into our own deeply seated cultural frameworks, which may be hidden but are shared by all, to support and facilitate our communities in the care of themselves, others, and the environment. This professional approach, significantly over-pinned by Ubuntu, has been highly commended by the leadership of the United Nations, and by many international faiths, organizations and social movements. Inspired by the social work theme of Ubuntu, they met earlier this year in a Global Summit to recognize the need to transfer power from modern nation states to communities. Leader after leader acknowledged that big nation states are unable to see and hear the strengths that sit within communities, and that people have far greater capacity to act with love and care for others, than do nation states.

These leaders have recognized social work as being a key driver on this new path for survival because of our links and role in nearly every community worldwide. As Ubuntu informed practitioners, we have accepted this mutual responsibility and, along with others, will preserve and extend these traditional pathways.

Many signposts on this journey are contained in the chapters of this book. The pages are full of interrelated issues on healing wounded families and communities, collective economic development, restorative justice, and environmental protection. They guide us forward and we hope will inspire further contributions, as Ubuntu sinks more deeply into the consciousness of the profession and the communities we work within.

On behalf of IFSW, I take this opportunity to thank the African and other Indigenous social workers for these gifts, not only to the profession, but for our common, and the other species', survival. In receiving this gift, we co-commit with you in taking forward these wisdoms to a new world where all have a role, belonging and confidence.

Rory Truell
IFSW Secretary-General

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The Ubuntu Practitioner: Social Work Perspectives

Swahili Language – Mweledi wa Ubuntu: Mitazamo ya Taaluma ya Ustawi wa Jamii

Shona language - Mushandi weUbuntu: Maonero eva Vabatsiridzi veMagariro

In Kinyarwanda - Uko Abanyamwuga mu Ivugururamibereho bifashisha Filozofiya y'Ubuntu

"This book is a collection of lived experiences and evidence of "good practices" across the world. I am grateful to all that took their time to share their practice stories in the form of book chapters. To prospective readers, I say Life is always evolving and lessons are ever being generated for purposes of continuous sharing and learning. Possessing a copy of this book will add value not only to your being but to your professional life too. You can read it from the beginning till the end, or you can commence reading it from a chapter that appeals to you most. You can potentially find the exact lesson or thought you might be looking for or need in this moment in your career. If this book has found you, it was probably looking for you for a purpose"

Joachim Cuthbert Mumba
IFSW Global President

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