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EDITORIAL

RESPECTING DIVERSITY THROUGH JOINT SOCIAL ACTION

In the pursuit of progress and lasting change, one African saying resonates deeply: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." This proverb encapsulates the essence of collaboration and unity, highlighting the indispensable role of diverse perspectives and contributions in achieving enduring success. It underscores the imperative of embracing and respecting different backgrounds, cultures, and viewpoints to realise common objectives. The articles in this second issue of 2024 are indeed a demonstration of the *Journal*'s mission of diversity through joint social action. This issue offers articles from India, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and specific cultures from South Africa, relating to topics on active aging, childcare arrangements of immigrant families, and child well-being. Additional topics in this issue include adoption, caregiving and care-leaving, parenting, cohabitation, and social work supervision. As part of the celebration of the *Journal*'s 60th volume, ten articles are included in this issue.

Respecting diversity is not merely a passive acknowledgment of differences; it is an active commitment to inclusive engagement and collective action. It acknowledges the intrinsic potential of local communities to effect positive transformations. Despite our diverse backgrounds, we can harness our collective strengths to forge a brighter future together. This ethos of respect for diversity is integral to effective leadership and the practice of social work.

The ethos of "respecting diversity through joint social action" is enshrined in the People's Charter for a New Eco-Social World. It recognises that meaningful change emanates from the grassroots level, propelled by the diversity of our communities. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) advocates for the empowerment of local communities and stakeholders to realise an inclusive eco-social world.

Embracing diversity fosters innovation, enhances performance, and drives growth at both the individual and community levels. Social work, as a profession committed to ethical practice, places a premium on understanding, respecting, and celebrating diversity. This is essential for effectively engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds and life experiences, fostering empathy, and promoting social justice.

Nevertheless, the social work profession is confronted by formidable challenges, exacerbated by global trends such as poverty, inequality, mental health issues, nationalism, conflict, and climate change. The COVID-19 pandemic has further underscored the indispensable role of social workers in crisis response and supporting vulnerable populations.

Amidst these challenges, there are opportunities for transformative change. By leveraging technology, embracing diversity, and nurturing partnerships with local communities, social workers can surmount obstacles and contribute to co-building a more equitable society. This entails creating spaces where every individual is valued, respected, and empowered to lead a life of dignity and purpose, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Against this backdrop, Putran, Mohan and Choolayil observed in an Indian context that older adults in many developing nations are accommodated in care homes for reasons other than ill-health. In these care homes, the institutional routines and separation from families curtail the autonomy and choices of older adults, adversely affecting their prospects for active aging. This study introduced a novel social work intervention targeting individual-level, personnel-level, and institutional-level modifications to improve the active aging prospects of institutionalised older adults.

Mwedzi and Sobantu observed within a Zimbabwean context that childcare is a pivotal universal right, particularly for immigrant families and their children, in helping them to settle successfully in a host country. Underpinned by social exclusion and intersectionality frameworks, this qualitative study explored the childcare methods used by Zimbabwean immigrant families living in Soweto, a predominantly low-income community in Johannesburg, South Africa. Among other findings, the study revealed the various childcare options used by immigrant families, although their choices were constrained by levels of vulnerability and forms of exclusion.

Also, within the field of child care, Kamuingona and Rabie observed that Namibia has adopted several policies, pieces of legislation, and programs aimed at improving the well-being of children. However, they noted that policymakers require a comprehensive and integrated set of indicators to inform policy revisions and make informed choices. The authors reviewed national and international child protection reports, evaluation studies, and indices to identify contemporary indicators for tracking child well-being in Namibia. Their research offers an alternative integrated indicator framework that captures multiple dimensions of child well-being. By adopting this framework, policymakers in Namibia and beyond are enabled to make more informed decisions to support vulnerable children.

Shifting the focus from a Namibian context to Xhosa cultural attitudes in South Africa regarding adoption, Nombebe and Boshoff observed that the Xhosa culture has a strong aversion to breaking familial relationships by placing children in non-parental settings or

orphanages. This aversion may lead to limited legal adoption procedures in this cultural context. Employing a cross-sectional descriptive design and a quantitative approach, they used descriptive statistics and mean scores to analyse variable distribution and associated demographic characteristics. The findings of this research indicate a markedly positive attitude towards adoption within the Xhosa culture.

In another shift of focus, from the use of quantitative research in a specific culture to a phenomenological study on the experiences of family members caring for a relative diagnosed with schizophrenia, Khuselwa and Davids observed that these family members may experience severe challenges that can result in secondary stress and influence various life domains. Their research findings suggest that social support and social work interventions can mitigate or prevent the adverse effects on family members caring for a relative with schizophrenia.

With a focus on care-leaving, Reuben and Van Breda aim to deepen and theorise the understanding of the need for belonging among young people transitioning out of residential care. Their article addresses the lack of theoretically informed studies and builds indigenous theory to explain the care-leaving journey. The authors' qualitative research findings suggest the imperative of building care-leavers' sense of belonging after removal from home to care, ultimately leading to increased youth resilience.

The next two articles in this issue both focus on parents. Vorster and Le Roux observed that the importance of the early childhood years for school readiness signifies the primary role of parents in preparing their children for school entry. Amidst evidence of inadequate school readiness among many South African children, the findings of the authors' qualitative study suggest that parents' knowledge, perceptions, and socio-economic contexts influence their ability to effectively prepare young children for school entry. They recommend a definite role for social workers in empowering parents to enhance their children's school readiness.

Also, within the context of parenting, Bradley and Greeff observed that few previous studies have explored the perceptions of parents about positive parenting in general, and none regarding parents' motivation to apply a positive parenting approach. Therefore, they ask the question: what motivates mothers to apply a positive parenting approach? Their thematic analyses generated four themes: it is who I am, it just works, gaining knowledge through learning and resources, and the importance of social support. The findings of this study may be utilised in interventions and guidance to encourage parents to adopt a positive parenting approach.

From a focus on parents to a focus on cohabitation, Kgadima observed that cohabitation is often misconstrued as existing in a relationship characterised by little commitment. Through the lenses of commitment and symbolic interactionist theories, this article explored how cohabitees construct and express commitment in their relationship. The findings of this qualitative study suggest that commitment in cohabitation is multidimensional, as it allows a couple to demonstrate their love in different ways, without necessarily conforming to a particular traditional formality. It is a private and personal commitment between the cohabiting partners concerned, founded on principles of trust.

Finally, from a focus on cohabitation to social work supervision, Maluleke and Bhuda observed that determining the quality of supervision is significant. While social work supervision is intended to capacitate social workers with knowledge and skills and to support them, it may be fraught with enduring challenges. The authors found that the majority of their research participants in the Giyani region of South Africa were not offered quality supervision by their supervisors. This was attributed to the fact that supervisors were delegated rather than formally appointed to supervise. The authors recommend that all delegated social work supervisors should be permanently appointed in supervision positions to enhance the quality of supervision rendered to social workers.

In conclusion, the articles in this issue clearly demonstrate that the journey towards a more just and inclusive society necessitates a collective commitment to embracing diversity and fostering collaborative action. As we navigate the complexities of the modern world, let us draw inspiration from the wisdom of African proverbs and unite in our efforts to create a world where diversity is not only respected but celebrated as a source of strength and resilience.

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