Social Work in a Changing World: New Challenges and Perspectives

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Introduction

Holistic Perspectives on Social Work, Education, and Human Well-Being

A prevailing consensus in academic discourse emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to social work and healthcare—one that integrates physical and mental health, community engagement, and social services into a cohesive framework. This journal embraces a complementary methodology, where research papers with distinct yet interconnected focal points collectively present a more comprehensive understanding of these critical matters. This approach not only broadens the discourse but also illuminates a resurgence of interest in the role of spirituality as a fundamental element in enhancing human well-being and fostering resilience (1,2).

By weaving together research from multiple disciplines, this issue aims to provide deeper insights into the evolving landscape of social work and health, underscoring the importance of innovative strategies and ethical considerations

in shaping policies and practices that uphold human dignity and social justice.

The Human Focal Point

In contemporary society, the field of social work is confronted with challenges that encompass policy frameworks, economic transformations, and the diverse needs of individual clients. These challenges necessitate multidisciplinary approaches and innovative solutions (3). Within this intricate ecosystem, the human being occupies a central and exclusive position. This is not only as the catalyst for its own development and the initiator of sustainable growth, but also as the ultimate objective of all endeavours aimed at its empowerment, healing, and meaningful development (4). The ability of a society to address the challenges it currently faces, which are evident across all continents, cultures and political-economic formations, is contingent on the presence of healthy individuals and functioning social entities.

The recent global Covid19 pandemic, which has brought new phenomena in social work that require increased attention (5), is just one example of the challenges that have confronted the world in recent years. This crisis has underscored the critical need for adaptive policies, interdisciplinary collaboration, and sustainable support systems to address emerging social vulnerabilities and inequalities (6). A pivotal aspect of this transformation is the increasing integration of digital tools in social support, particularly within the realm of mental health. Digital platforms have become indispensable for fostering connection and emotional expression, highlighting the necessity of incorporating technology into contemporary social work practices (7). However, the growing reliance on digital engagement also presents significant challenges. As social work continues to intersect with digital environments, a nuanced understanding of both the advantages and limitations of online interactions is essential for the development of effective and equitable support strategies across diverse populations (8). Beyond the pandemic, other global crises—including the California wildfires, economic fluctuations in major world economies, and geopolitical tensions arising from conflicts in such as in Ukraine—have further exacerbated social instability.

These external factors, which are beyond the control of the individual, have resulted in a multitude of psychosocial consequences, which have most frequently been observed to escalate within the family unit (9).

Paradigm Shifts

Considering the contemporary global challenges that we are currently facing, there is an imperative for a rethinking of leadership. Given that these issues extend well beyond a narrow ecological horizon, it is essential to anticipate a new mode of leadership (10). It is not unrealistic to expect that soon, hitherto unrecognized social turbulences and issues may emerge that will confront us with social work challenges that we have not yet had the opportunity to encounter and that have not emerged from a generally accepted understanding of anthropological metanarrative (11,12). Diverse naturalistic conceptions of understanding the world – particularly in the sense of strict determinism according to Hawking (13) – are confronted with novel challenges arising from the social welfare context of adolescents and healthcare for the long-term ill, thereby unveiling fresh possibilities for interpreting observed social phenomena, especially in the context of solipsistic trends in contemporary consumer culture (14). Consequently, it is imperative that social workers have access to new knowledge, digital technologies, modern strategies and innovative practices that reflect the dynamics of social reality (15).

The Implementation of Spirituality in Social Work and Holocaust Education

Recent research and empirical evidence suggest that effective social interventions must be grounded in multidisciplinary collaboration and long-term sustainability. The relationship between social work and spirituality has garnered increasing attention in academic circles, reflecting its significance as a vital component of a holistic approach to practice. Spirituality influences values, ethics, and the overall framework for assisting clients, making it an essential element of social work (16, 17).

Human spirituality is an integral aspect of social work values, encompassing a range of beliefs about what is considered meaningful and forward-looking within the field (18). These beliefs encompass general principles regarding the nature of a just society and the values that foster sustainable quality of life from birth to death. For individuals experiencing a life crisis—whether short-term challenges like burnout or long-term struggles such as homelessness—effective intervention cannot solely focus on practical issues. Instead, it must provide comprehensive social support that addresses the spiritual dimension of their existence (19, 20,21).

Moreover, incorporating Holocaust education into this framework adds a critical layer of understanding. The lessons of the Holocaust emphasize the importance of empathy, resilience, and the acknowledgement of shared humanity in social work practice. By integrating the principles of Holocaust education, social workers can deepen their understanding of the historical and social contexts that shape individual experiences of trauma and resilience. This integration not only enriches the spiritual discourse within social work but also fosters a greater commitment to social justice and human rights (22,23,24).

Ultimately, a holistic approach that encompasses spirituality and Holocaust education equips social workers with the tools to support clients more effectively, recognizing that healing and empowerment extend beyond the material aspects of life to include the spiritual and emotional dimensions as well (25, 26, 27).

Conclusion

Social Work, Healthcare, and the Enduring Lessons of the Holocaust

The fields of social work and healthcare are deeply rooted in an outlook of resilience, healing, and hope. Social workers engage with individuals' narratives to devise solutions, provide crucial assistance, and guide them toward a path of recovery. In doing so, they become bearers of hope—drawing upon an understanding of the past while equipping individuals with the tools to navigate present challenges. Philosophically, it is in the present that the foundation for a meaningful future must be laid, built upon an unwavering commitment to human dignity and the capacity for renewal.

As we mark the 80th anniversary of the Holocaust, we must recognize how history shapes our moral and professional responsibilities (28). The Holocaust, an unparalleled atrocity, forced humanity to confront the depths of cruelty but also revealed the remarkable resilience of the human spirit. From despair emerged the will to survive, and from devastation arose a renewed sense of purpose. This transformation serves as a powerful metaphor for the work of social workers and healthcare professionals—helping individuals reclaim agency, restore hope, and rebuild their lives even in the face of profound suffering (29).

Today, in the face of rising antisemitism and the persistence of hatred, the lessons of the Holocaust are more relevant than ever. The fight against antisemitism is not only about remembering the past but about shaping a just and humane future. As Israel's Ambassador to Slovakia, H.E. Eitan Levon, poignantly stated at the February 26, 2025, funeral of Shiri, Ariel, and Kfir Bibas, "They deserve not to be forgotten." His words underscore the urgent need for education and moral clarity, especially as some Western nations struggle with the ethical imperative of condemning terrorism.

In this spirit of education and remembrance, Dr. Rivka Rosenberg from Bar-Ilan University recently visited Nitra (as part of the Erasmus+ program) to deliver groundbreaking workshops and lectures on the intersection of performing arts and emerging technologies in Holocaust awareness. Her presentation highlighted the use of *Whistle: My Mother Was Mengele's Secretary*, an award-winning play that explores themes of trauma, survival, and moral reckoning. By integrating 21st-century tools such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and artificial intelligence (AI), Dr. Rosenberg demonstrated how immersive storytelling can foster deeper engagement and understanding, especially among younger generations (29).

This innovative approach bridges the past with the future, ensuring that Holocaust education remains dynamic, relevant, and impactful.

By harnessing the power of technology and artistic expression, educators and activists can combat historical distortion, counter Holocaust denial, and inspire meaningful dialogue. Dr. Rosenberg's work exemplifies the critical role that creative and digital methodologies play in preserving memory and reinforcing the imperative of "Never Again." It is through such initiatives that we not only honor the past but actively shape a future where history's darkest lessons serve as a beacon for justice, humanity, and hope.

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