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## EDITORIAL

### Lambert K Engelbrecht

Department of Social Work, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6549-7183>  [lke@sun.ac.za](mailto:lke@sun.ac.za)

The third edition of 2023 presents a collection of eight articles that delve into four central themes: role players in social work, the interface of Covid-19, gender-based violence, and child rights. The articles engage with diverse challenges and dynamics within the social work landscape, contributing to the advancement of theory and practice in both local and global contexts. In this editorial, we provide an overview of the themes and the contributions each article makes to the broader discourse.

In the first theme, which revolves around the roles enacted by diverse professionals within the domain of social work, the initial article explores the challenges encountered by child and youth care workers (CYCWs) as they navigate their interactions with children. Children and adolescents grappling with attachment and behavioural complexities pose significant challenges not only for parents but also for child and youth care workers and society at large. The article utilises qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews to investigate this domain. Findings underscore that CYCWs operating in the child welfare sector contend not only with a lack of acknowledgment but also encounter conflicts, excessive workloads, and other detrimental job attributes. These adversities impact their caregiving responsibilities owing to the intricate and demanding nature of their interactions with children. Subsequently, the second article explores the resilience of social auxiliary workers. Resilience, within this context is defined as a protective factor fostering stress management, well-being, and success in adverse circumstances. A significant number of social auxiliary workers in South Africa operate independently with only sporadic and brief supervision. The research delineates how individual, social, and environmental factors contribute to the resilience of these auxiliary workers, enabling them to thrive even in the face of daunting challenges. The third article in this theme segues into an exploration of the perceptions held by social work students regarding the asset-based community-driven development approach. Over the past decade, asset-based community-driven development (ABCD) has gained substantial traction within social work education. Employing a mixed-method approach, this study captures students' perspectives on the applicability and relevance of ABCD in the context of social work education across two

South African universities. The research identifies the challenges students face in facilitating a transition from being passive recipients of services to active community change agents spearheading their own development. The outcomes of this research are intended to inform enhancements in the curriculum and pedagogical strategies for social work students. The fourth article in this thematic focus centres on women academics within the professional workspace. Despite various shifts in workplace dynamics, women continue to encounter distinctive challenges that adversely affect their overall well-being. The findings underscore that women academics place significant value on an array of job-related resources encompassing psychological, social, physical, and organisational dimensions. It is recommended in the article that institutions of higher education proactively prioritise workplace well-being through pragmatic, organisational, and policy measures. Recognising the workplace as a vital ecosystem contributing to employee welfare, the field of social work must continually deepen its comprehension of these intricate forces at play. Social work interventions should actively engage with structures addressing both personal challenges and the promotion of well-being within the workplace.

The second theme critically examines the role of social workers amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The first article in this theme presents an exploratory study conducted at a university of technology. Through interviews and focus group discussions, the study underscores the pivotal role social workers play in alleviating psychological distress caused by illness, loss, economic insecurity, and violence. Despite feeling unprepared for the pandemic's mental health burden, participants used their expertise to provide counselling and support to affected individuals, particularly students. The subsequent article delves into the experiences of students with blended and emergency remote online learning (EROL) during the pandemic. While universities embraced technological advancements, the study reveals that disadvantaged students' needs remained unaddressed. The findings emphasise the importance of equitable access to education, urging further research to facilitate technological advancement for marginalised social work students.

The third theme critically examines gender-based violence programmes and their conceptualisation of victimhood. The seventh article assesses the usage of the term "victim" in empowerment-based social work services in South Africa. In light of the empowerment and developmental approaches adopted in the post-apartheid era, the article calls for a deconstruction of the prevalent victimhood discourse in gender-based violence programs. By challenging established narratives, this article sparks discussions and further research regarding empowerment services, impacting developmental and social work practices across different societal contexts.

The final theme centres on child rights and the influence of culture, focusing specifically on child rights violations in Zimbabwe. The eighth article employs qualitative case study research to examine harmful cultural practices violating child rights in the Nkayi district. Identifying practices such as sexual dalliance, labia elongation, discrimination against children with disabilities, and gender-based distinctions, the article highlights the implications of these practices for child rights and social work practice in Zimbabwe. The study emphasises the

coexistence of both harmful and positive cultural practices, providing avenues for future research to explore.

Collectively, the articles featured in this edition of *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* contribute to the ongoing dialogue within the field of social work. By addressing multifaceted challenges and opportunities, these articles expand the boundaries of knowledge, enriching the theoretical and practice dimensions of social work in South Africa and beyond.

**Lambert K Engelbrecht**

**Editor in Chief**

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