



The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher

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Editorial (pages 1-2)

Jean Triegaardt and Kathleen Collins

When religious distress manifests: Helping clients through such challenges (pages 3-18)

Raisuyah Bhagwan

Social work scholarship on religion and spirituality has proliferated in the past two decades. Empirical research at the interface of myriad psychosocial problems has documented the potential of religion and spirituality in enabling coping and ensuring well-being for those experiencing trauma and distress. It is also within this milieu that scholars have called for an awareness of how religion and religiousness may cause distress and have argued for practitioners to give attention to these negative facets that may influence client well-being. This paper delineates some of the challenges posed by religion or religiousness and the distress clients may experience due to this. It also explores how practitioners may help clients deal with such quandaries in the helping situation.

Psychosocial vulnerability of social work students (pages 19-35)

Adrian van Breda

Social work education has the mission not only of imparting professional knowledge, skills and attitudes to students, but also of developing the person of the student social worker. Social work practice, unlike many other disciplines, involves a close integration of the personal and professional selves of the practitioner. This paper reports on a survey of the psychosocial vulnerability of student social workers at the University of Johannesburg. Seventy one percent (n=370) of undergraduate students agreed to participate in this quantitative study. Results highlight the prevalence and personal and academic impact of death and poverty, as well as a pervasive childhood pattern of abuse and violence. Death and abuse were also found to be associated with higher rates of academic failure. The author argues that social work educators need to work proactively, creatively and authentically in helping students to engage with their own vulnerability.

Analysing South African legislative measures to protect trafficked children: A social work perspective (pages 36-58)

Ajwang' Warria, Hanna Nel and Jean Triegaardt

Children have the right to the best possible start in life and opportunities to develop as individuals. Child trafficking therefore threatens a child's development and survival. Building a protective environment for children requires governments to acknowledge that child trafficking is a violation of multiple human rights. This article reviews key South African legislative frameworks established to guarantee the protection of child victims of trafficking. This will also be examined in relation to other international and regional frameworks.

The analysis shows that efforts to address child trafficking in South Africa reveal both possibilities as well as on-going challenges. The government has recognised child trafficking as a challenge in South Africa by its inclusion of trafficking-specific provisions in several legislative and policy documents. A child rights approach has been considered in the formulation of South African child trafficking policies because it strengthens child protection measures, thus creating sustainable child protection systems.

Experiences of social workers in investigating child sexual abuse (pages 59-78)

Maria Cussons and Corinne Strydom

The purpose of the research was to investigate the experiences of social workers in non-governmental organisations during investigations of child sexual abuse as well as the influence of these experiences on service delivery. The research followed a qualitative approach. Fifteen social workers participated in this investigation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted. The results of the data were divided into themes and subthemes for detailed clarifications and discussions of the respondents' experiences. The respondents stated that their experiences could influence their behaviour, decision making and service delivery. Six themes were included namely: personal experiences; experiences with other professionals; limitations; objectivity; and knowledge. The respondents also made suggestions to improve the investigating process.

The psychosocial needs of teenagers orphaned by HIV and AIDS: A qualitative study in KwaZulu-Natal (pages 79-95)

Phiwayinkosi Gumede, Gretchen du Plessis and Dumile Gumede

Dealing with HIV, AIDS, parental illness and death are realities many South African teenagers have to face. Understanding the experiences of such teenagers provides a vital ingress into the complexities of the HIV and AIDS epidemic as a social phenomenon. The objective of this study was to describe the psychosocial needs of orphans aged 13-15 years. In-depth interviews were conducted with a purposeful sample of teenaged orphans in KwaZulu-Natal. Findings reveal that these teenagers were confronted with drastic changes before and after the deaths of their parents. Several losses were experienced, such as the loss of a parent, the loss of friends, the loss of a home, an inheritance and a childhood. The care experience of the teenagers differed. Whereas some caregivers provided some of the needs of the teenagers, unmet psychosocial needs and poor care were reported.

The flagship programme for the empowerment and poverty alleviation of unemployed women in the rural area of Mathateng (pages 96-113)

Lulama Qalinge

The article reports on the strengths and weaknesses of a flagship programme initiated by the South African government as a poverty-alleviation and empowerment strategy for unemployed rural women of Mathateng village in the North West Province. The aim was to determine the positives and negatives of the programme with a view to making recommendations aimed at improving the programme. The study was qualitative, using focus group interviews to collect data from programme participants. The study identified that the programme had both strengths and weaknesses. Notwithstanding the challenges faced by women in the programme, the programme was appreciated by participants as it brought back their self-esteem and gave them something to do on daily bases. Adopting a critical stance, the author makes recommendations towards better management of the programme.

