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BOOK REVIEW

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Paul, N., & Dey, J. (Eds). (2025). *Global perspectives on social work in transition: Navigating technological, cultural, and academic challenges.* Verlag Barbara Budrich. ISBN 978-3-8474-3109-1. Pages: 343.

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This detailed and voluminous (343-page) book provides global perspectives on social work in transition with a particular focus on navigating technological, cultural and academic challenges. The book is the outcome of the relentless and uncompromising commitment of a group of academicians and practitioners to reflect upon and disseminate their knowledge and experience in social work. Its global scope is evident from the contributions by various scholars presenting perspectives from 12 countries. The book is divided into four parts: **Part 1:** Social Work among the Vulnerable for a Better World; **Part 2:** Technological Social Work for Better Social Work Practice; **Part 3:** Culturally Sensitive Social Work for Tomorrow's Progress; and **Part 4:** New Directions of Health Social Work.

Each of these parts delves into an array of important and sensitive topics that are relevant to current international social work practice in both the global North and global South.

Part 1: Social work among the vulnerable for a better world

The first part of the book consists of four chapters, outlined below

1. "Unlocking Diversity Potential in Social Work: Theories, Empirical Findings, and Emerging Competencies in Open Youth Work" by Kira Margarete Barut. This chapter explores the integration of diversity into social work with a particular focus on open youth work. The chapter has provided detailed information on the concept of diversity in social work theory and practice. It has offered actionable insights for improving practices and competencies in open youth work, ensuring that diversity is embraced and

utilised effectively. This will enable social workers to understand that they do not work with a homogenous group of people (i.e. youths). Rather, social workers work with heterogeneous group of people with diverse needs. In order to adequately attend to their needs, they should simultaneously apply different techniques drawn from multiple disciplines.

2. "Resilience in Social Work during Armed Conflict: Insights from Ukraine for Global Future Practice" by Tetyana Semigina, Yuliia Kokoiachuk, Valentyna Shkuro and Olha Stoliaryk. This chapter explores Ukrainian social workers' experiences during conflict – in this case, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 up to time of writing this book chapter in 2025 – and the policy changes that inform resilient social work practices. The chapter concludes that the Russo-Ukrainian war exemplifies these challenges, emphasising the need to understand how resilience, adaptability, professional dynamics, digital advancements and market forces shape social work in Ukraine. This chapter shows the challenging environment in which social work can be practised, as well as suggesting innovative approaches that social workers can adopt in providing social work services to vulnerable people in complex and life-threatening situations.
3. "Critical Theory, Poverty Awareness, and Organising for the Adjunct. Adjunct: An Intentional Capitalist Creation" by Ivania Delgado. The chapter addresses a fundamental principle of the helping professions such as social work, namely that every social worker must begin their task with self-awareness and reflection in the search for a just society. This implies that awareness and reflection in social work must be extended beyond the individual to include communities and organisations. For social work to move forward as a discipline, it must be willing to examine the power structures within its own education and training systems that create an oppressed class of educators.
4. "Revitalising Women's Empowerment: Social Work Strategies for a Post-COVID World: Reading on the Background of Kudumbashree in Kerala" by Norby Paul, Joyashri Dey and Monisha U. The chapter is a global call for women's empowerment in the post-COVID era. It emphasises the need for the interplay of innovative theory, resource mobilisation, theory of change and empowerment theory, which must lead to a sustained post-COVID women's development process. This in turn requires a creative, sustainable strategy that spearheads a movement for equality and distributive justice, essential to any social worker across the world who works on women empowerment programmes.

Part 2: Technological social work for better social work practice

This part of the book has focused on a contemporary issue of technological social work, which is not a common theme in many studies on social work. It encourages social workers to think about the role of technology in the social work profession. This section consists of three interesting chapters.

1. “Reshaping Social Work in the AI Era: Implications for Tomorrow's Practice” by Ahmed Thabet Helal Ibrahim. This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on social work education and practice. It argues that social work has focused on using technology for social good, emphasising the important role of technologies in social work education, practice and training. Rapid advancements in AI underscore the increasing need to integrate AI into the different fields of the discipline. Yet it is also important to understand the challenges that AI has introduced into society, and how it could create new problems that will result in different societal problems to be addressed by social workers. The implication is that all social workers across the world need to develop an understanding of AI.
2. “Bridging the Gap: Mandating Social Worker [sic] for Students [sic] Well-being in Higher Education Institutions” by Safiya R, Sheethal M J, Tamil Vanan K & Kavitha R. This chapter emphasises the need for dedicated professionals with specialised skills to deal with various psychosocial issues faced by students in contemporary Indian society. It highlights the potential benefits of integrating social workers into the education system, including enhanced academic performance, fewer behavioural issues and improved mental health outcomes. Indeed, the effects of stress, anxiety and other psychological issues on the academic performance of students call for a more comprehensive approach to supporting students' mental health needs through psychosocial counselling. This feature should be introduced into the education of social work students.
3. “Reconceptualising Technological Social Work in Egypt: A Framework for Bridging the Gap” by Ibrahim Sabry Ahmed. This chapter investigates the current state of technological social work in Egypt and highlights its potential and challenges. Although the primary focus is on Egypt, the chapter offers global insights based on lessons learned from Egypt's experience, emphasising the transformative potential of technology in social work, the importance of bridging the digital divide, and the need for collaboration, cultural sensitivity, evaluation and ethical considerations.

Part 3: Culturally sensitive social work for tomorrow's progress

This part of the book focuses on a very important dimension of social work – cultural sensitivity, which is essential for every social worker across the world. The section consists of three chapters.

1. “Bridging Gaps in Social Work: Enhancing Cultural Competencies and Understanding for Suicide Prevention in Kyrgyzstan” by Leila Salimova and Bermet Egemberdieva. This chapter addresses the problem of suicide in Kyrgyzstan, emphasising the influence of different aspects of an individual’s life, including legal, societal and cultural beliefs as well as traditions, on suicide prevention. It highlights the importance of social service providers, including social workers, who bring their skills and knowledge to bear in navigating cultural aspects to provide effective support to individuals, including young people at risk of suicide.

2. “Enhancing Culturally Sensitive Social Work Interventions for People with Disabilities” by Ishari Gunarathna and Chandima Jayasena. With focus on Sri Lanka, this chapter has established that social work professionals working closely with the disability community in Sri Lanka have identified many shortcomings in the process of integrating people with disabilities and in the creation of a supportive social context for them. These include socially insensitive approaches that hinder overall wellbeing. This chapter emphasises the importance of respect for diversity and incorporating cultural competence into social work practice. There is a global call for disability inclusion and development activities that every social worker is expected to support.
3. “Exploring the Dynamics of Professionalisation and Regularisation in Social Work” by Priyadharshini K. and Lakshmi J. This chapter traces the historical evolution of social work from a philanthropic practice to professionalism, in which the social work profession stands as a navigator of compassion, advocacy and empowerment in addressing the holistic challenges encountered by individuals, families and communities. The chapter argues that the continued evolution of regularisation and professionalisation in social work underscores the need for a collaborative approach among educators, practitioners and policymakers to enhance the profession’s capacity to respond to contemporary social challenges, highlighting that the social work profession is not static. As such, social work curricula and education should be constantly adjusted to respond to the changes taking place in society. This ensures that through social work education, training and practice the profession can remain relevant to society.

Part 4: New directions of health social work

This last part of the book focuses on an important aspect for every human being across the world – their health. This is because without good health, every aspect of human life and society is negatively affected. This section of the book consists of six chapters.

1. “Successful Ageing: Confirming the Environmental Factors for Gerontological Social Work” by Boban K. K. This chapter contributes to the body of knowledge on health and social work, with a focus on the contribution of environmental wellness to ensure the successful aging of older adults in India. It highlights the necessity of preserving natural environments in the context of global warming and climatic changes. Older adults are among the populations worst affected by the effects of climate change. There is therefore a global call for eco and/or green social work.
2. “Examining Elderly Care Policies of Kerala for Geriatric Social Work Practices” by Manju Mary Jose. This chapter focuses on key aspects of elderly care, including healthcare tailored to meet individual needs, promote mental health support, provide institutional care, and develop fundraising strategies. By comparing Kerala's policies with those of developed nations, the chapter describes strategies for improving elderly care policies, services and support systems in Kerala, India. The chapter concludes that geriatric social work plays a vital role in addressing the unique needs of the growing population of the elderly in Kerala. Given the health care challenges that have emerged

as a result of the ageing population, there is a global call for increased and improved geriatric services. Social workers are among the front-line workers considered to have the professional power and expertise to advocate for geriatric services. Social workers can therefore make a difference in several key ways such as advocating for comprehensive, inclusive and effective geriatric policies and services.

3. "Contemporary Social Issues in Geriatric Phase and a Paradigm Shift in Geriatric Care with a Glimpse on [sic] COVID-19 in India" by Kavitha VRS. This chapter attempts to develop a conceptual framework that provides a broader understanding of geriatric care and geriatric social work in India during the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter calls for a paradigm shift in geriatric care in India and advocates for a better geriatric social work perspective. Given the global phenomenon of population ageing, this knowledge is essential to social work education and practice across the world. This can better prepare social workers to respond to the health and social care challenges associated with care for older adults.

4. "Psychosocial Factors of Problematic Internet Use in Adolescents of Working Parents" by Preeti Hossain, Prasad Kannekanti and Surjit Prasad. This study has investigated parental influences leading to internet addiction among adolescents with working and non-working parents. This chapter has explored factors such as parenting style and parent-child relationships in relation to problematic internet use among adolescents. It concludes that internet addiction causes even more family distress. Stricter parental controls and monitoring tools are recommended. In this digital age, such studies are essential for social work with children, youths and families, not only for understanding the possible challenges associated with internet use among adolescents, but also how these challenges can be addressed.

5. "Beyond Childbirth and Postpartum Effects on New Mothers: Reflecting on Well-being and Social Work" by Deepika Krishnan P K. This chapter explores the multifaceted experiences of females during the postpartum period, focusing on the integrated wellbeing of new mothers, including psychosocial challenges, family support structures, social influences and societal pressures. The chapter concludes that despite the postnatal and associated problems that new mothers suffer, their condition has been largely neglected in social work research, practice and policy, and indeed in social work education. The chapter has contributed to a deeper understanding of post-partum wellbeing. This knowledge is essential to social work with families, feminist social work and gendered aspects of social work.

6. "Advancing Gender Equality in Climate Adaptation: Insights from Barak Valley" by Gitanjali Sharma and Joyashri Dey. This chapter examines the intersection of gender equality and climate adaptation in Barak Valley, India, with a focus on how climate impacts affect men and women differentially. It is grounded in a critical feminist ontological perspective that views gender and environmental issues as interrelated and mutually formative. The chapter underscores the importance of gender-sensitive policies and practices in climate adaptation. It offers knowledge that can enable social

workers to understand the effects of climate change from a gender perspective as well as the gendered interventions that can be used to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Overall, this book is a useful resource providing global knowledge in the field of social work. This is because it has provided vital scientific knowledge well grounded in theory and empirical evidence. It has covered topics that are essential in both the global North and global South. As the book's editors rightly observe, the chapters are well integrated to provide future directions when the hardcore reality of the traditional mode of service delivery is challenged. The book is thus designed to engage the social work fraternity and act as a catalyst for future action as it deals with the implications of today's challenges. The chapters deal with broad aspects of social work and suggest practical solutions. This provides readers with easy connectivity to global phenomena in relation to local experiences. It has challenged social workers to practise their profession creatively and in diverse ways to meet demands of the time. The book will serve as a global resource for students, emerging and established social workers, academics, researchers, practitioners, as well as for policy and law makers. It has broadened scientific knowledge of the field, and can potentially generate new and nuanced knowledge about social work education, re-education and practice.