

Ubuntu Africentric Social Work

Rethinking relational community wellbeing, enhancing diversity and social justice

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"I am for we are": Ubuntu

- The ideals of relational communities that are shaped on welcoming, affirming, justice and equitable distribution and access of resources are possible.
- I am arguing centering the Ubuntu principles in shaping relational communities.
- Ubuntu is emerging as the overarching theory in business, leadership, health, theology, education, law and justice, psychology, and sociology

Research purpose

- Humanity everywhere in the world is at a crossroads (Rutte, 2018). Human environments are complex with complex challenges that require individuals, families, and communities to navigate through.
- The suffering of the world seems overwhelming, characterized by war, hunger, poverty, racism, injustices, and unending uncertainty.
- Communities are dysfunctional, systems are built to deny others access to resources and services.
- Now casting doubt on the efficacy of individualistic perspective of person, community and society that has colonial, dominance, and suppression of others as the norm of being.

Ubuntu – A gift not yet full utilized

"... [Western society] seems to be very concerned with perfecting their technological know-how while losing out on their spiritual dimension. We believe that in the long run the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in this field of human relationship. The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa—giving the world a more human face." - Steve Biko -

- Ubuntu is a well-defined principle and way of life redirecting people to the human—social capital. The human face to ways of being, knowing, and development.
- In African communities, Ubuntu is the way of life. It is expressed as, "I am because we are" a person is fully human because of others (Nussbaum, 2004, Gade, 2012, van Brenda 2019, Sibanda, 2014).

Ubuntu Principles

- Communitarity
- Environmentalty
- Dialogue and consensus building
- Respect and Spirituality (Mugumbate& Chereni, 2020; van Brenda, 2019,, Costa& Ntsobi, 2023)



Ubuntu Values

- Valuing relations& Respect: Community wellbeing is nurtured and natured collectively
- Responsibility & Accountability: Collectively holding together for the just-defined communities
- Culture & History: Valuing ways of being and historical legacies
- Justice and Freedom
- Wholism/Holistic: Valuing connection (Bhuda& Marumo,2022, Africa Social Work & Development Network, 2024)

Conceptualizing relational community



Research Methodology

- The research utilizes Africentric Methodologies (Daniels, 2001; Reviere, 2001) and decolonial methodologies that intend to investigate pertinent questions legitimately and effectively, especially those that possess embedded assumptions about injustice, race, culture, wellness, and community wellbeing.

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Natural Goodness and Cooperate Existence

- Ubuntu is grounded in the attributes that a good person ought to have, and should have love, kindness, empathy, respect of self, and others, and care for the existing environment.
- As an African way of life, Ubuntu gives an understanding of the value of relationships for the good of wellbeing of the society. In this case, an action is deemed right or wrong based on how it is related to corporate existence.
- It is founded on the importance of collectivism, interconnectedness, cooperation, harmony, maintaining good relationships and sensitivity to the wellbeing of other people individually or collectively. Nussbaum (2003) argues that "Ubuntu speaks to the interconnectedness, common humanity and the responsibility enshrined in each other that flows out from the depth of natural connection"(p.21).

Networks, Alliance, and Ubuntu

- Africentric social work understand that communal networks are essential for social functioning, and they create alliances that can enhance opportunities and expand resource systems (James, et al., 2010)
- Ubuntu Africentric social work emphasizes the interconnection of all things, and the importance of collective identity and recognition of the effective dimensions of social change, and social transformation (Nwoye, 2017).



- Ubuntu defines the spiritual connectivity of being.
- Three pillars: interpersonal values (regard for others), intrapersonal values (regard for self) and environmental values (regard for environment) (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020)



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