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This volume consists of five articles. All the articles are focused on Africa, four articles focus on Southern African countries, the fifth analyses issues pertaining to gerontology social work across Africa. The first article by Joseph N. Musuguri and Mariana J. Makuu is a review article on medical social work, its nature and associated challenges in hospital settings. The article provides a caricature of the medical social work world by examining medical social work, the associated roles of medical social workers and the challenges being faced by medical social workers. The authors established that medical social workers are not understood by health practitioners, and inter-professional collaborative practice is poor, yet it can contribute to improved treatment outcomes for patients.

The second article by Matanga, A., Chiparausha, M., Kurevakwesu, W. and Charamba, S. addresses a developmental problem that has become pervasive across the African continent and beyond that is drug and substance use and abuse. The authors investigated reintegration challenges for young people recovering from substance use/abuse disorders in Harare through an interpretative phenomenological design. The study findings pointed out that youths recovering from substance use disorders face several challenges in their reintegration journey. They are likely to encounter social stigma, lack of empowerment programs, stress, idleness, relapse and lack of social support.

Insightful recommendations were proffered and this study can be of benefit to other countries in Africa and outside.

In the third article by Langtone Maunganidze uses the Zimbabwean experience to interrogate gatekeeping issues in digitalised political participation research. Since it is clear that the dynamics of digitalised gatekeeping have a profound capacity to facilitate and inhibit the research process, the author used a combination of a critical review of documentary information and snippets of practical experiences drawn from Zimbabwe, to examine the various gatekeeping mechanisms in digitalised political participation research. The author effectively delineates possible interventions. Even though the article focuses on digitalised political participation research, it has implications for research in any field because the world has become digitalised and online research activity is fast becoming part of contemporary research culture.

Chika Rita Ikeorji and Ajwang Warri investigate caregiving practices for older persons in Africa towards transformative social work practice implications. Their analysis is centred around the African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Aging/HAI which has recommendations on the inadequacies of family caregiving. The caregiving of older people in Africa has always been an aspect of the family, but there have been changes in these traditional caregiving practices due to changing social, cultural, economic and health landscapes, requiring a transformative approach to caring for older people in Africa. Given this, the authors conducted this narrative literature review to examine the arguments of scholars within the position of AU/HAI recommendations within the culture of informal care for older people as well as the potential challenges and opportunities that arise from the evolving perspectives on the caregiving of older persons in Africa. The authors used Ubuntu and the Relational-Cultural theory as frameworks for the study. Their findings revealed that available literature admissibly argues for the adaptation of the African perspective on caregiving for older people due to its inadequacy in addressing evolving health, social and economic factors associated with ageing. This article provides an often ignored, yet important discussion of gerontology social work in Africa. This will help shed more light on how the care of older people is supposed to be transformed in line with current misgivings.

The final article by Anotida Mavuka, Charlene Dambiranwa and Anesu Matanga focuses on medical social work, just like the first article in this issue. The authors focus on the complexities of medical social work within multi-professional settings in Zimbabwe. Their study sought to identify the challenges being faced by medical social workers through a phenomenological research design. The findings of the study established that medical social workers are prone to high caseloads, lack of resources, misunderstanding of the role of medical social work and professional mistrust among many others. The study made various recommendations to deal with challenges faced by medical social workers by asking the government of Zimbabwe to recruit more social workers and to have clear guidelines on medical social work by also developing an inter-professional collaboration committee at public hospitals for instruction on expectations.

What is unique about this issue is that it focuses on issues that are generally neglected in research, and I hope that the articles therein can provide a pedestal for future research on these and other connected issues, whilst at the same time, contributing to improvements in policy development and professional practice.