

E-social Work: The Fourth Industrial Revolution

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ABSTRACT

Human communities' social and economic activities worldwide were significantly disrupted by the First and Second Industrial Revolutions. Social work practice has always been based heavily on "face-to-face" interactions. The traditional practice of social work may soon be disrupted by new technologies from the Third and Fourth Industrial Revolutions, including computers, mobile devices etc. The scope of social work practice in the 21st century has expanded with the introduction of e-social work and social work informatics. The ramifications of social work education will be looked at in this essay. Cross-sectional knowledge and information sharing were insufficient in the information society (Society 4.0), and cooperation was challenging. The difficulty of extracting the necessary information from the abundance of information and then analyzing it was a burden. The effort and range of action were constrained by age and varied aptitude levels. Additionally, it was challenging to respond appropriately due to a number of constraints on problems like a declining birth rate, an elderly population, and local depopulation.

Keywords: E-social work, Fourth Industrial Revolution, Social work education, Social work profession.

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INTRODUCTION

Behavior, institutions, and professions, including social work are all changing as a result of the digitalization of society. One of social work's most severe difficulties as both a scientific field and a helpful profession is adjusting to this new environment. Diagnostic and social intervention procedures are also being impacted by this new technological environment in higher education, in addition to instructional methods. Social workers must specialize since social exclusion processes are occurring in the digital space at the same time. We explore how social work might utilize e-social Work to help a person meet the changing requirements and needs of the modern digital society in introducing this theme. People-centeredness has traditionally been associated with the social work profession. It has played a key part in addressing the societal problems that plague humanity. Significant societal developments like the First and Second Industrial Revolutions in the world's emerging urban centres brought huge social problems like poverty and homelessness. According to Rifkin (2016), these revolutions increased societal efficiency but also disrupted social conventions and economic activity in human cultures. As a result of poverty and unemployment brought on by urbanisation and industrialism, it was noted that Social welfare in

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South Africa is in a crucial stage" (Mbedzi, et.al, 2015). The boundaries between humans and digital technologies will become more hazy in the twenty-first century as a result of the development of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence like the internet of things (IoT) (Schwab, 2017). The rapid development and effects of the digital era have not been immune to the social work profession. The conventional approaches to social work practise have been significantly impacted by the "digital revolution." The exponential growth of technology is making it difficult for social workers to keep up with the world's rapid change. The traditional face-to-face type of social work education and practice has also been put to the test by the global COVID-19 health pandemic of 2020 since everyone in society had to abide by rules set by the government. To stop the illness from spreading, this included encouraging social withdrawal. According to Amadasun (2020), the pandemic affected society's

most vulnerable members' psychological and social wellness. These factors have forced the social work profession to re-evaluate its established practices in order to effectively address the pandemic's negative effects.

The Difficulty of Being Beneficial in a Digital Environment When Working in Social Work and Technology

The adoption of ICTs into every part of life is known as digitalization, which includes all the relationships, structures, and components involved. User interactions, as well as their requirements and demands, are changing as a result of digitalization processes. These alter the organisations where social workers exercise their profession. Furthermore, digitalization generates a digital environment that acts as a unique context in which exclusionary practises are reinterpreted and where it is required to create fresh approaches to diagnosis, intervention, and assessment. A variety of innovative digital techniques have expanded the scope of the field's research, therapies, interventions, and social networks. E-social Work, which has a cross-cutting impact on social intervention as a whole, is a new area of specialization that is emerging. Without considering their online behavior, interactions with others and institutions, or digital abilities, we cannot evaluate the needs of individuals or groups. New mechanisms of inequality and exclusion are developing in digital social networks on the internet. Digitalization is affecting every level of society. It affects not only user behavior but also defines the social inclusion and exclusion reimagined in a particular technology area, as well as government organizations going through a rapid digitalization process. More and more administrative processes (such as applications, forms, complaints, etc.) can only be completed online. Due to user demands and the features of our employer, e-Social work may become a crucial component of our professional activity since a sizable portion of social workers are employed by public administrative bodies (the public administration). In this context, a large number of public organizations use ICTs to deliver social services, and NGOs offer support online (Antonio López Peláez & Chaime Marcuello-Servós, 2018). In order to review and transform their practices in a path that should be responsive to further problems for the benefit of society with technology, professions that have a long history of assisting humanity in coping with the effects of societal changes are now faced with a significant challenge. Ballantyne et al. (2017) assertion

that human services must accept and embrace the still-emerging technological ways to improve human well-being in the Fourth Industrial Revolution supports this. The field of social work must take use of the Fourth Industrial Revolution's advantages while also addressing its problems. In this context, it could be instructive to look at some of the changes that the Fourth Industrial Revolution's exponential digital improvements are influencing in the field of social work. The Fourth Industrial Revolution's prospective effects on the field of social work are discussed in this section. There is evidence that some industry experts are beginning to talk about the impact's many elements. Additionally, suggestions are provided to help the social work profession effectively address the opportunities and problems presented by the fourth industrial revolution. The effects of the first and second industrial revolutions have always impacted social work, and its development and continued importance are closely related to those effects.

The New Practise Model

E-social Work was defined by Peláez, Garcia, and Masso (2018) as including online research, therapy (individual, group, and community participation), teaching and training social workers, and evaluating social service programmes using only technology. Understanding and addressing the opportunities and problems given by the Fourth Industrial Revolution are part of what this article means by appropriate education. The traditional social work programmes in South Africa should emphasise the ethics, values, and professional ideals. The way ethics are incorporated into e-social work takes into account how technology is employed. Programs in social work also include material to prepare students for assessment and intervention tasks at the micro, meso, and macro levels of social work, as well as in an online setting. A component of social work practise is research. For a social work curriculum to be relevant and effective in the digital age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, big data management and the usage of a variety of digital research apps must also be included. Thus, it is crucial that social work education take advantage of the chance for curriculum renewal that equips future practitioners to function both in the online and offline environments. Both of these settings are now occupied by client systems (Safodien, Mohamed., 2021). The social work is no different. We should draw lessons from the inventive and improvisatory ways that social workers, kids, and families used technology during the epidemic



and the concepts we used to uncover and comprehend their accomplishment. These insights can be effectively used to create a framework for flexible digital social work practise and education that will help social workers determine when and how digital tools and media would best support their work and assessments. Social workers and families would benefit from such a framework in today's digital settings of daily life, and it should be future-proofed for quick reactions to as-yet-unknown pandemic-like catastrophic circumstances (Pink, S., Ferguson, H., & Kelly, L., 2022). In order to meet this major issue for social work, current practitioners and social service organisations are also essential. Practitioners of social Work receive training in the use of new technologies and participate in their creation and development, which can strengthen the profession's ability to tackle this major problem.

CONCLUSION

This article's objective is to examine the opportunities and challenges brought forth by the new discipline of e-Social work. E-Social Work is quickly emerging as a new field of study, and digitalization has a cross-cutting impact on all of our activities. The digital sphere has emerged as a new frontier that may replace the field of social work in both higher education and professional practise. A social work discipline called e-social work can be described as one in which it is feasible to create intervention plans, carry out research initiatives, and create public policies since individuals, communities, and groups all have needs. Online research, patient care (individual therapy, group therapy, and community

dynamics), social worker training and education, and programme monitoring are all included in e-social work. As a result, E-Social Work creates a crucial framework for society 4.0.

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