



Sustainable Practices and Long-Term Impact: Creating Change by Bridging Boundaries with Kindness n Social Work

Chilotem Nwadi Achusi

Department of Social Work

School Name: Western Sydney University. Australia

Abstract. Social work continues to be a paramount profession in every society. With the prevalence of social, health, and economic disadvantages among minority and marginalized communities worldwide, there is a need for humanitarian services that address these issues. Kindness is a virtue, an element that has crucial effects on friendship and empathy. This is paramount to delivering humanitarian services as it can transform communities and build enduring relationships, leading to a more empathetic and supportive world. This article explores the idea that kindness is an ancillary, ontologically coherent, and counter-hegemonic resistance to neoliberal influences in contemporary social work. Drawing on relational theory and strengths-based approaches, as well as empirical evidence and case studies, it argues that kindness offers a transformative pathway to promoting sustainable practices and creating lasting change in social work.

Index Terms- Social work, Kindness, Sustainable practices, Lasting change, Empathy, Relational theory, Strength-based approaches, Systemic change, Marginalized communities, Empowerment.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background and Context

Social work, as a field of study and a practice-based profession, is ethically bound to promote human development, social change, individual and collective well-being and deliver high-quality services that meet the basic and complex needs of individuals and communities (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2024). At its very core lies a firm commitment towards upholding the principles of collective responsibility, social justice, human rights, equity and respect for diversity (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2017; IFSW, 2024). Unlike other helping professions, social work has a particular and unique dual role in addressing some of the most complex social problems. From an emancipatory perspective, it confronts the internal or personal barriers to human wellbeing and development as well as challenges the external or structural conditions that perpetuate social injustices and limit human rights for all persons (Glicksen, 2011). As the global landscape becomes increasingly complex, social workers are confronted with more complex and multifaceted human and social problems that require more than just technical approaches and solutions. More than ever, social work requires more sustainable approaches that transcend



conventional methods in order to effectively confront these multifaceted human and social problems and help disadvantaged groups find hope in the process. Clark and Hoffler (2014) were inclined to believe that hope undergirds resilience, creates a renewed sense of purpose and optimism for the future; facilitating the empowerment and liberation of disadvantaged groups.

The feelings associated with a renewed sense of purpose, resilience, positivity and optimism for the future can be ignited through kindness (Dreisoerner et al., 2021; Neff, 2011). Kindness has been considered as fundamental and of immense value to social work profession. The focal point of social work profession's mandates and actions are basically to advance the well-being of those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged and oppressed through lasting systemic change (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2017). Kindness, often overlooked as a soft skill, is a powerful resource that is invaluable in social work practice and an important capacity for social workers to develop. Mastrantonio (2023) sees the capacity for kindness as a key starting point for the delivery of humanitarian services. Importantly, she argued that it is capable of transforming communities and developing enduring relationships in any field of social work practice, such as, social work with older people, social work with people living with disabilities, social work with communities, etc.

Despite its significance to contemporary social work practice, kindness continues to be an under-researched and underutilised concept even in the profession where it is most valued. Notably, the practical implications of kindness for bridging boundaries and creating lasting change has been so often overlooked in virtually all fields of social work practice. In today's diverse and often polarised world, it is of vital importance to understand the mediating effects of kindness in the delivery of enduring humanitarian interventions that create lasting change. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of relational social work theory and strength-based approaches, this paper explores the transformative role of kindness in contemporary social work practice, particularly in relation to the Australia context. It argues that kindness is a powerful tool that can serve as a key component in promoting sustainable practices and creating lasting change in social work. Furthermore, it puts forward kindness-centred approach as an ontologically coherent, and counter-hegemonic resistance to neoliberal influences in contemporary social work. It is a deliberate attempt to give voice to evidence from case studies and empirical research that make a compelling case for achieving enduring positive outcomes in social work through kindness. The paper will provide a foundation to assess how kindness can help social workers bridge boundaries; creating environments that support effective delivery of various interventions that achieve enduring positive outcomes. This is vital to inform professional practice and future research endeavours.

2. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To explore kindness as a transformative force for systemic change in social work
- To examine the contributions of kindness in the promotion of sustainable practices and enduring positive outcomes in social work
- To illustrate how kindness bridges boundaries to facilitate working together among social work professionals and other stakeholders.



- To identify systemic barriers that hinder kindness from being in the foreground of social work interventions.
- To assess the transformative impact of kindness in the delivery of humanitarian interventions in underserved/underprivileged populations.

3. Rationale

Incorporating kindness as a core element of professional practice is impactful even if kindness is widely regarded as a soft skill. Therefore this study attempts to advance the knowledge that aims to highlight how kindness could become a basis for sustainable social work practices by demonstrating its practical utility. As such, the research is important for exploring kindness as a counter-hegemonic response to such neoliberal challenges by moving beyond the theory-practice divide. It looks at the power of kindness, and how it can be a medium through which effective humanitarian services can be achieved. The outputs will enhance understanding of the relational processes necessary for effective social work in contemporary complex social systems. Additionally, this study contributes to the body of academic literature by offering empirical evidence and case studies that support the argument that kindness leads to systemic change. The findings will contribute to professional practice, develop social work interventions, and contribute to developments in social work education and policy.

II. Literature Review

1. Conceptualising Kindness

The origin of the word “kindness” could be traced to the base words “kin”, “kindred” which denotes family; and “kind” which denotes type. For Rowland (2009, p. 207), the etymology of kindness implies that “a relation of kindness among groupings” is fundamental to human relation. There has been increased scientific interest in exploring and understanding the multifaceted nature of kindness and its significance from psychological (Buchanan & Bardi, 2010; Canter et al., 2017; Malti, 2020), philosophical (Crisp, 2008; Pohoata, 2015; Wilson, 2016), management (Caldwell, 2017a; Caldwell & Anderson, 2017), theological (Hertig, 2021; Paula da Silva & Bachkirov, 2023), and sociological (Brownlie, 2024; Brownlie & Anderson, 2016) standpoints. Kindness has been widely framed from a psychological viewpoint as an individual trait or virtue that seem inherent in humans but could be cultivated and reinforced (Noddings, 2013). The conceptualization of kindness as a virtue or a valuable trait has its roots from both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions (Aristotle 1959). Kindness has also been defined by many scholars as being rooted in religion, with Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, etc conceptualising kindness as a duty owed to both friends and foes (Passmore & Oades, 2015). However, psychological terms and concepts have tended to dominate and shape current understanding and conceptualization of kindness and its perimeters. Like many other psychological constructs, kindness has been defined by scholars in a variety of ways. Ryon (2013) argues that kindness is a sincere act solely motivated by the need to help another as opposed to conforming with social expectations. In support, Ahern (2013) describes kindness as an action that is benevolent and solely borne out of the desire to help another and not due to any reciprocal benefits or explicit punishment that might result from such action. In other words, kindness entails engaging in altruistic acts for the



benefit of others (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). However, Post (2005) argues that kindness does not only benefit the recipient but also the giver. In other words, kindness could be seen as having both self- and other-oriented dimensions. In support, Passmore and Oades (2015) conceptualise kindness as a powerful and action-oriented resource characterised by selfless and genuine acts of generosity, love, benevolence and service aimed at improving one's life and the life of others with one's talents and resources. As such, kindness can be expressed as a deep genuine concern for oneself and for others. Binfet and his colleagues (2016) argue that for a behaviour to be kind, it must be subjectively perceived by the recipient as beneficial. In this context, subjective perception is, for Covey (2013), an evaluation of the behaviour vis-à-vis what is important to the recipient according to their 'emotional bank accounts'.

Although there is no single operational definition of the construct of kindness, there is a common theme associated with all definitions of kindness. The predominant theme is its conceptualization as behaviours or actions that encompasses prosocial acts (any sincere and voluntary actions that benefits others) and other-oriented motivations (such as compassion, concern, and empathy) (Eisenberg et al., 2006; Knafo & Israel, 2012; Peterson and Seligman (2004). Furthermore, each of these definitions are based on an understanding of kindness as a moral and ethical duty. Needless to say, these commonalities do not obscure the layers of complexity kindness has, especially at the conceptual level. This complexity, according to Clegg and Rowland (2010, p. 723), is very much evident in its operationalisation as "it can lead to acts that by intention are kind but may involve misjudgment and harm to the others". For example, would giving cigarettes to an addictive smoker asking for cigarettes be viewed as kindness? At what point does being kind to oneself mean knowing when not to act according to one's emotional bank account and when does it mean going beyond one's preconceived limits? However, a psychological perspective considers kindness as a state of being that expresses one's emotions, deep genuine concern and particular sensitivity for oneself and for others (Malti, 2020). Also, in their work – "On Kindness", Adam and Barbara (2009, p. 8) refer to kindness as "the ability to bear the vulnerability of others". Taking the above into consideration, it can be argued that key the emotional competences – empathy and discernment – support the capacity for kindness. Thus, being kind demands that one has to be aware of one's inner state and genuinely understand the perspective of others as well as the interconnection between the self and others. In understanding the relationship between the self and others, Adams and Barbara (2009, p.28) reiterate the importance of interdependence instead of independence, as kindness considers "the self and other as interdependent". The self is viewed as that which is not in isolation but that which is inherently bonded through "its kindly relations with others". Furthermore, compassion is another emotional competency that supports the capacity for kindness. Compassion involves a deep feeling of concern for another's distress. It goes without saying that if one is compassionate towards the "addictive smoker", being kind would mean actions that will protect the smoker from harm. In this case, Mayeroff (1971) describes the feeling associated with such acts of kindness as that which embraces the other as part and parcel of the self while also acknowledging the autonomy and uniqueness of the other. Finally, such acts of kindness epitomises a positive and practical outlook on life that is "built upon a commitment to social justice" and the broader social good (Rowland, 2009, 208). Following Adams and Barbara's (2009) as



well as Rowland's (2009) understanding of kindness, kindness could be seen as fundamental and of immense value for social work practice. In other words, kindness should be understood and operationalised as actions that challenge oppressive and suppressive practices and at the same time, remain accountable to systems and structures that perpetuate and reinforce inequalities, poverty and discrimination in communities.

2. Sustainable Practices in Social Work

Sustainable social work practices borders on practices that contribute to enduring social well-being and justice through the promotion of human rights, social justice, collective responsibility and the fair distribution of social and material resources (Akram, 2017). In support, Mary (2017) suggests it encompasses approaches that are designed to address not just clients' and communities' immediate needs but also provide long-term solutions that have enduring positive effects on societal/human well-being and developmental outcomes. The integration of economic, social and environmental sustainability into practice is central to sustainable social work. This reflects the interconnectedness and interdependency between humans and the planet, a sentiment echoed by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015).

The growth ideology has become the dominant discourse that forms the basis of global economic, developmental and political theories and policies. Underpinning this ideology is a philosophical commitment to the relentless pursuit of economic growth as a yardstick for measuring societal/human well-being and development (Powers et al., 2021). Neo-liberalism has served to mainstream this growth ideology throughout much of the world, revering economic growth as the answer to social problems.

Social work has consistently challenged the belief that economic gain through development is a precondition for social development (IFSW, 2014). Houlbrook (2022) argues that the dominant neoliberal culture is directly opposed to the core principles and mandates of social work and community development. The core principles of social work has always been to strengthen human relationships and uphold the principles of collective responsibility, social justice, human rights and dignity, respect for diversity, and the equitable allocation of social and material resources (IFSW, 2014). Although these core principles might have underpinned social work training and practice in the past, contemporary social work has become increasingly entrenched in the growth ideology. Drawing on Foucault's analysis of power, Hill and Laredo (2020, p. 1) note that mainstream social work could no longer be seen as gentle and kindly but a "conduit and amplifier of power networks of neo-liberalism". Of concern, Lawler (2013) suggests that running social services as a business rather than a charitable, non-profit model has supplanted the espoused social justice goals of social work. Contemporary social work practices have become highly technocratic, becoming involved in 'ordering' discourses towards service users, and prioritising risk management, individualism and allocation of resources over genuine care and empathy for human beings and their environment (Renau et al., 2023). Meadows and his colleagues (1972) argue in "Limits to growth" that growth does not result in outcomes that bring about justice, rather it perpetuates and reproduces social



inequalities and injustices globally. Jones et al (2021) note that the rise of neo-liberalism has brought unsustainable social protection systems, increased inequalities and worsened social injustices. As such, development within the growth ideology might not be unconnected to several paradoxical forces at play in the world today. Steady rise in knowledge-based economies, globalisation, and technological advancements have been accompanied with deteriorating global peace, localised conflicts, rising inequality, and increased social suffering.

Perhaps unknowingly, social work within this dominant neoliberal culture does not result in outcomes that bring about justice, rather it perpetuates and reproduces the very systems and structures that engenders social inequalities and injustices. As such, social work has been reduced to offering temporary solutions to alleviate problems without transforming the structures and systems that gave rise to them. In support, Jones et al (2021) argue that social work practice within the prevailing neoliberal orthodoxy that produces 'self-sufficient beings' in an attempt to reduce inequality and poverty would remain unsustainable and bound to fail. For instance, the primary focus of social protection systems in most developed countries lies on assisting the valued members of their societies (their citizens) while keeping out those they consider of non-deserving of the entitlement (such as asylum seekers). Jones and his colleagues (2018) suggest that such discriminative actions, grounded in a neoliberal growth ideology, might negatively impact another's well-being or that of future generations. Instead, social work practice should focus on a grander goal of creating inclusive, sustainable communities that fosters human flourishing, social support, care and collective action.

Khallis (2018) stresses the need for social work to embrace a more sustainable approach which transcends economics and incorporates meaning and empathetic relationships in order to promote sustainability in social work. Kindness represents a powerful resource whose ontological coherence offers a counter-hegemonic resistance to neo-liberal influences in social work practice (Hill & Laredo, 2020). Kindness could be the vehicle that will not only form the basis of a transformative practice but also provide the groundwork for sustainability in social work. Behaviours anchored on kindness form the foundation for empathetic care, helping relationships and social support. As Freire (1970) highlights, building direct and purposeful relationships with clients through the sphere of dialogue is central to the delivery of a socially just and sustainable, rights-based practice.

3. Bridging Cultural, Institutional, and Interpersonal Boundaries

Social work practice often involves complex and multifarious boundaries that social workers must navigate to improve the effectiveness of interventions. Social work is a profession that feels a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in the application of self, the person in the process (Mattison, 2000). Notably, the ability to establish a good working relationship is a necessary condition for effective social work practice (Ward et al., 2010). The application of self remains the prerequisite skill with which social workers relate to clients and their problems as well as the foundation for positive intervention outcomes. The application of self, which closely aligns with the postmodern paradigm is quite difficult to effectively put into practice. The Postmodern paradigm demands that social workers be personally involved and



open to constantly nurture the ongoing working relationship with clients in the helping process (Kapelj, 2022). Drawing on the postmodern paradigm in psychotherapy, Čačinović et al (2011) argue that as a helping profession, the focus of social work transcends the problems and interventions. They argue that the helping or therapeutic process, established through a working relationship between the client and the social worker, shapes the dynamics of the standard of care social workers can provide. However, the working relationship established through the application of self, the person in the helping process appears to lend itself to the development of dual/multiple relationships, competing values and ethical dilemmas which have several ethical consequences. In support, Reamer (2003) agrees that maintaining a safe, professional and transparent connection between client and social worker can be problematic and challenging due to ethical issues related to cultural, structural, and professional boundaries. Kindness remains a fundamental component in the helping process, facilitating the creation of a safe, non-judgmental space where boundaries, trust and human dignity are respected and promoted. With kindness, social workers' view of professional boundaries would align with the thoughts of Flaker (2020), who argues that boundaries should be conceptualised as bridges that connect social workers to clients rather than separate them. Obviously, some professional boundaries need to be cast in stone based on clear values and ethical considerations, such as those related to exploitation, sexual relations, etc. Importantly, Flaker (2020) posits that certain boundaries should not be set in advance – “a priori”, but rather develop organically and adapted for each working relationship. Accordingly, the capacity of kindness to be at the centre of this transformative social work practice is predicated on its ability to bridge boundaries between genuine connections and professional obligations. Kindness can play a central role in bridging institutional, cultural, intrapersonal and interpersonal boundaries in social work, especially when working with diverse and vulnerable populations. Before all others, professional boundaries in social work relationships should take into consideration the broad spectrum of developments in the profession's theories and values as well as the current realities of practice. O'Leary et al (2012) and other scholars who challenge the conservative representation of boundaries in social work relationships emphasized the need for social workers to embrace an inclusive, connected and dynamic understanding of professional boundaries in practice. Kindness is a tool for establishing social work relationships where boundaries are determined on the basis of respect for human dignity, mutuality, inclusion, dynamism and connected professional relationships as against separation and professional distance. In this context, practicing kindness entails acknowledging the inappropriate behaviours and the vulnerabilities that may damage the working relationship, diminishing its ability to establish a safe space for problem-solving and the co-creation of positive outcomes. Contemporary theories and perspectives of social work, such as postmodernism and narrative approaches stress the importance of the use of self, unconscious dynamics and inter-subjectivity in social work relationships (Bird, 2000; Ruch, 2010). These could be achieved through intentional acts of kindness such as offering consistent support, being empathetic and compassionate, listening actively and validating clients' emotions.



4. Research Questions

Informed by the relational theory and strengths-based approach, this research synthesises the current state of knowledge regarding kindness and its role in transforming social work practices and outcomes.

Specifically, the research addresses the following questions;

- How does kindness help drive meaningful and long-term systemic change?
- What are the contributions of kindness in the promotion of sustainable practices and enduring positive outcomes in social work?
- In what way does kindness bridge boundaries to promote engagement, collaboration and co-construction of solutions to social problems?
- What are the systemic barriers that hinder social workers from incorporating kindness in social work interventions?
- How does kindness affect the success of humanitarian services in underserved/underprivileged populations?

III. Methodology

The study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to effectively meet the research objectives and address the research questions. The choice of methodology was on account of its suitability for assessing, appraising and synthesizing available research on kindness and its role in transforming social work practices and outcomes. According to Fink (2005), systematic literature reviews encompass a complete set of published and unpublished literature spanning various fields of knowledge. The relational theory and strengths-based research approach guided all phases of the review process, with a strong focus on examining the transformative role of kindness in social work practice and its contributions towards systemic change and enduring outcomes for social work interventions.

1. Search Strategy

The review prioritised and included relevant literature that explored the transformative role of kindness in driving sustainable practices and achieving enduring positive outcomes in social work. This includes peer-reviewed articles published in English language between January 2004 and December 2024 with special focus on theoretical frameworks, empirical studies and case studies. Due to the dearth of research on kindness in relation to social work practice, this 20-year expansive search was to enable the search identify as many relevant papers as possible. The review also included grey literature sources such as non-peer reviewed journals, conference proceedings, government reports, social work websites, theses and dissertations.

All potentially relevant papers were identified through a systematic search of four electronic databases such as PsycINFO, Web of Science, Google Scholar and Science Direct; relevant social work journals and other information sources such as conference repositories. The systematic search strategy involved the use of at least one or the combination the following keywords: kindness, sustainable practices, lasting change, long-term impact, bridging boundaries, social work practice.



Examples search terms include (“sustainable practices” OR “sustainability” OR “community-based approach”) AND (“long-term impact” OR “enduring outcome”) AND (“bridging boundaries” OR “interpersonal boundaries” OR “professional boundaries” OR “institutional boundaries: OR “cultural boundaries”) AND (“kindness” OR “empathy” OR “kindness-centred approach” OR “acts of kindness”) AND (“social work” OR “social care” OR “humanitarian services” OR “social work interventions”).

The search strategy utilised title and abstract field restrictions in all databases as a preparatory test of full texts. The search strategy also involved an ancestry and progeny searches whereby reference lists of selected peer-reviewed studies and all studies citing previous reviews were examined to identify relevant studies.

Grey literature databases and websites of governmental and non-governmental organisation were searched for articles exploring the transformative role of kindness in driving sustainable practices and achieving enduring positive outcomes in social work. Systematic search of grey literature sources were carried out in Trove, Social Care Online, and Google Scholar. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to screen and select all relevant studies identified through the search strategy.

The preparation and reporting of the systematic review was in line with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 (Page et al., 2021) (Figure 1).

All search results were assessed for their study quality based on their relevance to the research questions and reliability, such as the article’s intended purpose, coverage, authority of the author(s), accuracy, and currency.

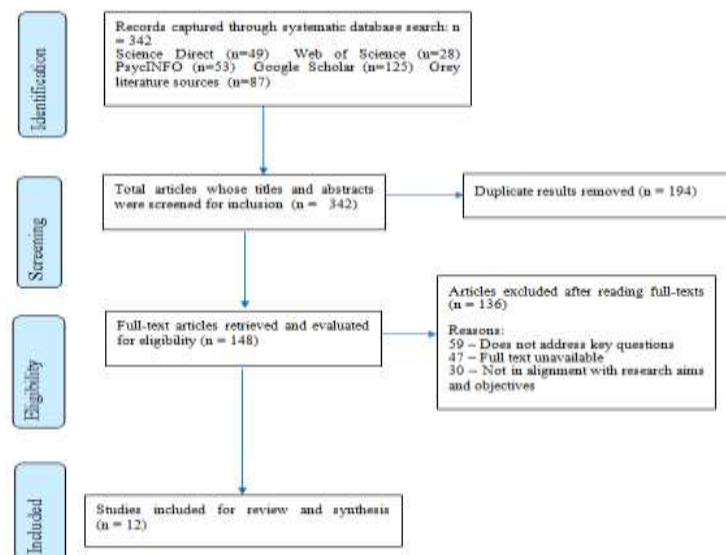


Figure 1: PRISMA flowchart for the SLR



2. Data Collection and Analysis

Data was extracted from the included studies using the Microsoft Excel software based on the following study characteristics: author (s) and year of publication; aims, study location, study design and methodology, key findings and recommendations. Finally, a thematic analysis and synthesis of the included studies alongside a relational and strengths-based perspectives were carried out to capture emerging themes that are relevant to addressing the research questions.

3. Theoretical Frameworks

Relational Theory

Over the years, the centrality of relationships with or between individuals, groups and structures in social work practice has been consistently emphasized in social work literature (Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto, 2008; Mattison, 2000; Petr, 1983;Turney, 2010; Ward et al., 2010; Winter, 2019). Needless to say, relational social work is central to actualising the aims and objectives of social work practice (Winter, 2019). At its core, relational theory provides a theory of solutions rather than problems and their sources (Parton and O'Byrne, 2000). Drawing on post-modern paradigms, relational theory holds that solutions meant to address social problems do not emerge from individuals, but from the reflexivity and actions of existing networks (Folgheraiter, 2007). Existing social networks in this context include friends, family members, co-workers, mentors, teachers, bosses, etc. According to the theory, social workers serve as the relational guides of these networks; and based on the reciprocity principle, co-create sustainable solutions to problems from the social relations involved. The underlying assumptions of the relational theory, especially the significance of relationships and the environment, are in agreement with conservative modernist social work viewpoints (Sarri, 2005). Relational social work theory provides a foundational framework for social workers to understand the linkages between social relations and solutions to social problems. Social workers can use relational theory to engage with the existing social networks of individuals who are experiencing challenges or in need of support to enhance their capabilities, capacities and resilience to drive and achieve the desired change (Folgheraiter, 2007).

Social work practice from the perspective of contemporary relational theory is centred on a two-person approach to intervention. From inception, social work practice is known to have its root in a deficit model which pathologises individuals and emphasises the need for remedial actions for individuals and their networks. Relational social work instead stresses on the co-creation of solutions through the sphere of reciprocal interactions with clients. Tosone (2004) well defined it as the practice of “using the therapeutic relationship as the principle vehicle to effect change in the client’s systemic functioning referring to the inherent interconnection of the intrapsychic, interpersonal and larger community systems” (p. 481). In this context, relationships are obviously not just procedural and transaction-based but are safe spaces that foster trust, inter-subjectivity, social agency, respect and empowerment.

Strengths-based Approach

The strength-based perspective is a social work practice theory developed by a team comprising Ann Weick, Charles Rapp and Dennis Saleebey (Healy, 2005).



The strengths perspective has its roots in the age of modernism, being one of many conservative modernist theories that were developed in the quest for rationality, objectivity and scientific truths (Weick et al., 1989). The approach was developed to corrective response to the predominant psychoanalytical and deficit-based approaches and policies that focus on the weaknesses, needs and problems in clients and work towards eradicating them (Saleebey, 1992). Alternatively, the strengths-based perspective holds the core belief that “all people have strengths and capacities and, that given access to resources and supports, can achieve their life goals and solve problems” (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2005, p. 123-124). Needless to say, the strengths-based approach does not utterly neglect problems rather it reframes difficulties and problems; as opportunities and drivers for change (Giacomucci, 2021). The principal focus of the strengths-based approach lies on highlighting the client’s strengths and resources, including skills, knowledge, talent and support systems with the aim of achieving their goals and aspirations (Healy, 2005; Saleebey, 1992; Weick et al. 1989). Self-determination, individuals’ strengths, capabilities and assets form the basis of interventions (Saint-Jacques et al., 2009). According to Grant and Cadell (2009), strengths-based approach is client-led and a collaborative approach based on a philosophical commitment to prioritise human potentials rather than their limitations.

Social work practice from the strengths-based perspective places people’s strengths, capacities, capabilities and potentialities at the heart of the therapeutic process rather than amplifying the weaknesses of individuals and their networks (Chapin, 2017). From a strengths-based perspective, the social worker’s task is to focus on what the client does well or what has been successful for them, and explore ways to do more and build on them (Chapin, 2017). By putting what clients can do rather than their deficiencies at the centre of the helping process, social workers engender a framework that encourages and supports the ability for recovery, development and change (Saleebey, 2013).

Finally, relational theory and strengths-based approach represent practice theories and models that would help uncover the nuances in the functionality of kindness as a fundamental component of sustainable and ethical social work practices. These social work theories provide invaluable perspectives and guide the understanding of kindness and its transformative potentials for social work from both practice and ethical lens. The theories amplify the centrality of a two-person approach to intervention that strongly focuses on highlighting the client’s strengths and resources.

4. Findings

Twelve articles (4 grey literature and 8 peer-reviewed) were selected and included for review in the study. Majority of the articles explored the transformative role of kindness in driving sustainable practices and achieving enduring positive outcomes in social work. 4 studies (33.3%) reported real-world examples of kindness-centred approach in the delivery of social work intervention (Carole, 2013; MHIN, 2015a, 2015b; MEP, 2018). 8 studies (66.6%) examined the transformative role kindness plays in creating lasting change and sustainable social work practices. Interestingly, half of the eight peer-reviewed articles adopted experimental study designs using randomized controlled trials (Binfet & Whitehead, 2019; Frybury et al., 2021; Quirk



& Ivztan, 2018; Stell & Farsides, 2016)), three were observational studies (Hill & Laredo, 2020; Mastrantonio, 2023; Otake et al, 2006) and one was a meta-analysis (Hui et al., 2020). This indicates that the available empirical evidence provides significant knowledge with respect to kindness in social work, thus findings could be generalizable.

Table 1: Characteristics of reviewed studies and main findings

S/N	Author(s) and Year	Study Location	Study Design and Methodology	Aims of the Study	Key Findings	Conclusions
1	Binfet & Whitehead (2019)	Canada	Experimental study design: Randomised controlled trial	To evaluate the extent of adolescents' engagement in a kindness intervention and the resultant effect on their well-being.	Adolescents who consistently implemented acts of kindness had the lowest self-reported negative affect and highest self-reported kindness to others	Commitment to implementing intentional acts of kindness enhances individual wellbeing
2	Carole, (2013).	Nairobi, Kenya	Case study intervention program	To extend compassion and support towards creating sustainable opportunities that empower Nubian women and youth while addressing the root causes of systemic inequalities in the Kibera slums	Over time, the program not only addressed the immediate needs faced by vulnerable community but also increased the community's overall sense of well-being and cohesion. The	Prioritise kindness-centred approach in social work interventions in marginalised populations and communities



S/N	Author(s) and Year	Study Location	Study Design and Methodology	Aims of the Study	Key Findings	Conclusions
					kindness-centered approach helped to build trust and empower women, girls and youths, leading to sustained improvements and community resilience	
3	Frybury et al., (2021)	United States of America	Experimental study design: randomized, baseline- and comparator-controlled field study	To investigate the impact of kindness media on viewers' emotional responses in a real-world, pediatric healthcare setting.	Kindness media resulted in statistically significant increases in viewers' reports of feeling inspired, moved, or touched. In addition, individuals who watched kindness media were also more generous compared to standard viewers	Kindness increases altruism, positive emotions, and strengthen positive social and interpersonal connection
4	Hill & Laredo	United	Qualitative study:	To explore the position	Social workers on	Kindness forms the



S/N	Author(s) and Year	Study Location	Study Design and Methodology	Aims of the Study	Key Findings	Conclusions
	(2020)	Kingdom	ethnographic research approach	that neoliberalism in social work framed as 'new managerialism' has shifted the focus of social work away from a right-based practice	the frontlines adopted individual acts of kindness as social solidarity in defiance to the prevailing technocratic practices in social work practice.	foundation for the dynamic practice of community-based social work, resisting the dominant neoliberal practice characterised by a silo-based, individualised and marketised model of social work
5	Hui et al., (2020)	Not Applicable	Meta-analysis	To evaluate the magnitude of the relationship between prosociality and wellbeing and the moderators that influence the relationship	Prosociality was found to be strongly associated with psychological functioning. Also, informal helping (vs. formal helping) was associated with more well-being benefits	Intentional acts of kindness enhances prosocial behaviours which in turns improves wellbeing
6	Mental Health Innovation Network (2015a)	Benue State, Nigeria	Case study: intervention program	To improve rural primary mental and neurological health services in	Mental health services available in primary care and	The kindness shown by trained health workers was instrumental in scaling up



S/N	Author(s) and Year	Study Location	Study Design and Methodology	Aims of the Study	Key Findings	Conclusions
				Benue state,	community based rehabilitation facilities across 16 of the 23 local government areas (LGAs) in Benue State	services in primary care leading to long-term improvements in mental health across communities in Benue State
7	Otake et al. (2006)	Japan	Quantitative study using surveys	To evaluate the link between the character strength of kindness and subjective happiness, and the impacts of a counting kindnesses intervention on feelings of happiness	Happy people had more motivation to perform, were more able to recognise and enact kind behaviours. In addition, counting one's own acts of happiness increased subjective happiness and made happy people more kind.	Kindness has a transformative impact on subjective happiness and the ability to develop trusting relationships
8	Mastrantonio (2023)	Germany	Quantitative study using surveys	To explore the position that kindness is one of the most important skills needed	Kindness was associated with positive social interactions, healthy	As a social bond, kindness has the potentials to transform individuals and societies,



S/N	Author(s) and Year	Study Location	Study Design and Methodology	Aims of the Study	Key Findings	Conclusions
				to safeguard the future of human cohesion and social bond	relationships and foster a sense of social responsibility	promoting wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusive communities
9	Quirk & Ivztan (2018)	United Kingdom	Experimental research: intervention study	To evaluate the effectiveness of loving-kindness mediation (LKM) in building individuals' resilience and well-being	LKM significantly increased psychological resilience and reduced stress and depression among the experimental group while no significant changes occurred among the control group	Social work practice can reap more benefits by focusing on the soft approaches to social work interventions. Focusing on the soft side of social work practice such as client experience, kindness-centred approaches such as LKM can be successful in building resilience and its associated beneficial outcomes
10	Migrant English Project (2018)	Brighton and Hove, United Kingdom	Case study: Intervention Program	To support the integration and acculturation process of migrants, asylum seekers and	The kindness shown by the volunteers were able to promote strong, supportive relationships,	Kindness-centred approach is fundamental for building strong relationships, and empowering refugees/migrants to overcome



S/N	Author(s) and Year	Study Location	Study Design and Methodology	Aims of the Study	Key Findings	Conclusions
				refugees into their host communities	and successfully helped refugees, migrants and asylum seekers find employment, access services, and build social networks.	cultural and institutional barriers as well as navigate the prevailing neoliberal orthodoxies in the access to essential services in order to build fulfilling lives in their new home.
1 1	Stell & Farsides (2016)	Brighton, United Kingdom	Experimental research: randomised controlled trials	To examine the effectiveness of loving-kindness meditation (LKM) in reducing racial bias	A short-term induction of LKM was effective in reducing implicit prejudice towards a racial out-group	Kindness-centred approach plays a significant role in reducing racism and is instrumental for achieving systemic change
1 2	Mental Health Innovation Network (2015b)	Uganda	Case study: intervention program	To improve access to mental health services in post conflict rural communities of Soroti District, Uganda	Access to mental health services greatly improved in the rural communities, leading to improved mental health outcomes	The kindness-centred approach is instrumental in achieving improved mental health outcomes across the rural communities by building trust and encouraging active participation in



S/N	Author(s) and Year	Study Location	Study Design and Methodology	Aims of the Study	Key Findings	Conclusions
						the affected communities

The Transformative Role of Kindness in Sustainable Social Work Practices

The articles reviewed consistently acknowledged the transformative power of kindness and kindness-centred approach in achieving sustainable outcomes in social work practice (Binfet & Whitehead, 2019; Frybury et al., 2021; Hill & Laredo, 2020; Quirk & Ivtzan, 2018; Mastrantonio, 2023; Stell & Farsides, 2016). The results demonstrate that kindness enhances the effectiveness of social work intervention outcomes by promoting collaboration, resilience and trusting relationships. Social workers who incorporate kindness report increased levels of client satisfaction and sustained positive impacts in their interventions. Intentional acts of kindness is the manifestation of an approach that develops empathetic relationships and guarantees sustainability in social work (Hill & Laredo, 2020). Kindness enables social workers to pursue their roles and responsibilities not as corporate employees but as human service professionals with a commitment to serve, build relationships and engage in collective activity. Furthermore, kindness through its other-and self-oriented emotions and cognitions (Malti, 2020), will enable social workers incorporate the capacity for empathetic practice and perspective-taking to better relate with clients. In addition, kindness provides an important foundation from which social worker would uncouple the neoliberal narratives that shape the services they provide and focus on a holistic approach empowering individuals and communities.

Bridging Boundaries: The Role of Kindness

The findings indicate that kindness is highly instrumental for bridging interpersonal, systemic and cultural boundaries (MEP, 2018; Stell & Farsides, 2016). Actions anchored on kindness helps social workers effectively engage with clients from diverse backgrounds. Social workers, by approaching clients and communities with kindness, will be able to break cultural barriers and thus, improve communication and collaboration without compromising cultural sensitivity. Furthermore, kindness facilitates the navigation of complex systems and the development of more coordinated interventions by establishing safe collaborative environment with other professionals and stakeholders. With the increasing trend of 'New Managerialism' in contemporary practice, socials workers often times are faced with several challenges that include limited resources, restrictive policies, and greater uncertainty capable of undermining the effectiveness of social work interventions. A kindness-centred approach helps social workers find their voices and critique neoliberal "Managerialism" by forming strong alliances across agencies, advocating



for clients' interest and committing to a supportive, empathetic and relationship-based practice.

Long-term Impact of Kindness: Creating Lasting Change

Findings show that kindness leaves an enduring impact on both social workers and their clients (Hui et al., 2020; MHIN, 2015a, 2015b; Otake et al., 2006; Quirk & Ivztan 2018). On one hand, clients who experience kindness in their interactions with practitioners are more likely to take part in sustainable behaviours and be active contributors to their sustained well-being. On the other hand, practitioners who incorporate kindness in their practice report increased rates of job satisfaction and reduced stress levels. In addition, findings show that kindness can help bring about systemic change by decoupling and reshaping the disruptive neoliberal influences in the broader social environment. One way to bring about systemic change is by creating a more connected culture through kindness. By consistently practicing acts of kindness, social workers model this prosocial behaviour for others as the standards for expected behaviour (Leape et al., 2012). Scientific and anecdotal evidence have shown that intentional acts of kindness is associated with increased feelings of happiness both for the giver and the recipient (Otake et al., 2006). Furthermore, studies have also shown happier people to be kinder (Aknin et al., 2012). This confirms the interdependence and sustainable cycle involving happiness and kindness; with happy people becoming happier by practising or witnessing acts of kindness which also increases their proclivity for more kinder behaviours. By initiating a virtuous cycle, kindness offers a transformative influence to organisational cultures and societal norms (Leape et al., 2012). As such, social work practice can create a social environment that supports social development and sustains enduring positive outcomes through a virtuous cycle of reciprocity.

V. Discussion

1. Implications for Social Work Practice

This comprehensive systematic literature review aimed to examine the transformative role of kindness in driving sustainable practices and achieving enduring positive outcomes in social work by reviewing evidence from empirical studies and real-world examples. Three transformative roles of kindness were identified: sustainable social work practice; bridging boundaries; and creating lasting change/impact. The review demonstrates that the transformative potentials of kindness have significant implications for social work practice. It is important to acknowledge that incorporating kindness into social work is instrumental for enhancing the effectiveness of interventions and the sustainability of social work practices.

There is a strong case for articulating kindness as a transformative force that inspires effective and sustainable ways of social work practice. This is particularly true with regards to its capacity to facilitate effective and sustainable ways of driving social change by navigating boundaries and the ethical quandaries that arise in contemporary social work practice. The influence of social theories connected with social constructionism, postmodernism and narrative approaches in social work practice has significantly increased in recent years. Social work practice has



witnessed a paradigm shift from a long-established approach that privileged silence, professional distance, abstinence, neutrality, and a one-person approach to intervention. Much emphasis now rests on the plurality of knowledge and voice, connection, dialogue, and a two-person approach to intervention (Borden, 2000; Ornstein & Ganzer, 2005). Kindness presents a powerful, ontologically coherent catalyst to an empathetic, supportive relation-based practice. In social work practice, kindness is not only an emotive concept, it is also a tool for social development. This is consistent with the broader research, which emphasizes that kindness is capable of producing the therapeutic relationships that create the safe environment for transformative change and a more sustainable future. Kindness forms an important foundation that actively shapes the services practitioners are able to provide and how they engage with clients and systems. Furthermore, kindness is far from being just a relational quality. As a tool for social justice, kindness confronts dominant social, economic and structural narrative that reproduce inequalities by offering an empathetic, compassionate and humanising response to clients who experience oppression, trauma and marginalisation.

Kindness can be integrated into social work practice by placing it at the heart of a strengths-based approach to social work practice. Kindness can reinforce a strengths-based approach to the delivery of humanitarian services. Kindness within the strengths-based approach recognises and gives value to the knowledge, potentials and capacity for resilience, courage, growth and change that individuals possess regardless of the challenges they face. Kindness encourages social workers to promote the rights of individuals and communities to pursue their own goals and expectations (Mathers, 2016). Kindness entails acknowledging the vulnerabilities and weaknesses clients experience without allowing these weaknesses define them and become the focus of treatment. It emphasises treating clients with respect, empathy, and compassion; encouraging social workers to refrain from reducing clients to their problems, but approach them as motivators for change. Mastrantonio (2023, p.119) found that kindness is associated with “positive social interactions and the development of healthy relationships”, leading to greater sense of social responsibility. Obviously, engaging clients with respect and compassion as well as recognising their strengths increase their sense of self-worth and motivation to actively engage with the intervention process (Peart, 2024). For example, in working with a client with an intellectual impairment, a kindness-centred strengths-based practice will never reduce the client to a person with disability and without agency who needs to be worked on. It is evident that clients might get accustomed to and eventually internalise such stigmatising and deficit-focused perspective. This predisposes the client to disengagement and a sense of hopelessness to change (Pulla, 2017). Instead, a strengths perspective that incorporates kindness will instil hope within with the client by helping the client identify and build on the inherent resilience he/she possess; support the client realise his/her capacity to gain employment; and focus on the strengths, abilities and resources at his/her disposal. It could also be noted that focusing on the client’s strengths and assets inspires confidence in clients and sets the groundwork for empowerment and enduring change (Pulla, 2017). By incorporating acts of kindness, such as encouragement, compassionate listening, empathetic partnership, affirming his/her , the client



becomes the expert in a goal-oriented, proactive, transformative journey of recovery and lasting change.

An integral hallmark of the strengths-based practice is establishing hope-inducing relationships (Rapp et al., 2005). According to Rapp and his colleagues in “The Future of Strength-based Social Work”, the therapeutic relationship should be able to help clients find hope and opportunities as well as increase their confidence, self-worth, and how they perceive their potentials and resources. Kindness, as articulated by Neff (2011) induces feelings associated with a renewed sense of purpose, resilience, positivity and optimism for the future. By incorporating acts of kindness, strengths-based practice engenders high expectations and hope, ensuring that their strengths, goals and aspirations are the focus of interventions. Furthermore, kindness establishes a therapeutic relationship that is trustworthy, empathetic, and purposeful in empowering clients overcome problems and connect to social support systems.

Kindness can also be integrated into social work practice by making it a critical component of relational social work. Linked with anti-oppressive and anti-racist social work practices, this approach demands that social workers view their clients as experiential experts and active partners in their journey toward empowerment and liberation. Kindness encourages the development of safe and trusting environments where clients’ knowledge and voices are seen, heard and valued. Kindness within the relational framework dismantles existing power imbalances in the therapeutic relationship, allowing both the social worker and the client identify strengths, share power, and co-create solutions. Given the huge value social work profession places on relationship in practice, kindness facilitates deeper connections that will potentiate the use of therapeutic relationship to stimulate sustainable practices and effect change. Kindness, in this context, becomes not only an ancillary quality, but the vehicle for engaging and harnessing these supportive and problem-solving networks to promote and achieve enduring change. Furthermore, this is consistent with existing body of literature that supports the idea that kindness promotes trust and acceptance in relationships (Binfet & Whitehead, 2019; Fryburg et al., 2021; Rowland & Curry, 2019). One of the central characteristics of the relational approach that has significantly influenced contemporary social work practice is “the identification and investigation of enactments as they unfold between therapist and client” (Ornstein and Ganzer, 2005, p. 567). In fact, Winter (2015, p. 1) suggests that “the inextricable links between the interpersonal, intrapersonal and structural worlds” of the social worker and the client are fundamental to the processes of engagement, collaboration and co-construction of solutions to social problems. Trust and acceptance in relationships are central to the processes by which the structural, interpersonal and intrapersonal worlds of the social worker are inextricably linked with that of the client. Trust and acceptance in relationships encourage clients’ narrative competence and foster increased agency and empowerment. Transformative acts of kindness serve as the “glue” with which social workers can effectively ‘hold in tension’ the interpersonal and intrapersonal components of relational practice. Thus, when kindness pervades working relationships, collaboration is encouraged, clients feel more in charge of their recovery and are fully invested in the process of change. This indicates that kindness in social work interfaces well with the Rogerian ideas of person-centred approach which stresses on “the capacity of conscious human beings to reason, make choices



and act freely” (Payne 2005, as cited in Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2005, p. 121). Needless to say, this improves the outcome of the helping process, allowing social workers engage clients as empathetic partners, introduce new perspectives and increase the possibility of successful intervention outcomes.

In addition, particular attention should be paid to practice principles which reflect key professional identities and values in social work. These practice principles include accessibility, truthfulness, respect, resourcefulness, empathy, flexibility, dedication, emotional self-regulation and emotional intelligence. The quality of relationships established in the helping profession are significantly influenced by these broad set of guiding principles. These principles, according to Pohoata (2015), operationalise a culture of kindness in practice that enables individuals go beyond transaction and act towards transformation. A growing body of research indicates that social service users value professionals who operationalise these practice principles (Reimer, 2013).

Finally, enduring change demands that the outcome of interventions are not only effective but could be sustained over time. Bell Hooks, in one of her famous quotes put forward the saying that “love is an action, never simply a feeling”, suggesting that emotional competencies shouldn’t be merely understood as emotive concepts in one wants to achieve enduring change in the society. Given that contemporary social work is situated within the hegemonic power of neo-liberalism, just feeling kind is not enough for achieving positive long-term intervention outcomes and creating enduring change. Kindness must be operationalised as actions that challenge oppressive and suppressive practices and at the same time, remain accountable to systems and structures that perpetuate and reinforce inequalities, poverty and discrimination in communities. Incorporating intentional acts of kindness into social work practice is central to achieving long-term impact. One of the ways kindness brings about lasting change is by helping individuals and their communities find hope in order to build resilience. Hope undergirds the capacity to cope and adapt in the face of difficulties; and it is a critical factor in the sustainability of enduring positive outcomes. By approaching clients with kindness, social workers can help clients build their confidence, self worth, self-efficacy and the ability to adapt and recover from challenging life circumstances. Consequently, such resilience and a positive outlook contribute to the long-term sustainability of the social change achieved through interventions. Furthermore, kindness as a transformative force, facilitates trust and meaningful engagement with clients, creating a foundation for sustained relationship and establishing stronger and more inclusive communities. Relationships built on trust, collaborative partnership and mutual respect are essential for advocacy, co-creation of effective interventions, continuity of care and social support that are necessary for achieving enduring change.

2. Recommendations for Future Research

- Based on the results, this study suggests future research in the following areas;
- Longitudinal studies should be conducted to evaluate the measurable impacts of kindness-centred approach on social work outcomes.
- Future studies could examine actionable strategies to institutionalise kindness-centred approaches within social work policy and practice.



VI. Conclusion

Intentional acts of kindness has critical and practical implications for upholding the profession's espoused values and actualising its core mandates. With kindness offering a dynamic, counter-hegemonic resistance to neoliberal influences in mainstream practice, this presents a unique opportunity to transform social work practice to reflect its ethical foundations of a just, relationship-based, right-based practice. At a minimum, kindness remains the driving force behind a commitment to facilitating social cohesion, social change and empowerment of individuals and communities. The relative simplicity of kindness is the bridge that transcends systemic barriers and genuinely connects practitioners to the unique narratives of their clients, facilitating the co-creation of solutions. Thus, kindness facilitates trust, understanding, empathetic practice and remains the foundation for transformative and enduring change.

REFERENCES

1. Adam, P. & Barbara, T. (2009). *On Kindness*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
2. Alexandria VA (2024). About ACAP. [online] City of Alexandria, VA. <https://www.alexandriava.gov/teen-pregnancy-prevention/about-acap>
3. Ahern, P (2013). *The Gift of Kindness*. Penguin UK
4. Albuquerque, S., Teixeira, A. M., & Rocha, J. C. (2021). COVID-19 and disenfranchised grief. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 12, 638874–638874. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2021.638874>
5. Aknin, L. B., Dunn, E. W., & Norton, M. I. (2012). Happiness Runs in a Circular Motion: Evidence for a Positive Feedback Loop between Prosocial Spending and Happiness. *J. Happiness Stud.*, 13, 347–355.
6. Akram, A. (2017, March 16). The Roles of Social Workers in Sustainable Development: What is sustainable development? <https://en.iraniansocialworkers.ir/social-workers-in-sustainable-development/>
7. Aristotle. (1959, Oct.). *Ars Rhetorica*. (W. D. Ross, Ed.). Oxford University Press. (Original work published n.d.).
8. Arnd-Caddigan, M. and Pozzuto, R. (2008). 'Use of self in relational clinical social work'. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 26, pp. 235–43.
9. Australian Association of Social Workers, (2020). *Code of Ethics*. Australian Association of Social Workers, Canberra, ACT.
10. Binfet, J. T., Gadermann, A., & Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2016). Measuring kindness at school: Psychometric properties of a School Kindness Scale for children and adolescents. *Psychology in the Schools*, 53, 111-126.
11. Binfet, J. T. & Whitehead, J. (2019). The Effect of Engagement in a Kindness Intervention on Adolescents' Well-Being: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Int J Emot Educ*.11(2), 33-49.
12. Bird, J. (2000). *The Heart's Narrative: Therapy and Navigating Life's Contradictions*. Auckland, Edge City Press.



13. Borden, W. (2000). The relational paradigm in contemporary psychoanalysis: towards a psychodynamically informed social work perspective. *Social Service Review*, 74, 352-373.
14. Brownlie, J. (2024). How kindness took a hold: A sociology of emotions, attachment and everyday enchantment. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.13128>
15. Brownlie, J. & Anderson, S. (2016). Thinking Sociologically About Kindness: Puncturing the Blase in the Ordinary City. *Sociology*. 51. 10.1177/0038038516661266.
16. Buchanan, K. E. & Bardi, A. (2010). Acts of kindness and acts of novelty affect life satisfaction. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 150, 235-237.
17. Čačinovič V. G., Kobal, L., Mešl, N. and Možina, M. (2011). Establishing a working relationship and personal contact. Ljubljana: Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana.
18. Caldwell, C. (2017a). Kindness and Self-Interest: Why Treating Employees Well Makes Such Good Sense. *Graziadio Business Review*. 20(1). <http://gbr.pepperdine.edu/>
19. Caldwell, C. (2017b). "Understanding Kindness - A Moral Duty of Human Resource Leaders." *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*, 10 (2), Article 8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22543/0733.102.1188>
20. Caldwell, C. and Anderson, V. (2017). The Nature of Kindness: Keys to Competitive Advantage in Caldwell, C. and Anderson, V. (Eds.). *Competitive Advantage, Strategies, Management, and Performance*. Hauppauge, NY: NOVA Publishing, pp. 147-160.
21. Canter, D., Donna Y., and Miroslava Y. (2017). "Towards a Measure of Kindness: An Exploration of a Neglected Interpersonal Trait." *Personality and Individual Differences* 106 (1): 15–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.10.019>.
22. Carole, (2013). *ANGAZA COMMUNITY PROJECT*.
23. Chapin, R. K. (2017). *Social policy for effective practice: A strengths approach*, fourth edition. NY: Routledge.
24. Chenoweth, L. & McAuliffe, D. (2005). *The road to social work and human service practice: an introductory text*. Thomson Learning, Southbank, Vic.
25. Chenoweth, L. & McAuliffe, D. (2017). *The road to social work & human service practice*. 5th edn. Cengage Learning Australia, Melbourne, VIC, pp.1-31.
26. Clark, E. J., & Hoffer, E. F. (2014). *Hope matters: The power of social work*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
27. Craig, G., 2002. Poverty, social work and social justice. *British Journal of Social Work*, 32(6), pp.669-682.
28. Crisp, R. (2008). "Compassion and Beyond." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 11 (3), 233–246. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-008-9114-x>.
29. Curry, O. S. (Ed.). (2020). *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science*. Oxford University Press.
30. Dreisoerner, A., Junker, N. M., & van Dick, R. (2021). The relationship among the components of self-compassion: A pilot study using a compassionate writing intervention to enhance self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness.



- Journal of Happiness Studies, 22(1), 21–47. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-019-00217-4>
33. Edwards, (2024, February 10). Understanding organic solidarity in Sociology. Easy Sociology. <https://easysociology.com/general-sociology/understanding-organic-solidarity-in-sociology/>
 34. Eisenberg, N., Fabes, R., & Spinrad, T. (2006). Prosocial development. In Damon W., Lerner R. M. (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology. Volume 3: Social, emotional and personality development* (6th Ed., pp. 646–718). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
 35. Fabio, F. and Maria, L.R. (2017). The principles and key ideas of Relational Social Work – Relational Social Work. [online] [rsw.erickson.international](https://rsw.erickson.international/archivio/vol-1-n-1/the-principles-and-key-ideas-of-relational-social-work/). Available at: <https://rsw.erickson.international/archivio/vol-1-n-1/the-principles-and-key-ideas-of-relational-social-work/>.
 36. Featherstone, B., Gupta, A., Morris, K & White, S (2018). *Protecting Children: A Social Model*. Bristol: Policy Press.
 37. Fink, A. (2005). *Conducting research literature reviews: from internet to paper*. Second Edition. London: SAGE Publications.
 38. Flaker, V. (2020, October 25). Setting boundaries - poison for social work. <http://vitoflakeragenda.blogspot.com/2020/10/postavljanje-meja-strup-za-socialno-delo.html>
 39. Folgheraiter, F. (2007). Relational Social Work: Principles and Practices. *Social Policy and Society*, 6(2), 265–274. <https://www.doi.org/10.1017/S1474746406003526>
 40. Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* London. Penguin.
 41. Fryburg, D. A., Ureles, S. D., Myrick, J. G., Carpentier, F. D. & Oliver, M. B. (2021). Kindness Media Rapidly Inspires Viewers and Increases Happiness, Calm, Gratitude, and Generosity in a Healthcare Setting. *Front Psychol.* 11. <http://www.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.591942>
 42. Giacomucci, S. (2021). Strengths-based and mutual aid approaches in social work and psychodrama. *Psychodrama in Counselling, Coaching and Education*, 1, 155-185. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-6342-7_9
 43. Glicken, M. D. (2011). *Social work in the 21st century: an introduction to social welfare, social issues, and the profession*. Second edition - Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications.
 44. Hastings, S. L. and Cohn, T. J. (2013). Challenges and opportunities associated with rural mental health practice. *Journal of Rural Mental Health*, 37(1), pp.37–49. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1037/rmh0000002>.
 45. Healy, K. (2005). *Social Work Theories in*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
 46. Hertig, P. (2021). *The Trouble with Kindness in the Acts of the Apostles*. Global Missiology.
 47. Hill, D., & Laredo, E. (2020). The personal is political: reframing individual acts of kindness as social solidarity in social work practice. *European Journal of Social Work*, 23(6), 969–979. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2020.1805587>
 48. Houlbrook, M. C. (2022). Neoliberalism and suffering in higher education : compassionate pedagogy as an act of resistance. In K. Soldatic & L. St Guillaume (Eds.), *Social Suffering in the Neoliberal Age: State Power, Logics and Resistance* (pp. 181-195). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003131779-14>



49. Hui, B. P. H., Ng, J. C. K., Berzaghi, E., Cunningham-Amos, L. A., & Kogan, A. (2020). Rewards of kindness? A meta-analysis of the link between prosociality and well-being. *Psychological bulletin*, 146(12), 1084–1116. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000298>
50. International Association of Schools of Social Work,(2018). Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles. <https://www.ifsw.org/global-social-work-statement-of-ethical-principles/>
51. International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). (2024). Global definition of social work. <https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/>
52. Jones, D. N., Powers, M. & Truell, R. (2018). Global agenda for social work and social development, third report: Promoting community and environmental sustainability. In *Global Overview*; International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW): Rheinfelden, Switzerland, pp. 1–50.
53. Kapelj, A. (2022). Professional boundaries that promote dignity and rights in social work practice. *Ethics and Social Welfare*, Volume 16 (4), 450-456. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2022.2033396>
54. Kallis, G. (2018). *Degrowth*, Newcastle Upon Tyne: Agenda Publishing.
55. Knafo, A., & Israel, S. (2012). Empathy, prosocial behaviour, and other aspects of kindness. In Zenter M., Shiner R. L. (Eds.), *Handbook of temperament* (pp. 168–179). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
56. Lawler, J. (2013). “Critical Management.” In Gray and Webb 2013, 98–115.
57. Leape, L. L., Shore, M. F., Dienstag, J. L., Mayer, R. J., Edgman-Levitan, S., Meyer, G. S. & Healy, G. B. (2012). Perspective: A culture of respect, part 2: Creating a culture of respect. *Acad. Med.* 2012, 87, 853–858.
58. Mary, N. (2008). *Social work in a sustainable world*. Chicago: Lyceum Books.
59. McAdam, K. (2020). 5 Initiatives Supporting Refugee Integration in the UK | Sona Circle. [online] Sona Circle. Available at: <https://sonacircle.com/5-great-initiatives-supporting-refugee-integration-in-the-uk/>.
60. MEP (2018). About us – The Migrant English Project. [online] Mepbrighton.com. Available at: <https://mepbrighton.com/about-us/> [Accessed 3 Oct. 2024].
61. MHIN (2015a). Comprehensive Community Mental Health Programme | MHIN. [online] MHIN. Available at: <https://www.mhinnovation.net/innovations/comprehensive-community-mental-health-programme> [Accessed 3 Oct. 2024].
62. MHIN (2015b). Using mobile mental health clinics to expand access to services in post conflict rural areas | MHIN. [online] MHIN. Available at: <https://www.mhinnovation.net/innovations/using-mobile-mental-health-clinics-expand-access-services-post-conflict-rural-areas> [Accessed 4 Oct. 2024].
63. Morrice, L., Tip, L., Brown, R. and Collyer, M. (2021). ‘You can’t have a good integration when you don’t have a good communication’: English-language learning among resettled refugees in England. [online] Available at: https://cris.brighton.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/5900112/Language_accepted_22Feb2019.pdf.
64. Malti, T. (2020). “Kindness: A Perspective from Developmental
65. Psychology.” *European Journal of Developmental Psychology* 18 (5): 629–657. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2020.1837617>



66. Mastrantonio, M. (2023). Kindness as a Social Bond and the Education for the Future: Guidelines From a Psycho-Social Survey. <https://www.doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-9295-6.ch016>.
67. Mathers, N. (2016). Compassion and the science of kindness: Harvard Davis Lecture 2015. *British Journal of General Practice*, 66(648): e525-e527
68. Mattison, M. (2000). Ethical Decision Making: The Person in the Process. *Social work*, 45, 201-12. <https://www.doi.org/10.1093/sw/45.3.201>.
69. Mayeroff, M. (1971). *On caring*. Harper and Row.
70. Meadows, D.H., Meadows, D.L., Randers, J. and Behrens, W.W. III (1972). *Limits to growth*, New York, NY: Universe Books.
71. Neff, K. D. (2011). Self-compassion, self-esteem, and well-being. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00330.xc>
72. Noddings, N. (2013). *Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education* (updated). Berkeley, CA, and Los Angeles: University of California Press (Original work published 1984).
73. Nussbaum, M. C. (1998). *Cultivating Humanity*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
74. O'Leary, P., Tsui, M-S. & Ruch, G. (2012). The Boundaries of the Social Work Relationship Revisited: Towards a Connected, Inclusive and Dynamic Conceptualisation. *British Journal of Social Work*. 43. 135-153. [10.1093/bjsw/bcr181](https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcr181).
75. Okello, J., Onen, T.S. and Misisi, S. (2008). Psychiatric disorders among war-abducted and non-abducted adolescents in Gulu district, Uganda: a comparative study. *African Journal of Psychiatry*, 10(4). [doi:https://doi.org/10.4314/ajpsy.v10i4.30260](https://doi.org/10.4314/ajpsy.v10i4.30260).
76. Ornstein, E. D. & Ganzer, C. (2005). Relational Social Work: A Model for the Future. *Families in Society*; 86 (4), 565-572.
77. Otake, K., Shimai, S., Tanaka-Matsumi, J., Otsui, K., and Fredrickson, B. L. (2006). Happy people become happier through kindness: A counting kindnesses intervention. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7(3): 361-375.
78. Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M. et al., (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, 372, n71
79. Parton, N., Campling, J., & O'Byrne, P. (2000). *Constructive Social Work: Towards a New Practice*. Red Globe Press. <https://www.macmillanihe.com/page/detail/constructive-social-work-nigel-parton/?sf1=barcode&st1=9780333747292&loc=uk&priceCode=uk>
80. Passmore, J. & Oades, L. G. (2015). Positive Psychology Coaching Techniques: Random Acts of Kindness, Consistent Acts of Kindness & Empathy. *The Coaching Psychologist*, 11(2): 90-92. <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/81936/>
81. Paula da Silva, M., & Bachkurov, A. A. (2023). Social inclusion through synergy of kindness, forgiveness, and peaceableness: A conceptual proposition. *Journal of Moral Education*, 53(3), 450–466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2023.2236315>
82. Peart, V. (2024, May 9). Here's how using strengths-based practice can make you a better social worker. *Social Work News*. <https://www.mysocialworknews.com/article/here-s-how-using-strengths-based-practice-can-make-you-a-better-social-worker?>



83. Petr, C. G. (1983). 'The worker –client relationship: A general systems perspective'. *Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work*, 69, pp. 620–6.
84. Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. Washington, DC: APA Press and Oxford University Press.
85. Pohoata, G. (2015). Kindness – The theological creed of human condition. *Cogito*, Bucharest, 7 (2): 18-33.
86. Post, S. G. (2018). *The Science of Compassion: A Modern Approach for Cultivating Empathy, Love, and Connection*. New Harbinger Publications.
87. Powers, M. C., Rambaree, K. & Peeters, J. (2019). Degrowth for transformational alternatives as radical social work practice. *Crit. Radic. Soc. Work*, 7, 417–433.
88. Powers, M., Rinkel, M., & Kumar, P. (2021). Co-Creating a “Sustainable New Normal” for Social Work and Beyond: Embracing an Ecosocial Worldview. *Sustainability*, 13, 10941. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su131910941>
89. Pulla, V. (2017). Strengths-based approach in social work: A distinct ethical advantage. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 3(2), 97-114. www.ijicc.net
90. Pulla, V. and Kay, A. (2017). Response to a strengths-based approach in social work in schools: An Indian school in Dubai. *International Social Work*, [online] 60(6), pp.1418–1432. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872815617996>.
91. Quirk, M. & Ivztan, I. (2018). Soft is Hard: Building Resilience with Loving Kindness Meditation at Work. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. 11. <https://www.doi.org/10.15406/ijcam.2018.04.00381>.
92. Rapp, C. A., Saleebey, D., & Sullivan, W.P. (2005). The future of strength-based social work. *Advances in Social Work*, 6(1), 79-90.
93. Reamer, F. (2003). Boundary issues in social work: managing dual relationships. *Social Work*, 48(1), 121-133.
94. Reimer, E. C. (2013). Relationship-based practice with families where child neglect is an issue: putting relationship development under the microscope. *Australian Social Work*, 66(3), 455-70.
95. Renau, D., Stanley-Clarke, N., & Mafle'o, T. (2023). Social workers and their understanding of neoliberalism, advocacy, and othering. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 35(3), 44–57. <https://doi.org/10.11157/anzswj-vol35iss3id997>
96. Rowland, S. (2009). “Kindness.” *London Review of Education*, 7(3), 207–10.
97. Rowland, L. & Curry, O. S. (2019). A range of kindness activities boost happiness. *J Soc Psychol*. 159(3), 340-343. doi:10.1080/00224545.2018.1469461
98. Ruch, G. (2010). 'The contemporary context of relationship-based practice'. In G. Ruch, D. Turney and A. Ward (eds). *Relationship-Based Practice: Getting to the Heart of Social Work*. London, Jessica Kingsley, pp. 13–28.
99. Ryon, K. (2013). *Altruism and Psychology*. Docs.school Publications. <http://www.oboolo.com/social-studies/psychology/case-study/altruism-psychology-84733.html>.
100. Saari, C. (2005). The Contribution of Relational Theory to Social Work Practice. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 75(3), 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1300/J497v75n03_02
101. Saleebey, D. (1992). *The strengths perspective in social work practice: Power in the people*. White Plains, NY: Longman.



102. Seppälä, E. M., Simon-Thomas, E., Brown, S. L., Worline, M. C., Cameron, C. D., and Doty, J. R. (2018). *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science*. Oxford University Press.
103. Simpson, J. E. (2013). Grief and loss: A social work perspective. *Journal of Loss & Trauma*, 18(1), 81–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2012.684569>
104. Saint-Jacques, M., Turcotte, D. & Pouliot, E. (2009). 'Adopting a strengths perspective in social work practice with families in difficulty: From theory to practice'. *Families in Society*, 90 (4), pp.454–61.
105. Stell, A. J., & Farsides, T. (2015). Brief loving-kindness meditation reduces racial bias, mediated by positive other-regarding emotions. *Motivation and Emotion*, 40(1), 140–147.
106. Tosone, C. (2004). Relational social work: Honoring the tradition. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 74(3), 475-87.
107. Turney, D. (2010). 'Sustaining relationships: Working with strong feelings. III. Love and positive feelings'. In G. Ruch, D. Turney and A. Ward (eds), *Relationship-Based Practice: Getting to the Heart of Social Work*. London, Jessica Kingsley.
108. Twikirize, M. and Spitzer, H. eds. (2019). *Social work practice in Africa: Indigenous and innovative approaches*. African Books Collective.
109. United Nations, (2015). *Sustainable Development Goals*. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>
110. Ward, A., Turney, D. and Ruch, G. (2010). 'Introduction', in G. Ruch, D. Turney and A. Ward (eds). *Relationship-Based Practice: Getting to the Heart of Social Work*. London, Jessica Kingsley.
111. Weick, A., Rapp, C., Sullivan, W., & Kisthardt, W. (1989). A strengths perspective for social work practice. *Social Work*, 34(4), 350-354.
112. Wilson, A. T. (2016). "Modesty as Kindness." *Ratio* 29 (1): 74–88.
113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rati.12045>.
114. Winter, K. (2019). Relational social work. In M. Payne, & E. Reith Hall (Eds.). *Routledge Handbook of Social Work Theory*, pp. 1-10. Routledge.
115. Ying, Y.-W. (2009). Contribution of self-compassion to competence and mental health in social work students. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 45(2), 309–323. <https://doi.org/10.5175/JSWE.2009.200700072>