

Abstract

Little research has been published that is specifically relevant to professional social work ethics in Kenya. This paper seeks to address this gap in the literature. One of the major challenges is maintaining professional social work ethics, which are predominantly Western-based, in an African cultural context. This paper argues for an Afrocentric approach, specifically proposing Ubuntu as a helpful concept that could guide the development of professional social work ethics that are relevant to African contexts. The Kenyan context is documented, including the challenges faced in social work education and practice in Kenya. While the paper is primarily theoretical, the overall argument is informed by two teaching cases, one of which highlights the ethical challenges experienced by social workers in Kenya, the other demonstrating creative engagement with cultural traditions and practices. It is concluded that: the concept of Afrocentricity supports a move beyond knowledge accumulation to knowledge-informed action as part of ethics for social workers; more social work-led research in Kenyan and other African contexts is desirable, but if international knowledge can be made relevant to the needs and cultures of African people this may also be useful.