

Ubuntu and Values Underlying the Vatsonga Culture: Implications for Developmental Social Work with Children

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Abstract

The development of the social work profession in Western countries is criticised as being irrelevant to the African context. Although developmental social work was introduced in South Africa to align the profession with African contexts and adopted in some southern African countries, the acknowledgement of African indigenous knowledge systems remains a neglected area. In this article, we present the findings of the study that explored the use of Vatsonga indigenous knowledge in child protection. By using a qualitative study as the basis, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 40 Vatsonga elders who were keepers of their indigenous knowledge. The research findings indicate that beliefs and practices based on the African principles underlying ubuntu have a strong focus on enhancing the well-being of children, including orphans and vulnerable children, and could relate to the central goal and the concepts underlying developmental social work. We conclude that there is a strong association between the principles of ubuntu and developmental social work interventions that focus on the well-being of children.

Keywords: Ubuntu, developmental social work, indigenous knowledge, Afrocentric worldview, Vatsonga people, child well-being