

Embracement of Social Work Values in the African Ubuntu Dimensions: Lessons from Dr. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The article employed a desk research method to reflect the evidence-based practice of the late Dr. Julius Nyerere (Ubuntu Champion of 2014). Dr. Nyerere embodied social work values in post-colonial Africa by incorporating indigenous ecology and cultural values into education, political, social, and economic development activities that promote human dignity, equality, social justice, social unity, and social welfare for all. He declared war against racism, social injustice, and abuse of human rights in post-colonial Africa. The findings have shown that, despite internal and external challenges, as the founding father of Tanzania, he successfully managed and localised social work into national policies and social welfare services in post-colonial Tanzania between 1961 and 1985 under the Ubuntu capacity. The collective and holistic provision of communal social welfare services accommodated vulnerable populations through universal policies that promoted equality, self-reliance, human rights, peace, cultural values, human dignity, social justice, and equal access to social welfare services. He is one of the founders of African philosophy, known as Ubuntu, which encompasses the values and principles of the social work profession. Both social work and Ubuntu emphasised the values of life based on social cohesion, human dignity, equality, sympathy, empathy, humaneness, harmony, the importance of human relationships and reconciliation. This has been demonstrated by Dr. Julius Nyerere's African Ubuntu, which has been incorporated into African development agendas to contextualise different theories and practices locally. These have proven to be relevant and sustainable interventions for Development in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa. Technically, this analysis provides a platform for upholding Afrocentric models and evidence-based practice in social work, which are intended for social, health, political, and economic development in Africa. Social workers and policymakers need to revisit Dr. Julius Nyerere's African Ubuntu philosophy and its contributions to social work services in Tanzania. His contributions to the indigenisation of concepts in the African context include the value of Ujamaa, self-reliance, equality, social justice, social service, respect for human dignity, and universal human rights. The call for embracing this indigenous and innovative Ubuntu method is vital for social work and Afrocentric social work across Africa and beyond. Unfortunately, Dr. Nyerere's legacy in developmental social work is less documented compared to economic and political development aspects.

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the contributions of the late Julius Kambarage Nyerere (April 13, 1922 - October 14, 1999), the former and founding President of the United Republic of Tanzania, African Ubuntu philosopher, African political scientist, pioneer of Africanism and decolonisation of Africa, and the first President of the United Republic of Tanzania (Lembuka, 2023a). Throughout this review, he will be referred to as Dr. Nyerere, as he was awarded the Ubuntu Doctoral Champion title in 2014 by the National Heritage Council of South Africa (The Citizens, 2021). He is one of the founders of African philosophy, known as Ubuntu, which encompasses the values and principles of the social work profession (URT, 2020). Both social work and Ubuntu emphasise the values of life based on social cohesion, human dignity, equality, sympathy, empathy, humaneness, harmony, the importance of human relationships, and reconciliation (Hailey, 2008 & Tutu, 2008).

Dr. Nyerere by using Ubuntu model of holistic development, as a president of the country (Tanzania 1961-1985) and contributing leader in the liberation struggle of Africa, he dedicated his life in serving the primary

mission of the social work profession by enhancing human wellbeing, social justice and the provision of indigenous social welfare services, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, marginalised, oppressed, and living in extreme poverty in Tanzania and Africa (The Citizens, 2021). His practices incorporated African ecology, history, and cultural values relevant to restoring and maintaining social functioning within the African context. According to the Tanzania Association of Social Workers (TASWO, 2015), both Dr. Nyerere's ideology and social work promote social justice and social change with individuals, families, groups, organisations, and communities.

Dr. Nyerere envisioned that Africa was for Africans, and his remarkable contributions to adopting and transforming social work into African Ubuntu approaches, emphasising self-reliance and reflecting African culture and ecology (Ubuntu values), cannot be overlooked. This approach aimed to deliver human rights, social justice, and social equality (TASWO, 2026). Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice, as did Dr. Julius Nyerere (Nyerere Centre for Peace Research, 2010). He became a practical self-made social worker through investing in African Ubuntu values and practice that places emphasis on being human through other people (Ubuntu as a model for human dignity and social welfare).

The 1960s were a challenging time in Africa's history, as some African countries were still colonised, others were still engaged in a liberation struggle, and even post-colonial African countries were left with a colonial legacy, social, economic, and political dilemmas of choosing the right path of development (Lembuka, 2023b). In the face of such dilemmas, Dr. Nyerere devoted himself to rethinking and developing the right ideology and model relevant to the African continent, particularly in terms of its ecological and cultural aspects, under the Ubuntu capacity through the Ujamaa framework. He utilised indigenous resources to liberate Africa and advocated for the restoration of human dignity in post-colonial Tanzania and other African countries (The Citizens, 2021).

Similar to the values of social work, Dr. Nyerere applied the Ubuntu philosophy to advocate for African liberation, emphasising that Africa is one continent and all Africans are equal; only colonial boundaries and the legacy of colonisation divide the continent. By the early 1950s, most parts of Tanganyika and other parts of African countries were rural and characterised by tribalism. For the case of Tanganyika, it contained more than 120 ethnic tribes that were scattered and divided, posing a serious challenge to liberation and social cohesion (Nyerere, 2000).

Dr. Nyerere was a renowned and influential post-colonial African leader, as well as an articulate spokesman for the African liberation struggle and an African Nationalist who championed human rights, social change, social justice, equality, dignity, integrity, the importance of human relationships, and competence. These are a few examples of social work values and principles that Dr. Nyerere practically upheld and applied during his lifetime. His legacy has influenced not only developmental social work but other aspects of human development, including economic, political, diplomacy, health, and international relations. Until his retirement in 1985, Nyerere was the first African head of state to retire voluntarily, remaining a robust and influential leader in both local and international arenas (Shivji, 2015).

Unfortunately, the legacy of Dr. Nyerere in social work capacity has received minimal attention in the Ubuntu parameters, and available literature is mainly dominated by imported standpoints outside Africa that undermine the legacy of Dr. Nyerere to economic and political agendas while leaving his contributions in social work and other aspects of life undocumented. Therefore, this review has engaged a purposeful sampling technique to select literature on African-related social work, African Ubuntu, and Dr. Nyerere to establish the place of the evidence-based African Ubuntu in the social work perspective. Supported by the Ubuntu conceptual Framework and Ujamaa Intersections Model, Dr. Nyerere is the centre of focus on how he applied African Ubuntu dimensions in social, political, health, cultural, and economic development in Tanzania and beyond. The review calls for more debate and research to decolonise literature that encircles Dr. Nyerere in African Socialism rather than African Ubuntu.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative study is based on available secondary data through analysing the legacy of Dr. Julius Kambarage Nyerere in embracing social work values under the Ubuntu parameters in Tanzania. To ensure broad coverage of Social work, Nyerere, and Ubuntu, the study opted for purposive sampling by selecting the Ujamaa practical framework out of other Ubuntu Social Work models from Africa. The fact that most of the available literature is Eurocentric has sidelined the legacy of Dr. Nyerere and social work in the Ubuntu capacity (Lembuka 2025a & 2025b). An Abundance of empirical findings on social work interventions has undermined the component of Nyerere's legacy and the Ujamaa concept in the Ubuntu capacity to uphold the quality of life and social welfare services in general (Lembuka, 2024a & 2024b). To justify the methodological approach employed in the study, the Ubuntu conceptual framework was considered relevant for providing an unbiased review, presentation, and discussion of the findings. The capacity of Ubuntu as a theoretical and practical ideal in Africa, influencing both social work and indigenous models on child quality of life community interventions, provided significant contributions to the study (Buhori et al., 2024; Lembuka, 2024c).

The purposive sampling of the study followed the selection of empirical literature and reports that were purposively selected, screened, and independently reviewed against predetermined criteria for eligibility (Schabram, 2010). On the course, the next stage consisted of making verdicts about the suitability of secondary data to be deliberated in the review, where the authors made efforts to ensure as inclusive as possible to ensure that all relevant studies, published and unpublished, appropriate to the study were included in the review (Okoli, 2010). The wealth of trustworthy online databases includes Elsevier, Google Scholar, BASE, CORE, Science.gov, Semantic Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, ERIC, IEEE Xplore, ScienceDirect, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), JSTOR, AJOL, and arXiv, among others. These platforms provided easy access to a wide range of scholarly articles, books, and other research materials, thereby enriching the review (Jesson et al., 2011).

The searching of online secondary sources based on the five keywords, namely 1) Ubuntu social work values, 2) Ujamaa and social work, 3) Nyerere and social welfare services, 4) Nyerere and community values and 5) the African social work. Therefore, competent eruditions were those that unambiguously justified the legacy of Dr. Julius Nyerere and social work values under the African Ubuntu conceptual framework. Lastly, the collected data were scrutinised, organised, encapsulated, and analysed for exclusion and inclusion criteria relating to Ubuntu, Nyerere, Ujamaa, and social work in the Tanzanian context. The extracted data were presented in a meaningful way that suggests a new contribution to the existing literature and knowledge on a given topic; thus, conclusions were based on this comprehensive knowledge base (Watson & Webster, 2002).

Conceptual Framework

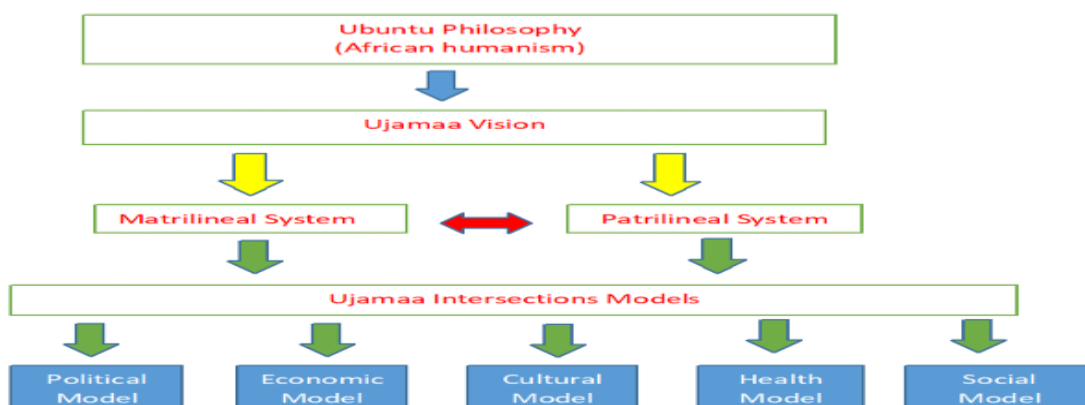


Diagram 2.1: Ubuntu Conceptual Framework

Lembuka (2025)

Ubuntu is a philosophical framework that originated in Africa and represents a historically broader practice of Africa, viewing humanism or human rights in every aspect of human life, grounded in the heart of community

activities (Lembuka, 2023a & 2023b). According to Mugumbate et al (2013), Ubuntu is guided by several principles, including equality, solidarity, Ujamaa, sympathy, cooperation, human dignity, social justice, tolerance, social inclusion, and cultural diversity. The presence of an abundant African lingua franca across a vast continent, Ubuntu encompasses several models with different names, all based on similar approaches and geographical locations (Metz, 2011 & 2014). The compatibility of African Ubuntu and child quality of life is reflected in the reciprocal capacity of the Ubuntu approach through communal relations, communal ideals, and human excellence, which form part of the knowledge and wisdom on how African communities and families raise children (Metz, 2016; Mugumbate et al., 2019).

In Tanzania, the Ujamaa Intersections Model represents other Ubuntu models relevant to social work education and practice, and this has been the nation's strong vision in the post-colonial era (1960s) during the Ujamaa's reign under the influence of the late Dr. Julius Kambarage Nyerere, a notable Ubuntu Champion of 2014. Dr. Nyerere was among the pioneers who practically engaged Ubuntu in Tanzania and the rest of Africa to ensure the quality of life is well demonstrated on the capacity of equality, democracy, social justice, solidarity, uhuru, Harambee, human dignity, unity, and equal sharing of community resources, etc. (Nyerere 2011 & Lembuka, 2025b). The compatibility of Ubuntu and the quality of life is well represented in the worldviews of humanism, which envisions a quality of life where every member of the community is responsible for caring, supporting, and protecting children. Dr. Nyerere took advantage of the African community setting to realise social work agendas in Tanzania and beyond, through upholding community sections or Ujamaa intersections (Lembuka, 2024a & 2025a). Community sections, including family, extended family, neighbourhood, local leadership, ecology, spirituality, and community values, play significant roles in developmental social work (Manyama, 2018).

FINDINGS

Ubuntuism

Ubuntu descends from the Nguni and Bantu languages of Africa, which denote being a human; this meaning is also expressed in other languages. In Shona, Ndebele, Botswana, Tanzania, Congo, Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, and Uganda, the words bomoto, gimuntu, umunthu, vumuntu, and umuntu are used, respectively. To date, the word Ubuntu has become a global framework for social work and other global agendas. Ubuntu is associated with numerous entities, including Ubuntu schools, Ubuntu conferences, Ubuntu names, Ubuntu loans, Ubuntu childcare, Ubuntu awards, and Ubuntu counselling services, among others (Mugumbate et al., 2013).

The term Ubuntu encompasses various definitions, yet it can best be described as a humanistic perspective from Africa that envisions Africa's worldview of societal relations. It is a social and humanistic ethic that strives to bring and maintain positive human relationships, restore human functioning, and promote welfare to individuals, families, clans, communities, regions, and the international level (Mugumbate et al., 2013). Ubuntu relates to bonding with others. This is in line with what the word expresses in most African languages: being self because of others.

Ubuntu is an African philosophy that emphasises 'being human through other people'. It has been succinctly reflected in the phrase I am because of who we all are. It has been applied in theology by the likes of Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Tutu, 2000), in politics by the likes of anti-apartheid icon former South African President Nelson Mandela (Mandela, 1994), in management by the likes of Professor Lovemore Mbigi (Mbigi, 1997) and in the field of computer science, Linux has developed a software named Ubuntu which is developed and shared free of charge.

Therefore, the general Ubuntu values and model emphasise the importance of bonding with others for the sake of human well-being and social work. Dr. Julius Nyerere promoted the unification of Africans through African brotherhood, social justice for all, human dignity, harmony, and the equal distribution of resources in Tanzania and Africa.

Rationale of Dr. Nyerere and African Ubuntu

Dr. Nyerere's practical example demonstrated the role of African Ubuntu values and practices in enhancing and accelerating social service delivery, ultimately promoting good governance, human rights, equality, and social justice, as well as the dignity of the individual, solidarity, and social development. Ubuntu is an African term meaning “humanity” or “humanness,” emphasising caring and sharing. It is a way of life that stresses the importance of individuals, families, communities, solidarity, sharing, and caring. It promotes cooperation between individuals, cultures, and nations (Nzimakwe, 2014). Dr. Nyerere understood the importance of ecology and culture; thus, in the process of adopting and implementing socialist ideology, he avoided unthinkingly duplicating it to fit the African context. From that point, he merged it with the African Ubuntu model to formulate the concepts of Ujamaa and self-reliance. Given the potential of African Ubuntu to become a global framework for advancing indigenous and culturally relevant social work practice, an analysis of Dr. Nyerere’s contributions to African Ubuntu is relevant to the process of making Ubuntu a global agenda (IFSW, 2022).

Dr. Nyerere’s life was devoted to African Ubuntu practice, which embraced social work values and practices in Africa and globally. Dr. Nyerere envisioned and practised African Ubuntu as a framework for socio-economic and political development in Tanzania and the international arena. The African view of the human person was more “relational” than “individual” (Nyerere, 1968a). It is a form of humanism that can be expressed in the phrase ‘I am because of who we all are.’ He argued that an individual does not live in a vacuum, but rather is found in the social context that comprises other humans; thus, it is necessary for interaction between the community and the individual. The individual lives through the life force of the whole and vice versa; no member of any African society could develop outside the community. An individual is an incomplete being outside the community (Nyerere Centre for Peace Research, 2010).

The late Dr Julius Nyerere received the Ubuntu Honour of the Year 2014 on August 11, 2014, at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, at a ceremony held by the National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC). Dr Nyerere joins other ‘Citizens of the World’ who receives the honour for their living evidence of the values of Ubuntu – Dr Nelson Mandela (2006); Dr Kenneth Kaunda (2007); Fidel Castro (2008); Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali (2009), Ms. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela (2011) and Ms. Miriam Makeba (2013). A select committee of eminent persons has identified him as one such citizen of the World who, during his lifetime, lived a humble life prioritising the improvement of the quality of life of citizens of Africa (The Citizens, 2021). The NHC had chosen to honour somebody who, through their work and deeds, lived and left a lasting legacy influenced by values that the current and next generations could aspire to emulate and live by. Dr Julius Nyerere emerged as the most deserving candidate worthy of receiving the Ubuntu Honours in 2014 (The Citizens, 2021).

Therefore, the philosophical aspect and evidence-based practice of the Late Dr. Nyerere contributed to upholding both social work and Ubuntu values. Thus, an analysis of his contributions from the perspective of indigenous or traditional social work is vital for raising the philosophy and practice of African Ubuntu.

The Politics of Social Work

Social work is inherently political due to its reliance on government-defined parameters and the legal powers often held by social workers. It involves navigating power dynamics and advocating for social justice within a specific political context. This includes addressing systemic inequalities, influencing policy, and engaging in political action to create lasting social change. In that aspect, Ubuntu is founded on harmony, not violence. Dr. Nyerere, under the leadership of the African National Congress, promoted peaceful, human rights, solidarity, Uhuru, and democratic values, leading fellow Africans to claim Tanganyika's independence from the British. His approach facilitated roundtable discussions with the British colonial power, and on December 9, 1961, Tanganyika became one of the earliest countries to gain independence. His approach gained him more popularity among the Africans, and he became the first Prime Minister (URT, 2012).

Social unity and social solidarity are key aspects of Ubuntu and social work. Dr. Nyerere, the first president of Tanganyika in 1961, later succeeded in convincing the Late Abeid Amani Karume, the president of Zanzibar, to unite the two countries of Tanganyika and Zanzibar through the African Ubuntu brotherhood (Lembuka,

2024c). The Union took place on 26th April 1964, and Dr. Nyerere always reminded Tanzanians to protect the union of the two countries, as it is founded on Ubuntu brotherhood, namely blood, mutual understanding, social history, culture, ecology, and social ties (United Republic of Tanzania, 2012).

The value of Ujamaa

Ujamaa and social work values share strong relevance through their emphasis on community, social justice, and collective well-being. Ujamaa, a Swahili term meaning "familyhood," promotes communal living, shared resources, and participatory development, aligning with social work's focus on human dignity, equality, and social justice. Both ideologies prioritise the well-being of the community and advocate for equitable access to resources and opportunities. On the other hand, social work emphasises the community strengths, and Ujamaa is among the core values of African Ubuntu. As an open-minded thinker, Dr. Julius Nyerere was able to contextualise socialist ideas with African societal values, upholding the African concept of Ubuntu within the framework of the Ujamaa and self-reliance (Kujitegemea) ideology. The indigenisation of social work with African values, principles, and practices led other African leaders, such as Dr. Nelson Mandela, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, and Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, to support this new movement, known as African Ubuntu, for decolonisation and social development (Nyerere Centre for Peace and Research, 2010).

Dr. Nyerere's Ujamaa policy emphasises collective human rights and collective community development. He practically managed to establish communal villages that upheld traditional African development (Lembuka, 2024e). Through the villagisation policy, he ensured that these collective communities were predominantly based on the extended family and communal principles, in which the land was consistently recognised as belonging to the community, and basic goods were held in common and shared among all community members (Erumevba, 1981). It is on this basis that Benezet Bujo (2001) aligns with Nyerere in recognising communal rights as distinct from individual rights (Chachage, 2004). This view of human rights is grounded in communal rights, which centres on African ethical values and practices based on a 'We' ethics, Ubuntu (Bujo, 2001; Rwiza, 2012).

Human Rights

Dr. Nyerere stresses that individual well-being is inseparable from the well-being of the community, similar to Ubuntuism, and advocates for the community to take responsibility for the welfare of others and to participate in building a just and equitable society, which are crucial for the realisation of human rights (Nyerere, 1967). Concerning Ubuntu, Dr. Nyerere's principles often favoured restorative justice approaches, which aimed to repair harm and rebuild relationships rather than solely focusing on punishment. This aligns with the broader human rights goal of rehabilitation and reintegration (Mugumbate 2013 & 2019). By grounding human rights in Ubuntu, societies can develop human rights frameworks that are more relevant and meaningful to their specific cultural contexts. This can lead to greater acceptance and implementation of human rights principles (Metz, 2011 & 2016).

The Ujamaa value created a more equitable society by emphasising communal living, collective ownership, and nationalisation of key industries. The policy emphasised the provision of education and healthcare as fundamental rights, contributing to the development of human and social work. Dr. Julius Kambarage Nyerere was a human rights activist throughout his life. In one of his remarkable speeches, he made while addressing the 35th session of the Legislative Council on December 16, 1959, Nyerere affirmed his promotion of human rights in these words: "Our struggle has been, still is, and always will be, a struggle for human rights" (Nyerere, 1968a, p. 76). He fought for human rights and prioritised it in his political, social, economic, and ethical agendas both inside and outside Tanzania. Dr. Nyerere's language reflects the language of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), approved by the UN General Assembly in 1948, which includes two categories of rights: civil and political rights, and economic, social, and cultural rights. Although his primary focus was on communal rights, he also emphasised the importance of the rights and responsibilities of individuals and ethnic groups (Nyerere, 2011).

The social work profession aims to promote fundamental human rights, as exemplified in Dr Nyerere's African Ubuntu, particularly in the context of Ujamaa, which aligns with Universal human rights. The essential

components of Ujamaa (African Ubuntu) are freedom, unity, social justice, equality, respect for human dignity, and human rights (Lembuka, 2024d). As Bonny Ibhawoh wrote: "...Dr. Nyerere referred frequently to the repression and injustices of colonial rule as derogations from basic human dignity and fundamental human rights. 'Our struggle,0' he stated, will always be a struggle for human rights...Our position is based on the belief in the equality of human beings, in their rights and duties as citizens" (Ibhawoh, 2018, p.151).

Non exploitation society, as part of African Ubuntu it is against any form of exploitation, (We cannot be independence country while our neighbouring countries are still colonized) Dr. Nyerere he used human rights agenda as a tool for fighting against colonial legacy by referring to universal human rights in his struggle against colonialism; not all African anticolonial leaders did so (Ibhawoh, 2018). Dr. Nyerere envisioned African countries as being free from colonial rule and the colonial mentality, as well as united as one nation or continent, through the application of the Ubuntu philosophy. He infused Ubuntu values and practices into politics during the pre- and post-colonial eras. Subsequently, he succeeded in accelerating the independence of other African countries, including Namibia, Zambia, Mozambique, and Angola.

The Importance of Human Relationships

Ubuntu, an African philosophy emphasising interconnectedness and humanness, is highly relevant to social work's core values of human relationships and social justice. It promotes a relational approach, emphasising empathy, respect, and collective responsibility, crucial elements for effective social work practice. Dr. Nyerere deliberate wanted social cohesion and social welfare through people positive interaction so as social worker, he integrated the Ubuntu practice of the "We" concept, thus it was appealed to all Tanzanians to live as brothers and sisters of one nation, regardless of social differences while embracing human rights for Tanzanians and non-Tanzanians (Nyerere, 2011). To date, Tanzanian society remains rooted in the same spirit and values of brotherhood and sisterhood, despite having more than 120 ethnic tribes. This was never easy, as it required ruling such a diverse mix of ethnic tribes with different interests in the socio-economic and political development of a young nation, which was then Tanganyika and Zanzibar, until it became Tanzania in 1964 (Lembuka, 2025a).

According to Dr. Nyerere, leaders are servants and vice versa. Dr. Nyerere emphasised the importance of political leaders and public administrators treating and serving people equally, thereby avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy, to foster social interaction and unity (Lembuka, 2024d). According to Dr. Nyerere, "equality could be obtained by promoting the concept of leaders as 'servants' and not 'masters,' and by promoting social interaction among civilians and the army, allowing the two groups to share social services". Dr. Nyerere was convinced that the goal of social and economic development was not the accumulation of wealth or economic growth for its own sake or to create social classes, but to develop good relationships among people (development of the people) and the satisfaction of the basic material needs of the families (Nyaki, 2015).

Social Unity and Solidarity

Social work, as a profession, is dedicated to helping individuals, families, and communities improve their well-being and address social problems. Social solidarity, on the other hand, refers to the sense of unity, cohesion, and shared responsibility within a society, often based on shared values and interdependence. Social work practice inherently involves fostering social solidarity by promoting social inclusion, addressing inequalities, and advocating for social justice (Van Bredda, 2015). The Ubuntu philosophy emphasises group solidarity, which is central to the survival of African communities (Dia, 1992). An African is not a rugged individual, but a person living within a community. In a hostile environment, it is only through such community solidarity that hunger, isolation, deprivation, poverty, and any emerging challenges can be overcome, thanks to the community's brotherly and sisterly concern, togetherness, cooperation, care, and sharing (Metz, 2016).

Dr. Nyerere, in his approach to tackling African socio-economic problems, urgently called for African cooperation and unity. He emphasised the importance of solidarity among individuals, communities, and African countries, grounded in the African communal dimension of solidarity, unity, and human rights. The ideology was seconded by other African leaders who supported Ubuntu values and practices. The practical example was integration of the concept of unity and equality into Organization of African Unity's 1981

African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) was a view articulated by other important post-independence African leaders, such as Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) Ibhawoh, (2018, pp. 217-218).

- Zanzibar Union, his practical application of the brotherhood of Ubuntu to unify Zanzibar on 12th April 1964, Dr. Julius Nyerere, through the collective communal livelihood of Ubuntu, pioneered the union of the two countries, namely Zanzibar and Tanganyika, with the belief that both countries shared the same Ubuntu life and other social ties. The union is a practical manifestation of solidarity among African societies that share a common history and cultural practices.
- African Union, Dr. Nyerere, and other African leaders who believed in Ubuntu values and practice initiated the establishment of the African Union and other regional integrations to bring solidarity and a strong unit in Africa. The establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which later transformed into the African Union (AU). Thus, Ubuntu brotherhood became a movement for the African Union to transform into United Africa
- East African Community, Dr. Nyerere advocated for the East African Union to take into consideration the close ties of the neighbouring countries that shared standard African Ubuntu cultural, social values and norms. He recognised the necessity of unity among East African countries to achieve socio-economic and political development in East Africa and the Great Lakes region.

Equality

Social work and social equality are intrinsically linked, as social work actively strives to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion within society. Social workers address inequalities by advocating for marginalised groups, challenging discrimination, and promoting social justice through policy changes and direct practice (Van Bredda, 2015). Dr. Julius Nyerere, in laying down the pillars of the Arusha Declaration, emphasised that human rights flow from Ujamaa's commitment to the equality and dignity of persons. According to Dr. Nyerere, equality was the basis for his commitment to and respect for the Universal human rights (Magesa, 1987). It is founded on the firm "belief in the equality of human beings, in their rights and their duties as human beings, and the equality of citizens, in their rights and duties as citizens" (Nyerere, 1968a, p. 76).

Social work is against any form of racism that contradicts the value of equality of Ubuntu. Dr. Nyerere was anti-racism, and his direct involvement in South Africa's freedom against racial discrimination is undeniable from the early 60's to 80's. He initiated numerous arrangements and agreements aimed at addressing the racial issues in Africa and beyond. Taking vivid examples of Namibia and South Africa, the Boer regime was typical of racism. He also hosted and opened the door for the South African ANC party and other anti-racism activists from South Africa to reside in Tanzania. Technically, this was a risk to national security. However, for the sake of African Ubuntu's brotherhood and sisterhood, the concerns of neighbours' freedom and security are ours (We value and practice) and vice versa (Nyerere, 2011).

Human Dignity and Worth of a Person

Social work is fundamentally rooted in the principle of upholding human dignity. This means respecting the inherent worth and value of every individual, regardless of their background or circumstances, and treating them with compassion, respect, and fairness (Van Bredda, 2015). Social workers strive to promote the well-being of individuals and communities by advocating for their rights, addressing social injustices, and empowering them to reach their full potential. Dr. Nyerere, being a social activist for the human dignity and worth of a person through Ubuntu values, yet it is portrayed in the social work profession that the importance of respecting human dignity is paramount, and nothing can be used to exchange or devalue a human being. Dr. Nyerere believed that every individual has rights regardless of their colour, race, or tribe, as he asserted, "The rights we recognise are the rights of individuals, and I am appealing to my friends the non-Africans to believe that we are sincere in this" (Nyerere, 1968a, p. 71). This principle of human rights recognises that every person has the right to dignity and respect.

For Nyerere, "human dignity involves equality and freedom, and relations of mutual respect among people" (1974, pp. 88-89). As Laurent Magesa (1987b) wrote, Nyerere was driven by the spirit of making human life in

society as equitable as possible. Any person, institution, attitude, behaviour, or act which destroys the person and the human spirit is violent. In this regard, in his capacity, Dr. Nyerere supported social work interventions that uphold human dignity, a foundational value in social work that shapes its ethical framework and guides its practice.

Dr. Nyerere sought to establish a nation where human dignity and the worth of every person were shared equally by all, enabling individuals to exercise their fundamental human rights. Nyerere's concept of Ujamaa "emphasised the blend of economic cooperation, racial and tribal harmony, and moralistic self-sacrifice" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020; Bjerk, 2017). His understanding of human rights was significantly influenced by the African tradition's values that emphasise equal respect, rights, and the sharing of community resources. He accepted both collective and individual rights, but placed more emphasis on the collective rights, given the cultural context and the economic and political situation in Tanzania "(1968a, p. 146). Ibahwoh (2018) and Bjerk (2017).

Social Justice

Social justice is an integral part of the social work profession, and Dr. Nyerere was posthumously awarded the title of "World Hero of Social Justice" by the UN General Assembly in October 2009 (Mesaki & Malipula, 2011). For him, in the absence of basic needs in a particular society, there is no justice at all. For the sake of African Ubuntu, it is essential that each individual or community has equal access to basic human needs and that social services are accessible to all. According to Dr. Nyerere, the primary goal was to establish a just society in which individuals are politically free and have their basic needs met (Chachage, 2004). Dr. Nyerere further argued that there is no single, universally accepted criterion for approaching social justice (Nyaki, 2015). Similar to Ubuntu and social work, which emphasise the intrinsic value of each individual and their inherent dignity, recognising that a person's worth is intrinsically linked to their relationships with others.

Promotes a worldview where individuals are not isolated entities, but rather, their existence and well-being are deeply intertwined with the community. For the African Ubuntu model, Wealth and other resources are communally owned; thus, Dr. Nyerere's perception of traditional society is that wealth is a fundamental right for each individual, and the elders of traditional society ensure that individual rights are highly respected and valued. "Everyone has a right to which he or she is entitled". In Nyerere's eyes, the traditional values are almost a self-contained economic and social unit, in the sense that an individual was assured of the necessities of birth, life, and death. Nyerere struggled to retrieve these traditional values through Ujamaa and self-reliance (Nyerere, 1968a; Nyaki, 2015).

- Both African Ubuntu practice and social work practice strive for basic human needs as a key social justice. Dr. Nyerere supported the idea and practice from the Ubuntu perspective. When Dr. Nyerere spoke of economic needs, he referred to individuals' necessities: food, clothing, medicine, and shelter (Nyerere, 1968a). To address these needs, Dr. Nyerere established and implemented the national policy of 'nationalisation' and equal sharing of national resources (Nyaki, 2015; Bjerk, 2017).
- Removal of the post-colonial structure that contributed to social injustice in African societies. Dr. Nyerere succeeded in dealing with colonial mentality and its related structures in post-colonial African societies. He classified the structures of slavery, colonialism, discrimination, and exploitation as structures of violence. Nyerere situated his perspective on violence in the context of the demands for fundamental human rights and dignity. Specifically, he focused on the questions of colonialism and racial discrimination in Africa (Sanga, 2020).

Social Change

Dr. Julius Nyerere called for social change for social development, everyone has a part to play for social change and it was essential to create this structure for the following reasons: First, to lessen or control economic inequalities so as not to create an imbalance in the economy of the people; and second, to take away from some individuals or groups who have 'extra' and give to those who have none (Nyerere, 1968a). Nyaki (2015) points out that this is what Nyerere means by nationalising goods and properties from the hands of the few for the common good. Nyerere argued that it was the duty of the government to first, reduce economic

inequalities in such a way that the gap between the rich and poor is narrowed; and second, equalise wealth and income so that all people may have more or less the same possessions.

Nyerere saw two possible ways; the first was to allow the “haves” to continue existing in society with the hope that they could assist the “have-nots.” Unfortunately, this alternative was unable to produce fruit. The second approach was to prevent economic inequalities from increasing in any way (Nyerere, 1968d). Dr. Nyerere chose the latter way. He employed various social work strategies, including invoking norms of justice and implementing strict policies that would discourage the rich from investing and generating additional profits, among others.

Social Equality

African Ubuntu is against any form of exploitation in society as it brings plenty of social ills, agonies, and conflicts. Dr. Julius Nyerere promoted social equality through the Ubuntu communal value, emphasising a classless society and equal ownership of social structures. Social work seeks social equality for all, and Dr. Nyerere went further to use economic equality as a form of social equality. According to Nyerere, social equality must take into consideration two significant aspects, status and individual freedom (Nyerere, 1968a).

Dr. Nyerere, through the Ujamaa vision, advocated for a classless society, rejecting social classes in favour of a “We” (Ubuntu) society, where no social class or group feels superior to or more potent than others. He established a just and equal society in which no one could claim the title of being a ‘boss.’ For Dr. Nyerere, the title ‘boss’ was a colonial brand (Nyerere, 1968b). In the first place, the idea of a boss-less (Bwana Mkubwa) society was not very practical, simply because most of the leaders and public servants could not accept the concept. For his highest degree of tolerance, Dr. Nyerere could not push them, but could give them more orientation and training (Sanga, 2020). For him, exercising authority means not intimidating anyone, but rather fulfilling one's duty according to the work regulations and the principles of leadership ethics. He is convinced that human beings have brains; they do not have to be pushed around (Nyaki, 2015).

Service

In social work, service is a core value, emphasising the commitment to helping individuals, families, and communities address their needs and improve their well-being. Ubuntu, an African philosophy, expands on this by highlighting the interconnectedness of humanity, promoting compassion, empathy, and social justice as essential components of service. Ubuntu-informed service promotes a sense of shared responsibility and collective action, thereby strengthening communities and fostering human dignity (TASWO, 2017, & Lembuka, 2025a). Service is the first value in social work. Dr. Julius Nyerere's emphasis on social welfare as a priority in African Ubuntu, with the application of the principle of human equality to social welfare, acknowledges the importance of prioritising human equality in service delivery (Nyerere, 1968d). Human equality, then, is the state of being equal in terms of opportunities, rights, and status, as well as access to health and social care services and employment opportunities (Nyerere, 2011).

Dr. Nyerere's socio-economic equality implied the ability for each individual or family to have access to the necessities of a decent human life, including food, shelter, clothing, medicine, and essential social services. By the time he became president, Dr. Nyerere found an already rotten structure of economic inequalities: there were two distinct groups of people, the “haves” and the “have-nots.” He struggled to seek ways to bridge these gaps (Nyerere 1968a). As president of independent Tanzania, Dr. Nyerere implemented the policy of nationalisation, whereby private schools, industries, and other institutions were nationalised, and provided equal opportunities to all citizens. Dr. Nyerere offered free education from primary to university level in all governmental schools. According to Nyaki (2015, p. 27), no child in Tanzania could say, “I did not go to school because my parents were poor, I wish I were born in a rich family.” When Nyerere resigned from the presidency in 1985, “Tanzania had one of the highest literacy rates in Africa” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020; Bjerk, 2017).

According to Dr. Nyerere, political equality did not make sense unless economic and social equality were achieved (Nyaki, 2015; Bjerk, 2017). His vision of equality of possession was based on the belief that it is

possible to have a structure that can provide all members of society with what is considered necessary to live a decent human life. This structure would not allow any individual in society to have more than others, ensuring that others have sufficiently met their needs (TASWO, 2015). Dr. Nyerere facilitated social work practice by initiating the establishment of the Department of Social Welfare in Tanzania, which coordinates and supervises social welfare provision throughout the country. He also enacted the Institute of Social Work Act 1974 to establish the first social work training school, producing competent social workers to provide social work services in the country (TASWO, 2017 & Manyama, 2018).

Social Protection

Social protection, particularly when viewed through the lens of Ubuntu philosophy, emphasises a holistic approach to well-being and social justice. It highlights the interconnectedness of individuals within a community and recognises the shared responsibility for the welfare of all, especially the vulnerable. Ubuntu, an African philosophy, promotes social solidarity, mutual support, and the inherent dignity of every person, aligning closely with the core values of social work, which include social justice and human dignity. Dr. Julius Nyerere maintains that individual and communal rights also impose a duty on the government as a protector and provider of productive means, such as land, for the realisation of fundamental human rights (Nyerere, 1968a).

The purpose of human rights and duties is the promotion of everyone's well-being. Since people live in society and promote their dignity within the community, the primary role of the state must be to create conditions for the fulfillment of these rights and duties for the common good (Nyerere, 1968a). Individual protection is essential, as every human being is unique and deserves an opportunity to contribute and thrive within the social, cultural, political, and economic structure (Sanga, 2020). Social protection for vulnerable Populations, Dr. Nyerere applied the Ubuntu cultural practice of protecting one's neighbour. He tried to instill the spirit of sacrificing for the sake of those who are most in need, such as the poor, elderly, orphans, the sick, and widows. Even in the case in which one has a right to what is his or hers, Dr. Nyerere insisted on the spirit of sacrifice for the sake of those who are in most need, like poor peasants who cannot afford medicine (Nyerere, 1968a; Nyaki, 2015; & Pagnucco et al, 2014).

Democracy and Active Social Participation

Social work and democracy are inherently intertwined. Social work, with its focus on social justice, human rights, and empowerment, is deeply relevant to the ideals and practices of democracy. Conversely, a robust democracy provides the necessary environment for social work to flourish, ensuring social justice and access to resources for all citizens. Dr. Nyerere's call for community democracy and active participation of every member of the traditional community in planning for socio-economic development was observed throughout his presidential terms. He established Ubuntu communal villages throughout Tanzania and relocated scattered individuals into these villages to facilitate the easy provision of social welfare services. These Ubuntu communal villages could practice democracy and provide an opportunity for every individual to participate in planning and implementing community development projects (Nyerere, 1968a).

The African Ubuntu, as per Dr. Nyerere's concept of equality of voice, originates from African traditional society. In traditional society, there was no voting in meetings or mass gatherings. People met and discussed their views until they reached an agreement (Nyerere, 1968a). It is from this foundation that Nyerere implemented this type of democracy and social participation in Tanzania, and it was one of the remarkable practices during his reign. He argues that democracy is a natural element of African traditional society; therefore, there is no need to teach them how to discuss issues related to their democracy, and welfare is inevitable (Sanga, 2020).

He practised African traditional democracy based on the principle of equality of voice, and whenever there was a meeting, everyone had the opportunity to contribute. Everyone had to speak in a meeting, though one might have nothing to contribute, but just to say, "I concur," which was expressed in Kiswahili by the phrase, "ninaunga mkono" (Nyerere, 1968a). If one is elected without being opposed in Kiswahili, they say "amepita bila kupingwa," that is, he was accepted by all (Nyaki, 2015). However, political, social, and economic

inequalities are not God-given but have been created by man himself. Ibhawoh (2018), Bjerk (2017), and Mesaki & Malipula (2011). We also note that, despite being a one-party state, “certain democratic opportunities were permitted within that framework” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020 & Bjerk, 2017).

Dr. Nyerere and Developmental Social Work

Ubuntu, an African philosophy that emphasises interconnectedness and humanity, offers a valuable framework for developmental social work at the micro, meso, and macro levels. Similar to Dr. Nyerere’s approaches in Tanzania, which encouraged a holistic, community-centred approach that prioritised social justice, empowerment, and collective well-being, aligning with the goals of developmental social work. In essence, Ujamaa provided not only a philosophical foundation for developmental social work in Africa but also the evidence-based practice of developmental social work, promoting a more just, equitable, and sustainable approach to development that is rooted in African values and experiences. Dr. Nyerere envisioned and demonstrated the significance of community participation in development initiatives, recognising their knowledge and agency in shaping their futures, a key tenet of developmental social work.

Dr. Nyerere developed national policies that entail developmental social work and the inclusion of micro, mezzo, and macro strategies (Manyama, 2018). Although not explicitly stated in the literature, available evidence shows that developmental social work thinking was very instrumental towards achieving African social and economic development after attaining independence i.e., *Ujamaa and self-reliance* was applied in Tanzania, *harambee* in Kenya and *Ubuntu* in south Africa, to mention a few, were focusing on helping the vast majority of the vulnerable population using community resources (Spitzer, 2014). In the Ubuntu capacity, Dr. Nyerere promoted a human-centred approach to development, prioritising the well-being and empowerment of individuals and communities, aligning with the core values of developmental social work.

As already pointed out by Spitzer (2014), in Tanzania, the developmental social work method was employed unconsciously when the country adopted Ujamaa and self-reliance as its governing political ideology. The primary intention of this method was to pool community efforts and resources to facilitate the provision of social welfare services (Ibhawoh & Dibua, 2003). This enabled the community to access a wide range of free basic education and health services for all people (Nyerere, 1977). One can correctly argue that the developmental social work method under Mwalimu Nyerere was intended to foster the spirit of togetherness, upholding African traditions of mutual assistance within communities and recognising that the state would provide support when people came together (Sanga, 2020).

To put this ideology into practice, the villagisation campaign was employed, where many social service workers were engaged in assisting communities to identify their resources, work together, and develop for their betterment (Nyerere, 1977; Okoko & Kimse, 1987). One can correctly postulate that in Tanzania, elements of developmental social work methods preceded the formal social work training, which began during the 1970s through the establishment of the Institute of Social Work at Kijitonyama, Dar es Salaam. Thus, the escalating degree of social problems, with multifaceted shapes in Tanzania, compels the East African countries to turn to developmental social work as advocated by Dr. Nyerere (Spitzer, 2014).

Lessons Learned

- Dr. Julius Nyerere’s Ubuntu values and practice were heroic because Tanzania was one of the few African countries that attempted to find its route to development through social work instead of borrowing the ideologies of the West and contextualising them in the African context.
- With wise and strong leadership, and with brilliant national policies of African cultural integration and universal human rights, he made Tanzania a presentable and unique country in the World, practising the developmental social work model in the Ubuntu capacity. At the same time, he became a proud Ubuntu leader in African affairs and an active member of the global community, focusing on developmental social work through Ubuntu capacity.
- African Social Work needs to embrace the African Ubuntu models like the Ujamaa Intersections Model through taking into consideration the value of collective reciprocity, spirituality, intergenerational, and interconnectedness of individuals and existing community or Ujamaa Intersections as part of human

ecology and cultural values, something which was affected by modernity as well as market forces. This entails that African Social Workers must consider history, culture, values, and available systems in order to develop sustainable and effective social work interventions.

- The Africanization or indigenisation of Social Work should not be an instrument for the restoration of the “imported social work with colonial legacy” but instead calling for African Ubuntu Social Work through the (re)designing, planning, implementation, and evaluation of locally developed models for sustainable Social Development is the way forward if the profession is to regain its place among other emerging, economically oriented “professional giants”.
- The need for more analysis of Dr. Nyerere’s legacy in developmental social work under Ubuntu capacity would provide a good ground for attesting to the contributions of Nyerere to the contemporary global agendas and how this could be of significance to the African social, political, and economic problems.

CONCLUSIONS

Ujamaa is among the core values of Ubuntu, where Dr. Nyerere's thoughts evolved around Ubuntu, as reflected in the Ujamaa model, which has always been part of Africa's traditional heritage linked to social work grounded in collective and holistic development under the power of community. Ubuntu, as a continental philosophy from precolonial times, is a fundamental factor in understanding African social work through the historical background, culture, ecology, economy, and political trends of this continent. Like other aspects of human society, Africa and other continents may differ in the level of development, just as social work has evolved from pre- to post-colonial times. The Ubuntu Conceptual Framework is a crucial domain to understand the history and development of African social work, particularly concerning Dr. Nyerere and other development agendas.

The fact that each continent has a philosophy, so does Ubuntu in Africa which emphasizes on collective and holistic approach in the human eye thus tracing back Dr. Nyerere’s legacy in Ubuntu rendered Africans an opportunity to rethink and embrace African Ubuntu values and models relevant for addressing the impacts of globalization while (re)adopting indigenous socio-economic and political models relevant in African context like Ujamaa in attaining developmental social work. The Ubuntu ideology and practice are becoming a global framework for addressing socio-economic and political problems; thus, it is a call for social workers to embrace the African Ubuntu model as a vital pace towards the indigenisation process of social work theories and practice. This has been demonstrated by Dr. Julius Nyerere’s African Ubuntu, which has been incorporated into development social work agendas to contextualise different theories and practices locally. These have proven to be relevant and sustainable social work interventions in Tanzania for decades.

Technically, this analysis provides a platform for upholding Afrocentric models and evidence-based practice in social work, which are intended for social, health, political, and economic development in Africa. Social workers and policymakers, we need to revisit Dr. Julius Nyerere’s African Ubuntu philosophy and its contributions to social work services in Tanzania. His contributions to the indigenisation of concepts in the African context include the value of Ujamaa, self-reliance, equality, social justice, social service, respect for human dignity, and universal human rights. The call for embracing this indigenous and innovative Ubuntu method is vital for social work and Afrocentric social work across Africa and beyond. Unfortunately, Dr. Nyerere’s legacy in developmental social work is less documented compared to economic development aspects. Also, either intentionally or unintentionally, branding Ujamaa as African socialism and not Ubuntuism is a technical mistake that needs urgent research and scientific debates to unlock this mystery.

The fact that every continent has its philosophy, which is used in social, political, economic, and development agendas, thus engaging the Ubuntu philosophy in understanding Dr. Nyerere’s legacy in social work and other issues, is inevitable. Most importantly, Dr. Nyerere’s Ubuntu legacy is not a matter of the past, but rather a matter of today and the global future of collective, universal, and shared international agendas. Suppose Dr. Nyerere’s legacy in social work is revisited through an Ubuntu lens rather than other imported philosophies outside Africa, it can deliver more solutions for restoration and maintain a positive human relationship,

promoting peace, combating racism and tribalism, and upholding universal human rights, which could accelerate constructive regional integration, improve international relations, and enhance global governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The fact that the global social work agenda is shifting to a collective and holistic approach means that Tanzania and other African governments should engage key stakeholders to revisit existing national and regional integration social work-related policies to ensure they seriously integrate Ubuntuism, taking reference to Dr. Nyerere in African social work and other development vision, mission, goals, and strategies.
2. Most of the social work history of Tanzania and Africa has been written and dominated mainly by the Global North Perspectives. However, it is the right time to invest in rewriting African history, culture, indigenous knowledge, and practices through the Ubuntu lens, incorporating the social work legacy of Dr. Nyerere.
3. The review recommends that academicians, diaspora, and relevant professionals who focus on the African major agendas, including social work, should uphold Dr. Nyerere's Ubuntu legacy rather than the imported interventions that do not reflect Africa's parameters. Ubuntu's perspective can render advantageous and relevant capacities in developing Africa and (re)position it in the contemporary global agendas, including social work and the Sustainable Development Goals.
4. Ubuntu, in the eye of Dr. Nyerere, is a relevant African philosophy emphasising interconnectedness and humanness, which is highly relevant to social work's core values of human relationships and social justice. Therefore, Ubuntu can be a robust framework for social workers to decolonise their practices, challenge inequalities, and build more just and equitable communities

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