

## Editorial

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*Social work with older people is a complex field, in which various subjects are involved, both at an individual and institutional level. During the pandemic and post-pandemic phase in particular, studies and research show that older people were not listened to, or involved in the decision-making processes that concern them, and their human rights were not respected (Cesari & Proietti, 2020; Anand et al., 2021). In this Special Issue of the Journal, we focus our attention on «Promoting human relationships in Gerontological Social Work». Promoting relationships in Gerontological Social Work means supporting communication between the different services required, promoting collaboration among those involved (practitioners, family members, volunteers), and ensuring the participation of older people and their families. Several academics from all the world contributed to this issue, highlighting different ways in which social workers can help older people and caregivers, and encourage their participation in decision-making and the care plan.*

*The first article originates from a study, conducted by Li and colleagues, that involves different Countries: Ireland, China and Namibia. For each country a case-study is given in order to explore how relational social work can be applied at micro, meso and macro level. In Ireland, a peer group exchange in a qualitative research context, allowed older people to enhance their self-awareness on abuse issues. The Chinese case study presents an online intervention to support caregivers of older people with dementia. The third case study is about a community education model applied in a rural context in northern Namibia, to raise awareness among the elderly, their caregivers, and the community at large, of elder abuse. All these studies reveal the importance of promoting empowerment and strengthening relationships between older people, caregivers, professionals and communities.*

*In the second article, Smarika and Walker consider the situation of older Nepalese British wives, to reflect on the active ageing perspectives in British society. Through in-depth narratives, the authors highlight how being part of an ethnic minority influences the experiences and needs of these older women. Suggestions for gerontological social work interventions are provided, to rebalance power in relationships, recognize indigenous strengths, promote genuine participation, and challenge negative assumptions on age, race, gender, and ethnicity.*

*Corradini and Cacapardo present the results of a secondary analysis of data from a study carried out in the pandemic period in a District in the North of Italy. The research considers the situation of people aged over 65 who were acting as volunteers in various local organizations and the consequences of the pandemic and lockdown both on these associations and on older volunteers. Starting from the perspective of ageism, the article describes a profound change*

*in their role: from helpers to fragile people which have to be protected. Implications for social work to contrast this image are discussed.*

*The article of Gillingsjö and colleagues addresses the topic of older LGBTQ adults and their strategies to manage social interactions with non-LGBTQ persons in everyday life situations. The results of the research, carried out in Sweden, are interpreted in the perspective of Goffman and reveal that the interviewees employed specific impression management strategies. A secure disclosure of their identity could help the social inclusion of older LGBTQ people. The findings of this research can hopefully be useful for social service personnel to help older LGBTQ adults feel secure about disclosing and managing their identities.*

*The following article considers the activities of the Centres for Social Work in Bosnia and Herzegovina in support of older people living in poverty. The recent crisis (inflation) has had a particularly negative impact on the quality of life of older people, and for most of them the pension hardly covers the costs of living. In this paper, Gadžo-Šašić analyses the work of social workers in these Centres in Canton Sarajevo, through the lens of social protection rights.*

*Dhembra and Napi present the situation of older people in two African countries: Eswatini and Zimbabwe. Through a scoping review of the literature and policy documents, the authors describe a paradoxical situation: older people are a part of the population particularly vulnerable to poverty, ill-health, abandonment and neglect, and abuse. However, in those countries, longevity should be celebrated as one of the greatest achievements of modern times. The paper poses this question and interrogates the formal and non-formal care systems in both countries.*

*We continue with an article, written by Kowaliková and colleagues, that presents research carried out in the Czech Republic in the Covid-19 period. The authors analyze the topic of social support for older people through the recording of the phone calls to an older adults helpline and interviews with professionals. Emotional support is the main dimension to consider, related to loneliness and solitude. Authors present the functions of technology-based interventions for older people, their implications, and their limitations.*

*Then, the article of Dan-Bright and colleagues presents the situation of older people living in Ghana, with particular attention to social inclusion. Three main factors are indicated in influencing the social inclusion of older adults: the weakening of extended family system, the poor formal support infrastructure, and the accusations of witchcraft made by some pastors, with implications of mistreatment of older people, especially women. The authors discuss this topic, proposing interventions to promote social inclusion in the Ghanaian society.*

*In conclusion, Grignoli and D'Ambrosio present a project entitled SEE ME-Social inclusion through meaningful aging. Through a relational lens, the authors present and examine this project, aimed at improving the quality of care and social inclusion of older people, starting from an analysis of the educational needs and experiences of social workers. The reflection is extended to the Italian social services system, with the aim of opening new paths for a really inclusive welfare system.*

*I thank all of authors, coming from many different countries. This testifies the importance of reflecting on social work with older people and of describing the commitment of social*

*workers around the world, aimed at promoting the improvement of the conditions of older people, at all levels.*

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