

Editorial

Fabio Folgheraiter

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy

Dear readers,

I am pleased to introduce the new issue of Relational Social Work (Vol. 9, No. 2, October 2025), which brings together contributions from various countries, offering insights into how Social work continues to evolve in response to contemporary social, ethical, and professional challenges.

The issue opens with the article Understanding the Facilitation of Community Future Dialogues through the Relational Social Work Paradigm: Findings from an Italian Study, by Limongelli, Calcaterra, and Landi. Drawing on the Relational paradigm, the study explores the functions and processes of facilitation within Community Future Dialogues — a participatory method for co-developing community projects. The authors highlight how relational competencies, reflexivity, and shared responsibility enable communities to transform dialogue into concrete cooperative action.

The second article, authored by Charenkova from Lithuania, examines how older adults' social networks change upon moving into residential care facilities. Through qualitative interviews analyzed using grounded theory and self-determination theory, the study underscores the importance of autonomy, competence, and belonging in residents' well-being and adaptation.

In the third article, From Human Needs to Social Needs in African Social Work Practice: The Ubuntu Perspective, colleagues from Kyambogo University (Uganda) offer a critical reinterpretation of how human needs are conceptualized in African Social work. They caution against an individualistic view that overlooks the relational nature of human life. Through the Ubuntu perspective, they propose reframing human needs as social needs — rooted in relationships and shared knowledge — based on four principles: human beings as social entities; needs as collective knowledge; their satisfaction as social action; and institutional responses as community-based interventions. This perspective opens new pathways for social work as a profession committed to social justice.

Next, Zanchetta from Italy presents an empirical study on participatory pathways to social and labour inclusion. The paper discusses how co-planning between professionals and service users can foster empowerment and support sustainable reintegration processes.

In Human Rights-Based Approaches in Disability Care, Italian authors Bilotti and Degl'Innocenti examine the Tuscan Care Model as an innovative framework that integrates social, health, and environmental dimensions in disability support. Using a participatory action research approach, they demonstrate how interprofessional collaboration and co-design can enhance inclusion and self-determination from a human rights and anti-oppressive perspective.

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Relational Social Work

Vol. 9, n. 2, October 2025

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Then, Orock and colleagues explore the lived experiences of Child protection social workers in Seychelles through Heideggerian phenomenology. Their study sheds light on the existential dimensions of professional risk, emotional labor, and resilience, offering new insights for reflective practice and supervision.

The article Recognizing and Improving Soft Skills in Social Work, written by Sibilla from Italy, analyzes the value of transversal competencies — such as communication, empathy, creativity, and collaboration — within relational practice. It proposes strategies for integrating soft skill development into social work education and ongoing professional training.

Finally, Trygged and colleagues from Sweden examine the impact of digitalization on access to welfare. Their article discusses the paradox between efficiency and social justice, revealing how digital barriers can undermine public value. They propose policy measures to make digital welfare systems more inclusive and trustworthy.

Together, these contributions reflect the vitality of contemporary social work research, showcasing its ability to connect ethical reflection, methodological innovation, and community engagement across diverse contexts. Each article, in its own way, reaffirms the relational foundation of social work and its enduring commitment to human dignity and social justice.

I would like to thank all the authors for their valuable and inspiring contributions, and the reviewers for their generous support in ensuring the journal's scientific quality.

Milan, October 2025