

# Review of: "A Deeper Look at the Origin and Evolution of the Social Work Profession"

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**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

- The manuscript is generally an interesting read, and I do believe that it adds value to the existing literature within its domain. The comments I have provided below are therefore from my eagerness to see this manuscript get published with the expected qualities.
- Just to provide my comments as inputs to the author's consumption for making improvements:
  - The title of the manuscript is pretty nice. Given that, no clue is indicated within the text of the manuscript that would help readers understand what the term "deeper," in the title, entails about the 'look' the researcher made at the origin and evaluation of the social work profession. How much deeper was the look? Was it something methodological or theoretical?
  - To my understanding of the manuscript, I would suggest replacing the term "evaluation," in the title, with the term 'process' or 'development' or 'evolvment.'
  - The first two lines of the abstract suggest that the purpose of the study is to show the changes that the social work profession has undergone since its inception all the way through the 21st century in India, Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. However, the points discussed in the abstract and its conclusion make the manuscript appear as if it was entirely only about the origin and development of the social work profession in India. The abstract needs to be inclusive, or else the study needs to be reshaped, delimiting its scope only to India.
  - There are indeed interesting points incorporated. With that in mind, the first paragraph of the introduction section (and, for that matter, the findings section of the manuscript) is full of factual and empirical claims that seem to trace partly to oral traditions and partly to historical accounts. However, these claims have been put without being supported with valid sources and references. All the claims should be well referenced.
  - Unfortunately, the introduction section is very scanty and does not provide readers with adequate and informative exposition regarding what the study is all about. The points discussed in this section seem like concluding remarks that relate to the would-be findings of the study. The introduction section could have been used to deal with the conceptual dimensions of some key terms in order to clarify what they would operationally mean proper to the objectives of the manuscript. For instance, as there are tensions within the profession, how would the author like the terms 'social work profession' to be conceptually understood within the context of this manuscript? Does it refer to the visions, missions, and sanctions of the profession, or the practices, the services, work settings, the client populations, the practitioners, or a combination of a few of these or even all? Also, it would be better to explain why the author wants to see the origin and changes of social work in the four indicated countries, India, United Kingdom,

United States of America, and Europe. It could be to my limitation, but I could not make sense of the inclusion of Europe as a continent in this equation where the remaining three are countries.

- Kindly, I do feel that the methods section needs a bit more work. The section with two sentences entails nothing about the scientific method used or how the study was conducted. In a scientific inquiry, what matters is not what we know but also how we know. Therefore, unless being embedded in a well-described scientific method, the interestingly constructed narratives the author presented in the manuscript in telling the scientific community about the genesis and development of social work in India would remain futile and hence fail to find its space in the existing literature within the domain of its topic. So, I would strongly suggest for the author to discuss and justify the methods used, including the validity and reliability of data sources, in just a couple of paragraphs. For example, who were the “individuals” from whom the author reported to have collected primary data through interviews? And for that matter, what kind of interview was it?
  - In the section, which I would assume is of the findings, the traditional and religious services and practices that the author claims to have shaped the “early landscape of social work” in India are quite interesting and yet are not supported with valid references, on the one hand. No explanations and justifications have been presented that would testify or assert how these ancient traditional and religious practices paved the birth of social work in India, on the other hand. Such kinds of traditional and religious practices, because, are believed to have preponderantly been practiced everywhere, in many parts of the world. So, there is no exception to India in this regard. Unless the author shows us how these practices contributed to shaping the development of the profession, their mere presence could not be plainly taken to automatically give birth to the social work profession. Just to make a case in point, Ethiopia is a country having lots of longstanding traditional and religious practices, too much to count, as quite similar as in India, and yet did not serve as a platform for the social work profession to emerge from within. Social work education was rather introduced at Addis Ababa University, being imported from abroad, albeit it was banned sooner due to the then political ideology of the country’s Marxist Socialism, in the early 70s. The profession, however, was reopened in 2004, mainly as an integral part of – not the indigenous practices of the country– the global social work education, consequent to the regime change.
  - In a few cases, the text of the manuscript lacks consistency in the use of some terms. For instance, does Britain mean the United Kingdom? If so, why are the two used alternatively, instead of choosing one of them and using it consistently throughout the entire manuscript? It is a bit confusing for me to see both of them appearing in the manuscript interchangeably. Similarly, the emergence and changes of social work in countries such as China, the Middle East, etc., which were not initially introduced either in the abstract or the introduction sections as parts of this study, have been also analyzed and presented in the manuscript.
- In a nutshell, I would assume that addressing all these concerns may help to improve the manuscript.
  - Finally, I would say that the manuscript fits getting published if it sees a minor revision in addressing these concerns.

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