

# The Ethics and Values of the Social Workers in Nigeria

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**Abstract**— This essay seeks to give a comprehensive description of the Social Work in Nigeria. It gives a clear analysis of the Ethics and Values of Social Work Profession in Nigeria. It describes Nigeria as the most populated Africa Country with over 300 spoken languages. It analyses and understudies the ethics and values of Nigerian Social Workers in order to know the practicality of the Nigerian Social Work profession in relation to those of some European Countries. Therefore, an evaluation of the Nigeria Social Profession was made and this information was based an interview conducted with a Nigerian Based Social Worker Regarding the Ethics and Values of the Social Work Profession. So, in order to get the fuller and more comprehensive sense of this article, it is important to read the complete work.

**Index Terms**— clients, confidentiality, ethics, Integrity, respect, service users, social work, social workers, transparency, values.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This essay seeks to give a comprehensive description of the Social Work in Nigeria, as well as analysing the Ethics and Values of social work profession in Nigeria. My reason for choosing this topic is to analyse and understudy the ethics and values of Nigerian Social Workers in order to see how well-established the profession is in Nigeria. Therefore, this writeup is intended to give a scientific study of the ethics and values of social workers in Nigeria for both academic and general use.

## 2 THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is a federal republic in the West Africa, sharing borders with Benin in the west, Chad and Cameroon in the east and Niger in the north. Nigeria is the largest and most populous country in Africa, and the 7th most populated country in the world. So, with this level of population, there come many social and health issues which required constant and regular supervision and management. Therefore, there came the need for social workers in the country.

Just as much as most countries in Europe, and other parts of the world, there are social work professions and professionals in Nigeria. Nigeria social workers address some of the social issues and health problems in the society. However, the Nigerian social work is not as established as found in the developed countries. Akorede states that as a social worker he worked with people of various chronic health issues and substitutes as well as with orphans and the vulnerable children.

Therefore, dwelling on the above premises, one can postulate that the profession of social work in Nigeria is somewhat active, perhaps, not as active as those of some developed countries in the world. Some of the reasons why the profession is not so popular in Nigeria, could be as a result of the fact that, only a few if any higher institutions in Nigeria include the academic study of social work in their curricula. And even those universities that included it, only have it as postgraduate programmes rather than undergraduate. However, there is no doubt that professionals in the field of health sciences tend to be more aware of the relevance and existence of the social work profession in Nigeria, because of the con-

stant and regular interactions between health and social work professions.

## 3 THE ETHICS AND VALUES OF THE SOCIAL WORK IN NIGERIA

According to the Social Work Dictionary, 'ethics' is defined as the "moral principles concerning right and wrong that guides one's behavior" whereas, Wikipedia views it as a "moral philosophy... that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct." In the other hand, 'values' is defined as "a person's standards" in life. Both ethics and values are sometimes used interchangeably. However, it is noteworthy to establish the fact that, while ethics represent the moral philosophy guiding human behavior, values set the minimum standards for moral behavior. Therefore, it is clear that human behavioural attitudes are usually guided by both values and ethics. So, to this end, there can be personal ethics and institutional ethics, as well as individual values and institutional values. However, we shall be focussing on the ethics and values of the social work in Nigeria.

Akorede explained the ethics of the Social Work Profession in Nigeria as follows; Social workers must be transparent in dealing with their clients, they should be ready to keep as confidential, the secret entrusted to them, they must be people of good integrities. Social workers should promote the right and interest of their clients, respect the diversity of cultural beliefs, promote the independency of service users; not to exploit the concerned party, avoiding neglect of their clients and not using abusive words to their clients; self-composure, knowledgeability, proper documentation, record-keeping as well as the establishment of a healthy relationships with the clients.

He added that, in his own case as a social worker, he always made sure that he never took chances of any of his clients. He believed that, the service users are depressed and need comfort and empowerment, not exploitation. In the other hand, Akorede states that, his professional values are the readiness to impact great change in peoples' life. He emphasized that respecting peoples' cultural dispositions and religious beliefs is a value that brings about peaceful co-existence.

Therefore, it is clear that, social work as a professional institution, is guided by ethics and values. And These ethics and values serve as moral directives and standards enhancing the social work professions. And of course, this directives and standards would promote the social workers in their professionalism if they strictly and practically apply them as professional guidance in their social work careers.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

Be that as it may, it clear that social workers are needed not just in Europe or the developed countries, but also in Africa, the developing nations and the world at large. And of course, this is also true with the social work profession in Nigeria. However, there is need for the establishment of the social work as a course of academic study, in the higher institutions of learnings in Nigeria. And as a matter of fact, the academic study of social work should not just be added as postgraduate course but also be available as undergraduate programme as well. The brain behind this, is to afford people the opportunity of venturing into the social work profession, as their life-long careers. Another important thing to note is that, social workers should always understand and apply the ethics and values of their professionalism, as that is the basis for proper discharging of their professional duties and responsibilities. If all these measures are put in place, I believe that, Nigerian social work professions would be well-improved and the social workers in Nigeria would be well appreciated and recognized for their efficiency.

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