



## **Does Innovative Technology Stimulate Innovative Social Work Practices (E-Social Work)?**

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### **Abstract**

The paper reviewed the social work and the digital age, specifically focusing on the benefits and constraints of incorporating Information Communication and Technology (ICT) into social work practice. The comprehensive literature searches are made from extensive collections from international journals, conference reports, organizations' websites, reports, and related documents which were then classified. A total number of 32 (78%) articles were incorporated for review.

The review shows that the innovative technologies positively stimulate the innovative social work practice (E-Social Work) and credit an application of ICT to enrich social workers and practitioners with practical skills to carry out their work more effectively using several ICTs tools and online services like video and telephone therapy, e-counseling, e-therapy, email, and social networking sites. On the other hand, the review reveals that unsatisfactory ICT competencies and literacy among Tanzania's social workers and practitioners occasioned by limited training and readiness to embrace the new technology applications; some degree of evidence associated to the practices use of ICT and tools appeared to be a key resistance stagnant the integration of ICTs into practice. Further, the researcher suggests that social workers and practitioners' e-readiness accept new processes, procedures, structures, policies, and standards that leverage the capability of familiarizing themselves with technological transformation and new standards for the use of technology. Furthermore, as regards the future research area more empirical evidence as well as e-readiness awareness and capacity building is required.

**Keywords:** e-social work, social work practice, and ICT in social work

### **Background to problem**

In today's world, our everyday life has been revolutionized by the rapid adoption and use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The advancement of ICT use has reformed the way people link, interact with each other (Migone 2013, Kimball and Kim 2013 as cited by Mishna and Fantus, 2017; Beddoe, 2015; Mishna, Bogo, *et al*, 2012 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015) and how people work (Bargh & McKenna, 2004 as cited by Perron, Taylor, *et al*, 2010;

Benedict, Balogun and Ukpere 2014; Coleman, 2011). It has been argued that ICT recently touching every aspect of human life and it even promises more transformations at the future time (Tregeagle & Darcy, 2008, Lahlou, 2008 as cited by Abdurrahmani, Bushati, *et al*, 2014; Benedict *et al*. 2014 cited by Mishna and Fantus 2017; Hill & Shaw, 2011, Lanfranco, 2008, Watling & Rogers, 2012 cited by Chan and Holosko 2016). This rapid development of ICT has successfully managed to unlocked gates for both service users and professionals to access massive information and online support (Beddoe, 2015; Chan and Holosko 2016).

Recognizing and harmonizing benefits of ICTs in the field of social work across the global, jointly the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) in 2005 have issued a set of ten standards concerning technology and social work practice. This standard aimed to guidance social workers in the placement of ICT in practice to offers innovative ways of providing services to users (NASW & ASWB, 2005, QAA, 2008 as cited by Chan and Holosko 2016; Perron, Taylor, *et al*, 2010; Abdurrahmani, Bushati, *et al*, 2014; Foeday 2011). Among the standards outlined include; 1. **Access** - social workers shall have access to technology and appropriate support systems to ensure competent practice and shall take action to ensure client access to technology; 2. **Technical Competencies** - Social workers shall be responsible for becoming proficient in the technological skills and tools required for competent and ethical practice and for seeking appropriate training and consultation to stay current with emerging technologies; 3. **Privacy, Confidentiality, Documentation, and Security** - social workers shall protect client privacy when using technology in their practice and document all services, taking special safeguards to protect client information in the electronic record to mention a few. Tanzania Social Work practitioners are members of the NASW and ASWB as well, therefore not exceptional in rolling into e-social work practices as per the ten standards of technology issued (NASW & ASWB, 2005). The standards give a platform for social workers to adjust themselves with contemporary technological advancements while still observing their professionalism by adhering to social work standards, ethics and values in the practice also cited by the NASW and ASWB 2005 ‘‘the roles for social workers are changing and they may need to adjust to the new demands for practice in the information age. Social workers should acquire adequate skills that use technology appropriately and adapt traditional practice protocols to ensure competent and ethical practice’’.

In the same way in Tanzania, the Government through the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly, and Children (MOHCDGEC) has made several initiatives to promote the use of ICT in the social welfare arena and workforce. This includes the formulation of National Human Resources for Health Strategic Plan 2008—2013; the TASWA –NASW partnership; formulation of TESWEP (Tanzania Emerging Social Work Education Programs). The plan aims to promotion practitioners to engage on ICTs use for effectiveness and ethically, with the close attention of the working relationship and meeting the local and international standards (MHSW, 2012, p. 1); network expansion, to improve the quality of communication services and to accelerate ICT infrastructure penetration into rural areas (Wangwe, 2010). More specifically, the Muhimbili National Hospital through its IT infrastructure has an integrated Hospital Management Information System (HMIS) application called Jeeva implemented in 2004, the system serves all hospital functions from patients’ registration to discharge, human resource management, payroll, finance, supplies, laboratory, pharmacy, all departments are

integrated including the social work department in accessing online records for patients and experts deliverance on a variety of cases of concern (GoT-HoMIS, 2017; MNH website, 2020). Despite the growing acceptance of ICT use in social work practice and innovation over digital technologies has been recognized across the world (e.g., Barak & Grohol, 2011 as cited by Berzin, Singer and Chan 2015; Bellg et al., 2004 cited by Chan and Holosko 2016; Postle, 2002, Harlow, 2003, Garrett, 2005 cited by Coleman 2011), still there is slow acceptance of integration of ICT into social work practice in many of the African countries like Zimbabwe, South Africa, Zambia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Egypt (Garret, 2005, Walman and Rafferly, 2008, NASW and ASWB, 2005 cited by Benedict, Balogun and Ukpere 2014; Abdelmaguid 2016; Umoren 2016; Chitereka 2009). This has made social work practitioners and scholars persist doubtful to integrate ICT into practice and fully embrace this movement (Berzin, *et al*, 2015; Carrilio, 2005, Carrilio, Packard, & Clapp, 2003 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015). As a result, very little discussion and research on the impact of ICT on social work practice in the country (Singer & Sage, 2015 cited by Berzin, *et al*, 2015). ICTs to the social workers' professional practice characterized as an extra component (Hill & Shaw, 2011, Mishna, Bogo, Root, & Fantus, 2014, Raya & Santolaya, Estefania, 2009, p. 92 cited by Diez 2018) which strength social workers to increase their realities and transform the way they carry out social processes and involvements (Chan and Holosko 2016; Coleman, 2011). For this reason, this paper explores a theoretically based direction extracted from literature review to navigate the benefits of integrating ICT in social work practice, and finally, the study will examine the challenge preventing the integration of ICT in social work practice.

### **Method used**

This study is a review of the literature in nature. The review was conducted to provide detailed evidence of the impact of ICT on social work practice. The method used for conducting a comprehensive literature search to proposals a wide range of literature from research papers from international journals, conference reports, organizations' websites (i.e. NASW, ASWB, and MoHSW) and reports. The search was extended by the Google Scholar search engine, Academia, and many other online journals. Several search keywords used as search criteria for example, 'Social work and ICT', 'Social work in developing countries', and 'e-social work'. The narrative literature review was chosen for concise of the diverse studies from which conclusions can be drawn into a general interpretation of existing theories and the reviewers' views (Ferrari, 2015; Odekunle, et al, 2017).

### **Results**

As a result, the online searches process brings in a total of 41 articles. The process collects lectures from diverse sources including published journal articles; books; policy documents and reports. Once the inclusion and exclusion process completed. It has produced a total of 9 (22%) articles were excluded for the reason that they are not met criteria. The remaining 32 (78%) articles were included in the study for review. The articles categorized as 22 (69%) articles and thesis, 1 (3%) book, 9 (28%) documents, and reports. The literature collected had some similar focus in developing countries like Tanzania and others had a global approach.

### **Social work and ICT Overview**

The rapid expansion of ICT has impacted and continues to impact several disciplines and/or professions such as guidance and counseling (Chester & Glass, 2006, Richards & Vignano, 2013

cited by Chan and Holosko 2016; Wilczenski and Coomey 2006 cited by Mishna and Fantus 2017), health care services (Hamad, 2019; Halford, Obstfelder, & Lotherington, 2009, Poon et al., 2006 cited by Chan and Holosko 2016; Koch-Weser et al. 2010 cited by Mishna and Fantus 2017), education (Fu, 2013, Markauskaite, 2003 cited by Chan and Holosko 2016; Jackson et al. 2009 cited by Mishna and Fantus 2017; Benedict, Balogun and Ukpere 2014), psychology (Van Allen and Roberts 2011, Zur 2012 cited by Mishna and Fantus 2017) and recently the social work discipline has been impacted (Giffords, 2009, Reamer, 2013 cited by Chan and Holosko 2016; Farley, Smith, & Boyle, 2003 cited by Foeday 2011; Benedict, *et al*, 2014; Abdurrahmani, Bushati, *et al*, 2014; Csiernik et al., 2006 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015). Hence, the paper defined social work practice as the application of social work theory and/or methods to the resolution and prevention of psychosocial problems intervention with individuals, families, small groups, communities, policies, establishments and other human service agencies (Chukwu, *et al*, 2017; NASW, 2008; Walsh 2013).

On the other hand, the term ICT refers to the incorporation of the potentials of computer, telecommunication, and electronic media using digital technology (Trucano quoted by Yusuf and Yusuf, 2009, and Benedict, *et al*, 2014). Further, the term ICT defined as any electronic mediated activity used by social workers in the management and assessment of social services (Abdurrahmani, Bushati, *et al*, 2014). The assimilation of ICT into social work and practice has transformed the nature and practice of social work, as results, has risen the new form of work (E-Social Work). The term e-social work defined as the use of ICTs in the field of social work and social services in the practice of conventional social work by bringing in new elements of methods, monitoring, feedback and follow-up between social workers' and client in all of the processes (Coleman, 2011, Lopez Pelaez, 2015 cited by Diez 2018). This is, therefore, it is should be considering ICT as a tool to facilitate the social work processes and communication between social workers and clients (Mishna, Bogo, *et al*, 2012 cited by Boddy & Dominelli 2017).

In African countries, there are several factors played a significant role in enabling the emergence of social work Chitereka (2009) and the fast advancement of the technological revolution have entirely contributed to the globalization of social work (Umoren 2016; Spitzer & Twikirize, 2014 cited by Manyama and Mvungi 2018). It has been argued that social work in many African countries has advanced interested in a sustainable profession (Umoren 2016; Darkwa, 2007 cited by Chitereka 2009; Abdelmaguid, 2016). Besides, social workers need to practice social work skills and rise above the boundaries to address structural, formal aspects and update policies at all levels Manyama and Mvungi (2018) to bring into line of integration of ICT into social work practice. This situation is identically marked in most African countries such as Zimbabwe, South Africa, Zambia, Ethiopia, Swaziland, Nigeria, Uganda, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Egypt that social work now exists as a profession and they are training their social workers (Chitereka 2009; Abdelmaguid 2016; Umoren 2016; Perron, Taylor, *et al*, 2010). With this note, social workers need to breakdown the routine application of social work practices and intertwine it with the application of ICT for better, efficient, and enhance the utmost integration of ICT into delivering social work services directly and indirectly from micro to macro level.

### **The ICT usage in Delivery of Social Work Practice**

Like any other discipline in the world, the use of ICT in social work practice is not a novel phenomenon. A review of the literature shows that the deployment of ICTs in social work practice is widespread (Mallon & Houtstra, 2007, Beaulaurier & Radisch, 2005, Parrott & Madoc-Jones, 2008, Parton, 2008 cited by Foeday 2011) and its impact on practice in more deliberate ways (Coleman 2011; Perron, Taylor, *et al*, 2010; Foeday 2011). This has made the NASW and ASWB in 2005 propose a new standard for practitioners' use of technology to speed up the process of adoption and use of ICT among social workers and practitioners. The standard requires social workers to be responsible for becoming proficient in the technological skills; tools required for competent; ethical practice; seeking appropriate training and consultation to stay up to date with emerging technologies (NASW and ASWB 2005, p. 7). As results of this, several studies have highlighted the significance of ICT in social work practice, for instance, Tregeagle and Darcy, 2008 as quoted by Foeday (2011) concede the significance of ICT in social work practice, underline the critical role ICT plays in simplifying communications and interactions among the social worker and the client. Similarly, Harlow, 2003: 19 as quoted by Coleman (2011) states that ICT is not neutrall at all, its reflection both economic trends and cultural influences, as well as power relationships, exist between social workers and clients. In the same way (Raya & Santolaya, Estefania, 2009, p. 92 as quoted by Diez 2018) also supported by declaring that, ICTs in a social work professional and practice must be considered as complement and an enabling element to expand helpfulness and human communication rather than essential for dislodging the professional. ICT in social work practices has several benefits including the following:

ICT plays a significant role in social work Foeday, (2011) and has become a tool that supports the production of knowledge and the development of skills (Kreuger & Stretch, 2000 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015) that transformed the nature and practice of social work Esther Raya Diez (2018). The integration of ICT specifically the use of the Internet and the information society has boosted the intervention of social workers (Chan & Hokosko, 2016, Lopez Pelaez, 2014, Mishna, Fantus, & Mcinroy, 2017 cited by Diez 2018). Additionally, Darkwa, 2007 as cited by Chitereka (2009) argues that social work has extended to almost every angle of the world. This has made social workers nowadays be involving with use of ICT daily and keeping their work electronically and accessing without geographical boundaries (Beddoe, 2015; Coleman 2011, p. 25) which then simplify the process of gathering, organization and spreading of information (Benedict et al. 2014 cited by Mishna and Fantus 2017). Furthermore, the technological tools allow social workers and other professional service providers to store, and exchange information (Benedict, Balogun and Ukpere 2014); interacting with clients regularly via the internet (Farley, Smith, & Boyle, 2003 cited by Foeday 2011); engage clients through fax, email, smartphones, chat rooms, online messaging and video teleconferencing (i.e. Skype, FaceTime, and Second Life) (Csiernik et al., 2006, Chester & Glass, 2006, Kanani & Regehr, 2003, Lamendola, 2010, Menon & MillerCribbs, 2002 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015) as well as the use of social networks such as Facebook (Rocha 2011 cited by Foeday 2011; Baker et al., 2014 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015) that transform the traditional way of practice to new forms of practice.

More precisely, the integration of ICT into social work practice has changed the life of the clients as well as the social workers themselves (Perron, Tylor, Glass, Margerum-Leys 2010: 2-4) and improve the interaction between social workers and other professional service providers through the use of Internet (Farley, Smith, & Boyle, 2003 cited by Foeday 2011). The evidence shown by the study conducted by (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002 cited by Perron, *et al*, 2010) said that the online interaction can have possessions of familiarity, productivity, and freedom that exceed offline interaction. For instance, the interactions may be question-and-answer chats, emails about appointments and feedback has become more easy and helpful to home-bound clients with incapacitating sicknesses, aging, women with children, etc. (Abdurrahmani, *et al*, 2014; Rocha 2011 cited by Foeday 2011).

Besides, previous face-to-face contact with social work professionals has been seen essential, nowadays face-to-face contact is no longer guaranteed with adoption and use of ICT and it is often being used to complement or even substitute professional input Coleman (2011). The evidence validates that for online interaction has become equivalent or stronger working alliances may happen to compare in traditional face-to-face practice (Andersson et al. 2014, Holmes and Foster 2012, Reynolds et al. 2013, Sucala et al. 2013 cited by Mishna and Fantus 2017). Moreover, the traditional office workspace, where social workers have all the time been able to meet with supervisors and coworkers for counseling and supporting, possibly will vanish completely (Postle, 2002, Harlow, 2003, Garrett, 2005 cited by Coleman 2011; Jones, 2010 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015) and replaced with the online and virtual meeting. As results, social workers and practitioners use ICT tools such as online services, video, and telephone therapy, text messaging, email, and social networking sites to link with clients and coworkers (Reamer, 2013 cited by Boddy & Dominelli 2017; Farley, Smith, & Boyle, 2003 cited by Foeday 2011). Similarly, the growth of the World Wide Web (WWW), social media (Hill & Shaw, 2011, Lanfranco, 2008, Watling & Rogers, 2012 cited by Chan and Holosko 2016); Web-based technologies, teleconferences (NASW & ASWB, 2005; Kaplan, Wade, Conteh, & Martz, 2011; Art, 2009); distance learning or e-learning (Waldman & Rafferty, 2008; Nwezeh, 2010 cited by Foeday 2011) together has given rise to the expansion of several codes of conduct concerning social work practice through the ICT usage which entitled online social care (NASW & ASWB, 2005; Recupero & Rainey, 2005, Ross, 2011 cited by Diez 2018). More specifically, the emergence of e-counseling and e-therapy (Csiernik et al., 2006 as quoted by Bullock and Colvin 2015) has directly contributed into changing from traditional to electronic support practice (Dunlop & Fawcett, 2008 cited by Bullock and Colvin (2015) as new forms of work that social workers use in services delivery to clients.

The review shows that the ICT usage has significantly changed social work education and practice and become extremely an essential tool in a social work practice (Perron, Tylor, Glass, Margerum-Leys 2010: 2-4; Tregeagle and Darcy, 2008 cited by Foeday 2011). Additionally, (Sinokki, 2011 as cited by Chukwu, *et al*, 2017) states that social workers have no option to pick and choose what problems and/or issues would like to address. Instead, see a problem even a very difficult problem and stand to help service users and their families solve problems and/or issues. Form that assumption, in today world social workers who ignore the incorporating ICT into their practice will not only weakening out of step with the profession (Reardon, 2010 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015) but also occasioning ineffective social work practice methods (i.e.,

delivery of services, education, and research) (Perron, *et al*, 2010; Foeday 2011). For instance, the destitute development of social transformation initiatives and/or collaboration with specialists from other disciplines who manage to incorporate the use of ICTs as part of existing strategies (Perron, Tylor, *et al*, 2010: 1).

With Tanzanian context face to face is still the main method for access and seconded by telephone follow up more specifically for social welfare officers from municipal to ward level, a reasonable communicative is also done by emails internal and external depending on the nature of clients being served, as well as the limited zeal of incorporation of ICT for practitioners. The adequate utilization of ICT advancement and technology is reasonably operationalized with those undertaking indirect social work through social work higher learning institutions (academia arena) and national and international organizations working in the social work-related fields.

### **Challenges of ICT usage in the delivery of social work practice.**

As per the previous discussion, revealed that ICT has been significantly impacting the field of social work and it is nowadays considered as nearly as entirely dependent upon it (Postle, 2002; Harlow, 2003; Garrett, 2005 cited by Coleman 2011). This has positioned social workers and practitioners to the point where it would be difficult to work effectively without ICT (Garret, 2005; Walman and Rafferly 2008 cited by Benedict, *et al*, 2014; NASW and ASWB, 2005). As regards to the context of technology acceptance as quoted by (Kowitlawakul, 2008 quoted by Bullock and Colvin 2015; Alharbi, and Drew 2014; Budu, et al. 2018; Tsai 2014; Pituch and Lee 2006) declare that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the ICT systems are both determine user's (social workers) attitude which is then developing the behavioral intentions to use ICTs systems. From that standpoint, many social workers find themselves using ICT with their clients (Mishna et al., 2012 cited by Berzin, *et al*, 2015), even though, many of them have the opinion that the integration of ICT into their practice will result in several challenges (Bullock and Colvin 2015; Kaplan, Wade, Conteh, and Martz 2011 cited by Foeday 2011). This has been confirmed by Abdelmaguid (2016) who declares that social work practices and practitioners in developing countries suffering from many challenges and difficulties. Further, (Mishna et al., 2012 as cited by Berzin, *et al*, 2015) state that the study social workers and practitioners facing several boundaries that impeding their intention to integrating ICT into practice, which is then causing some resistance among them. Moreover, the study conducted by (Berzin, *et al*, 2015 and Bullock and Colvin 2015) has demonstrated several challenges of integration of ICT into social work practice. The study agrees with the challenges from the several studies adapted to this review. These challenges include inadequate ICTs competency and literacy, inadequate experience to new technological applications into social work practice, inadequate knowledge and training of ICT tools into social work practice, and inadequate evidence related to the practices of ICT in social work practice.

### **Insufficient of ICTs competency and literacy**

Insufficient ICTs competency and literacy has become a critical challenge to many professions in our everyday working life. In the same regard, failure to gain sufficient competency and literacy regarding utilizing ICT tools reduce the positions of effective service delivery and capability to meet the global needs in this 21 century (Benedict, *et al*, 2014; Zur, 2011 cited by Foeday 2011). Many social workers in developing countries particularly in Tanzania having limited ICT competency and literacy which develop an undesirable intension to adapt and integrate ICT into

practice (Zur, 2011 cited by Foeday 2011; Carrilio 2007 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015). Early research points out that, even though there is a growing used of ICT in social work practice in some countries, limited ICT competency and literacy become a major challenge among social workers (Drumm, McCoy, and Lemon 2003 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015). On the other hand, (Chinien & Boutin, 2003 as cited by Perron, Taylor *et al*, 2010) state that social workers must have both competency and literacy with ICTs. This will help them to manage to learn new ICT skills that facilitate the incorporation of ICT usage into practice (Dunlop & Fawcett, 2008 quoted by Bullock and Colvin, 2015). Therefore, insufficient competency and literacy among social workers make them not only failed to maintain the standards but also the ability to values of social work ethics Mswcareers (2018). More specifically, having limited ICT competency and literacy develops a barrier to many social workers and practitioners and disappointment to acquire an essential educational opportunity attained from the internet for themselves and their clients Perron, Taylor *et al*, (2010). As results of this, the intention among social workers and practitioners deviations and consider ICT as complex systems and raised to weakening face-to-face interactions and client-worker relationship (Reardon, 2010; Hill & Ferguson, 2014 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015); challenging to learn on how to use ICT systems (Mishna et al., 2012 cited by Boddy & Dominelli, 2017); as well as weakened delivery services by using ICT Bullock and Colvin (2015) which directly affecting their intension to integrating of ICT into social work practice.

### **Poor involvement in new technological applications**

Inadequate experience to new technological applications between social workers and practitioners has become one of the challenges toward integrating Information and Communication Technology into social work practice. The review shows that high tensions among social workers and technology (Reardon, 2010 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015) and the limited ICT knowledge and skills among social workers (Benedict, *et al*, 2014; Zur, 2011 quoted by Foeday 2011; Kamani & Regehr, 2003 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015) found to be challenging resulting social workers having little exposure to new technological application in their practice. More specifically, many social workers and practitioners in developing countries believed that professional restrict them to exposure to the new technological application due to limited practices, the openness of standards, ethical issues and ambiguity (Mishna et al., 2012 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015; Boddy & Dominelli 2017) which then limiting their understanding to adapt and deploy different forms of technologies in offering services to their clients Foeday (2011).

Also, one more challenge that root tensions among most social workers and technology are the emergence of e-counseling and e-therapy (Csiernik et al., 2006 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015; Berzin, *et al*, 2015). These technologies (e-counseling and e-therapy) have made the social workers and therapeutic to develop misperceptions concerning the integration of ICT into practice (Freddolino & Blaschke, 2008; Langlois, 2011 cited by Berzin, *et al*, 2015). Bullock and Colvin (2015) pointed out that high tension on using an electronic therapeutic and counseling that allows social workers to connect with clients via the internet; the complication of streamlined conversations with clients, the privacy and confidentiality of the electronic relationship has developed resistance among social workers and practitioners to exposure their experience with the new technological application.



### **Inadequate knowledge and training of ICT systems and tools**

Interactive learning and training of ICT systems and tools among social worker professions have become significant promoting the development and enhancement of the body of knowledge and distribution to present and prospect practitioners of the profession to reflect the real-world use of ICTs (Abdelmaguid 2016; Benedict, *et al*, 2014; Perron, Taylor, *et al*, 2010). The previous study shows that, inadequate of learning and training on how to use the ICT system and tools become a source of poor delivering of quality services to clients Abdurrahmani *et al*, (2014) which is then limit the capability of social workers on using ICTs in delivering social work services to their clients Perron, Taylor, *et al*, (2010). The study done by Bullock and Colvin (2015) finds that lack of training technological tools has developed resistance among social workers to incorporate ICT into social practice due to limited knowledge and skills of ICT. This has also evidenced by (Mishna, Bogo, & Sawyer, 2015 cited by Berzin, *et al*, 2015; Umoren 2016) who declare that limited training of ICT system and tools prevent many social workers and practitioners to understand on how to effectively incorporate ICT into practice as well as their intension to use it. More specifically, limited the knowledge to understand on how to controls privacy on online services once client address issues of confidentiality on social networking sites or any other internet services (Zur, 2011 cited by Foeday 2011); the knowledge to change to new modernized practice models (Mishna, Bogo, *et al*, 2012 quoted by Boddy & Dominelli 2017; Foeday 2011; Baker, Warburton, *et al*, 2014 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015); instead of traditional face-to-face interaction (Reamer, 2013 cited by Boddy & Dominelli 2017) which force social workers and practitioners to consistently use internet, video conference, email, website, live chat, and social networking sites to connect with clients and colleagues (Reamer, 2013 cited by Boddy & Dominelli 2017) from different geographical locations.

### **Shortage of resources**

The shortage of resources among social workers is a key constraint on social work professionals in Africa including Tanzania. Social work personnel is satisfactory compared to contextual and practical demand. This problem can be partly attributed to insufficient financial support for social welfare programmes (Berzin, *et al*, 2015; Dhemba, Jotham, 2012, P. 12 quoted in Hesham Sayed Abdelmaguid 2016; Umoren, 2016). Owing to the chronic recession, conservative ideologies, and misguided policies, many African governments, like their complements in America and Europe, have been advocating reduced spending on social welfare (Chitereka (2009; Johnson, Emmanuel, *et al*, 2012, P. 24 as quoted in Abdelmaguid 2016). There is a widespread belief that investment in social welfare programmes does not contribute, at least directly, to economic growth and development. On the other hand, economic development programmes tend to receive a lion's share of government funding, which makes it difficult for social welfare agencies to obtain the necessary human and material resources to implement their programmes Macpherson, (1982; Abdelmaguid 2016). The scarcity of financial resources means inadequate office facilities and supplies (filing cabinets, stationery, tape recorders, etc) (Umoren 2016; Goldkind & Wolf, 2015 quoted in Berzin, *et al*, 2015). Under such conditions, keeping records and confidentiality becomes highly problematic. Moreover, Social workers often a shortage of basic items as well as inadequate transport and advanced communication facilities like offices, telephones, and computers which in turn implies that home visits cannot be easily or efficiently made, especially concerning clients residing in rural areas where the bulk of the

population live, (Rwomire & Radithokw 1996; Chitereka 2009). This has entirely reinforced their effectiveness to distribute services and became a progressive challenge in the field of social work Chitereka (2009).

### **Shortage of evidence related to the usage of ICT in social work practice**

Some degree of evidence on the usage of ICT in social work practice positively influences the behavior intention to use the ICT system and tools. Social worker's perception of either using or not using the system will depend on the availability of evidence associated with the practical usage of ICT systems and tools and the readiness in embracing the use of ICT. This is essential in promoting and boost the rapid and stable growth of the e-Social work practice.

Previous studies show that there is little research addressing the use of ICT in social work practice (Bullock and Colvin 2015; Chan & Holosko, 2015 cited by Berzin, *et al*, 2015; Perron, Taylor, *et al*, 2010). Additionally, the absence of more evidence of different forms of technologies that social workers and practitioners can use and deploy in practice (Foeday 2011; Bullock and Colvin 2015) has contributed in one way or another in aggregate the resistant among social workers and practitioners in integration of ICT into social work practice. This has also been evidenced by Perron, Taylor, *et al*, (2010) who argued that social workers and practitioners in many developing countries have a narrow basis understanding how to integrate ICTs to enhance various aspects of the social work process. Further, (Hill & Ferguson, 2014 as cited by Bullock and Colvin (2015) add that more evidence related to the usage of ICT needed to fully understand the impact of ICT as a tool in social work practice.

More specifically, social workers and practitioners lack the practical evidence that makes them acquiring a proficient of technological knowledge and skills (Berzin, *et al*, 2015; Reardon, 2010 cited by Bullock and Colvin 2015) to practice such as use of online, video conference and electronic therapy and consultancy (Reamer, 2013 cited by Boddy & Dominelli 2017) as well as brochures, fact sheets, newsletters preparation, email, and social networking sites (SNSs) (Rocha, 2011 cited by Foeday, 2011) to integrate innovative communication technology into their practice and connect with clients and colleagues from different locations.

### **Conclusion**

The paper aimed to examine the on whether innovative technologies stimulate the innovative social work practice (e-Social Work). The study concludes that ICTs have the potential in improving social work practice as well as the performance of social workers and practitioners themselves in reaction to quick social and economic shifts that have an impact on social work practice and service delivery. More specifically, the innovative technologies have positively stimulated the innovative social work practice (E-Social Work) and credit an application of ICT to enrich social workers and practitioners with practical skills to carry out their work more effectively using several ICTs tools and online services like video and telephone therapy, e-counseling, e-therapy, email, and social networking sites. Additionally, the emerging of e-Social work necessitates social workers and practitioners' e-readiness to accept new processes, procedures, structures, policies, and standards that leverage the capability of familiarizing themselves with technological transformation and new standards for use of technology. Furthermore, the review revealed that unsatisfactory ICT competencies and literacy among Tanzania's social workers and practitioners occasioned by limited training and readiness to embrace the new technology applications; some degree of evidence associated to the practices

use of ICT and tools appeared to be a key resistance stagnant the integration of ICTs into practice. Consequently, social workers and practitioners should similarly keep in mind that the integration of ICT will neither change social work professional or care for their client, instead it is only being a tool to facilitate service delivery (Dragon, 2006 cited by Foeday 2011) in overcoming their resistance. Finally, more empirical evidence required associated with the integrating of ICT into social work practice (e-social work). Regarding the future research area, awareness, capacity building, and e-readiness assessment are required.

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