

## **Beyond Limits: Exploring the Possibilities for Using the Metaverse to Teach Social Work Practice Skills**

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**Abstract:** *As social work is one of the fastest growing professions, it is crucial to provide future practitioners with the skills and tools needed to address global challenges. As a part of this initiative, social workers must be given the opportunity to take a leading role in the decision-making regarding the use of technologies such as the metaverse in the education of the next generation of social workers. To aid in this process, this article provides an overview of the metaverse and highlights its educational potential. A social work implication for the development of the metaverse can expose students of social work to opportunities to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities without being limited by time and location.*

**Keywords:** *Augmented reality, metaverse, social work, virtual reality, social work practice*

Over the past decade, several universities have adopted online technologies, such as virtual simulations, for use in social work education (Martin, 2017). Some higher education institutions also rely on Second Life (SL) to augment clinical learning experiences, as this online multimedia platform allows users to create personalized avatars through which to interact with other users and user-created content within a multiplayer virtual world. Developed by Linden Labs in 2003 as an e-learning tool, SL has also been used to facilitate the development of interpersonal communication skills in mental health. This and similar platforms have broadened the scope of student-centered learning (Xie et al., 2022).

Guided by these recent advances, educators have also started to consider the use of metaverse as a learning platform in diverse fields, such as medicine, nursing, science, and manufacturing, as well as military training and language learning (Choi & Kim, 2017; Díaz et al., 2020; Jovanović & Milosavljević, 2022; Koo, 2021; Siyaev & Jo, 2021; Tasa & Gorgülü, 2010). The range of its applications is expected to increase, given that metaverse enables learners to experience, explore, learn, and teach, as well as practice various skills that can be later applied in the real world.

For example, Farjami et al. (2011), Kanematsu et al. (2013), and Han (2020) explored the development of real-life experiments where the metaverse system is used as a tool to solve problems. However, it can also be used to learn social skills, as users can interact in this virtual environment according to the rules defined by its creator (Farjami et al., 2011; Kye et al., 2021). As the metaverse could be explored within a virtual reality (VR) system or via augmented reality (AR) in real-world contexts (Avila, 2017). Ofgang (2022) proposed engaging educators in its further development to ensure that it can be leveraged in education.

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In the metaverse space, people can engage in social activities such as discussing social issues, collaborating on projects, playing games, and solving communal problems (Bourlakis et al., 2009; Jovanović & Milosavljević, 2022; Park & Kim, 2022). Yet, despite considerable research in this domain, little is presently known about the technologies behind the metaverse. Additionally, little is known specifically about the developments needed to provide users with a fully immersive experience in social work education including the ability to create personalized stories through interactions with others. As noted by a scholar at the University of Denver, “Whether we like it or not, the metaverse is coming. Will social workers have space in this metaverse from a practice standpoint, and should we? Our industry will hurt if we don’t wake up to this quickly” (Graduate School of Social Work University of Denver Communications Team, 2021, para. 8). The purpose of this article is to explore the use of metaverse for teaching social work practice skills to future social workers. Thus, in the sections that follow, we first provide a brief overview of this technology, including how it differs from virtual and augmented reality. This is followed by a brief discussion on the diffusion of innovation theory and the use of this framework as a guide to integrate the metaverse in social work education. Lastly, we explore the possibilities for its adoption in social work education, including identifying potential challenges and future opportunities.

### **Brief Overview of the Metaverse**

The metaverse can be described as a hypothesized iteration of the Internet, supporting persistent online 3D virtual environments through conventional personal computing, as well as virtual and augmented reality headsets. In its simplest form, the metaverse is an online, open, shared, persistent, three-dimensional virtual world that includes augmented reality, virtual reality, and 3D avatars. More specifically, in this space, users could freely access a 3D space that reflects the real world through digital agents (avatars) and interact with each other in all parts of their lives (Smith, 2022; X. Zhang et al., 2022).

This goal is aptly captured by the term “metaverse”—first used by Neil Stephenson in 1992—as a combination of “meta” (meaning beyond; transcending) and “verse” (in reference to “universe,” cosmos; the whole world) which denotes a new virtual universe created beyond the real world (X. Zhang et al., 2022). More specifically, it describes a world where virtual and reality interact. The metaverse concept was more vividly depicted in science fiction movies, such as *Ready Player One*, *Lucy*, and *The Matrix* (Zhao et al., 2022). Such a 3D virtual world allows users to create avatars, which are digital representations of the user (i.e., teachers, learners, friends, co-workers, etc.) (Zhao et al., 2022). These avatars can be customized with details of the user's physical appearance and features (e.g., face, body, skin tone, hair, gender, dressing style, and even facial expressions, and gestures) (Kocur et al., 2020; Murphy, 2017; Wei et al., 2004). In the virtual space, avatars can coexist and interact with the other players in a variety of activities (e.g., working, learning, training, socialization, and transaction) (Park & Kim, 2022; C. Zhang et al., 2022). While user-created characters are not a new concept, they were previously mostly adopted in the gaming context. However, increasingly, avatars are being seen as extensions of users’ personas. Using their virtual identities, users interact with others remotely through body movements, voice calls, and taking snapshots. This aspect

has been particularly important to Gen Zers, Millennials, and Zoomers who consider their identities in virtual spaces just as important as that in the real world (Park & Kim, 2022). For these first generations of digital natives, who have come of age fully connected by technology, their behaviors, and attitudes influence metaverse experiences and developments (Johnson, 2022). Because these groups see themselves as technological pioneers, the metaverse presents a new frontier for engaging and learning.

As the scope of the metaverse has widened and is continuously growing, various definitions and concepts have emerged. For instance, some would define the metaverse as a post-reality universe, a perpetual and persistent multiuser environment merging physical reality with digital virtuality (Mystakidis, 2022). The metaverse has also been described as an embodied online world where people can work, play, and socialize with avatars, often in the form of headsets or glasses (Bobrowski, 2021; Zuckerberg, 2021).

Some people might consider the metaverse to merely be a new term for VR or AR; however, it is much more than that (Park & Kim, 2022). First, the metaverse relies on artificial intelligence (AI) for leveraging AR, VR, and other required elements (Hwang & Chien, 2022). That is, the metaverse includes both the items which already exist from the real world (augmented) and the creations produced in the virtual world (Zhao et al., 2022). Thus, unlike VR, the metaverse allows users to “live” for prolonged periods within the virtual world and engage in various activities such as working, owning, learning, interacting, creating, and entertaining (Hwang & Chien, 2022). Most importantly, the metaverse will enable people to have authentic, immersive, and multimodal experiences as if they are in the real world (Bourlakis et al., 2009; Jovanović & Milosavljević, 2022; Nevelsteen, 2018). This could lead to a future means for generating sustainable content and social meaning (Park & Kim, 2022).

To create, provide, and develop sustainable content and social meaning, the metaverse should be socially acceptable. For Lee et al. (2021), privacy threats, user diversity, fairness, and user addiction define the sustainability of the metaverse. For example, fairness in the metaverse should be based on the principles of fair competition, transparency, and innovation. Privacy threats, on the other hand, mean developing a community in the metaverse while ensuring a healthy and safe environment. This includes protecting the metaverse’s digital ecosystems and preventing the negative effects of technology on the metaverse environment. X. Zhang et al. (2022), stated the most representative authentication technology in the metaverse is blockchain, which can provide transparent, open, decentralized, and reliable services and protect users’ privacy to keep the metaverse world a sustainable ecosystem.

Additionally, user diversity is important to generating a sustainable meta environment. This includes ensuring authentic user interactions through social networking that encourages the acceptance of each user's unique background and language. For speakers of different languages to use a metaverse, a service that interprets and provides natural expressions through translation is required (Dwivedi et al., 2022). Still more, sustainability should encompass an environment that operates with services that are seamless when used by many users even in relatively low-end mobile devices (Dwivedi et al., 2022). This includes continuously developing open-source platforms and easy-to-use interface features

which are composed of visual and auxiliary auditory forms. When these various sensors are commercialized, it is possible to create a more immersive and continuous world (Dwivedi et al., 2022). Ultimately, in theory, sustainability and the metaverse can exist together in a way that transforms and reshapes the world for the benefit of everyone. By prioritizing sustainability in the metaverse, a virtual world can be created that not only provides new and exciting experiences but also sets the foundation for a better future.

In that sense, the metaverse can be considered a scalable environment in which users create their own content and events. For these benefits to be fully realized three components are necessary: (i) hardware improvements (e.g., GPU memory, 5G); (ii) development of the recognition and expression model that leverages the parallelism of the hardware; and (iii) availability of content in which users can immerse and participate (Park & Kim, 2022).

Lastly, in the metaverse, users can engage in an activity of their choice, while current VR and AR applications impose restrictions on the tasks that can be performed (Hwang & Chien, 2022). As the metaverse technology advances, it is also expected that the accuracy of vision and language recognition will improve, and the development of generative models will enable a more immersive environment and natural movement (Park & Kim, 2022). The processing time and complexity are already substantially reduced using multimodal models as E2E (end-to-end) solutions with a multimodal pre-trained model, allowing access to the metaverse anytime, anywhere via mobile devices connected to the Internet (Park & Kim, 2022).

## **Description of the Theoretical Framework**

### **The Diffusion of Innovation Theory**

Everett Rogers developed the diffusion of innovation theory to explain the process through which innovations are accepted and utilized in society (X. Zhang et al., 2015). Rogers (2003) defined innovation as “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or another unit of adoption” (p. 11) while describing diffusion as “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” (p. 5). He further posited that potential users would either adopt or reject an innovation based on the beliefs they form regarding its relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (Agarwal, 2000).

In this context, relative advantage refers to the degree to which an innovation is considered as being better than the idea it replaced in terms of economic benefits, social prestige, convenience, or satisfaction. It is also important that individuals perceive the innovation as advantageous. Thus, the greater the perceived relative advantage of an innovation, the more rapid its rate of adoption will be (Rogers, 2003). Advantages of using the metaverse are global as it connects individuals, communities, and environments in an online world through AR and/or VR, and with unique 3D avatars that convey their personality and other relevant traits.

Compatibility refers to the degree to which innovation is regarded as being consistent with the potential end-users existing values, prior experiences, and needs (Lee et al., 2011).

Essentially, compatibility represents the extent to which an innovation corresponds to the existing technical and social environment. The more an innovation incorporates the existing values and needs of potential users, the greater the likelihood of its diffusion and adoption (X. Zhang et al., 2015). In this stage of innovation diffusion, careful planning and safeguarding are needed to protect the values and uniqueness of users, which requires exploring and addressing the obstacles to implementation. In the context of metaverse adoption, this is not expected to be an issue, as many of today's learners already use platforms where they can connect with virtual worlds. Therefore, adapting to increased integration of AR or VR communities would be second nature to them (Carlson, 2005).

Complexity is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use (Lee et al., 2011). Some innovations are readily understood by most members of a social system, while others are more complicated and will be adopted more slowly. New ideas that are simpler to understand are adopted more rapidly than innovations that require the adopter to develop new skills and understandings. Accordingly, implementers need to provide suitable guidelines for virtual and/or augmented applications (including metaverse) that are clear, concise, and inclusive of language common to potential end-users.

Trialability refers to the degree to which innovations can be tested on a limited basis (Lee et al., 2011). New ideas that can be explored without complete commitment and with minimal investment are generally adopted more quickly than innovations that lack these features (X. Zhang et al., 2015). Therefore, if users can learn by doing and are given tutorials for experiencing the metaverse on a trial basis, they are likely to have fewer reservations regarding its adoption.

Lastly, observability is the degree to which the results of innovations can be visible to potential users (Lee et al., 2011). If the results are perceived to be beneficial, the innovation will be adopted (X. Zhang et al., 2015). Accordingly, the more potential end-users can visualize the metaverse's usefulness the more successful its adoption will be.

### **Challenges to Metaverse Adoption**

Like online activity since the inception of the Internet, the metaverse faces ethical issues and concerns (Heider, 2022), as the increased opportunity for interconnectedness has some inherent risks. Wheeler (2021) identified personal privacy, marketplace competition, and misinformation as the key "metachallenges" of the metaverse. On the other hand, Signé and Dooley (2022) are of the view that the core risks pertain to safety, work, resources, and equality. For example, in Horizon Worlds, up to twenty avatars can get together at a time to hang out in the virtual space. Meta reported that a beta tester using the platform Horizon Worlds was groped by a stranger (Basu, 2021). Hence, when using the metaverse as a platform to teach social work practice skills, social work educators should consider the adverse impact on student safety and privacy.

Technology standards that guide social work practice call for practitioners to analyze the risk of providing services using technology and to ensure that electronic services are kept confidential (National Association of Social Workers [NASW] et al., 2017).

Researchers warn that the safety and data privacy issues inherent in the current social media platforms will be magnified in the metaverse due to the immersive and hard-to-regulate ad-based model that will be integrated deeper into many parts of users' lives (Gale, 2022). Its other challenges might include perceived online user abuse and harassment in VR and AR environments, which can result in traumatic experiences (Signé & Dooley, 2022). According to Dwivedi et al. (2022), as the metaverse concept is based on a gaming culture in which bullying, racist language, and harassment are prevalent and often encouraged, it is likely that these issues will persist, given that the high volume of personal, behavioral, and biometric data collected through metaverse technologies can result in major privacy challenges. The value of this data to malicious users creates major cybersecurity and privacy risks.

Along with analyzing client risks and ensuring client confidentiality, social work practitioners are charged with advocating for changes in policies, practices, and programs that address the unique needs of individuals and groups and that ensure that marginalized populations have access to technology (NASW et al., 2017). According to Signé and Dooley (2022), "as the metaverse attempts to create a virtual world that more accurately reflects the real world, already-existing power dynamics and inequality in the real world may be replicated in the metaverse" (para. 3). For instance, marginalized populations often experience the most harm and suffer from racial and gender biases due to the unintended consequences of new technologies that rely on algorithms that make decisions about the type of content users see and have access to (Adeyemo, 2022). Mathiyazhagan et al. (2022) noted that biased algorithms have denied access to services such as housing, jobs, and other social service programs. Other equity questions can also be raised regarding the affordability of the technology and tools to access the metaverse. Can people from impoverished communities afford the headsets and other tools that could be needed to access some versions of the metaverse? Students who are first-generation college students may lack the resources to purchase equipment to fully engage in metaverse activities in the classroom. While these issues are widely recognized, limited efforts have been made to strengthen the knowledge and practices to design safe, accessible, and inclusive digital immersive environments such as metaverse (Zallio & Clarkson, 2022).

Another challenge that should be considered when adopting the metaverse is accessibility. The needs of both faculty with disabilities using the tool to teach as well as students with disabilities as a part of coursework require attention. For example, will faculty and students with disabilities have the option to select an identity that displays their disability? Can the available assistive technology easily integrate with the metaverse so that users have a seamless experience? Will a captioning system be available to accommodate deaf users? Technology companies like Meta have internal accessibility teams that are hopefully considering these questions and many others to ensure that users with disabilities can actively use this technology (Haynes & Alsaab, 2023). For example, Meta boasts of using an inclusive design approach when developing new technology. Virtual Reality Checks (VRCs) have been introduced to focus on ensuring that the applications on the platform are more accessible for people with disabilities (Meta, 2022).

## **Opportunities Provided by Metaverse**

Although the metaverse presents several challenges, there are also many potential opportunities for its use, especially in education. According to the diffusion of innovation theory, educators can opt to adopt or reject the innovation based on beliefs that are formed in connection with the innovation. Kshetri (2022) identified six benefits that the metaverse offers to colleges and universities, noting that it (1) makes educational resources affordable, (2) enhances student performance, (3) makes virtual interactions more like real ones, (4) enables experimentation with hard to create phenomena, (5) increases accessibility for remote students, and (6) attracts young demographic.

First, as colleges and universities grapple with budget cuts and limited funding, the metaverse may offer relative advantages through unique cost-effective learning opportunities for students. X. Zhang et al. (2022) refer to this learning mode as virtual experiment learning. The metaverse could allow students to participate in virtual experiments featuring real-time interactions, which is particularly beneficial for experiments that are too expensive or could be risky or toxic in the real world. The medical school at Fisk University created virtual cadavers for their students to practice (Kshetri, 2022). Similar approaches can be adopted in social work programs. For example, the University of Kentucky's School of Social Work created an ASK-VR program using Oculus Virtual Reality (VR) headsets as a platform to teach students to better engage and support foster and adoptive families. The purpose was to ensure that foster adoptive parents had a support service group (Barnes, 2023). Instead of having to purchase and establish labs for students to practice, those with limited funding can create interdisciplinary partnerships with medical programs to develop simulations in the metaverse. The in-person simulation labs often require the hiring of paid actors or standardized clients, which increases program costs. Although there is a potentially heavy commitment of time and resources on the front end, research on virtual social work simulations has shown that virtual simulations save time and money (Baker & Jenney, 2023). The metaverse could be a more cost-effective way for social work programs to develop the practice skills students require. For example, students can practice in a rendered metaverse world (home scenes, community environments, and office spaces) that mimics visual realism. In these settings, students can practice their engagement with peers and colleagues as virtual clients. This type of simulation can be monitored by the faculty and immediate, real-time feedback can be provided. Using this method can not only achieve better teaching results but also provide learners with an authentic supportive learning experience.

The metaverse can also lead to enhanced student performance, given that using extended reality (XR) technologies in learning environments has been found to increase learners' enjoyment, interest, and motivation to learn (Pimentel et al., 2022). The direct experience given to students in the metaverse is immersive, which not only promotes teamwork and skill development but also engages students in classroom activities in different ways (Tlili et al., 2022). According to Kshetri (2022), students that took part in a metaversity piloted by Morehouse College found VR classes more engaging and more satisfying and thus experienced increased achievement when compared to their peers who offered traditional and online classes. As the metaverse allows students to learn by doing,

creating practice classes in the metaverse could prove beneficial in enhancing social work students' knowledge and skills in key areas. This opportunity to further engage students in practice beyond what they experience in traditional in-person and online classrooms is compatible with the needs of social work programs.

A third benefit of the metaverse suggested by Kshetri (2022) is its ability to make virtual interactions more realistic. The author pointed out that "metaverse-related technologies bridge the gap between real-life and virtual interactions by allowing people to interact more naturally" (para 8). Likewise, Pimentel et al. (2022) are of the view that XR technologies used in the metaverse can facilitate a strong sense of presence, or the feeling of "being there," in a place different from a physical location, as well as a strong sense of agency, which may be powerful for enabling learning. Universities already use tools like Gather to create virtual buildings where avatars interact and use video to allow those in these virtual spaces to see one another and interact as they move throughout the environment. Gather also allows small groups to connect to hold separate conversations (Kshetri, 2022). Social work programs could use the metaverse to replicate their buildings and classrooms to create opportunities for online students to interact with students on campus as they develop practice skills. Key to this innovation is the need to reduce the complexity of implementation as well as provide clear user guidelines for both faculty and students.

Experimentation with hard-to-create phenomena is a fourth benefit of the metaverse (Kshetri, 2022). Some real-world situations can be risky for students. Virtual environments offer students safe spaces to make mistakes and hone critical skills needed in difficult practice settings (Lanzieri et al., 2021). Kim and Hopkins (2017) reported that about 70% of child welfare workers in the United States have been victims of violence or threats while they work, while 90% of former child welfare workers reported that they had experienced some types of verbal threats, 30% had experienced physical attacks, and 13% had been threatened with weapons. Field placements in child welfare settings are important for student learning, but as they are also inherently risky, these issues can be overcome through simulations in the metaverse. For example, faculty could create a community in the metaverse that allows students to investigate alleged abuse. During the home visit, students would have the experience of walking through the home and going room to room to complete a comprehensive assessment. Family members could be in rooms in the home and require student interactions. The scenario could include students facing a person with a weapon or a person having a psychotic episode. Students could be evaluated on their assessment skills, interviewing skills, crisis intervention skills, and safety skills. To fully leverage these new opportunities, field instructors and students should be allowed to experience metaverse learning on a trial basis, as this will enable developers to obtain valuable feedback for further improvements with the aim of full adoption of this highly promising innovation.

Fifth, as the metaverse increases accessibility for remote students (Kshetri, 2022), it can be highly beneficial for offering education to those living in rural areas. Jensen (2022) went further to suggest that the metaverse can expand the existing concept of online universities, offering students "unlimited access and trusted digital accreditations to meet specific regional curriculum requirements of the most cutting-edge campuses anywhere in



the world” (para. 3). As the need for professional social workers grows, finding creative ways to increase access to quality programs for students, especially those in rural areas, is important. As social work programs grapple with student concerns regarding the costs associated with unpaid field placements, the metaverse may offer opportunities to engage students in skill-building exercises that reduce the cost of travel to agency sites. However, to accomplish these learning opportunities for students in rural communities, measures should be in place to assure they have adequate access to the bandwidth necessary to engage effectively in multimodal interactions. Along with network access, measures should include ensuring that equipment, if any is required, be made available for student success using this space.

Finally, as metaverses provide experience-driven opportunities, they primarily attract a young demographic (Kshetri, 2022). This provides an ideal opportunity for universities to create virtual tours of their campuses in the metaverse to promote their programs to prospective students. This idea can be expanded to include gaming opportunities or live concert events as a means of popularizing academic institutions. As these young users experience observable results from using the metaverse, they are more likely to desire more opportunities to engage with this technology. This is also consistent with Roger’s construct of compatibility, as users that have positive experiences within the metaverse are likely to evaluate this innovation more positively.

### **Implications for Social Work Education**

Since clinical simulations already serve as powerful teaching and learning tools for social work students, the metaverse is expected to be the next iteration for skill development. For this reason, continuing the research efforts for expanding this virtual technology as a practice-based learning environment can take social work education to another level. As metaverse technology is further explored specifically in social work education, consideration should be given to its affordability, flexibility, and accessibility along with ensuring that it is a socially just space for practice. For instance, it will be important to ensure that users have access to well-designed and affordable infrastructure, hardware, and software. This includes adequate broadband, smart wearable devices, and computer technology to facilitate access to the metaverse world (Parmaxi, 2020). As indicated by scholars (e.g., Kang, 2021; Yang et al., 2022; C. Zhang et al., 2022), wireless communication and high-speed networks, such as 5G or 6G, are the basic requirements for the implementation and work of the metaverse world. With the support of high-speed networks, the metaverse can maintain fluency, steadiness, and low latency for data transmission, scene presentation, immediate feedback, and user connection (C. Zhang et al., 2022).

As stated by Park and Kim (2022), the smart wearable device is a basic hardware component that links the real world and the virtual world. Smart wearable devices include headsets or head-mounted displays (HMD), smart glasses, etc., which can be divided into non-see-through, optical-see-through, and video-see-through (e.g., Kang, 2021; Taylor & Soneji, 2022; Zuckerberg, 2021). These smart wearable devices can help learners to teleport themselves from the real world into the metaverse and switch between the real and

virtual worlds without restrictions. This hardware is now quickly enhanced because of technological advancement, but it still needs further improvement. Measures should be available to ensure that social work students have access to well-designed, cost-effective headgear or have the capability to access the metaverse without requiring wearable headgear at all. An example of providing the metaverse without the use of headgear is the platform Universe designed by ViewSonic. Users of this platform can access the metaverse simply by accessing the virtual world using their computers. No smart wearable headgear is required.

Additionally, software (e.g., edge computing, cloud computing, distributed computing) to process, compute, store, transmit, and interchange data and information between the virtual world and the real world, and among users is vitally important (e.g., Kang, 2021; Zhao et al., 2022). Accessibility should also be considered to ensure that all users enjoy the same services within the same timeframe regardless of any diversity factors (e.g., ability, language, socioeconomic status, culture, religion) (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2022; University of Montana, 2022). It is further important to ensure that the metaverse provides a practice space that is inclusive, equitable, and socially just. To ensure this, the metaverse should be a space where all learners are to be able to independently acquire the same knowledge, and engage with the same spaces, interactions, and technologies. Equitable access to learning experiences in the metaverse must further include adopting inclusive strategies for constructing the learning experiences. This can include social work paving a path for equity to prevent possible digital harm (Mathiyazhagan et al., 2022). Immediate implementation of the metaverse in the present non-regulated tech and social condition has the highest potential of amplifying existing social inequalities in the virtual universe. Therefore, addressing the US federal technology policy gaps with social work principles related to the metaverse should be an urgent priority. This will prevent an exacerbation of existing concerns (Mathiyazhagan et al., 2022).

Further development of the metaverse can expose students of social work to opportunities to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities without being limited by time and location. This experience can be extremely empowering, particularly for students that do not live in multicultural settings (X. Zhang et al., 2022). Exposure to individuals from different cultures around the globe will create more well-rounded, culturally competent students while also exposing them to new methods of practice. Moreover, the empowering nature of the metaverse can aid future social workers in breaking down barriers and strengthening cultural competencies. Imagining these possibilities makes it imperative to place this initiative at the forefront of social work education.

## **Conclusion**

Although the metaverse is a relatively new technology, as it develops further, it will have immense potential in diverse domains, education in particular. Imagine the possibilities of enriching social work professionals' human interaction, communication, and social transactions using technology. Metaverse has the potential to do just that. Thus, considerations should be given for social work education programs to adopt metaverse

technology in their teaching and training practices. To accomplish this, however, social work educators must ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to learn using this new technology. This will require universities and social work education programs more specifically, to make a commitment to invest in meta technology. Along with this, social work programs should ensure that students have access to equipment and services that are affordable, efficient, reliable, and equitable. By training new students in the metaverse, the profession would pave the way for a future workforce that embraces and enhances future e-service delivery. This will only take the social work profession to another level and position it to be at the forefront of this emerging technology. For this reason, it is imperative that the social work profession not turn its back on the possibilities that this integration can bring to the future of social work educational advancement.

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