EXPLORING THE STATE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION IN SOUTH AFRICA

By

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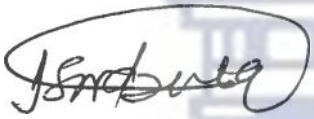
DECLARATION

I, **JOYCE SHONISANI RAMABULANA-NDZUTA,** hereby declare that the research project titled **EXPLORING THE STATE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION IN SOUTH AFRICA** towards the qualification to be awarded is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or towards the completion of any research study to another university or towards another qualification.



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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the state of social work supervision in South Africa, looking at how it is experienced by both social workers and supervisors. The empirical study was conducted in the Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West Provinces. The research sites were the service offices of the Department of Social Development (DSD). The research adopted a mixed-methods approach underpinned by a convergent parallel research design: the researcher collected qualitative and quantitative data concurrently. Questionnaires were administered on the same day on which the semi-structured interviews were conducted.

The findings of the study suggest that social work supervision is lacking in a number of areas. One of the areas of concern for social workers is that supervision, as it is currently applied, does not offer them the support they need. The study revealed that (a) supervisors were not able to support social workers as they themselves were not adequately prepared for the position of supervision by way of training, and (b) just like social workers who felt unsupported, supervisors also continuously felt unsupported by their managers.

Furthermore, it became clear that both social workers and supervisors had limited understanding of the approaches applied in social work supervision. This included a lack of understanding of the strengths-based approach which the researcher had chosen as the theoretical framework for the study. The findings also revealed a lack of policies to guide how supervision should be applied. Except for the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), participants did not know of any other policy regarding social work supervision. Consequently, there are no measures in place to monitor the implementation of social work supervision which results in it being applied inconsistently – and, in some instances, not being applied at all.

The research also focused on relationships in supervision and found that there were both positive and negative relationships.

Participants admitted that negative relationships were sometimes so extreme that they bordered on the level of bullying. As much as the assumption is that it would have been supervisors who bullied their subordinates, the former also reported being bullied by social workers.

The study makes several recommendations which are consistent with its findings. It recommends that training of supervisors be prioritised as this would empower them to fulfil the three functions of supervision, of which one is support for social workers. Next, clear and adequate policies on social work supervision should be developed to guide the application of supervision. Furthermore, with regard to the approaches in social work supervision, it is recommended that it should be compulsory for organisations to adopt at least one approach - or even several - and the application of such approaches should be enforced and monitored.

Keywords:

Social work supervision

Social work supervisor

Social worker

Approaches

Training

Relationships

Policy

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATION	FULL NAME
DSD	Department of Social Development
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACSSP	South African Council for Social Service Professionals
STATS SA	Statistics South Africa

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

1.1. Introduction

Social work supervision was first recognised in the United States of America during the 1920s (Kadushin, 1992). At that time, supervision was called inspection, because its focus was on reviewing programmes in institutions and not on supervising individuals (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). After the 1920s there was a shift towards supervising individual workers, as indicated by Kadushin and Harkness (2002), and it was then that social work supervision began to focus on guiding individual social workers.

Busse (2009) asserts that supervision was often seen as a form of social work practice rather than a separate, stand-alone function, and that social work supervision emerged from social work. This notion was confirmed in a publication produced by the Somerset County Council and Social Care Institute for Excellence (Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2011) which stated that social work and supervision had long been associated with each other.

A summary of the evolution of social work supervision globally and in South Africa is presented here, while the processes are detailed in Chapter 2, which is the literature review chapter.

Social work supervision grew and established itself between the 1920s and 1970s (Bradley, Engelbrecht & Höjer, 2010). As it evolved, social work supervision progressed through four stages, as explained by Grauel (2002). The first phase, referred to as the 'prehistoric stage', was also called 'medical consultation' because at that time supervision was largely practised in the medical field. During the second stage, social work supervision was influenced by Freud's psychoanalytical theory which is characterised by analysing people's behaviour at both conscious and subconscious levels. The third stage saw growing debates regarding social work supervision, which led to its gradual expansion and becoming independent of social work (Grauel, 2002). During the fourth stage, social work supervision applied counselling supervision as it was influenced by Carl Rogers' theory. The focus here was more on the social worker as a person and not on the programme.

It was during the 1970s that supervision became fully realised and autonomous. Its functions became fully operational, with the administrative function taking precedence over the educational and supportive functions because of managerial and compliance elements (O'Donoghue, 2015).

Social work supervision is necessary because, as Godden (2012) explains, social work is a demanding profession, both intellectually and emotionally, requires a variety of skills and knowledge, and is physically exhausting at times. Consequently, there was a call for social workers to be offered the support which supervision would provide (Van Heugten, 2011). The Department of Social Development (DSD) in South Africa has developed the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), the purpose of which is to guide the administering of social work supervision. This supervision framework stipulates that it is compulsory for all social workers - especially the newly employed (Engelbrecht, 2019a) - to receive supervision performed by qualified, registered and experienced social workers (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Moreover, the supervision framework gives the specific instruction that supervision of newly employed social workers should take place fortnightly for a period of three years before they can be advanced to the consultation level (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:32).

Globally, much has been written about social work supervision. The existing literature focuses mainly on its three functions (administrative, educational and supportive) on which Kadushin (1992) has elaborated extensively. The present researcher has, however, observed that there has not been much focus on how social work supervision is experienced by both supervisors and social workers. The relevant literature has emphasised the application of the functions of social work supervision with little consideration for the conditions under which supervision should be done.

In South Africa, the social work supervision scholar, Engelbrecht (2010, 2019), has also emphasised the approaches to social work supervision in his writings. The general state of social work supervision in South Africa remains a distant subject, and yet this affects the performance and the experiences of both supervisors and social workers. It is the view of the researcher that this silence on the state of supervision in South Africa is a gap which needs to be addressed by research, and which this study aims to investigate. The study by Ndzuta (2009) partially addressed this gap by focusing on the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers. The researcher realised the need to extend her investigations by examining the state of social work supervision in general, looking at it through the eyes of social workers and supervisors. This study is aimed at addressing not only the three main functions of supervision but is also meant to focus on other relevant aspects of social work supervision as well. This would present a holistic picture of the state of social work supervision in South Africa.

1.2. The Focus of Social Work Supervision

Social work supervision focuses on different areas which can be grouped into three categories (Payne, 1994).

***Focus on the client (Professional)*:** Clients should receive maximum benefits from services rendered by social workers. To support this, Botha (2002) states that the primary goal of supervision is to enable social workers to deliver the best possible service to clients. This statement makes it clear that the ultimate focus is the client.

***Focus on supervisees (Personal)*:** The aim, as explained by Engelbrecht (2019a:312), is to develop supervisees into competent and independent practitioners. One of the ways of achieving this is by offering educational supervision, which includes supervisors imparting skills to social workers. However, supervisees also require individual support from their supervisors. According to Engelbrecht's (2013) research findings, supervisees prefer supportive supervision over other types of supervision. When social workers are supported, they can, in turn, render quality services to their clients (Godden, 2012).

***Focus on supervisors and management (Organisational)*:** This refers to the role of management, including supervisors, in relation to the objectives of the organisation and what it seeks to achieve. Competent supervision allows supervisors to maintain standards and morale in service units, monitor workload levels, review and plan interventions, maintain objectivity, provide critical analysis, keep senior staff informed about the performance of frontline staff, and maintain good standards of professional performance (Payne, 1994).

1.3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study focuses on the approaches to social work supervision. A short description of the terms *approach* and *model* is offered here. The terms *model* and *approach* are often used interchangeably (Tsui, 2012). Although Botha (2002) does this as well, she also makes a distinction between them**.** According to her, in the context of social work supervision, an approach is a method used to conceptualise social work supervision. Models, on the other hand, explain the supervisory process. "Models are more adaptable than approaches…and are easily changeable" (Botha, 2002:83). Thus, an approach could be seen as the planning stage of supervision, while a model is the stage of implementation.

For this study, the researcher has chosen a strengths-based approach which has connections with other approaches, such as the empowerment, social development, and learning approaches. The social development approach is adopted by various organisations. This means that an organisation practising the strengths-based approach has the advantage of being able to apply other related approaches as well, even though this may be indirectly.

One of the important aspects of a strengths-based approach is that supervision – and, inevitably, supervisors – must create an environment which is conducive for the facilitation of supervision and the learning and growth of social workers (Coleman, 2003).

The strengths-based approach favours a focus on strengths, capacities, capabilities and resilience, rather than emphasising problems and pathology (Healy, 2014; Engelbrecht, 2019b:39). The researcher supports the view of Baron and Stanley (2019), namely that the strengths-based approach affirms people's positive attributes, as enumerated above, instead of defining them by their shortcomings. This, however, does not mean that the shortcomings are entirely ignored. Parallel to working on their weaknesses, individuals are made aware of the strengths they possess which may assist them in dealing with their shortcomings.

The empowerment approach, which is linked to the developmental and strengths-based approaches, is defined by Patel (2015:142) as "a process of personal, interpersonal or political empowerment to improve a person's life." In addition to this, Engelbrecht (2012b) postulates that empowerment is about giving people, particularly the disadvantaged, the opportunity and power to participate in matters concerning their lives, and this includes their participation in decision-making. In the context of this study and in social work supervision, empowerment refers to social workers being empowered by their supervisors who have a duty to create an environment conducive to this. In addition, and as indicated by Engelbrecht (2019b), the empowerment approach embraces partnership, teamwork and inclusion, where staff – and in this case social workers and supervisors – advocate the improvement of services and policies for the poor. In short, empowered social workers are better able to work with, and advocate on behalf of, their clients when their supervisors have empowered them.

1.4. **Challenges Facing Social Work Supervision**

The researcher has observed that, in its current form, social work supervision faces multiple challenges, as elaborated upon below.

1.4.1. **Lack of theory:**

The challenge facing supervision in South Africa is that the theoretical approaches supporting supervision are not applied. Thus, supervision is currently not informed by theory. This is confirmed by Engelbrecht (2010b, 2019) who noted that there is no clear directive to organisations to follow a particular approach or approaches. There is, however, a gradual move towards applying the developmental approach as stated by Patel (2015).

1.4.2. **Lack of resources:**

Lack of human and other resources, such as office space and vehicles to conduct home visits, are challenges to social work supervision in South Africa, coupled with high and unmanageable caseloads (Spolander, 2014).

1.4.3. **Lack of formal training for supervisors:**

The lack of theoretical knowledge in respect of social work supervision remains a challenge. The promotion of social workers to supervisory positions is largely based on years of experience and with no supervisory qualification required (Rankine, 2019). This has negative implications for the application of supervision, as supervisors then supervise based on only what they have learned from their own previous supervisors (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).

1.4.4. **Lack of a supervision policy:**

The lack of supervision policy is a matter of concern**. T**he *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* is currently used as a guide for the practice of supervision. However, the level of adherence to this guideline is not clear and there seem to be no consequences for those who ignore it.

1.5. **Problem Statement**

The researcher has observed that even when supervision is applied to social workers, it does not motivate them to perform their tasks zealously, effectively and efficiently. Botha (2002) noted the same low quality of supervision. Of course, the lack of motivation can be due to other factors as well, with poor supervision being only one of them.

These discussed challenges have contributed to the development of the *Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers* by the DSD (2006). In 2017, the *Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Service Practitioners* criticised the lack of supervision, while at

the same time attempting to address the issue. Both documents highlight the following challenges: limited supervision, informal supervision, ineffective supervisors, supervisors not offering the necessary support to social workers as they are not being trained for the task and, therefore, do not know what to do during supervision. Thus, both documents attribute the incidence of demotivated and disillusioned social workers leaving the profession altogether or seeking employment overseas in countries, such as the United Kingdom, to the lack of effective social work supervision.

The current problem in the practice of supervision is that it focuses primarily on social workers delivering on their caseloads. Little attention is paid to their professional and emotional needs, which should be addressed through supervision. This can be attributed to supervisors' inadequate preparedness (Ndzuta, 2009). Ndzuta's research revealed that the current system of promotion to a supervisory position is problematic as it does not prepare the candidate well for the position by way of training.

Although the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* gives a general framework for social work supervision, the emphasis on addressing and meeting the emotional needs of social workers remains minimal. In this regard, Dan (2017) insists that support, when applied as supportive supervision, is key to meeting the needs of social workers.

Research conducted by Engelbrecht (2013) revealed that supervisees prefer supportive supervision over other types of supervision. Supportive supervision is holistic in nature because it addresses most of the supervision needs of social workers in that it covers areas such as: support with cases (BASW, 2012), emotional support (Carpenter, Webb, Bostock & Coomber, 2015), guidance on integrating theory with practice as a form of support (Dan, 2017), and the provision of resources as a form of support as well (Egan & Kadushin, 2004). It is this supportive supervision which seems to be lacking currently, thus prompting the need for this research. This study investigates the challenges as currently experienced by both social workers and supervisors and also strives to provide recommendations on how to improve social work supervision**.** Moreover, policy developers and the welfare sector in general would also benefit from its findings and recommendations.

1.6. **Research Question**

The study was guided by, and undertook to answer, the question:

What is the state of social work supervision in the welfare sector in South Africa?

1.7. Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to explore the state of social work supervision in the South African welfare sector for the purpose of developing guidelines for social work supervision.

1.8. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- conceptualise social work supervision,
- explore the experiences and needs of social workers regarding supervision,
- explore the supervisors' experiences of supervision,
- explore areas which require improvement in social work supervision, and
- develop guidelines for social work supervision.

1.9. Research Methodology

The research methodology for this study involved the following: a mixed-methods research approach and a convergent parallel design was employed. The study applied the non-probability and the accidental sampling for the qualitative approach (Grinnell & Unrau, 2014; Monette, Sullivan, DeJong & Hilton, 2014). For the quantitative approach, simple random sampling was applied as it gives everyone an equal chance of being selected (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). Two sets of data were collected and analysed separately: qualitative data, followed by quantitative data.

1.9.1. Research approach

The researcher chose the mixed-methods approach. This choice was motivated by the need to collect both numerical and textual data and combine them to answer the research question (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). Defining the mixed-methods research design, Creswell (2015:2-3) states: "Mixed methods involve the collection, analysis and integration of both quantitative and qualitative data in different phases of a study." On the other hand, Rubin and Babbie (2017:70-71) define mixed-methods research as a procedure for "collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study to understand the research more completely." Furthermore**,** for the present study, the choice of the mixed-methods approach was influenced by two characteristics which are:

Completeness: Completeness means that the researcher can produce a more comprehensive account of the area of inquiry in which he/she is interested if both quantitative and qualitative

research is employed (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Both the qualitative and quantitative data gathered and analysed during this research helped create a comprehensive account of the topic under investigation.

Credibility: Employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches in one's research ensures that the integrity and credibility of the findings are enhanced (Bryman, 2006). Thus, the researcher of the present study used the mixed-methods approach in order to lend credibility to the findings produced by the research**.**

1.9.2. **Research design**

The researcher selected the convergent parallel design which is also known as the concurrent design. This design requires that the researcher collects "both qualitative and quantitative data, analyse[s] them separately and then merge[s] and compare[s] results to see if they conform or disconfirm each other" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:68).

The design was also chosen because it produces triangulated results regarding a single topic (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Although the researcher collected qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, the qualitative data were analysed first, followed by an analysis of the quantitative data. A comparison was then undertaken, as well as an interpretation of the analysed data. Thus, the researcher obtained different, but complementary, data on the same topic to best understand the research problem (Morse, 1991).

1.9.3. **Population**

'Population' encompasses the total of all units available for analysis from which the researcher wishes to draw specific conclusions (Welman et al., 2005). The population for this study included all registered social workers and social work supervisors in the DSD and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the five provinces which were identified for the study.

1.9.4. **Sampling**

Sampling means "taking a portion or a smaller number of units of a population as representative or having particular characteristics of that total population" (Sarantakos, 2013:167). A discussion of the qualitative and quantitative sampling processes follows.

1.9.4.1. **Sampling for the qualitative research method**

The study was planned to be undertaken in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Northwest provinces. The researcher considered having focus groups in the rural and the urban areas of these sampled provinces. This was motivated by the fact that urban areas are usually better resourced than their rural counterparts. For example, the largely urban Gauteng Province has better financial resources than the predominantly rural provinces, such as the Eastern Cape and Limpopo. The researcher applied accidental sampling when identifying these provinces. This type of sampling is generally informed by the availability of respondents (Monette, Sullivan, DeJong & Hilton, 2014). The researcher held preliminary discussions on supervision matters with several social workers and supervisors who showed interest in this subject. This helped the researcher decide to engage in the study, as well as which provinces to choose. A non-probability sampling method, focusing on social workers and their supervisors, was chosen. Accordingly, participants were selected based on their availability. This availability sampling was applied to both the qualitative and quantitative samples (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The criterion for choosing both supervisors and social workers was that they needed to be in the employ of the DSD or NGOs (in the selected provinces) for six months or more. The researcher expected that within at least six months of employment, social workers would have been exposed to a number of supervision sessions. The researcher followed the DSD process of seeking permission to conduct the study in the provinces identified, including seeking permission for the participation of officials in the selected provinces.

The researcher planned to make use of focus groups and individual interviews. In each of the provinces selected, two focus groups, each comprising four social workers, would be established. One focus group would be located in a rural area while the other would be located in an urban area of the province. Thus the total number of social workers in focus groups – covering all five provinces and being in the employ of the DSD - would be forty. With respect to the social work supervisors in the DSD, the researcher planned to interview two supervisors from rural and two from urban districts in each of the provinces sampled, bringing the total number of social work supervisors in the DSD to 20. The purpose of creating focus groups in both rural and urban districts was to gain a balanced view of the experiences of social workers who were from both settings.

Regarding NGOs, the plan was to conduct focus groups and interviews at one service office per identified province. Two social workers in a focus group were going to be interviewed in each office, which would result in a total of ten social workers in the five sampled provinces. Furthermore, the researcher would conduct interviews with one supervisor in each of those offices in which the social workers were interviewed. This would mean that, in total, five supervisors would be interviewed. The rationale for having a smaller sample from the NGOs was that they normally have fewer employees as they are usually funded by sponsors. A total of 15 social workers and supervisors from NGOs were to be interviewed. However, in the end the researcher interviewed fewer social workers and supervisors: some of them were not available as they had to attend to other demands of their work. This unavailability of participants is detailed in Chapter 5 (Research Methodology).

1.9.4.2. **Sampling for the quantitative research method:**

This study applied simple random sampling, which meant that each social worker at the offices where the interviews took place had an equal chance of being selected (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). To add to the simple random sampling, the researcher also applied the convenient sampling method to make sure that those who were easily available could be included in the study (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). Therefore, in each service office where the semi-structured interviews took place, the researcher requested that those social workers and supervisors who did not participate in the interviews be included in the list of respondents to the questionnaires. This meant that all social workers and supervisors in the offices where the qualitative data gathering took place participated by responding to the questionnaires.

1.9.5. **Collection of data**

Mixed-methods research involves collecting quantitative and qualitative data (Plano & Creswell, 2010). For the qualitative study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data while questionnaires were administered to collect quantitative data.

1.9.5.1. **Qualitative data collection procedures**

The researcher conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews which were guided by an interview guide with a set of pre-determined questions in line with Roulston and Choi's (2018) recommendations. The semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with social workers from the DSD and the NGOs, while individual interviews were conducted with supervisors both from the DSD and the NGOs. The semi-structured interview method was

applied because of its flexibility as it gave the researcher opportunities to follow up on certain interesting topics that emerged during the interview (Adler & Clark, 2015).

1.9.5.2. **Quantitative data collection procedures**

Quantitative data collection methods make use of measuring instruments which include, amongst others, surveys and questionnaires (Delport & Roestenburg, in de Vos et al., 2011). To collect data for the quantitative method, the researcher made use of questionnaires which were handed out to the participants.

1.9.6. **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in a mixed-methods research consists of analysing separately the quantitative data using quantitative methods and the qualitative data using qualitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Since this study made use of the convergent parallel design, and in line with what is stated by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), qualitative data were analysed first, followed by the analysis of quantitative data. Analysed qualitative and quantitative data were then converged and finally compared to produce the findings. The research methodology chapter (Chapter 5) of this study gives a detailed description of how the qualitative and quantitative data were analysed.

1.10. **Significance of the Study**

The study is considered important in that it will make the DSD and the social welfare sector aware of the current state of social work supervision and the gaps which exist. Describing the perceptions, experiences and needs of social workers and supervisors, and evaluating the general state of social work supervision in this sector in South Africa, will assist the authorities to gain a better understanding of the issues discussed here. The results of the study could assist the DSD, in particular, with the development of guidelines to address the above-mentioned needs of social workers and supervisors, at the same time bridging the gaps identified by the study. The benefit to the social workers and supervisors would be that these guidelines would have been informed by them, rather than having been compiled via a 'top-down' approach, giving them the assurance that they are cared for, that the DSD values them as professionals and recognises the contributions they have made to improving supervision.

1.11. **Contents of the Research Report**

The contents of this research report are listed as follows**:**

Chapter 1: **Introduction to Social Work Supervision:** The chapter gives an introduction and background to social work supervision and briefly outlines the research methodology followed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review: This chapter focused on the history of social work and social work supervision globally and in South Africa.

Chapter 3: **The Practice of Social Work Supervision**: The chapter outlines the practice of social work supervision globally and in South Africa. It is a continuation of the literature review.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework: This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of this study **and** focuses on three supervision approaches which are inter-related, and from which the researcher chose the strengths-based approach.

Chapter 5: **Research Methodology:** Chapter 5 is dedicated to a discussion of the research methodology, covering the research approach and design, the target population, sampling techniques, and data collection and analysis methods. This chapter also includes the ethical standards for conducting research in the social sciences and which the researcher applied during the study.

Chapters 6 and 7: Analysis of the qualitative Data: The qualitative data gathered during the interviews with social workers and supervisors are analysed in these chapters.

Chapter 8: **Discussion of the Quantitative Findings and Comparison of the two Methodologies:** The chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the quantitative data collected from social workers and supervisors. The findings of the qualitative and quantitative data analyses are compared in line with the convergent parallel design chosen for this study.

Chapter 9: Towards Guidelines for Social Work Supervision: This chapter outlines the guidelines which are part of the outcomes of this study and which focus mainly on three approaches applicable to social work supervision. They also include other important areas of social work supervision, including supervisory relationships and supervision systems.

Chapter 10: Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations: The chapter offers a summary of the findings and presents conclusions which were drawn from these. Recommendations are made based on the conclusions and are followed by suggestions for future research and concluding comments.

1.12. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter aimed at providing a general overview of the research topic and the nature of the study. It also introduced the discussions which follow in subsequent chapters, thereby laying a foundation for the structure of the study. Furthermore, the researcher provided brief

introductions to the relevant literature consulted. The next chapter, which is a literature review, focuses on the history and the evolution of social work and social work supervision in different countries, including South Africa.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: A DISCUSSION OF THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

2.1. Introduction

Up until the 1920s, supervision was not applied to individual workers in welfare organisations, but instead to groups of workers (Pieterse, 1961; Kadushin, 1992). It is widely agreed by different authors that social work supervision emerged from the evolvement of social work itself. Thus the history of social work supervision is also the history of social work (Baglow, 2009; Busse, 2009; Davys & Beddoe, 2010).

2.2. History of Social Work and Social Work Supervision in Different Countries

2.2.1. The history of social work and social work supervision in the United States of America (USA)

In the American context, the history of social work supervision can be traced back to the Charity Organization Societies of the 19th century (Munson, 2002). The Charity Organization Societies were reported to have started in Buffalo, New York, and then spread to other North American states and cities (Kadushin, 1992).

Kadushin (1992) gives an account of the evolution of social work supervision which reveals some similarities between its practice and that of social work. These similarities existed until social work supervision was professionalised. During the early days of social work supervision in the USA, supervisors – who were not trained in supervision – were referred to as 'paid agents'. Those who did direct service work, which resembled social work duties, were called 'visitors' or 'volunteers', and were also not trained. A paid agent would be allocated several volunteers to supervise (Kadushin, 1992).

The paid agents were also responsible for the recruitment and training of volunteers (Kadushin, 1992). Furthermore, they were also a link between their organisation and the volunteers. While volunteers reported to paid agents, paid agents reported to a district committee which consisted of lay people (Kadushin, 1992). The district committee had the authority to make decisions on behalf of the organisation, and, over time, the district committee began to focus on policy and administration matters (Kadushin, 1992).

In New York, the New York Association – which organised efforts to improve the conditions of the poor - entrusted their agents with the responsibility of supervising and training the

volunteers (Kadushin, 1992). The paid agents also allocated cases to the volunteers, similar to the way cases are allocated by supervisors today. The professionalisation of supervision during that era is displayed by the agents' studying the cases before allocating them to the volunteers. The agents were also tasked with the responsibility of advising and assisting the volunteers with cases allocated to them (Kadushin, 1992). From the 1920s onwards, social work supervision in the USA continued to grow and the three major supervision functions (educational, administrative and supportive) were introduced during the 1970s. Due to managerial and compliance elements, however, the administrative function dominated the educational and supportive functions (O'Donoghue, 2015).

2.2.2. **The history of social work and social work supervision in England**

Bradley et al. (2010) state that in England, as in the USA, social work was established during the 19th century by the Charity Organization Society which organised volunteers to support social workers who attended to the poor. Social work in England grew and reached a high point of development and professional autonomy during the 1970s (Harris, 1998; Bradley et al., 2010). Social work training in England remained generic despite the criticism that its broad scope did not fully equip social workers with specialised skills, such as those required for child protection (Laming, 2009).

In England, social work supervision emerged in the 1980s (Laming, 2009). This was due to concerns raised by the public regarding child protection, whether employers of social workers had a code of practice, and whether the Government of England had a policy which recognised the complex nature of supervision (General Social Care Council, 2004; Department of Health, 2006; Laming, 2009).

A study conducted by Bradley (2006) revealed that, in general, social workers with five years of experience were promoted to a supervisory post in the same organisation in which they were working. Bradley adds that there was normally no formal training for new supervisors except for on-the-job training.

Due to lack of official training, these supervisors practised supervision based on what they had learned from their own supervisors who modelled what this task was supposed to look like (Hair, 2012). As much as the supervisors knew how supervision should ideally be conducted and what it should entail, due to other additional tasks which they carried, their supervision remained limited to the discussion of cases with their supervisees (Bradley, 2006).

2.2.3. The history of social work and social work supervision in Sweden

In Sweden, social work was offered as a university course as far back as 1921, acquiring academic standing and becoming highly professional by the beginning of the 1980s (Bradley et al., 2010). Despite high grade requirements for university entrance, professionalisation of social work through university training and the pressure of the work itself, the social work profession in Sweden remained a low-paying position (Tham, 2007).

Compared to England and South Africa, Sweden was the first country to practise external supervision of social workers successfully (Bradley et al., 2010). External supervision entails being supervised by a qualified person who is not an employee of the same organisation which employs the social worker (Rankine, 2019). Dellgran and Höjer (2005) argued that the application of external supervision in Sweden created an opportunity for supervision to be offered by universities as a post-graduate course, up to a Master's level. This had a positive impact on supervision in Sweden as social workers were overseen by supervisors who were qualified as supervisors. The application of external supervision in Sweden resulted in the increased professionalisation of supervision in general (Höjer, Beijer & Wissö, 2007).

To the degree to which external supervision was successful in Sweden, it also had its disadvantages, one of which being that it came at a high financial cost to the organisations applying it (Beddoe, 2012). Motivated by the high rates charged by external supervisors, social workers aspired to becoming supervisors themselves. In other words, the motivation to become supervisors could be interpreted as having been purely for financial gain (Dellgran & Höjer, 2005).

2.2.4. The history of social work and social work supervision in South Africa

Engelbrecht (2010) outlined the sequence of the evolvement of social work and social work supervision in South Africa. He established that social work developed in response to the destruction caused by the 1902 Anglo-Boer war. Many people were left destitute, prompting the establishment of women's organisations to assist poor whites who had been ravaged by this war (Engelbrecht, 2012b). During this period, while poor whites were assisted by formal and structured organisations, social work was not yet a formal profession. The literature is silent on the processes that unfolded in South Africa after 1902, and on exactly when and how social work became a profession, but the first National Department of Public Welfare was established in 1937.

The establishment of the National Department of Public Welfare was a major milestone in the recognition of social work as a profession in South Africa. Pieterse (1961) stated that social work training was introduced and offered by nine South African universities during the period from 1960 to 1975, indicating that the professionalisation of social work began around that time. Legislation which supported the practice of social work, such as the National Welfare Act (Act No 100 of 1978) and the Social Service Professions Act (Act No 110 of 1978) were developed. The 1978 Social Service Professions Act paved the way for professionalising social work, the registration of social workers and the creation of a professional body.

The researcher wishes to point out that during the period of the evolution of social work, South Africa was governed by the National Party (voted into power in 1948) which introduced the apartheid regime. Apartheid regulations separated South African citizens according to their tribes and placed them in what was then called 'homelands'.

The history of social work described here reflects how it developed during the rule of the white apartheid government. How social work and supervision evolved in the homelands during that period remains largely undocumented.

An early scholar of social work supervision in this country referred to the post-1960 period as the beginning of social work supervision (Pieterse, 1961). Pieterse reported that the group-work method was used in supervision which, at that time, was called 'field guidance'. The Terminology Committee for Social Work (1995:25) later defined field guidance as "that part of supervision whereby social workers are familiarised with the policy, administrative and organisational aspects of the institution where they are employed." During 1962, field guidance was a significant feature of in-service training in the Department of Social Welfare and Pensions (De Jager, 1962). According to Engelbrecht (2014), it was du Plessis who, in 1965, advocated the inclusion of the administrative and educational functions as part of the supervision system in addition to the group-work method. During the same period, du Plessis advocated the training of social work supervisors by the universities in the country as she argued that social work supervision was not receiving the necessary attention.

A national conference on field guidance was held in 1968 and contributed to the contextualisation of social work supervision in South Africa (Hatting, 1968). According to Engelbrecht (2010a), the 1970s and the following years represent a turning point for social work supervision as…

- a dictionary which defined social work and social work supervision was published in 1971, although it was in Afrikaans, and
- South African scholars, one of whom was Botha, contributed towards the advancement of social work, although they based their work on texts by North American scholars.

According to Engelbrecht (2010a), social work supervision continued to evolve during the period from 1975 to 1990, with academics canvassing for improvements to the system in 1985, namely:

- efficient supervision content,
- the introduction of skills in social work, and
- the scientific and professional justification of social work supervision.

In the same year (1985), Botha facilitated a seminar on an education model for the training of supervisors and this laid the foundation for the practice and training of social work supervisors in South Africa (Engelbrecht, 2010a). The need for training in social work supervision was supported by a study conducted by de Bruyn (1985) which revealed the lack of this training in South Africa.

As a response to the need for training in social work supervision, two South African universities offered a postgraduate course in 1985, which also contributed to social work supervision becoming reputable (Engelbrecht, 2010a). Despite these two universities offering such a course, it was argued that social work supervision was lacking in theory (Hoffmann, 1987). This led to more universities introducing Honours and Master's degrees in social work supervision. Engelbrecht (2010a) mentions that Pelser (1988) developed practice guidelines in social work supervision.

With the change of government in 1994 and the ushering in of democracy, changes were also experienced in the social work sphere as new policies which impacted social work supervision were introduced. The DSD was established in 1997 and its practices were driven by the principles of social development to achieve social cohesion (Engelbrecht, 2019a). The new democratic dispensation also saw the introduction of the implementation of the developmental approach to social work in South Africa. This approach, which is people-centred, looks at investing in human capabilities, the aim being the equitable redistribution of resources to bring about social justice (Engelbrecht, 2019a).

The policies introduced by the new democratic government included the *White Paper for Social Welfare* (RSA, 1997) and the *Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy* (2006) which was revised in 2017 to become the *Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Service Practitioners.*

The 1997 *White Paper for Social Welfare* greatly influenced the transformation of welfare services in the post-apartheid era by focusing on the improvement of the delivery of welfare services. The *Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy* (2006) was developed to address the poor working conditions (Engelbrecht, 2014). One such issue was the so-called 'brain drain' of social workers who left the country - or the profession - for better working conditions, including better salaries. This led to a decline in social work services and a shortage of social workers. Consequently, social work was declared a scarce skill by the DSD in 2003. The *Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy* was meant to address this shortage of social workers and ensure the improvement of the quality of social work services, which included improving supervision (Engelbrecht, 2010a).

The Government also ushered in the amalgamation of the different provincial and homeland administrations, which had functioned separately during the apartheid era, into a single government structure. The same amalgamation took place among the different welfare services departments to form the current DSD and the process was finalised in 1997 (Engelbrecht, 2010a).

The DSD has, from 2010 onwards, been engaged in driving improvements in social work supervision. This can be seen in the partnership of the DSD with the *South African Council for Social Service Professionals* to develop the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The purpose of this framework, as stated by Engelbrecht (2019), is to promote effective supervision of social workers, student social workers, as well as other social service professionals, in order to ensure competent and professional social work practices. The *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* remains the only existing framework to guide the supervision of social workers.

Engelbrecht (2010a:329) summarised the findings of a case study on the state of social work supervision in South Africa as follows:

- Poor working conditions existed for social workers and supervisors due to, among other things, the lack of human and financial resources.

- Social work supervisors were allocated other tasks in addition to supervision, resulting in their not prioritising supervision.
- There was usually no formal training for supervisors, apart from some internal orientation which they received when promoted to the position of supervisor.

2.2.5. **Common factors in the countries discussed**

While the description by Bradley et al. (2010) of the countries discussed in this chapter reveal some differences in their practice of supervision, they also have commonalities. In relation to the application of social work supervision, Sweden is viewed as a democratic state, England as a liberal state, and South Africa as a developing welfare state. The researcher observed that each of these countries experienced the following changes: South Africa experienced structural changes in the welfare system with the ushering in of democracy, England was affected by the modernisation of the welfare system, and Sweden was negatively affected by an erosion of the benefits of the welfare system.

Bradley et al. (2010) drew similarities between social work supervision in South Africa and England when stating that supervision in these two countries was predominantly aligned to the administrative function of supervision. This was attributed to the bureaucratic nature of both countries. However, in England and South Africa, social work supervision did include a focus on educating and supporting social workers, although the two countries still lacked formal training of supervisors.

In South Africa, as in England, supervisors are usually promoted from a social work post to a supervisory one without undergoing training in supervision, apart from in-service training (Engelbrecht, 2010a). A supervisory position in South Africa is a middle management post. South Africa also practises internal supervision.

The researcher observed that the practice of supervision in South Africa also mirrors the development and professionalisation of supervision in the USA in that, in both cases, social work supervision continued to grow as the profession itself grew.

The DSD acknowledged that the work done by social workers necessitates that they must be supervised by professionals who are also social workers. This is addressed by the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa,* which is aimed at formalising and giving guidance to social work supervision.

2.3. Definition of Terms

2.3.1. Describing and defining social work supervision

Barker (2003) argues that there is no single definition of social work supervision because such a definition would need to be based on different contexts. Tsui (2005), on the other hand, proposes that social work supervision be defined based on different approaches, such as:

- the normative approach, which seeks to answer the question of what the supervisor should actually do in practice (brief of supervision),
- the pragmatic approach, which attempts to define action guidelines for supervision (operationalisation of supervision), and
- an empirical approach, which involves the collection of empirical data about roles, styles and behaviour of supervisors (scope of supervision) (Engelbrecht, 2019:156).

In line with the approaches suggested by Tsui (2005), Engelbrecht (2019b:157) offers a comprehensive definition of social work supervision which can be broken down into three elements: the brief, operationalisation, and scope. The first part of the definition is given as:

> "The brief of supervision of social workers is a mandated formal arrangement by an organisational policy, which entails the execution of supportive, educational and administrative functions by a designated authoritative and trained supervisor with the ultimate goal to render the best possible service to the user system." (Engelbrecht, 2019b:157)

Although the extract above defines supervision, it also carries a partial description of a supervisor. From the brief, it can be deduced that social work supervision is not a random activity which can be conducted haphazardly. This definition implies that suitable arrangements need to be made for supervision to take place and that it must also be supported by the policy of the organisation. The training and authority of the supervisor feature in this definition, which also states that supervisors are expected to implement the three primary functions of supervision.

The second part of this definition, which describes the operationalisation is defined as follows:

> "Supervision is **operationalised** by means of structured, interactional supervision sessions, directed by adult education principles in a cyclical process with associated tasks, methods and activities according to a

> predetermined time-span, based on appropriate theories, perspectives and practice models, and guided by distinct values and ethical conduct." (Engelbrecht, 2019b:157).

As with the first part of this definition – which refers to the brief – the structure of supervision relates to planning for supervision sessions. Here, supervision is described as participative and inclusive of social workers. There is also an emphasis on the application of models or approaches which inform social work supervision.

The scope of supervision is broad, encompassing, among other things, supervisor-supervisee relationships. It is described as follows:

> "The **scope** of supervision is determined by a professional, constructive supervisor-supervisee relationship, context of the work environment and resultant roles which the supervisor has to fulfil." (Engelbrecht, 2019b:157).

This portion of the definition speaks of a relationship between supervisors (and their roles) and supervisees.

More definitions of social work supervision – by authors who formulate their definitions from different perspectives – are presented here. Some authors emphasise the application of the three supervisory functions while others emphasise supervisory relationships, and some develop their definitions from a clinical point of view.

Barker (2003:424) defines social work supervision from the administrative and educational perspectives when he says that it is "an administrative and educational process used to help social workers further develop and refine skills, enhance staff morale, and provide quality assurance to clients."

The supportive function of supervision also appears in some definitions, with the BASW (2011:3) stating that it is a "process by which an organisation provides support and guidance to social workers."

Munson (2002:10) describes supervision as "an interactional process in which a supervisor has been assigned or designated to assist in and direct the practice of supervisees in the areas of teaching, administration and helping."

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) define professional supervision as "the relationship between supervisor and supervisee in which the responsibility and accountability for the development of competence, demeanour and ethical practice take place" (NASW & ASWB, 2013:6). Kadushin et al. (2009) elaborate on this relationship by emphasising that the supervisor should perform the administrative, educational and supportive functions in a positive relationship with the supervisee.

2.3.2. **Defining a social work supervisor**

The following definition portrays supervisors as having authority vested in them, and that they are also expected to apply the three functions of supervision.

> "A social work supervisor is an agency administrative staff member to whom authority is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance and evaluate on-the-job performance of the supervisees for whose work he or she is held accountable. In implementing this responsibility, the supervisor performs administrative, educational and supportive functions in interaction with the supervisee in the context of a positive relationship." (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002:23)

Kadushin et al. (2009) also refer to the authority given to supervisors by their organisations by virtue of their managerial position to ensure that their supervisees perform their duties well.

Kadushin (1992:18) offers another definition which includes the aspect of authority of a supervisor when he describes him/her as "an overseer, the one who watches over the work of another with responsibility for its quality."

This definition indicates that supervisors are responsible and accountable for the work done by social workers - which means that the failure of the latter to deliver competent services reflects the failure of the former.

2.3.3. **Social work supervisee**

Munson (2002:10) defines supervisees as "graduates of an accredited school of social work who are engaged in practice that assists people to overcome physical, financial, social, psychological disruptions in functioning through individual, group, or family interventions."

2.4. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter described the history and development of social work supervision in the USA, England, Sweden and South Africa. The evolution of social work supervision in these countries was motivated by a common need to assist social workers who worked with the poor. Its development followed similar patterns but was implemented and became fully functional at different times in different regions.

The similarities and differences between these countries in the application of social work supervision were also discussed. Furthermore, this chapter also looked at definitions of social work supervision, supervisors, and supervisees. The next chapter is a continuation of the literature review but focuses on how social work supervision is applied, also reflecting on the challenges in its application.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW: THE PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

3.1. Introduction

Social work supervision is a support and learning opportunity for social workers and facilitated by supervisors (Carroll, 2010). In doing their work, social workers and their supervisors are expected to abide by the policies that govern social work supervision and strive towards achieving its objectives (Johns, 2001). The researcher observed that, based on their objectives, the practice of social work differs from one organisation to another. Inevitably, the style of supervision in different organisations will be designed in line with the purpose of the organisation. This chapter focuses on how social work supervision is practised globally and in South Africa.

3.2. The Importance of Social Work Supervision

It is the demanding, complex and stressful nature of social work interventions which necessitates supervision (Van Heugten, 2011; Godden, 2012). Supervision helps social workers remain resilient despite the stress of their work (Collins, 2007; Adamson, 2011; Godden, 2012). Thus, there are several reasons why supervision is important and necessary.

Supervision is important for both the newly employed and the experienced social worker. Newly employed social workers require mentoring, support and professional development due to the fact that they have not yet developed the knowledge, skills, abilities and disposition to deliver effective services (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). They may also lack confidence in their knowledge and skills and may struggle to formulate ideas about client development and the process of change (Giddings et al., 2006). Furthermore, Giddings et al. submit that novice social workers require more support in relation to their rendering of effective services to their clients than experienced social workers - and this is supported by the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

In the context of South Africa, the *Supervision Framework and the Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; DSD 2006(a) & DSD, 2017) recorded how the DSD came to realise the importance of retaining social workers in the profession, and to do that was through effective supervision. In this regard, the revised *Recruitment and Retention Strategy* expounds that its outcome is to determine the conditions that impact negatively on social work services, and to provide guidelines and measures that will ensure the recruitment

and retention of social workers (DSD, 2017). The creation of conducive conditions through supervision comes with benefits for social workers, such as work satisfaction, and thus contributes to a reduction in staff turnover (Ellet et al., 2007; Giddings al., 2008; Guerin et al., 2010). To add to this, Chiller and Crisp (2012) maintain that supervision contributes to the decision of social workers to remain in an organisation for ten years and more by reducing their burnout and enhancing their commitment to the organisation (see also Bradley et al., 2010; NASW & ASWB, 2013; Carpenter et al., 2015).

3.3. The Focus of Social Work Supervision

Ideally, social work supervision should focus on the implementation of the three functions of supervision, which are: administrative, educational and supportive.

The most dominant characteristic of social work supervision, however, which is also experienced in South Africa, is a focus on managerial matters (the administrative aspect), such as making sure that social workers comply with the policies and procedures of the organisation (Chibaya, 2018). They are held accountable for their case interventions and meeting deadlines (Baginsky et al., 2010; O'Donoghue, 2015) and return dates (Baginsky et al., 2010; Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010). The focus has shifted to the audit, surveillance, and discussion of cases (Baginsky et al., 2010). Furthermore, in statutory services, where cases are dealt with in line with certain legislations and are also handled by social workers in conjunction with the courts, supervision becomes dominated by the focus on their compliance with the statutory requirements, such as writing reports for the courts and submitting them timeously (O'Donoghue, 2014). Thus supervision has become more administrative, with less attention paid to social workers' personal development, strengths, competencies and support (Chibaya, 2018; Ornellas, 2018).

3.4. The Structure of Social Work Supervision

The implementation of social work supervision must be structured, regular, consistent and case-oriented. It should also consider the needs of individual supervisees (Munson, 2002: 40). However, it should not be rigid and lacking in flexibility. According to Chibaya (2018), it can take place in different settings and can range from formal (in the office) to informal (in the corridors) discussions, depending on circumstances. In the South African context, structured supervision refers to learning conditions for social workers, established according to a specified agenda and based on the personal developmental plans of social workers. A supervision report,

signed by the supervisor and supervisee, must be compiled after every supervision session (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* gives a description of how such supervision should be conducted. This will be discussed next.

3.4.1. **Supervision contract**

An agreement, in the form of a contract, must be drawn up between supervisors and supervisees (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). It must be negotiated and agreed upon by both parties. The advantage of having a contract is that it not only guides and gives structure to supervision, but also regulates the relationship between supervisors and supervisees (NASW & ASWB, 2013). The practice in South Africa includes a written contract, signed by both supervisors and supervisees, which covers several aspects outlined by the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa*. These include the following:

- agreement on the supervision schedule, that is: time, venue, frequency and agenda,
- a personal development plan which identifies the strengths and the developmental needs of the supervisee,
- identification of the supervisor and supervisee's expectations,
- specific goals and outcomes of the supervision, and
- clarification of the supervisee's style of learning and the supervisor's style of teaching.

Newly employed social workers should be offered orientation first, which would entail introducing them to the policies of the organisation, requirements of the post, expectations of society, and the objectives to be achieved (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). To add to this, as articulated by the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa,* newly qualified social workers must receive mandatory supervision on a fortnightly basis for a period of a year. After a year the social worker is assessed to determine whether the frequency can be reduced to once a month. It is also compulsory for social workers to receive supervision for a period of three years, whether at fortnightly or monthly intervals (Ng & Ho, 2010; DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Regarding the supervisor-supervisee ratio, the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* stipulates a 1:10 ratio if the supervisor focuses only on supervising. For those with additional tasks, the recommended ratio is 1:6.

3.5. Training of Social Work Supervisors

In South Africa, the training of social work supervisors has gained momentum, as can be seen in the development of the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* and the *Draft Supervision Training Course Context and Outline for Social Service Practitioners* (DSD, 2016) which actively promote such training. However, according to Bradley et al. (2010), there is a lack of formal training for social work supervisors and a call is made to policy makers and trainers to address this by developing formal courses at both agency and university levels. Universities should offer a general course in social work supervision, while organisations should provide context-specific training (Bradley et al., 2010).

3.6. Supervisory Functions

The practice of social work supervision generally revolves around the three functions of administration, education, and support (Kadushin, 1992). Regardless of changes in the theory and practice of social work, which have taken place over time, these functions of social work supervision have remained relatively stable (Bradley et al., 2010).

From a South African perspective, Engelbrecht (2010b) describes each function according to what it aims to achieve. The administrative function is referred to as normative because it seeks to standardise the practice of social work supervision; the educational function is formative - it focuses on the professional development of the supervisee; and the supportive function is restorative because it can restore the strength or the well-being of supervisees. Inasmuch as these three functions constitute the core of social work supervision, the downside is that they can create a tendency for supervisors to treat social workers as deficient professionals who need to be fixed, warns Engelbrecht (2010b). In other words, because the functions are problem-oriented in nature, they have the potential of working against empowerment and strengths-based practices, which are supposed to be their main goal (Cohen, 1999).

The *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* does not give practical guidance on the implementation of the functions of social work supervision. It has remained theoretical, which leaves supervisors to make their own decisions regarding the practical execution of these functions. In addition to this, research by Joseph (2017), Parker (2017) and Ornellas (2018) has revealed that, in practice, South African social work supervision is more orientated towards managerial (administrative) issues.

Furthermore, the implementation of the educational function is unstructured - in some instances, substituted with the sharing of information – and supportive supervision is done on a limited scale as supervisors are overwhelmed and overloaded with work and, therefore, do not have time to support their supervisees (Joseph, 2017; Parker, 2017; Ornellas, 2018).

3.6.1. **The administrative function**

The administrative function is synonymous with management (NASW & ASWB, 2013). It is the most common function because of its compliance and monitoring characteristics, which are also managerial activities.

Compliance is aimed at ensuring that supervisees abide by the policies and procedures of the organisation to achieve agency objectives, as well as holding them accountable for their work. This function also monitors the effectiveness and quality of their work with client satisfaction in mind (Beddoe, 2012; Lietz, 2013; Carpenter et al., 2015). Other activities of the administrative function include assigning cases to social workers, reviewing and signing off case reports, and doing performance reviews and appraisals (Ndzuta, 2009; Lietz, 2013:2; NASW & ASWB, 2013; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a)

Morrison and Wonnacott (2012) warn against the tendency by supervisors to use the administrative function as a performance audit tool, which is tantamount to policing social workers. Furthermore, Mo and Tsui (2018) criticise the overuse of the administrative function to the complete exclusion of the others, especially the educational function, arguing that there must be a balance to the implementation of these functions.

The *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* is lacking in that it places emphasis on adherence to the policies of the organisation without addressing the management of cases. The researcher has observed that, because of the shortage of social workers, supervisors find themselves with social workers who have caseloads of up to 140 households. Such a caseload may also include statutory cases, which take priority as deadlines of the renewal of court orders must be met, as laid down by the courts. Managing statutory services consumes a significant amount of time, and supervisors, as well as their supervisees, often find it difficult to cope with performing this part of the administrative function (Bradley et al., 2010).

3.6.2. **The educational function**

The educational function gives supervisors the responsibility of ensuring that social workers are knowledgeable and competent in their delivery of services to clients. This function includes exposing social workers to learning opportunities, with supervisors transferring knowledge and skills to their supervisees (Lietz, 2013). The activities of the educational function include teaching, training and staff development, coaching, modelling and mentoring (NASW & ASWB, 2013). It also calls for supervisors to be aware of the learning needs and learning styles of their supervisees in order to structure their teaching accordingly. This is particularly important as a 'one size fits all' approach will not necessarily suit the unique learning requirements of every social worker (Beddoe, 2015).

Educational supervision develops the professional capacity of social workers by enhancing their knowledge and skills. This is done through direct teaching regarding all aspects of social work, such as practice with the client, the team, the professional environment, and the relevant political and social systems (Munson, 2002; Barker, 2003).

Lietz (2010, 2013) emphasises that educational supervision should be participatory. The author suggests that, instead of teaching them, supervisees should rather be asked questions that would invite them to think critically. In this way social workers would be taught to develop and exercise analytical skills.

3.6.3. **The supportive function**

Support is regarded as the primary aim of social work supervision as the need for supervision is based on the need for support (Dan, 2017). The importance of this aspect is strengthened by research conducted by Engelbrecht (2013) which revealed that supervisees prefer supportive supervision over other types of supervision. Support focuses on helping social workers so that they, in turn, can render quality services to clients (BASW, 2011). Social workers need support due to the challenges they encounter in their work, such as: the growing complexity of client's problems, being exposed to traumatic incidences, unfavourable physical work environments and heavy workloads. All these have the potential of inducing trauma in social workers (NASW & ASWB, 2013). Support can be offered in different forms, such as emotional and professional support, although emotional support is the most often needed type of support (O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a; Carpenter et al., 2015).

Emotional support is demonstrated by showing genuine care and concern for the well-being of social workers. It entails, among other aspects, debriefing social workers who have experienced trauma in the course of their work, and helping staff release tension by expressing their fears and concerns (Lietz, 2013). When social workers feel supported, their confidence in their work improves (Schmidt, 2008; Baglow, 2009; BASW, 2012; NASW & ASWB, 2013).

Professional support, which is part of the educational function, focuses on developing social workers in theory, skills, competencies and self-awareness through teaching and learning (Carroll, 2010). This transferral of vital competencies results in their growth in the profession and leads to their independence. In Romania, as Runcan (2013) explains, when social work evolved, the need for supervision was equated with the need for professional support.

Bradley et al. (2010) maintain that supervisors are generally unable to give enough support to social workers. The authors attribute this failure on the part of supervisors to the fact that they are not supported by their own managers and, at times, suffer from burnout. They also cannot dedicate enough time to support social workers because of other management tasks they have to attend to, including performance management of the supervisees (Bradley et al., 2010).

3.7. **Feedback and Reflection**

Supervisors are in a better position to give feedback to social workers because they have the "detailed knowledge of the supervisee's performance" (Kadushin, 1992:165). It is the view of the researcher that feedback gives supervisees an opportunity to reflect on their performance and improve on it through the assistance of their supervisors.

3.7.1. **Feedback**

Social work supervision must be used as a platform for feedback. Naturally, social workers are expected to report to supervisors about their work and how they have experienced it. In turn, supervisors give feedback to social workers on their performance (NASW & ASWB, 2013).

As discussed by Shulman (1982), social workers do wish to receive feedback from their supervisors, although they may not like negative feedback. Similarly, supervisors find it difficult to give negative feedback, which tempts them to give only positive feedback, thus hindering the personal and professional growth of their supervisees (Munson, 1983). Nevertheless, feedback is necessary, and supervisors are expected to give honest, clear, specific,

credible and both negative and positive feedback (Shulman, 1982). Kadushin and Harkness (2002) compiled the following guidelines for supervisors:

- Feedback should be given as soon as possible after the performance of a task.
- Feedback should be as specific as possible.
- It should be objective and concrete.
- It should not be judgemental.
- Feedback should highlight good performance in the workplace and its effects.
- Feedback should not focus on the supervisee as a person, but as a professional.
- It should be tied to what the supervisor wants the supervisee to learn.
- Good feedback involves sharing ideas rather than giving advice.
- It should also be about exploring alternatives rather than giving answers.

3.7.2. **Reflection**

Carroll (2010:7) defines reflection as "the ability to step back and pose hard questions about: Why are things done this way? How could I do it differently?" As with feedback, reflection is facilitated by supervisors who must create safe enough conditions for social workers to reflect on their practice, decisions, interventions, emotions, and the learning that has taken place (Laming, 2009; Hughes, 2010).

Rankine (2019) explains that reflection can only take place where there is planned and structured supervision and that supervisors must be skilled enough to be able to facilitate reflection. It seems that, in the South African context, reflection is not taking place because supervisors chase targets and are hasty during supervision sessions.

3.8. **Supervision Methods**

Various methods of supervision must be applied, including individual, group and peer supervision. Consultation is also a method of supervision and one that is commonly used by South African supervisors. It is important for social work supervisors to have knowledge of these different methods of supervision in order to apply them according to the needs of the supervisees.

These methods are discussed next.

3.8.1. **Individual supervision**

Kadushin and Harkness (2002) describe individual supervision as a meeting of the supervisee and supervisor on a one-on-one basis, which is the method mostly applied in South Africa - although without adherence to a particular format (Cloete, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2019 (b)). The advantage of this method is that it promotes personal growth through focusing on one supervisee at a time. It is also mostly beneficial to newly employed and inexperienced social workers (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Egan, 2012).

3.8.2. **Group supervision**

Group supervision is the supervision of several supervisees at the same time by a single supervisor (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). The DSD's *Supervision Framework* (2012) stipulates that group supervision should be used to supplement individual supervision and not as a substitute for it. Supervisors can use this method to train social workers and as an information sharing platform where social workers share knowledge, experiences, as well as common challenges, and support each other (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

In South Africa, the current trend is that this method of supervision is partially outsourced to service providers outside the DSD who conduct training (Cloete, 2012). These service providers offer accredited courses which are recognised by the South African Council for Social Service Professionals, which allocates points for continuous professional development to social workers who attend these courses (Cloete, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014). The researcher is of the view that, despite the outsourcing of this method, supervisors should internally create opportunities for social workers to learn, including learning from each other during group supervision.

3.8.3. **Peer supervision**

Although it is widely accepted as a method of supervision, Engelbrecht (2019a) argues that peer supervision does not qualify as such because it is not led by a supervisor. He prefers to call it a technique of supervision. The purpose of peer supervision is to provide educational and clinical supervision through the exchange of clinical expertise (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Kadushin et al., 2009; DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

3.8.4. **Consultation**

Consultation is described as an activity in which social workers request their supervisors to attend to them and it does not focus on administration (Cloete, 2012). In South Africa, where

supervisors are overwhelmed with other managerial tasks and scarcely have time to conduct supervision, consultation has become the easy option in which social workers consult them, mostly with regard to difficult cases. As much as it is said that consultation can take place without being formally planned for, the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* gives some directives concerning who should receive consultation and when. It states that newly qualified social workers should receive formal supervision fortnightly for a period of three years, after which consultation can be offered. Even after the initial three-year period, the supervisor must compile a report which outlines the suitability of the social worker to be placed at the level of consultation.

3.9. Supervision Systems: Internal and External Supervision

Traditionally, supervision is done in an organisational setting (Beddoe, 2012). This does not, however, rule out the fact that supervision can take place outside the organisation and can be conducted by supervisors who are not working within the same organisation as the supervisees (outsourced).

Internal supervision is conducted by supervisors employed by the same agency as the supervisees, whilst external supervision is either conducted outside the organisation or internally but by a supervisor from an outside organisation who would visit the organisation to conduct supervision (Openshaw, 2012; Dan, 2017). One of the differences between the two systems is that internal supervision focuses more on administration and organisational matters, such as compliance with organisational policies, while external supervision focuses more on professional practice, such as the training of social workers (Beddoe, 2012; Egan, 2012).

3.9.1. Internal supervision

Internal supervision continues to be popular and is the form mostly practised in South Africa (Bradley et al., 2010; Beddoe, 2012). It presents the following advantages: supervisors are always present to monitor the work of social workers for quality and to give guidance; managers are able to disseminate quickly information to social workers through their supervisors as they are based in the same organisation; supervisors have better knowledge of cases and are also quick to respond to social workers' queries, unlike external supervisors; and supervisors are able to give feedback speedily to social workers and monitor their performance and progress closely and continuously (Openshaw, 2012; Dan, 2017).

In South Africa, the fact that social work supervisors are likely to be allocated additional managerial tasks is a disadvantage of internal supervision. Not only do such added duties interfere with the supervision schedule, but the potential exists that the supervisors become engrossed in other tasks to the detriment of supervision – a case of competing demands (Dan, 2017). In some extreme situations where there is a shortage of social workers, supervisors are allocated cases - something which cannot be done to an external supervisor (Bradley et al., 2010). Furthermore, internal supervision is characterised by power differences with the perception that supervisors have greater power, leaving supervisees to feel that they occupy inferior positions (Bradley et al., 2010). In such situations, supervisees do not feel free to communicate with their supervisors, particularly about their weaknesses, and this becomes a stumbling block to supervision (Rankine, 2019).

Openshaw (2012) approaches the disadvantages of internal supervision from a relationship point of view, stating that, if supervisors are promoted from within the organisation, it might be difficult for them to supervise persons who have been their friends. Similarly, supervisees might struggle to accept the seniority of a colleague who has been their friend, thereby creating tensions when it comes to supervision.

3.9.2. **External supervision**

External supervision, which is also called outsourced supervision, is done by someone outside the organisation (Runcan, 2013). In South Africa, external supervision has the support of the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* It states:

> "Supervision services may be outsourced. Supervision of social workers may thus be conducted by a social worker not in the employment of the organisation and may be obtained on a contractual basis as 'external supervision'." (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:35)

The document goes on to explain that a characteristic of external supervision is that the supervisor does not necessarily have to be physically present in the organisation on a continuous basis.

The advantage of external supervision, as articulated by Beddoe and Davys (2016), is that it empowers supervisees. Here, supervisees can make suggestions on matters and areas to be focused on during supervision and in this way external supervision is deemed as participatory

and empowering to supervisees (Beddoe & Davys, 2016). Another advantage is that external supervisors are perceived as objective in their evaluation of supervisees and the latter have greater trust in them, particularly in respect of confidentiality (Itzhaky, 2001).

One of the main disadvantages of external supervision is that it is generally costly. Outside supervisors' rates are usually market-related and might be higher than the remuneration offered to internal supervisors (Beddoe, 2012). Another disadvantage is that, to a large extent, external supervisors depend on supervisees for information on day-by-day activities and issues within the organisation which challenge them (Openshaw, 2012). Should supervisees decide not to talk about their challenges, external supervisors find themselves without much-needed information during supervision (Beddoe, 2012).

In addition to this, it has remained unclear how internal managers should relate to external supervisors. How are internal managers to advise external supervisors because the latter's roles, except for supervision, remain largely undefined. Likewise, it is unclear to what extent external supervisors should be bound by internal policies. This remains an ongoing debate as organisations struggle to apply their policies to external supervisors (Beddoe & Davys, 2016).

The researcher is of the view that organisations which opt for external supervision must be able to weigh the costs against the quality of services which such supervision offers.

3.10. **Supervisory Relationships**

The relationship between supervisors and supervisees is central to supervision: it is multi-faceted in that it includes the service organisation, the supervisor, social workers (supervisees) and the client (Hughes, 2010; NASW & ASWB, 2013). Relationships in supervision can either be positive or negative as the next discussion will show.

3.10.1. **Positive relationships**

A trusting relationship, which is based on honesty and transparency, creates a sense of safety in supervisees who then begin to feel free to express themselves to their supervisors without fear of being judged (Bradley et al., 2010). Supervisors have the task of establishing and maintaining this relationship with their supervisees (Davys & Beddoe, 2010).

Generally, the relationship between supervisors and supervisees is informed by their different hierarchical positions, with supervisors occupying a position of seniority because of the

authority which comes with their post. This automatically prescribes the way supervisors will relate to their supervisees. However, supervisors are not to abuse their power and authority in this relationship (NASW & ASWB, 2013). In the strengths-based approach, while supervisors are functionally superior, they are expected to relate to their supervisees as partners and colleagues and show them that their viewpoint is valued (Ledford, 2013).

3.10.2. **Negative relationships**

Negative relationships are harmful to supervision and are also characterised by bullying (Davys et al., 2017). Harmful supervision can be described as situations in which the action or non-action of supervisors causes harm to supervisees (Davys et al., 2017).

A study which was conducted in Ireland and the United States required that supervisees evaluate the supervision they received. The results of the study revealed the unhappiness of supervisees with what they called bad supervision and bullying (Ellis et al., 2015). This unhappiness was expressed in the following manner:

- Supervisees reported that they felt unsafe in their relationship with their supervisors.
- They did not give feedback to their supervisors for fear of a backlash.
- The bullying they experienced from their supervisors made them feel vulnerable and unsafe, particularly during supervision sessions.

3.11. **Expectations in Social Work Supervision**

As much as expectations apply to both supervisors and supervisees, more is expected of supervisors. They are required to have more expertise, knowledge, competence, skills and experience than their supervisees (O' Donoghue, Munford & Trlin, 2006), and to provide leadership, be role models, and act as a liaison between supervisees and the organisation (Openshaw, 2012; NASW & ASWB, 2013). Social workers also expect their supervisors to support them in all areas of their work (Dan, 2017). Supervisors are required to be trained in supervision so that they, in turn, can impart their knowledge and skills to supervisees (Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010). The researcher's observation is that, in South Africa, many supervisors have not received prior training in supervision and, therefore, struggle to conduct supervision and train their supervisees.

The expectations which supervisors have of their supervisees are that they must manifest a willingness to work hard, should freely discuss work (e.g. problems, cases and situations) and

their honest thoughts and feelings about work, should show respect towards their supervisor and be willing to work with the latter, and should be motivated to learn (Munson, 2002). For expectations in a supervisory relationship to be realistic, they must be supported by the organisation's policy on supervision, which will be discussed next.

3.12. **Policy on Social Work Supervision**

The conceptualisation of social work supervision includes the policy framework within which it is applied. In the context of South Africa, the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* has provided this framework. Although this supervision framework is not a policy, it is a useful guide to the application of social work supervision and has created a basis for policies to be developed. It prescribes what should be contained in the supervision policy, making suggestions on various matters, such as the supervisor-supervisee ratio and performance management (Engelbrecht, 2019a). Other policies which supplement the supervision framework are the *Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy* (DSD, 2006), the *Draft Supervision Training Course Context and Outline for Social Service Practitioners* (DSD, 2016), the *Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Service Practitioners* (2017) and the *Children's Act No. 38 of 2005* (RSA, 2006).

It is important for social work organisations to be in possession of a policy on supervision as its absence poses the risk that supervision will be applied without proper guidance. In some instances, where there is no supervision policy, social workers are made to perform tasks which are not related to social work and might even have supervisors who are not social workers (NASW &ASWB, 2013). The *Supervision Framework* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) pronounces supervision of social workers as compulsory, which can be considered a policy stance.

The researcher has observed that, in organisations where a supervision policy exists, supervision is taking place as guided by it. Thus the importance of the existence of a supervision policy is linked to the importance of meaningful social work supervision.

3.13. **Supervision Challenges**

In South Africa, the practice of social work and its supervision faces a variety of challenges.

- No particular approach to supervision is followed, leaving it to organisations to decide on an approach of their choice (Engelbrecht, 2010b, 2019). Gradually, however, there is an attempt to apply the developmental approach, particularly in the practice of social work.

- A lack of resources exists, including human resources, which relates to the shortage of social workers and supervisors coupled with high and unmanageable caseloads and poor working conditions (Spolander, 2014).
- The lack of formal - or insufficient - training of supervisors remains a challenge. This is partially based on the promotion system used, which promotes social workers to a position of supervisor without prior training and based only on their years of experience as social workers (Rankine, 2019). Generally, the best performing social workers are promoted to supervisory positions as the assumption was that they will be good managers**.**
- The lack of a definitive policy for supervision is also a challenge**.** The *Supervision Framework* currently acts as a guide for the practice of supervision. The level of adherence to this document is not clear and there seem to be no consequences for those who do not comply with it.
- The continuous shortage of social workers in the country forces some supervisors to do frontline work, such as having caseloads, and this compromises the implementation of supervision. This also gives the impression that supervision is not prioritised (Engelbrecht, 2019).

3.14. **Summary of the Chapter**

The demanding nature of the social work profession calls for special attention to be paid to the aspect of supervision (Godden, 2012), the focus of which encompasses its functions and supervisory relationships - both positive and negative.

This chapter also focused on the systems of supervision, as organisations have a choice between internal and external supervision, and each system must be chosen with the needs of supervisees as a priority. The training of supervisors remains an important need if supervision is to be effective (Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010). The chapter also highlighted supervision as a two-way process which involves participation and the relationship between supervisors and supervisees.

Supervision challenges include lack of training for supervisors and the lack of a supervision policy, notwithstanding the fact that a supervision framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) exists that has laid the foundation for future policies.

One important area which must be examined in the practice of supervision is that of a theoretical framework, which entails the application of approaches supporting social work supervision. These are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. Introduction

Engelbrecht (2014) explains that models or approaches - the terms are used interchangeably - are fundamental to the practice of social work supervision. While Botha (2002) also used these terms interchangeably, she made a distinction between them. In the context of social work supervision, an approach is a method used to conceptualise social work supervision. Models, on the other hand, define the supervisory process. They are more adaptable than approaches and are easily changeable (Botha, 2002).

Patel's (2015:122) definition of a model states:

> "A model is a conceptual framework that identifies the key characteristics, ideas, values, processes and methods that inform practice. Its purpose is to discover and describe a phenomenon. It is however only a partial representation of what actually occurs in reality."

Engelbrecht (2019b:160) expresses the view that "models underlying supervision are based on the organisation's school of thought", meaning that an organisation can be identified or be known by the implementation of an approach. In addition to these definitions, Healy (2014) describes approaches as theories, stating that they provide practitioners with a range of choices through which they can understand, interpret, and respond to situations.

The researcher's view is that applying or following a particular approach in supervision means that the organisation chooses to adopt a certain pattern in performing both social work and social work supervision, and this is what Engelbrecht (2019b) calls a 'school of thought'. This pattern is well thought through, conceptualised and is systematic in its application. The use of models, as stated by Middleman and Rhodes (1985), can help bring order to the carrying out of supervision.

The application of a particular model (or models) is dependent on the organisation and what it hopes to achieve. An organisation can choose to apply more than one model in its supervision. In this study, the researcher will use the term 'approach' for a school of thought, and 'model' for the implementation of that school of thought.

4.2. Approaches to Social Work Supervision

This chapter discusses three approaches to supervision which are: the developmental approach, which is also called the social development approach; the strengths-based approach; and the *learning organisation* approach.

The social development approach is the one which has been adopted by the Government of South Africa and the DSD as an instrument to deliver services and to redress the inequities and inequalities imposed by the previous apartheid administration (Patel & Hochfeld, 2013). When employing the developmental approach, social workers act as change agents at individual, family, group and community levels (Patel, 2015). Social workers can facilitate change in people by helping them identify their strengths, abilities and capabilities (Engelbrecht 2010b; Ledford, 2013). The researcher identified similarities between the developmental and the strengths-based approaches as they both focus on empowerment, strengths, and the resilience of people at individual and community levels.

The *learning organisation* approach is based on the notion that people have the capacity to assimilate new information and this learning ultimately brings about changes in them (Senge, 2006). The researcher has also observed links between the *learning organisation* approach and the developmental and strengths-based approaches in that, when an organisation encourages its staff to learn, the latter are also given an opportunity to discover their capabilities, which is a common factor in all three approaches.

4.2.1. The social development/developmental approach

The South African *White Paper for Social Welfare* (DSD, 1997) laid a foundation for the practice of the social development approach by transforming the two pillars of the country's social welfare system. These pillars are Social Security, also referred to as Social Protection, and Social Welfare Services (Patel & Hochfeld, 2013). Social Protection primarily consists of publicly funded cash transfers, normally called grants, which are meant to support older persons, people with disabilities, and children.

This Social Protection pillar has expanded significantly since the establishment of democracy in 1994 and has contributed to the reduction of poverty (Delany, Ismail, Graham & Ramkisson, 2008; Patel & Triegaardt, 2008; Neves et al., 2009).

The Social Welfare Service programme, the second pillar of the policy, is a social development approach to welfare services which is overall pro-poor and is informed by the people's rights. This approach is founded on the State's constitutional obligation to address inequity, inequality and discrimination regarding the access to services and to meet the basic needs of the population. Thus, the social development approach is clearly an effort to redistribute the country's resources while at the same time practising inclusivity (Patel & Hochfeld, 2013).

After the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, efforts were made to shift the emphasis of social work from clinical methods, where it is viewed as remedial and rehabilitative, to developmental approaches, including developmental social work or social development (Ncube, 2019). To add to this, Midgley (2014) indicates that social development places greater emphasis on macro-practice as opposed to remedial or therapeutic approaches which focus more on the individual.

While the developmental approach is characterised by its use of a macro-policy framework which focuses on fighting poverty in the broader community, it is flexible enough to focus on individuals, groups and communities as well. This brings us to the understanding that the developmental approach operates on three levels, according to Patel, 2015:

Micro level: This level of the developmental approach focuses more on rendering services to individuals, families and small groups by way of building and strengthening relationships.

Mezzo level: Here, skills-building involves groups, organisations and networks.

Macro level: This is the level at which policies, addressing the needs of communities and societies, are implemented.

Although the social development approach is broadly associated with social welfare services in South Africa, the researcher's experience is that there is a lack of implementation of this, and other theoretical approaches, by the social work fraternity. The practice of social work and its supervision largely remains individualised and oriented to problem-solving.

Globally, the following elements were identified as key drivers of developmental social welfare:

> "Enhancing the well-being of the people by raising their level of living; ensuring social justice and the equitable distribution of national wealth; strengthening the

> capacity of all people to reach their peaks as healthy, educated citizens, participating in and contributing to development." (United Nations, 1986:3)

The primary objective of the social development approach can be summarised as seeking to bring about change in the lives of people and their social conditions, and this is done through applying a multi-disciplinary approach (Midgley, 2014). Similarly, the social development approach is participatory in nature and its main feature is that it contributes to the economic development of society. It also invests in social programmes that enhance people's welfare through their participation in a productive economy and the achievement of social inclusion in society (Patel, 2015).

Midgley (2014:13) defines social development as "a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole within the context of a dynamic and multifaceted development process." Patel (2015:126) describes social development as a multi-disciplinary service delivery approach which cuts across sectors, such as health, education and economic development. According to Patel (2015), the reason for the implementation of a multi-disciplinary approach is to address the complex challenges presented by clients as individuals, groups and communities, as well as at a societal level.

Thus, Patel (2015:127) defines the developmental approach by stating that:

> "It is an approach to social welfare and involves the practical and appropriate application of knowledge, skills and values to enhance the well-being of families, groups, and communities in their social context…"

The fundamentals of these definitions are that social development and the developmental approach bring about social change, adopt a multi-disciplinary approach and promote the well-being of people, which also includes bringing about change in their lives.

4.2.1.1. **The features of developmental social work**

Developmental social work is identified by five features, some of which are similar to those of the strengths-based approach to social work, and these are discussed here.

Promotion of human rights and human development: According to Lombard and Twikirize (2014), there are three types of human rights which are promoted through developmental social work: the promotion of civil and human rights (the basis of democracy); the promotion of

economic, social and cultural rights (fulfilled through the rendering of social services); the collective rights of communities and societies (the rights to benefit from the economy of the society).

a) **Integration of social and economic development**: This feature means that people must be given an opportunity to participate in social and economic activities.
b) **Integration of micro and macro practices**: Intervention and service delivery take place at micro (individual), mezzo (families and groups) and macro (society) levels.
c) **Facilitation of people-participation**: People need to be given the opportunity to participate in matters concerning their lives, including participating in economic activities because, when they participate, they become empowered.
d) **Collaboration in partnership**: The delivery of services calls for partnership between the Government and civil society organisations.

4.2.1.2. Social work supervision in the context of a social development (or developmental) approach

The researcher has observed that the application of the developmental approach to supervision is mirrored by social workers' application of their service to clients. Noble and Irwin's (2009) study explored social work supervision within changing social, economic and political environments. The study concluded that both social work scholars and practitioners should continuously search for ways in which current knowledge regarding social work supervision could respond more meaningfully to prevailing challenges presented by social, economic, political and environmental aspects. Developmental supervision is able to respond to these challenges (Noble & Irwin, 2009).

In this approach, supervisors have the task of equipping supervisees with skills which would reflect their awareness of and alertness to clients' capabilities, assets, empowerment and strengths, including knowledge of people's interaction with their environment and how the environment, in turn, impacts their lives (Ncube, 2019). The reference to capabilities, assets and strengths indicates similarities between the developmental and the strength-based approaches, with both approaches also sharing similar principles of partnership, empowerment and facilitation (Engelbrecht, 2010b).

4.2.2. **The strengths-based approach**

When it was introduced, the strengths-based perspective was initially used as a way of intervening in clients' problems. It was introduced to help social workers move away from a conventional (or traditional) method of intervening, which focused more on the problems of the client, to that of viewing clients in terms of their strengths (Saleebey, 2013).

4.2.2.1. **Strengths-based social work practice**

In the conventional approach to social work, social workers are in charge of the intervention process whilst clients remain passive and continue to depend on their social workers. The entire process depends on social workers' assessment of the problem and their subsequent interventions. The conventional method looks at clients in terms of their shortcomings.

The shift from the method of solving problems to that of employing the strengths-based approach began during the 1990s (Ledford, 2013). According to Saleebey (2013), applying the 'strengths' perspective means that social workers help clients discover their strengths, abilities and capabilities, assisting them to recognise their own resources to meet their challenges. The strengths-perspective promotes partnership between client and social worker to intervene jointly in the client's situation. The partnership relationship requires social workers to believe that clients can transform and move beyond their challenges (Ledford, 2013).

4.2.2.2. **A description of strengths**

Saleebey (2013) refers to capacities, resources and assets in his description of strengths. He argues that strengths are not instantly visible and that social workers must listen to and observe their clients to discover their strengths. The following discussion entails what Saleebey (2013) views as strengths:

a) When people learn from their difficulties, they develop strengths. They also discover what they are capable of when they are faced with difficult situations. The change in people is also based on their personalities, traits and virtues (Wolin &Wolin, 1993).

b) What people know about the world around them: Personal experiences motivate people to help others. They are able to do this once they have learned from their own situations and have discovered their strengths.

c) People have talents which they are sometimes unaware of and, therefore, must be assisted to discover them.

d) Despite having gone through and overcome obstacles, people are able to display pride in themselves, which is a form of strength.

e) People in the community are a resource to each other.

f) Spirituality is a source of strength. People turn to spirituality for answers to their challenges, and in doing so they also discover their strengths.

Saleebey (2013) and Ledford (2013) describe strengths-based social workers as non-judgemental, not labelling or stigmatising their clients because of the situations they find themselves in. They do not see their clients from a shortfall point of view, meaning that clients are not viewed as incapable of handling their situations. Instead, their strengths must be acknowledged which, when utilised, help in 'solving' their problems, yielding better overall results. By allowing individuals, families and communities to participate in resolving their situations, the message is communicated to them that they are experts regarding their own situations. Applying the strengths-based approach does not mean that problems are ignored; they are attended to by clients themselves in partnership with social workers.

4.2.2.3. **Features of the strengths-based approach**

The strengths-based practice has certain features which distinguish it from other approaches. These features are described by (Saleebey, 2013) as:

a) **Empowerment**: Empowerment means that individuals, groups, families and communities must be assisted to discover and make use of their own powers, abilities, resources and tools within and around them. In order to promote such discovery within people and communities, it is necessary to do away with derogatory labels and instead provide people with opportunities to connect with their familial, institutional and communal resources while discarding the victim mind-set (Pulla, 2017). Too often, in the helping professions – which include social work – people are told what to do, which is in contradiction with the empowerment element of the strengths-based approach. Moreover, practising empowerment also includes discovering the strengths and resources of social workers themselves within their environment.

b) **Membership:** When people are alienated, marginalised and oppressed, they do not have a sense of membership (Saleebey, 2013), which is derived from a sense of belonging and inclusion. Similarly, Saleebey (2013) posits that people have a need to be citizens, and to be responsible and valued members of a community. Those who are served by social workers usually lack this sense of belonging - and yet they yearn to

belong. The second notion of membership, as explained by Saleebey (2013), is that people must unite to make their voices heard, have their needs met, redress inequities and reach their dreams, which is a feature of the developmental approach as well.

c) **Resilience:** A growing body of inquiry and practice makes it clear that the rule, and not the exception, in human affairs is that individuals and communities surmount serious adversities and rebound (Saleebey, 2013). When referring to resilience, Werner and Smith (1992) and Wolin & Wolin (1996), state that demanding and stressful experiences do not inevitably lead to vulnerability which includes psychopathology. In other words, people can go through traumatic experiences but remain resilient – which does not mean, however, that people deny the existence of traumatic experiences. Thus, Saleebey (2013) concludes that resilience is the ability to cope despite adversity.

d) **Healing and wholeness:** The notion of healing and wholeness rests on the premise that all human organisms are inclined to heal from traumatic experiences. Healing refers to wholeness and the inherent ability of the body and mind to regenerate and resist when faced with disorder, disease and disruption (Saleebey, 2013). Clients have the capacity to heal from their ordeals and be able to function again. The author further expounds that healing requires a supportive relationship between the individual and the larger social and physical environment.

e) **Dialogue and collaboration:** The concept of dialogue advocates that people are important and that they exist within relationships**.** This recognition of their importance brings about their healing from ordeals (Rangaan & Sekar, 2006).

f) **Suspension of disbelief:** Suspension of disbelief means that people, specifically clients, must feel that they are believed – and not judged - when they relate their experiences (Saleebey, 2013).

4.2.2.4. **Strengths-based social work supervision**

In the South African context, the *Integrated Service Delivery Model towards Improved Social Services* (DSD, 2006) adopted and recommended Saleebey's strengths-based approach to social work supervision. Similarly, Engelbrecht (2010b), who is a South African scholar of the strengths-based approach, identified various similarities between the developmental and strengths-based approaches and maintains that strengths-based supervision can be applied within the parameters of developmental social work.

The similarities are based on the focus of the two approaches on identifying the strengths, abilities, capabilities and resources of an individual (Ledford, 2013). Social work supervision has and continues to be problem-focused with a top-down approach in its application, in which supervisors control the process of supervision (Ledford, 2013). Here, supervisors perceive social workers as inefficient – even as failures - regarding their interventions with clients, resulting in supervisors being tempted to take over such cases from social workers**.** They are not flexible enough to allow social workers to attempt to solve their practice challenges, which would allow them to discover their strengths.

Employing the old method, supervisors searched for weaknesses in social workers instead of for their strengths (Ledford, 2013). However, the strength-based approach must strive towards practices which explore social workers' strengths, assets, capacities, abilities, resilience and resources rather than their shortcomings and failures (Engelbrecht, 2010b; Ledford, 2013). Even the language used by supervisors should, therefore, reflect their strengths-oriented position and emphasise supervisees' talents, skills and competencies over deficits (Engelbrecht 2010b).

Thus, strengths-based supervision mirrors the strengths-based counselling of clients (Cojocaru, 2010). This practice looks at what individual clients are capable of, rather than what they cannot do, requiring a paradigm shift from the service delivery of a social treatment model to a developmental model (Engelbrecht 2010b).

Strengths-based supervision embraces the notion of change, namely that social workers have the potential to change as they discover their strengths and capabilities, and that supervisors should create a conducive and safe environment for this to unfold (Engelbrecht 2010b). This means that a climate is created in which social workers can communicate openly and are encouraged to identify their own strengths (Cohen, 1999; Ledford, 2013).

Strengths-based supervision is non-hierarchical with supervisors and social workers working together as partners. Thus, social work supervisors who intend to employ strengths-based supervision should model the approach by working in partnership with their supervisees and allowing them to participate, bearing in mind that the latter learn more from what the former does than says (Shulman, 2005; Ledford, 2013). Moreover, such partnership requires that the supervisor take into consideration the views of the supervisee.

The strengths of social workers can be assessed by evaluating areas, such as their skills, knowledge and values, as well as how they practise within an organisation. In this context, strengths may refer to the social worker's understanding and application of policies and legislation, including budgeting and some administrative procedures (Botha, 2002).

Strengths-based supervision emphasises the partnership relationship between supervisors and supervisees, in which supervisees are supported and empowered to discover themselves and to make decisions regarding their interventions (Ledford, 2013; Pulla, 2017). There should be a clear distinction between strengths-based supervision and the practice of other models, including that of traditional supervision. This is indicated in Table 4.1.

Table 4:1: Pathological versus Strengths-based Supervision

Pathological (problem-oriented) Supervision	**Strengths-based Supervision**
The supervisor educates and the supervisee is being taught.	Both the supervisor and the supervisee are involved in the education process, and they learn from each other.
The supervisor is the all-knowing expert and the supervisee is the layperson.	The supervisor admits that he/she is not the all-knowing expert and appreciates and utilises the supervisee's knowledge and experience.
The supervisor takes full responsibility for critical reflections on interventions.	The supervisor and the supervisee are jointly involved in critical, reflective and imaginative thinking.
The supervisor mostly speaks and the supervisee listens.	Both the supervisor and supervisee speak and listen.
The supervisor makes decisions and the supervisee carries these out.	The supervisor and supervisee make joint decisions based on what they both find meaningful.
The supervisor controls the supervision processes while the supervisee is the one being controlled.	The supervisor and the supervisee strive to meet each other's needs instead of maintaining a system of control.

Source: Adapted from Engelbrecht (2012b)

The researcher has observed from the Table 4.1 above that, when the attitude of supervisors is pathological, they come across as unilateral and dictatorial in their approach. On the other hand,

the strengths-based approach to supervision is characterised by partnership and cooperation between supervisors and supervisees. Such supervision takes place within an organisation that also creates a conducive context for social workers and their clients. Finally, such conditions are optimal for learning which is in line with Senge's (2006) *learning organisation* approach – to be discussed next.

4.2.3. **The learning organisation approach**

Senge (2006) expounds that *learning organisations* are comprised of groups of people who continuously work on their capacity to learn and to be creative. In this regard, a *learning organisation* should be flexible enough to create a conducive atmosphere for its workers to learn and grow. As they do so they expand within organisation, and it is in their growth that they develop new ways of doing things. Thus, growth is the outcome of this learning experience in an organisation (Senge, 2006).

From this description, the following characteristics of the *learning organisation* are noted:

- People are given the opportunity to be creative through learning.
- By being creative, people find new ways of solving problems.
- People work as a team.
- Learning is continuous.

The *learning organisation* improves the way its employees function in the following manner:

- Employees move from being helpless to seeing themselves as active participants in shaping their future. This notion shares a similarity with the strengths-based approach because the latter operates from the viewpoint that people are in charge of their lives and, therefore, must be allowed to be active participants in matters which concern them (Engelbrecht, 2010b).
- People move from being trapped in their current situation, which is characterised by challenges and a sense of hopelessness, to looking into a future with hope.

In addition to this, the *learning organisation* also displays the following characteristics, as described by Senge (2006):

4.2.3.1. **Systems thinking**

Systems thinking looks at how parts of the system are interrelated to form the whole. The focus here is on the connections between the parts of the system. Learning occurs when people in the

organisation begin to see these connections. The researcher believes that social work supervisors, who are part of a *learning organisation*, can use systems- thinking to guide their supervisees towards seeing the interrelationships between various aspects of their clients' problems and thus provide them (the social workers) with a view of the bigger picture of their clients' issues. In turn, these social workers can then guide their clients towards connecting the different aspects of their situation in order to view the complete picture, and then identify elements in their circumstances which can help them deal with their challenges.

4.2.3.2. **Personal mastery**

Personal mastery is a process during which people continue to learn until they master certain skills. The researcher wishes to elaborate on this concept by stating that the organisation benefits when supervisors create an atmosphere which allows social workers to master various skills, such as participation and decision-making. The benefits to the organisation lie in the fact that it will develop independent and resilient workers.

4.2.3.3. **Mental models**

Mental models consist of the perceptions which people have about the world around them. According to Senge (2006), people are motivated to act and change their situations based on their perceptions of the world. The *learning organisation* must, therefore, change first before it can facilitate change in its staff. In support of this conclusion, the present researcher would link mental models to the notion of the strengths-based approach, that is, of facilitating the movement of people from a state of helplessness to that of discovering their inner strengths, abilities and capabilities (Ledford, 2013; Pulla, 2017).

4.2.3.4. **Building a shared vision**

Senge (2006) states that a vision starts at the level of the individual but must expand to be shared by the broader organisation. Organisational vision describes where the organisation sees itself in the future and what it wants to achieve. Senge (2006) adds that an organisation with a vision encourages people to learn, and the researcher concurs with this notion.

4.2.3.5. **Team learning**

Team learning, as explained by Senge (2006), involves developing and increasing the abilities of a team so as to achieve desired results.

According to Senge (2006), team learning, which builds on personal mastery and a shared vision, helps members of the organisation grow together as they learn together. The researcher agrees with Senge's notion that the organisation promotes learning by creating a conducive environment for its personnel. Senge (2006) further argues that, for a *learning organisation* to exist and function, a paradigm shift is necessary, which also requires a new type of leadership - a leadership which allows its staff and the organisation to grow. He argues that the *learning organisation*'s type of leadership differs from what he calls traditional leadership, which is characterised by leaders who set direction and make decisions. In addition to this, traditional leaders assume that people are powerless, lack personal vision and cannot master change, and that their deficits can only be corrected by their leaders**.** On the other hand, leaders in *learning organisations* are stewards: they facilitate learning and build organisations in which staff members continually expand their capabilities (Senge, 2006).

In conclusion, the emphasis of the *learning organisation* approach is that organisations should create an atmosphere which is conducive to learning, and learning takes place when employees work in partnership with the organisation on matters which concern them, including participation in decision-making.

Similarities are observed between the learning, developmental and strengths-based approaches as they all rely on partnership and participation for effective intervention.

4.3. **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter discussed three theoretical approaches which inform the application of social work supervision, namely the developmental, strengths-based and *learning organisation* approaches. They were chosen because of their inter-relatedness and the discussion aimed at highlighting their similarities. The main similarities are two-fold. Individuals should not be viewed based on their shortfalls; instead, they must be encouraged to discover their strengths, abilities, and capabilities (Engelbrecht 2010b; Ledford, 2013). Similarly, social workers function as agents of change when they shift their clients' mind-sets from vulnerability to resilience (Patel, 2015).

The notion of the *learning organisation* is that employees grow through learning and that leaders in organisations should facilitate this by creating a conducive environment (Senge, 2006). The researcher has chosen the strengths-based approach for this study, elaborated upon in detail in Chapter 9 - which also provides the guidelines emanating from the study. The next

chapter gives a detailed description of the research methodology which was followed during this study.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methodology of the study. The researcher applied a mixed-methods research with a convergent parallel design and conducted the study in two phases (qualitative and quantitative), which ran parallel to each other. Data from the two phases were analysed separately, followed by a comparison of the findings.

5.2. Research Question

A research question informs the direction which the study is going to take (Knight, 2002). It must be clearly stated and explicit and must be formulated early in the project (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005).

The research question of this study was:

What is the state of social work supervision in the welfare sector in South Africa?

5.3. Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to explore, by applying a convergent mixed-methods design, the state of social work supervision in the welfare sector of South Africa with the purpose of developing guidelines for social work supervision,

5.4. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- conceptualise social work supervision,
- explore the experiences and needs of social workers with regard to supervision,
- explore the supervisors' experiences of supervision,
- explore areas which require improvement in social work supervision,
- develop guidelines for social work supervision.

5.5. Research Methodology

The research methodology chosen for this study included certain sampling techniques and methods to collect and analyse the data. As this was a mixed-methods study, two sets of data, qualitative and quantitative, were collected and analysed separately. The researcher started by collecting qualitative data, followed by the collection of the quantitative data.

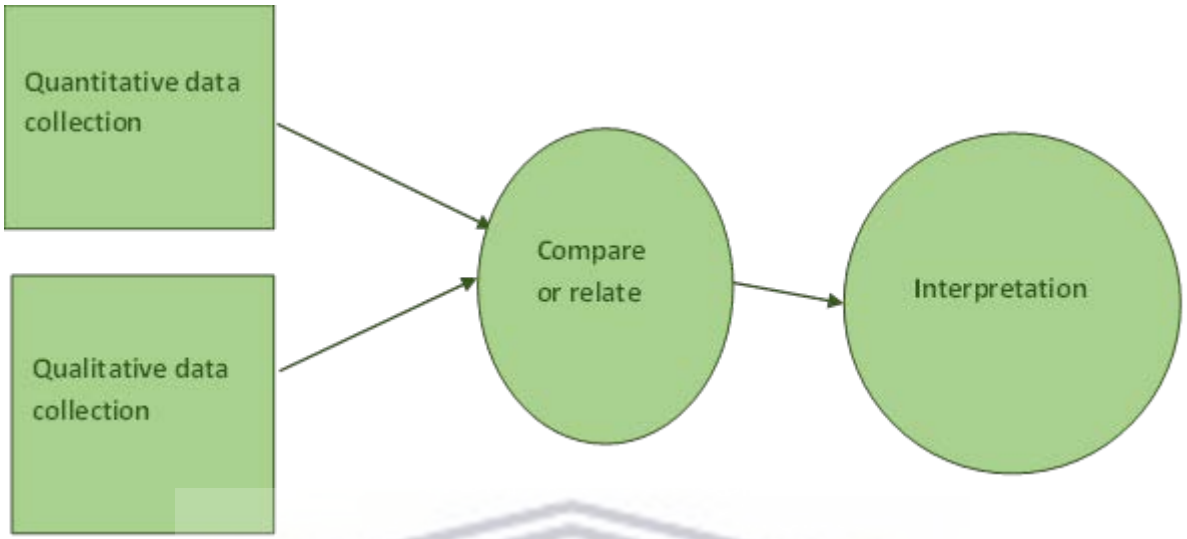
5.5.1. **Research approach**

The choice of the mixed-methods research approach was motivated by the fact that it involves the collection of both numeric and text data and thereafter mixing them to answer a research question (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). Furthermore, the central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination permits a more comprehensive understanding of research problems than would be possible by using either approach on its own (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Rubin and Babbie (2017:70-71) define mixed-methods research as a procedure for "collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study to understand the research more completely." Thus, choosing the mixed-methods approach, the researcher envisaged achieving a balanced perspective of the state of social work supervision in South Africa, and how it is experienced by social workers and supervisors, as well as producing a comprehensive research outcome.

5.5.2. **Research design**

Research design refers to a set of logical arrangements which guide the unfolding of a research project. From the many different research designs, researchers can select a suitable method for their specific research goals (Fouché & Roestenburg, 2021). The present researcher chose the convergent parallel design for this study, employing concurrent timing to implement the quantitative and qualitative strands of data collection during the same phase of the research process (Figure 5.1). On the day that the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, she also administered questionnaires to social workers and supervisors in the same service office. This was a convenient time-saving exercise. Both data collection methods were given equal priority, as they would yield different, but complementary, results on the same topic for a deeper understanding of the research problem (Morse, 1991). The strands of data were kept independent during analysis, the qualitative data being analysed first and then the quantitative data. This was followed by a comparison and, finally, the overall interpretation of the mixed results (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011:66-67).

Figure 5.1: A Convergent Parallel Design



Adapted from: Creswell & Plano Clark (2011)

5.5.3. Research population

Strydom (2011:223) defines a population as "the totality of persons, events, organisation units, case records or other sampling units with which the research problem is concerned." He describes a population as individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics. For this study, the targeted population was social workers and social work supervisors in the employ of the DSD and NGOs in the five provinces which had been chosen: the Easter Cape, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the North West. However, the study could not be conducted in the Eastern Cape due to the unavailability of suitable participants despite the researcher's numerous follow-ups. Thus, the population was restricted to the four remaining provinces. The determining and distinctive character of the population of this study was that it comprised social workers who were supervised by senior social workers, the latter having been promoted to the position of supervisor by their respective organisations.

5.5.4. Samples and sampling procedures

(a) Sampling for the qualitative study

The study was undertaken in the Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West provinces. Non-probability sampling was applied in which "each unit in a sampling frame does not have an equal chance of being selected…" (Grinnell & Unrau, 2014:297). Within this non-probability sampling, the researcher applied accidental sampling in identifying the provinces where the study would be conducted, a type of sampling which is generally informed by the

availability of respondents (Monette, Sullivan, DeJong & Hilton, 2014). The researcher held preliminary discussions on supervision matters with some ~~of the~~ social workers and supervisors, which led to the decision to choose specific provinces for the study. It was easy for the researcher to conduct these preliminary discussions with social workers and supervisors from DSD because the researcher herself is also an employee of DSD. It was also relatively easy for the researcher to obtain permission from the authorities of the national DSD to conduct the study as she is employed there as a social work policy manager. This permission, which was sent to the provincial heads of the DSD, also facilitated their granting permission for the study to be conducted in their provinces. The researcher did not experience challenges from the NGOs in obtaining permission to conduct the study with their social workers and supervisors.

Participants were social workers and social work supervisors in the employ of the DSD and the NGOs in the provinces identified for the study. The criterion for choosing social workers was that they should have been in the employment of the DSD or NGO for six months or more. The minimum period of six months was set because newly employed social workers would have been exposed to supervision for that period, as is prescribed by the DSD supervision framework. The *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* makes it compulsory for newly employed social workers to receive supervision fortnightly during their first three years of employment (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). As with the selection of social workers, a similar criterion for choosing supervisors was that they had to be employed as supervisors for six months or more.

The researcher planned to make use of focus groups and individual interviews. In each of the provinces selected, the plan was to have two focus groups, each comprising four social workers. One focus group would be chosen from the rural district and the other from the urban district of the province. A total of 40 social workers who were in the employ of the DSD from the selected five provinces were going to be the participants. Moreover, the researcher planned to interview two supervisors from a rural district and two from an urban district in each of the provinces sampled, bringing the total number of DSD social work supervisors to be interviewed individually to twenty. The actual total number of social workers interviewed came to 28, instead of the intended 40. A total of 14 DSD social work supervisors were interviewed instead of the 20 as initially planned. The purpose of selecting participants from both rural and urban districts was to generate a balanced view of the experiences of social workers from both settings.

At each NGO selected in the five identified provinces, the researcher planned to create one focus group comprising two social workers. This would bring the total number of interviewed NGO social workers to ten. Furthermore, the researcher planned to conduct interviews with one supervisor from each of the offices where the social workers were interviewed, which would bring the total number of NGO supervisors involved to five. The rationale for having a smaller sample from the NGOs was that the number of employees at those organisations was usually restricted by the funding and sponsorships they received. Thus, the total number of social workers and supervisors to be interviewed at the NGOs was to be fifteen. Ultimately, the researcher interviewed a total number of five NGO social workers and two NGO social work supervisors in two provinces, which were Gauteng and Mpumalanga. The relevant staff from the NGOs of Limpopo and the Northwest provinces were not available.

The reason for the reduced numbers of participants was that some participants were not available for interviews due to work commitments which coincided with the dates of the interviews. The researcher conducted the study in only four of the five selected provinces as she had been unable to obtain the necessary permissions from the head of the DSD in the Eastern Cape. This was despite several follow-ups to which the researcher received no response, compelling her to confine the study to four provinces as she was running out of time. The researcher has recorded this challenge of the unavailability of participants as one of the limitations of the study.

The researcher also consulted with social workers and supervisors - who were not part of the study but were employees of DSD - for the development of the guidelines. The aim was to obtain different, but supplementary, views on the study to be incorporated in the guidelines. The assumption of the researcher was that asking the participants in the study for their views on the development of guidelines would have resulted in receiving the same information, and therefore no new data would have been gathered. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 summarise the total number of focus groups and individual interviews conducted.

Table 5:1: Actual Number of Focus Groups, Social Workers and Supervisors Interviewed: DSD

Province	Districts/Regions	Focus Groups Conducted	Number of Social Workers in each Focus Group	Number of Supervisors interviewed
Gauteng	North Rand Region	02	Focus Group 1: 2 Focus Group 2: 2 Total = 04	02
Limpopo	Mutale Local Municipality	01	04	02
	Makhado Local Municipality	01	04	02
Mpumalanga	Enhlanzeni District. Emalahleni Service Office	01	04	02
	Middleburg Service Office	01	04	02
North West	Bojanala District			
	Rustenburg, Phokeng Office	01	04	02
	Madibeng Service Office	01	04	02
Totals	**4 Provinces**	**08**	**28**	**14**

Source: Researcher (Ndzuta, 2015)

Table 5:2: Actual Number of Focus Groups, Social Workers and Supervisors Interviewed: NGOs

Province	District/Region	Name of NGO	Number of Social Workers interviewed	Number of Supervisors interviewed
Gauteng	North Rand Region	Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie (SAVF)	02	01
Mpumalanga	Enhlanzeni District	Child Welfare South Africa	02	01
Northwest		FAMSA	01	Not available during the time of interviews.
Totals		**Total NGOs: 03**	**05**	**02**

Source: Researcher

Focus group sessions took place at the service offices of the districts selected for the study. In some provinces, it was not possible to have two focus groups as planned because social workers' schedules required them to attend to other activities at the time when the interviews were to take place. This resulted in the researcher having to settle for fewer participants overall. In Gauteng, only two social workers per group could participate in the interviews.

(b) **Sampling for the quantitative study**

Quantitative study sampling means "taking a portion or a smaller number of units of a population as representative or having particular characteristics of that total population" (Sarantakos, 2013:167). This study applied simple random sampling which meant that each social worker at the offices where the research was done would have had an equal chance of being selected (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). In addition to simple random sampling, the convenient sampling method was also applied in order to make sure that those who were easily available could be included in the study (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). In this regard, the researcher adopted the following strategy. In each service office, in which the semi-structured interviews took place, all social workers and supervisors were asked to complete the researcher's questionnaire. This included the participants in the interviews. The researcher then requested that those social workers and supervisors who had been selected for the interviews but could not take part be, nevertheless, invited to respond to the questionnaires. This meant that all social workers and supervisors in the selected offices participated in the data gathering, either through interviews and questionnaires, or only by responding to the questionnaires.

5.6. Data Collection

Preparations for data collection were initiated by seeking permission to conduct the research from the DSD heads of department (HODs) of the identified provinces. The researcher wrote letters to the HODs to request permission for the study to be conducted. The letters were endorsed by the Deputy Director-General of the Welfare Services Branch of the DSD by way of signature, which was of great assistance in obtaining the necessary permissions to conduct the research. (The DSD is the current employer of the researcher.) Permission to conduct the study was granted by the provinces of Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the North West, the Eastern Cape Province having been excluded as explained above. The researcher decided not to pursue the matter as the data collected from the other four provinces reached the point of saturation.

Furthermore, the researcher chose the convergent research design in which questions for both the qualitative and quantitative strands are designed such that they are comparable to each other. The convergent research design is defined by Creswell & Plano Clark (2011:184) as "the same concepts being addressed in both the quantitative and qualitative data collection so that the two databases can be compared or merged." Thus, the researcher distributed questionnaires to

capture quantitative data on the same day that she conducted the semi-structured interviews for the qualitative study.

5.6.1. **Qualitative data collection**

For the semi-structured face-to-face interviews, the researcher used an interview guide with a set of pre-determined questions in line with what Roulston and Choi (2018) suggest, while individual interviews were conducted with the supervisors. The rationale for using the semi-structured interview method was that it gave the researcher and the participants greater flexibility as the researcher was able explore certain interesting avenues that emerged during the interview (Adler & Clark, 2015). Bless et al. (2013) list the following advantages of qualitative interviews:

- Qualitative interviews actively involve the respondents in the research process, which empowers them.
- They allow free interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee.
- They allow opportunities for clarification so that relevant data can be captured.
- They maximise description and discovery.
- They offer researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words, rather than in the words of the researcher.

Creswell (1994) explains that the advantages of qualitative face-to-face interviews are that respondents can provide historical information that researchers would not normally obtain if they had applied other procedures. In addition to this, it allows researchers to have control over the line of questioning.

The following activities took place as part of qualitative data collection.

5.6.1.1. **Interview schedule or guide**

The researcher made use of interview schedules (Annexures A and B), with a set of pre-determined questions and themes which were used as instruments to engage the participants and navigate the narrative terrain (Roulston & Choi, 2018). As much as participants were allowed flexibility in their responses to the questions, the researcher guided them continuously to make sure that they remained within the scope of the questions in the interview schedule (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Two interview schedules, designed to incorporate open-ended questions,

were developed, one for social workers (Annexure A) and one for social work supervisors (Annexure B).

5.6.1.2. **Face-to-face interviews and recording**

Before the start of the interviews, the researcher discussed the 'informed consent' form (Annexure D) with the participants, allowed them to sign it and then proceeded with the interviews. With the permission of the participants, she audio-recorded the interviews, using her laptop and cell phone. These devices have applications which make it easy to transcribe the interviews (Bryman et al., 2014). The cell phone was used as a back-up to the laptop recordings. The researcher also took notes regarding some key information that emerged during the interviews, using short-hand.

5.6.1.3. **Reflexivity**

The researcher continuously engaged in the process of introspection to identify any biases and cultural beliefs she might have and which might negatively impact on the collection of data and the study as a whole (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006).

5.6.2. **Quantitative data collection**

Quantitative data collection methods make use of measuring instruments which include questionnaires (Roestenburg, 2021). Babbie (2007:246) defines a questionnaire as "a document containing questions and/or other types of items designed to solicit information appropriate for analysis." In the North West Province, the first province in which the quantitative research was conducted, the researcher delivered the questionnaires by hand to the managers of the respondents and requested them to distribute these to the latter. The respondents were given time to complete the questionnaires in the absence of the researcher, who collected them at a later pre-arranged date. Relying on the managers to make sure that the questionnaires were completed was not fruitful as the researcher discovered that very few had been completed. She then decided to administer the questionnaires directly to individual respondents in the remaining provinces as recommended by (Roestenburg, 2021).

In the subsequent provinces, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the participants, waited for them to be completed and conducted the interviews in the meantime. The interviewees were given additional time to complete their questionnaires, and the latter were all

collected on the same day. This method worked well as participants made time to respond to the questionnaires.

5.7. Data Analysis

Procedures in both quantitative and qualitative data analysis involve the following processes: preparing data for analysis, exploring data, analysing the data, representing the analysis, interpreting the analysis and validating the data and interpretations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:204).

5.7.1. Qualitative data analysis

Data analysis in this phase took place as follows:

5.7.1.1. Preparing data for analysis

For qualitative data analysis, preparing data means organising the document or visual data for review, or transcribing text from interviews and observations into word-processing files for analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:206). Here the researcher organised the collected data, starting with listening to the recorded data repeatedly to prepare for transcribing them. The transcribed data were saved on a laptop. The material from each province was transcribed separately, saved into a separate folder, and labelled according to the provinces. In addition, the folders were marked with names that indicated whether they contained interviews with social workers or supervisors and whether the data were DSD or NGO data. Interviews had been conducted in English; therefore, the researcher was not required to translate any data.

5.7.1.2. Exploring the data

Exploring data means examining the data with an eye for developing broad trends and the shape of the distribution, or reading through the data, making notes, and developing a preliminary understanding of the database (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:206). The researcher studied the data several times to gain an understanding of the material. She also studied the notes she had taken during the interviews, comparing them with the transcribed data. After having studied the notes, the researcher started to code information which was similar and which would later be classified as themes. Coding is the process of grouping evidence and labelling ideas so that they reflect increasingly broader perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:208).

5.7.1.3. **Analysing the data**

Analysing data consists of examining the database to address the research questions or hypotheses. Qualitative data analysis involves coding the data by dividing the text into small units, assigning a label to each unit, and then grouping the codes into themes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:207-208). When analysing the data, the researcher followed a thematic process which was sub-divided into searching for themes, and then reviewing and naming them. From the outset, semi-structured questions were formulated in such a way that they portrayed themes of the study. During interviews, the researcher coded information which also assisted in identifying similar texts. In addition to the researcher's theme organisation, an expert from the University of the Western Cape assisted with this process by helping organise the data into identified themes, sub-themes and categories. The work of the expert also entailed defining and naming themes which the researcher confirmed and used.

5.7.1.4. **Representing the analysed data**

In qualitative research, representing the results may involve a discussion of the evidence from which the themes or categories arise. The idea is to build a discussion that convinces the reader that a particular theme or category emerges from certain data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:209). The researcher discussed ideas of participants according to the themes and categories as classified, including divergent views of participants which were found in the same themes and categories. These discussions were also supported by direct quotes from the participants.

5.7.1.5. **Interpreting the results**

Interpreting results means making meaning of the discussions that took place in the process of analysing the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:209). For this qualitative phase, the researcher assessed how the research questions were answered, compared the findings with the literature, and formulated her own interpretation of the findings.

5.7.1.6. **Verification and validation of the data**

Verification of data helps the researcher ensure the trustworthiness of the findings (Schurink, Schurink & Fouché, 2021). The purpose of data validation is to check the quality of the data, the results and interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:209). In the case of participants whose data were not particularly clear to the researcher, the latter contacted the participants to

verify these data. In addition to this, the researcher verified the trustworthiness of the data by employing the following the criteria of credibility, confirmability and transferability.

Credibility

Anney (2014:276) explains that credibility establishes whether or not the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and are a correct interpretation of the participants' original views. To ensure the credibility of the data, and in line with what Schurink et al. (2021) state, the researcher applied the following strategies:

- *Prolonged engagement in the field:* The researcher interviewed the participants extensively, posing follow-up questions where necessary. This was done (a) to make sure that the data collected were accurate and (b) to ensure that both the researcher and the participants shared the same understanding of the data at hand.
- *Triangulation of data*: The researcher used different methods of data collection to "overcome the weaknesses of a single method" (Schurink et al., 2021:396). The methods used to collect data were semi-structured interviews and the distribution of questionnaires.
- *Peer debriefing*: The researcher created opportunities to discuss and refine the data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008) by holding sessions with her peers in the DSD who were not part of the research. These sessions were used for a collective interpretation of the data.

Confirmability

In qualitative research, confirmability refers to the importance of a self-critical attitude towards the researcher's own preconceptions and the need for continuous reflection (Leavy, 2018:5). In this study, the researcher avoided a personal bias by digitally recording the data and thereafter transcribing them verbatim. In addition to this, the researcher confirmed the data by doing peer debriefing in which the peers were engaged in discussions of the data as a quality-assurance exercise.

Transferability

Transferability of research findings refers to the extent to which a study's findings can be applied in other contexts and studies (Schurink et al., 2021:393). Having applied the mixed-methods research design for this study, which incorporates components of the qualitative and

quantitative approaches (Kumar, 2019), the researcher is confident that the findings can be used as a point of reference when engaging with the different areas of management in the social work profession, as well as in other social service professions.

5.7.2. **Quantitative data analysis**

Quantitative data analysis comprises those techniques used to convert data into numerical form for statistical analysis. The purpose of analysis is to reduce data to an intelligible and interpretable form so that relationships within research problems can be studied and tested, and conclusions drawn (Fouché, Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:250). The researcher followed these processes for quantitative data analysis.

5.7.2.1. **Preparing data for analysis**

In quantitative research, preparing for data analysis begins with the conversion of raw data. At this stage, data can be converted into scores to weigh the responses (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:204). The researcher made use of a research assistant who captured the raw data into a computer-generated Excel spreadsheet before they were converted into frequencies.

5.7.2.2. **Exploring the data**

For the quantitative research phase, exploring data means visually inspecting data and conducting a descriptive analysis to determine general-trend responses (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:206). Here, the researcher conducted a descriptive analysis of data after having allocated scores.

5.7.2.3. **Analysing the data**

The researcher was assisted by a specialist from the Human Sciences Research Council to develop the frequencies. After having received the frequencies, the researcher converted these numerical data into a narrative, using descriptive analysis to describe the basic features of the quantitative data generated in the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

5.7.2.4. **Representing the analysed data**

The researcher represented the results in statements, summarising the statistical results. Representation was done separately for DSD social workers and supervisors, and social workers and supervisors from the NGOs.

5.7.2.5. **Interpreting the results**

As with qualitative research, interpreting results in quantitative research means comparing the results with the initial research questions to determine whether they were answered (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:209). The researcher described how the results addressed the research question, comparing the results with past literature and theories. Comparison of the qualitative and quantitative strands was done after the completion of the data analysis.

5.7.2.6. **Validating the data and reliability of the results**

Quantitative validity means that the scores generated from the participants' responses were meaningful indicators of the construct being measured (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:210). Here, the researcher again compared the scores and the narrative against the research questions: they were found to be accurate.

5.8. **Pilot Study**

The researcher conducted a pilot study by administrating questionnaires and conducting interviews with social workers and social work supervisors in the DSD. They were first issued with 'informed consent' forms and information sheets from the University of the Western Cape – where the researcher was a student – to help them decide on participation. At the same time, information was provided about the study. The researcher recruited some participants for the pilot study through verbal invitations, while others were invited by email. It was easy and convenient to conduct the pilot study with this group of officials because the researcher worked with them. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine the relevance of the questions for the semi-structured interviews. Amendments were made to some questions in response to the results of the pilot study.

5.9. **Consultation for the Guidelines Chapter of the Study (Chapter 9)**

One of the objectives of this study was to develop guidelines relevant to social work supervision. These guidelines constitute a chapter in this thesis and, as with a pilot study, consultation was necessary to gather information and receive input. The consultation for the chapter was done in an online workshop due to COVID-19 restrictions. (This is the only chapter for which consultation was done online. All other data were collected in the face-to-face interviews or the questionnaires because this was done before the COVID-19 period.) For the guidelines chapter, the researcher consulted with social workers and social work supervisors

who had not been part of the study. The rationale for this was two-fold: (a) to avoid repetition of facts as these guidelines emanated from the study itself, and (b) to be able to compare the responses of the participants of the study with those of non-participants in order to establish objectivity and neutrality of the inputs. The draft chapter of the guidelines was attached to the invitations sent out by email (or handed to verbally invited colleagues) which also stipulated the date of the workshop: 19 March 2021. This gave the prospective attendees the opportunity to familiarise themselves with its contents before the workshop.

Most inputs received were concerned with the application of the approaches to supervision, with colleagues reporting that these were not implemented. They maintained that the practice of social work supervision was not informed by any theory. Some inputs referred to supervisory relationships, namely that supervisees experienced their supervisors as unsupportive in their work. The picture was created of supervisees being dissatisfied with the state of their relationship with their supervisors. They agreed with the participants of the study that their managers and supervisors were more concerned about the work being done than having their needs met as supervisors and social workers. Other feedback dealt with the structure of the chapter, with suggestions for combining some topics which appeared to address the same issues but were placed into different sections. The consultation on the guidelines also served as a quality-assurance measure.

5.10. **Ethical Considerations**

The study was conducted within ethical frameworks. Bless et al. (2013:29) state that …

> "…ethical behaviour and practice in research are guided by set ethical guidelines, principles and practices that should be integrated into a researcher's practice and behavioural framework and be used to evaluate their own conduct."

Similarly, the researcher's conduct was guided by the framework discussed here. As a start, the researcher requested, in writing, permission from the Deputy Director-General of the DSD to conduct research with social workers and supervisors in the identified provinces. When such permission was granted, the researcher sought further permission to conduct research from the HODs in the selected provinces. This was done in writing, using the permission granted by the DDG as an attachment. The researcher wrote to the management at NGOs, seeking permission to conduct research with their social worker and supervisor employees. The study was also

granted ethical clearance by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape. Moreover, the researcher observed the following ethical considerations:

Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation

'Informed consent' signifies that the participants have been given information regarding what is expected of them during their involvement with the research which helps them decide whether or not they wish to participate (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). In addition to this, good ethical research practice requires voluntary, unforced decision-making about participation and its consequences (Rubin & Babbie, 2017:85). For this study, the researcher issued 'informed consent' forms and information sheets which had been written in English. The forms provided a detailed explanation of the study and also explained to the participants that their involvement was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from it at any time. The participants were required to sign the 'informed consent' form as a way of indicating their voluntary participation in the study.

Violation of Privacy/ Confidentiality and Anonymity

Privacy refers to the physical setting in which data are collected (Morse, 2012:92). To ensure privacy for the participants in the service offices where the interviews were conducted, the researcher made use of unused offices and boardrooms depending on which were available. Regarding confidentiality, Mertens and Wilson (2012) contend that there is little difference between confidentiality and anonymity. They go on to explain that confidentiality refers to the collection, analysing, storing and reporting of data in such a way that the data cannot be traced back to the person who provided the information. Anonymity, on the other hand, implies that no identifiable information is attached to the data and no-one can trace anything to a specific individual (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher used a code to refer to each participant in order to hide their identities, for example, referring to them as Participant A, B or C, etc.

Avoidance of Harm

Harm may present as physical, psychological or social abuse or even legal jeopardy (Neuman, 2014:147-153). To add to this, Morse (2012:90) states that research with humans may elicit emotions connected to previous trauma, requiring appropriate management, such as offering support.

The researcher was aware of the possibility that the subject of social work supervision might induce emotions in the participants. This is due to social workers experiencing lack of supervision while supervisors feel that they are not adequately prepared for the task of supervising (Ndzuta, 2009). In a few instances participants became emotional when they were relating their experiences during supervision. In such instances, the researcher engaged these participants in individual debriefing after which they were observed to be fine.

No Deception

Deception refers to misleading participants by either deliberately misrepresenting information or concealing the nature of the study (Padgett, 2017:79). No information about the study was hidden from the participants. The researcher explained the possible benefits of the study for both social workers and supervisors, the most important one being the improvement of social work supervision**.**

Actions and Competence of the Researcher

Researchers are ethically obliged to ensure that they are competent, honest and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed investigation (Babbie, 2016:70). The researcher is competent to conduct this study because, in her career, she started as a social worker at a junior level at which she experienced supervision. She, therefore, knows the benefits of being supervised and the drawbacks of not being supervised as she has experienced both. She progressed to becoming a social work supervisor, and she is currently a social work policy manager. All these career stages enabled the researcher to experience supervision at different levels, which has rendered her competent in developing the research plan. The research plan included seeking permission from the national DSD and its provincial branches to conduct research, developing semi-structured interview questions and questionnaires for the qualitative and quantitative phases of the research, conducting interviews, administering questionnaires, and debriefing those participants who were emotionally affected.

Dissemination and Publication of Findings

The findings of the study must be introduced to the reading public in written form to ensure it is scientifically recognised as formal research (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:128). The researcher will make the study available to all the research units and libraries of the provinces where the study was conducted.

The researcher will also publish articles and conduct workshops emanating from this study.

5.11. Limitations of the Study

The researcher identified the following as possible limitations of this study:

- The unavailability of sampled participants and respondents both in the DSD and the NGOs posed a challenge in that the researcher had to settle for a lesser number of respondents**.** With regard to the NGOs, instead of having five provinces participate in the study as initially planned, only two provinces were available. This significantly reduced the number of participants and respondents. The explanation given for this unavailability of social work employees was that they had other work demands to attend to.
- Government procedures to obtain permission to conduct research in provinces was lengthy, and this delayed the researcher in conducting and completing the study.

5.12. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter focused on the research methodology of the study and detailed the processes which the researcher followed while collecting and analysing data. The researcher chose a mixed-methods research model with a convergent parallel design. Data were collected during the qualitative and quantitative phases and, in line with convergent parallel design, they were analysed separately and parallel to each other, converged, and then compared. As this chapter has described data collection and analysis, the next chapter presents the qualitative findings of the data. It is the first of three chapters which present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: SOCIAL WORKERS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on analysing the qualitative data, collected from participants who were social workers, by breaking them down into themes. In this regard, the researcher was assisted by a specialist in qualitative data analysis who helped organise the data into themes. The identified themes were expressed and supported by direct quotations from individual participants and the literature. To recap, the study was conducted to explore the state of social work supervision in South Africa. This chapter presents the qualitative findings that reflect the experiences of social workers with regard to supervision.

6.1.1. Profile of the participants

For the qualitative study, all social work participants were black males and females and this is a reflection of the demographics of South Africa. In the provinces where the study was conducted, the 2011 census showed provincial statistics for Black Africans as follows: Gauteng 9 493 684 (77.36%); Limpopo 5 224 754 (96.67%); Mpumalanga 3 662 219 (90.65%); Northwest: 3 152, 063 (89.80%). (Statistics South Africa, 2011)

The focus groups were dominated by females - which is a fairly accurate reflection of the social work profession as a whole. Out of 28 participants, 23 were females and only 5 were males. Globally, the trend has always been that of females dominating the social work profession. The reason for this, as stated by the Galley & Parrish (2014), is that social work, as a profession, is assigned a lower status and salary compared to other professions. Thus, men show less interest in this career. Furthermore, Galley & Parrish (2014) also stated that the perception that social work is a caring profession is another deterrent for men who consider caring roles to be associated more with females. This global perspective is also reflected in South Africa as evidenced by the participants in this study.

The table below shows the profile of DSD social workers who participated in the qualitative study.

Table 6:1: Profile of DSD Social Workers Who Participated in the Qualitative Study

Province	District/Region	Number of Focus Groups Conducted	Number of Social Workers in each Focus Group	Gender	Race	Qualifications	Age Range	Years of Experience as a Social Workers
Gauteng	North Rand Region	02	Focus Group 1:02 Focus Group 2:02	Focus Group 1: 02 Females Focus Group 2: 01 Male; 01 Female	Black Black	Degree in social work: 02 Masters in Social Work: 02	29-45	6-12 years: 01 13- 15 years: 01 16 and more: 02
Limpopo	Mutale Local Municipality	Mutale: 01	Mutale: 04	Mutale: 1 male, 3 females	Black	Degree in Social Work: 04	32-44	06-12 years : 02 13-15 years: 02
	Makhado local Municipality	Makhado: 01	Makhado: 04	Makhado: 1 male, 3 females	Black	Degree in social work: 3 Masters in Social Work:1	30-40	6-12 years: 01 13-15 years: 02 16 and more: 01
Mpumalanga	Enhlanzeni District. Emalahleni Service Office	01	04	3 females; 1 male	Black	Degree in social work: 04	30-45	6-12 years: 0 13-15 years: 02 16 years and more: 02
	Enhlanzeni District. Middleburg Service Office	01	04	4 Females	Black	Degree in Social Work: 02 Masters in social work: 02	27-39	6-12 years: 02 13-15 years: 02
Northwest	Bojanala District: Rustenburg, Phokeng Office	01	04	4 females	Black	Degree in Social Work: 04	29-42	6-12 years: 01 13-15 years: 03
	Bojanala District: Madibeng, Brits Service Office	01	04	3 females; 1 male	Black	Degree in Social Work:04	32-47	6-12 years: 01 13-15 years: 02 16 years and more: 01
Totals		Focus Groups: 08	28	Females: 23 Males: 05	28	Degree in social work: 23 Masters in social work: 05		6-12 years: 08 13-15 years: 14 16+ years: 06

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

The ages of the participants, which ranged between 25 and 49, represented roughly what is happening in the profession in South Africa. The assumption made by the researcher was that some of those aged 50 and above might have been promoted to supervisory positions based on their professional experience, while others might have left the profession due to limited chances of promotion created by the Occupation Specific Dispensation (DSD, 2009). The OSD is a tool which determines the promotion of social workers to higher positions and has been experienced as creating delays in their career path. This has led to frustration and disillusionment which, in some cases, resulted in their leaving the DSD or changing their career. All participants held a four-year qualification, which is a basic degree in social work in South Africa, as stipulated by the Social Service Professions Act No. 110 (1978). A three-year qualification in social work is no longer offered in South Africa.

With regard to the years of professional experience, eight participants had 6-12 years' experience, fourteen had practised for 13-15 years, and six had been in the profession for more than 16 years. These years of experience are a general reflection of the population of social workers in the profession. The interesting phenomenon here is that the majority of respondents had been social workers for thirteen to fifteen years. This means that the majority of the social work participants were in the prime of their career and had gathered enough experience to be able to articulate on matters which were impacting on social work supervision.

6.1.2. **Profile of the NGO social workers who participated in the qualitative study**

The information regarding the profile of the NGO participants was similar to that of the DSD social workers in many respects. The main difference was that here one of the participants from one of the NGOs was a white female. The table below shows the profile of the NGOs social workers who participated in the qualitative study.

Table 6:2: Profile of the NGO Social Workers Who Participated in the Qualitative Study

Province	District/Region	Number of Focus Groups Conducted	Number of Social Workers in each Focus Group	Gender and race	Age Range	Qualifications	Years of Experience as a Social Worker
Gauteng	North Rand Region: Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie (SAVF)	1	2	Gender: Female: 02 Race: White: 01 Black: 01	33-47	Degree in Social Work: 01 Masters in Social Work: 01	06-12 years: 01 13–15years: 01
Mpumalanga	Enhlanzeni District. Emalahleni. Child Welfare South Africa	1	2	Gender: Female: 02 Race: Black: 02	30-42	Degree in Social Work: 02	06-12 years: 02
North West	Bojanala District: Rustenburg Local Municipality. FAMSA	No Focus Group. Only 1 social worker interviewed	1	Gender: Female: 01 Race: Black: 01	25-32	Degree in Social Work: 01	0-05 years: 01
Totals		2	5	Gender Females: 05 Race Black: 04 White: 01		Degree in Social Work: 04 Masters in Social Work: 01	0-05 years: 01 06-12 years: 03 13-15 years: 01

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

6.2. Description of Themes

This section focuses on the themes, sub-themes and topics identified in this study and they are discussed in the following order:

- Theme 6.2.1: Description of the current state of supervision
- Theme 6.2.2: Description of professional conduct in social work supervision
- Theme 6.2 3: Expectations related to supervision
- Theme 6.2.4: Description of preferred supervision systems
- Theme 6.2.5: Frameworks for social work supervision
- Theme 6.2.6: Opinions on what is needed for effective supervision

Table 6.3 provides a summary of themes, sub-themes, and topics.

Table 6:3: Summary of Themes, Sub-themes and Topics

Themes	Sub-themes	Topics
Theme 6.2.1: Descriptions of the current state of supervision	Sub-theme 6.2.1.1: The experiences of supervision	
		6.2.1.1 (a): Positive supervision experiences
		6.2.1.1 (b): Negative supervision experiences
		6.2.1.1 (c): Consultation replacing supervision
	Sub-theme 6.2.1.2: The importance of support in supervision	6.2.1.2 (a): Support with cases
		6.2.1.2 (b): Emotional support
		6.2.1.2 (c): Professional support and guidance for new social workers
		6.2.1.2 (d): Practical support
		6.2.1.2 (e): Lack of supervision
	Sub-theme 6.2.1.3: Monitoring and coordinating	
	Sub-theme 6.2.1.4: Format of supervision	6.2.1.4 (a): Structured supervision
		6.2.1.4 (b): Informal supervision/consultation
	Sub-theme 6.2.1.5: Experiences of inter-personal relationships with supervisors	6.2.1.5 (a): Trust and lack of trust with supervisors
Theme 6.2.2: Descriptions of professional conduct in social work supervision	Sub-theme 6.2 2.1: Conduct of supervisors	
	Sub-theme 6.2.2.2: Conduct of supervisees	
	Sub –theme 6.2 2.3: Abusive supervision	6.2.2.3 (a): Experiences and/or perceptions related to abuse by supervisors

Themes	Sub-themes	Topics
		6.2.2.3 (b): Perceptions of why social workers abuse supervisors
		6.2.2.3 (c): Perceptions related to the reasons for abuse in supervision
Theme 6.2.3: Expectations relating to supervision	Sub-theme 6.2.3.1: Perceptions regarding supervisors' expectations on supervisees	
	Sub-theme 6.2.3.2: Expectations of supervisees on supervisors	6.2.3.2 (a): Supervision should include the three main functions
		6.2.3.2 (b): Knowledge
		6.2.3.2 (c): Guidance and assistance with career path.
	Sub-theme 6.2.3.3: Feedback in supervision	6.2.3.3 (a):Work-related feedback
Theme 6.2.4: A description of preferred supervision systems		
	Sub-theme 6.2.4.1: Internal supervision systems	
	Sub-theme 6.2 4.2: External supervision systems	
Theme 6.2.5: Frameworks for social work supervision	Sub-theme 6.2.5.1: Developmental social work supervision	
	Sub-theme 6.2.5.2: Strengths-based social work supervision	
Theme 6.2.6: Opinions of what is needed for effective supervision	Sub-theme 6.2.6.1: Training	
	Sub-theme 6.2.6.2: Appointment of persons with qualifications, expertise and experience	
	Sub-theme 6.2.6.3: Supervisor workload	
	Sub-theme 6.2.6.4: Support to supervisors by managers	
	Sub-theme 6.2.6.5: Standardised guideline for supervision	

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

6.2.1. **Description of the current state of supervision**

Participants described, with a fair amount of discontent, their perception of the current state of supervision and how they were experiencing it. They stated that supervision was not applied consistently and that there were social workers who did not receive supervision at all. The lack of a standardised format of supervision was criticised as this resulted in supervisors having to develop their own formats which then differed from organisation to organisation. They also reported that their relationship with their supervisors was not always positive and this impacted negatively on the supervision process.

Furthermore, the training of supervisors was neglected which impacted on their competence to do supervision. Supervisors also did not have enough time to supervise due to their own workload, as well as problems with supervisory relationships and the supervision system as a whole.

Other challenges emanated from the authorities' lack of leadership in not clearly articulating and championing the role of supervision in social work. The lack of clear theoretical supervision models forced supervisors to resort to their own discretion on how to supervise. The criteria for promotion from social worker to supervisor seemed problematic, particularly when promotion was based only on years of experience as a social worker, with qualifications neither considered nor required. When promoted in this way, the ability of supervisors to perform their duty effectively was continuously in doubt (Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010). This study aims at examining the state of social work supervision through the lens of social workers and supervisors, including those areas in which both groups are unhappy, and to make recommendations for future application.

6.2.1.1. **The experiences of supervision**

Supervision remains the core of social work practice, which is by nature a complex and demanding profession (Van Heugten, 2011). Effective supervision can help social workers remain resilient and hopeful in their practice (Collins, 2007; Adamson, 2011). Participants offered different descriptions of their experience of supervision, which can be summarised as positive and negative. The discussion that follows describes these different experiences of supervision.

6.2.1.1. (a) Positive supervision experiences

A positive experience is created when social workers receive regular supervision as expected and on agreed-upon terms. It also entails supervisors educating and supporting their supervisees.

A positive experience was described as follows:

> *"I think I'll describe it positively. Since I started working, I've always been assigned somebody in a position of supervisor and I think it assists a lot because the purpose of supervision I think for me is to have somebody who has experience*

and who provides a role of a teacher and support in our work. Supervisors for me are also role models."

6.2.1.1. (b) Negative supervision experiences

Others had negative experiences, expressing their dissatisfaction with issues ranging from inconsistent supervision to none at all (Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010). The following quotes confirm that supervision does not take place in some organisations.

"I don't remember having any supervision with my supervisor… It does not exist."

"For me, I think supervision is non-existent…"

Social workers were left with the impression that supervision did not exist when supervisors continuously postponed supervision sessions to the point where these no longer took place. The absence of supervision impacted negatively on the implementation of certain legislation, such as the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005, which stipulates the need for social workers to be supervised, particularly with regard to court cases involving children. The Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978 and the social work profession's *Policy Guidelines for Course Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers* (SACSSP, 2016) also highlight the importance of social work supervision. Moreover, it is emphasised that social workers cannot be supervised by officials who are not social workers themselves, given the fact that the profession also deals with statutory matters which require supervisors to possess the appropriate knowledge.

6.2.1.1. (c) Consultation replacing supervision

Some participants did experience sessions with their supervisors, but these amounted to consultations rather than full-scale supervision. This left them confused as to what constitutes supervision. In most instances, organisations appeared to substitute supervision with consultation as it offered quick solutions and was more 'convenient' as it was voluntary. The downside of this practice was that those social workers who participated in consultations, were not obliged to take the advice given during the session (Middleman & Rhodes, 1985). The following participants expressed their experiences of consultation replacing supervision.

"Actually, in the workplace, there is no supervision, if I can say that. It is mainly consultations, going in and out of the supervisor's office."

"Or maybe that is the supervision session? When we call them for advice? I also called them, in such situations when I call and ask her how I should intervene in a particular case. Or go to her office and engage with her on a particular case. So maybe those are supervision sessions?"

"For me I don't think I will call it supervision but in a way I would say it is consultation."

Regarding consultation versus supervision, the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* specifies the required frequency of supervision for different levels of social workers. The frequency is reduced as social workers gain more experience in their work and become confident and independent. Consultation, which seems to be what supervisors are offering to most social workers, regardless of their experience, should only be offered to those who have practised for three years or more. Even then, they need to be assessed by their supervisors before it is recommended, by means of a written report, that they be moved from supervision to the level of consultation (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Supervisors prefer consultation for many reasons, other than not having time to conduct supervision. Among these are that consultation is less formal than supervision, does not need to be planned for, and the social workers approach their supervisor to request consultation which eases the supervisors' burden of planning (Engelbrecht, 2019a).

6.2.1.2. **The importance of support in supervision**

Support is one of the key areas in supervision (Carpenter et al., 2015). Supervisors must be able to identify areas in which social workers need support so that they can offer it. Shulman (1982) refers to a supportive atmosphere as one in which social workers are permitted to make mistakes and are encouraged to openly talk about matters which affect them. The importance of supervision is also acknowledged in such areas as supporting social workers with the cases they handle and monitoring their work. Participants mentioned different areas in which they required support, such as with cases, and even admitting a need for support in personal matters and/or emotional support.

6.2.1.2 (a) Support with cases

Participants considered support with cases as important because some of the cases they handled were difficult and they were not equipped to manage them. They also experienced

high caseloads, which also increased the necessity for support as can be seen in these comments:

> *"I think as social workers, we do need support because the kind of work we do, most of the time it is risky and dangerous."*

> *"Some cases are difficult and that is where we need support. Sometimes you hit a dead-end. You don't know what to do. So you need somebody with more experience than you to support you."*

> *"We have a lot of workload. Then we specialize in our work and we have many files. We have large amounts of files, so we do need support."*

Support with cases helped social workers make professional judgements and decisions (BASW, 2012). They experienced their work as complex and stressful, and requiring supervision to help them develop resilience (Karvinen-Niinikoski, 2003; BASW, 2012; Dan, 2017). On a daily basis, particularly in the domain of child protection, which is characterised by statutory work, social workers are required to compile reports for the children's courts in line with the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005. This is one area in which social workers need support from their supervisors - starting with the investigations, through report writing, and with court appearances - as the entire process can drain the social worker emotionally and affect his or her ability to make critical decisions that affect the lives of children. All social workers, new and experienced, require supervision, and all must be given the opportunity to be supervised, so that their different professional needs are addressed (Engelbrecht 2010a; DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

6.2.1.2 (b) Emotional support

Participants admitted to requiring the support and empathy of supervisors in personal matters, as personal issues negatively impacted their performance at work. They also reported that when there was a show of support from their supervisors, they felt encouraged to do their work. One participant expressed the following regarding support from supervisors on personal matters:

> *"When my supervisor allows me time to attend to my family problems, I feel I am supported in that way."*

Another participant added:

"Yes, sometimes personal issues can make you underperform so the supervisor will want to know why you underperformed. Yes, so somewhere, somehow personal issues will come up."

The third participant indicated that supervisors cannot be concerned only about work without looking at the needs of social workers:

"As much as I am an employee, I am a person as well. I am an individual. That is why it makes it hard for us to open up sometimes because you are not given an opportunity to share them. All the time it's work. Unless if you are brave enough to hint that there is something wrong in your personal well-being. But yes, the focus is mostly on the work that we do."

According to the participants, discussions of personal matters were not usually included in their supervision sessions. They also indicated that omitting personal matters from supervision sessions was counterproductive as they remained affected by them and, therefore, could not do their work effectively. Furthermore, ignoring their personal challenges was a sign of lack of emotional support on the part of their supervisors. Carpenter et al. (2015) encourage the use of supervision as a platform to offer emotional support, although their emphasis was on emotional support in relation to the stress experienced by social workers with regard to the cases they handled. Based on the statements of the participants, supervisors should not deliberately ignore the personal challenges of social workers because these ultimately affect their performance. The researcher supports the view of Carpenter et al. (2015) that supervisors must support their supervisees. However, Dan (2017) warns that supervisors must not act as therapists to their **supervisees.**

6.2.1.2 (c) Professional support and guidance for social workers

Participants indicated that they needed professional support, particularly the newly employed social workers. This would help them integrate theory with practice and thereby enable them to manage their cases. One participant stated the following regarding the need for support:

"Since I am new, and I am from University, I need support to integrate theory into practice."

Another participant added:

"And I also think when you are new some cases are overwhelming for us when we come from university and you find that the reality is hard… You need someone to meet you, someone you can go to, to help you, and sometimes you don't know how to deal with a certain case so you need someone to help you with that one so you can grow."

Although professional guidance emerged as a need from the comments of the newly employed social workers, it is also a need among social workers at all levels if they are to continue to learn and grow. Supervisors should give continuous guidance and support, aligning it with the needs of their social workers.

Professional support is linked to training and skills transfer from supervisors to social workers when they guide them on the cases they handle and other related tasks (Dan, 2017). Here, supervisors give work-related advice, equipping social workers with skills to manage cases and do their work. The need for guidance for newly employed social workers is being emphasised by the South African supervision framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) when it differentiates the frequencies of supervision between those newly employed and those who were experienced.

6.2.1.2 (d) Practical support

During this study, the researcher became aware of dire shortages of resources, such as office space and transport, as articulated by social workers, with the DSD being more affected compared to the NGOs. Social workers look to their supervisors to provide the necessary tools of trade, such as office space, vehicles to conduct home visits, and stationery. Participants admitted that, in most instances, supervisors were unable to provide these resources. They added that there were instances when supervisors used their own time and transport to enable social workers to do home visits. This social worker participant said:

"Sometimes we do not have transport to get to a case so I need support. Driving and transporting me."

Egan and Kadushin's study (2004) revealed that when managers were able to provide resources, workers expressed satisfaction with their work and working conditions and such employees rendered competent service (without hindrances and delays) to clients who were satisfied, in turn.

The lack of resources also frustrated supervisors (Frumkin, 1980; Bogo & Power, 1992), and this source of frustration and low morale among social workers will continue if left unattended. Particularly in the case of the DSD, which represents Government, the impression is created that social work services are not prioritised. This inevitably affects supervision negatively, and supervisors are compelled to improvise.

6.2.1.2 (e) Lack of supervision

Most participants bemoaned the lack of supervision, which they viewed as a lack of support. Some social workers had to navigate their own way through learning on the job until they mastered the various tasks. Participants also raised the issue of over-delegation, as they would be instructed to induct newly employed social workers, something which supervisors are supposed to do. These situations are described by participants who said:

> *"When I started here, there was no supervisor, so I got used to working by myself…"*
>
> *"Even when it comes to orientation, those things are hardly done because when someone new comes they just look at them and say to social workers: 'Can you orientate for the next three months'?"*
>
> *"I think both of us are busy because they are both coordinating the programs and supervising at the same time. So by the time that I am free, she is busy and by the time that she is free I am also busy."*

One reason given for the inability of supervisors to supervise was that they were allocated other tasks. Prominent among these additional tasks, particularly in the case of DSD supervisors, were the monitoring of welfare programmes which are: substance abuse, social crime prevention, and services to children and families.

These programmes, because they appear in the Annual Performance Plan (APP) of the DSD, automatically take precedence over supervision. The reason for this is that the APP is a tool used by the South African Parliament to monitor the performance of Government departments. Parliament conducts quarterly discussions of APPs, assessing whether quarterly targets have been achieved or not. Given the political nature of the activities contained in an APP, managers, supervisors and all workers focus their efforts on these to achieve the set targets - to the detriment of supervision. Even when supervision takes place, supervisors

mostly focus on statistics as this is how performance is reported in the APP**.** This is confirmed by the participant who said:

> *"Even the supervisors when they supervise us they ask the numbers… The other theoretical areas, theoretical basis and theoretical fields are just out."*

The issue of allocating extra duties to social work supervisors in South Africa is echoed by Adamson (2011), Beddoe (2012) and Egan (2012), who note that supervisors do have other managerial tasks to attend to but warn that this places supervision on the back burner.

In organisations which experience a shortage of social workers, it is not uncommon for supervisors to have to manage cases in addition to their supervisory work (Hughes, 2010). The *Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Service Practitioners* (DSD, 2017) refers to a shortage of social workers even though there is a pool of unemployed social work graduates whose studies were sponsored by the Department. This can only point to a lack of foresight and planning by those responsible for absorbing and placing social work graduates in various existing DSD welfare programmes. In the light of these challenges, it appears that, in South Africa, it will remain a reality for a while for supervisors to carry caseloads.

6.2.1.3. **Monitoring and coordinating**

Participants acknowledged that their supervisors monitored their work, but especially their cases. Some felt that the way they were monitored was equivalent to policing and that this did not add value to their work. A participant said:

> *"She also monitors the cases. Do you have lapsed cases? What are the reasons behind the lapsing of those cases?"*

Another said:

> *"But for me she is more on the administrative side because that is where she checks your cases. If you have lapsed orders, what is happening with the cases; how many cases do you have, stuff like that. So, for me she is more on the administrative part…"*

Referring to the way they were supervised, this participant said:

> *"It is policing…"*

Monitoring, which is part of the administrative function, was the activity most experienced by the participants. Monitoring should ideally include assessing the quality of services rendered to clients and ascertaining whether social workers were managing their cases well.

Given the state of supervision, it did not appear that the quality of work was considered during monitoring. This contradicts the notion of the NASW & ASWB (2013) which expects monitoring involve quality-assurance of the work done by supervisees. Monitoring, like supervision, should be of high quality and should not be used as a tool to police social workers (Cojocaru, 2005; Tsui, 2005; DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Instead, it should be done in such a way that it empowers workers while providing solutions to their challenges (CEREAS, 2011). In line with the findings of this study, the area of monitoring needs attention to ensure that it is not used merely to achieve set targets and statistics, but that it also helps social workers grow by finding solutions to problems they experience.

6.2.1.4. **Format of supervision**

It emerged from the participants' remarks that they expected supervision to have structure and to follow a particular format; in other words, it should be planned and have a schedule. Participants saw supervision as a formal activity and, therefore, it should be treated as such. One participant said:

> *"There must be supervision session schedules. And they should be followed."*

Planning for supervision is considered important as it brings structure and purpose to supervision. It needs to include such matters as the agenda, frequency of supervision, duration of sessions and contracts. The *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* also supports structure and format for supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Important is that both supervisors and supervisees should be consistent in following an agreed-upon supervision schedule. Based on reports from social workers they were not receiving supervision, and supervisors were not following schedules.

6.2.1.4 (a) Structured supervision

Once more, the participants placed emphasis on the importance of having a schedule for supervision and a contract for structure as was indicated by what this participant said:

> *"Supervision must be structured and there must be a signed contract between a supervisor and a social worker."*

This participant admitted that there was a supervision schedule, stating:

> *"But for instance for me we have schedules like where we meet once per quarter for scheduled supervision then she will normally draw a programme or an agenda where there are issues that she wants us to discuss. We discuss intakes. She wants to see my files and the interventions that I did to clients. We discuss the challenges I come across."*

One way of rendering structured supervision is by having a supervision agenda which is agreed upon by both social workers and supervisors and which also incorporates the personal developmental plan of the supervisee (Dan, 2017; Engelbrecht, 2019a). The newly employed social worker requires more structured supervision as he or she is assisted to adjust and grow in the profession (Giddings et al., 2008). The structure creates a sense of safety, consistency and continuity for supervisees (Munson, 2002).

The reality regarding supervision in South Africa, at the time of the study, was that, despite the fact that a supervision structure appeared on paper, it was not always adhered to because the attention of supervisors was drawn to other tasks, or their planned schedule was interrupted by senior managers, which resulted in the continuous postponement of supervisory sessions. It would appear that the only remedy for this is to relieve supervisors of other tasks so that they can focus only on supervision.

6.2.1.4 (b) Informal supervision/consultation

Participants equated informal supervision to consultation, which is what they normally received from their supervisors in the absence of formal supervisory sessions. They described consultation as a less formal form of supervision during which they asked their supervisors for assistance without having made an appointment beforehand. They experienced consultation as a quick way of addressing issues they were struggling with at the time. The remarks made by these participants confirm their assertions.

> *"Yes. We don't have the structured supervisions but we do have situations where we engage one another on a daily basis. So that is the type of supervision that we have. We don't have the formal ones but we do engage on certain levels."*

"I don't think we've had like a supervision per se where we sit and discuss issues of supervision… but I know we've had consultations… and we talk about issues that are affecting the service delivery."

"I just go to her when I am stuck or when I have a problem with the case…"

Consultation seems to be a convenient and quick way of receiving unplanned supervision, especially when supervisees encounter challenges which require immediate attention or have urgent questions which need answers. Furthermore, in practice, consultation differs from supervision in that it does not usually carry administrative responsibilities and accountability (Coleman, 2003). However, to the extent that Hawkins and Shohet (2006) agree with informal supervision (and consultation), they also warn that the temptation here is to avoid formal, planned supervision by replacing it with consultation. The downside of consultation is that supervisees are not obliged to carry out the resolutions reached and the advice obtained because of the informal nature of such meetings (Ng & Ho, 2010).

While supervisors were indiscriminately consulting with social workers, the South African Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) clearly states that consultation should be given only to more experienced, mature and independent social workers.

6.2.1.5. **Experiences of inter-personal relationships with supervisors**

Successful supervision rests on the nature of the relationship between supervisors and supervisees (Pritchard, 1995; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). Both supervisors and supervisees must endeavour to establish a trusting climate (Munson, 2002). This trust can only develop if supervisors provide a supportive atmosphere by allowing supervisees to make mistakes, encouraging open expression by inviting them to discuss subjects categorised as taboo, sharing their (supervisors') own thoughts and feelings with supervisees, and allowing the latter to do the same (Cousins, 2004). Supervisors must be aware that it takes time for supervisees to trust them, and this process might be influenced by their past experiences. For example, supervisees' trust in their previous supervisors may have been destroyed by, amongst other things, having their confidential and sensitive information disclosed to others (Cousins, 2004).

6.2.1.5 (a)Trust and lack of trust in supervisors

Participants had mixed responses to issues of trust. Some participants trusted their supervisors while others expressed mistrust, depending on their experiences. Where there was trust, supervisees could discuss even personal matters with their supervisors without fear. Those who did not trust their supervisors complained that matters were not kept confidential. One participant shared:

> *"With my supervisor you can bring any personal problems and work-related issues."*

This participant had a different experience, saying:

> *"I remember telling my supervisor about some personal stuff. Within minutes it was known. I was so offended. So, that breaks the trust."*

Another participant agreed, saying:

> *"Whatever you share with your supervisor, she will share it with other supervisors on a WhatsApp group. When you come here, they know everything about you."*

Trust is engendered and nurtured over time through support, empathy and confidentiality (NASW & ASWB, 2013:7). Where there is trust, social workers experience a sense of security and are able to reflect, explore and practise new ways of working (Carpenter et al., 2015; CFCECAS, 2015). They will be comfortable with disclosing matters of concern, both professional and personal, to their supervisors. Meanwhile, where a sense of security is lacking, workers usually shy away from disclosing information, even if their challenges affect their work performance. A reluctance to share is usually linked to supervisory styles, which may come across as harsh and judgemental to supervisees (Pisani, 2005). A study by Rosenblatt and Mayer (1975) on the level of students' disclosure to their supervisors, revealed that students who perceived their supervisors as harsh and judgemental practise non-disclosure as a way of coping.

As gathered from participants, it seemed that there was little trust between social workers and their supervisors, with a lack of confidentiality cited as one of the reasons for this. The DSD, and other Government departments, have created platforms which employees, not only social workers, can use to seek help with their personal matters. The guarantee of confidentiality is

assured. This wellness service is usually handed over to private companies which, in the researcher's view, is of great assistance as employees now have a platform on which to express their challenges with the guarantee that they will not be judged. This does not, however, negate the fact that at times supervisors are required to assist their workers with both professional and personal challenges.

6.2.2. **Description of professional conduct in social work supervision**

The conduct of both supervisors and social workers is expected to be guided by the ethics of the profession as provided by the *Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and Rules for Social Workers (*SACSSP, 2016; Engelbrecht, 2019a). Supervisors are expected to have greater expertise and knowledge and be competent in the execution of their duties (O'Donoghue et al., 2006), and their conduct should encourage the trust of their supervisees (Rankine, 2019). Moreover, social workers should conduct themselves in a manner which manifests a willingness to work hard (Munson, 2002).

6.2.2.1. **Conduct of supervisor**

Participants described the conduct of their supervisors on both professional and personal levels, and within the context of their supervisory relationship. Good conduct of supervisors was experienced when they showed respect towards their supervisees, including respecting their opinions. It was also interesting that participants linked conduct to the professionalism and competency of their supervisors. Furthermore, it was recognised as a sign of good conduct when supervisors admitted that they did not always have all the necessary knowledge at hand in relation to their supervisees' work. Behaving as if they knew everything - when they did not - created more mistrust. The following quotes reflect the above findings.

> *"I would trust a supervisor who has self-realization. The one who understands herself or himself. The one who understands what she is doing, so he or she must be self-realized before she can expect any other thing from anyone. That is the one that I can trust."*

> *"It is all about respecting my opinion. Acknowledging that I have my own mind and my own way of doing things."*

> *"He or she… if maybe he or she doesn't know the answer to something that the supervisee has asked, he or she should be able to acknowledge that. That is*

professionalism. You cannot just say 'I don't know'. If you are a serious supervisor, you should say 'I will consult and come back to [you]'. That is professionalism."

Supervisors occupy leadership positions which require them to act as role models (Openshaw, 2012) and their conduct cannot be separated from such a position. In this regard, supervisees watch their supervisors closely and are influenced either positively or negatively by their actions and advice (NASW & ASWB, 2013).

6.2.2.2. **Conduct of supervisees**

Participants explained that good conduct of supervisees included taking responsibility for their work and not always waiting for their supervisors to initiate supervision sessions. They should, however, also take the initiative to consult their supervisors when there was a need. This was explained as follows:

"A professional social worker should always make it a point to go and consult to the supervisor. He or she must not think because they went to university for 4 years they know everything. He or she should know that supervisors are there to assist you. So you should go there because sometimes supervisors won't be calling us for supervision sessions, you should also go there and ask for a session when you feel you need it and you need help."

While the supervisees referred to their conduct from their own point of view, there is a general expectation of how they should conduct themselves in relation to their work. According to Munson (2002:45-46), social workers are expected to: manifest a willingness to work hard; freely talk about problems, cases and situations; be honest about how they feel; show respect for their supervisor; be willing to cooperate with their supervisor; be motivated to learn, and be willing to discuss work and their thoughts about work.

6.2.2.3. **Abusive supervision**

Abusive supervision is defined as subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours, excluding physical contact (Tepper, 2000:178). Hannah et al. (2013) refer to abusive supervision as a destructive and hostile form of leadership which takes place within a supervisory relationship, discouraging and dampening the morale of supervisees at work, as well as stifling their professional and

personal growth. Consequently, it is met with hostility and retaliation (Folger, 1993; Innes et al., 2005) from supervisees, creating a situation in which non-physical violence is met with more such violence.

Abusive supervision is aimed at creating fear and is belittling to those at whom it is directed (Tepper, 2000). Those who are faced with bullying supervisors require more energy than they may have to stand up to the abuse (Hannah et al., 2013). Further, they may also refrain from confronting their supervisors for fear of attracting more aggression. This then creates a continuous cycle of abuse in which workers are always at the receiving end because they cannot stand their ground (Hannah et al., 2013).

6.2.2.3 (a) Experiences and perceptions related to abuse by supervisors

Abuse stifles the professional and personal growth of supervisees. Participants admitted that there were instances when they were abused by their supervisors. Depending on their experiences, participants gave different descriptions of abuse, ranging from being shouted at to be refused a listening ear when it was necessary. Participants also felt undermined by supervisors who did not allow them to participate in decision-making, which they also classified as bullying, as is stated by this participant:

> *"Like the supervisor does not consult you but makes decisions. When they don't allow you to use your* own *discretion as a social worker."*

The following participant perceived the use of vulgar language by supervisors towards them as a form of bullying:

> *"The supervisor using the wrong language. When the supervisor is maybe too emotional to a point of using vulgar language that can be classified as bullying."*

Supervisors humiliating supervisees in front of other supervisees by talking to them in a loud voice was also deemed bullying by this participant:

> *"Shouting supervisees before other staff members…."*

The researcher observed that, generally, among supervisors who displayed abusive behaviour were those who seemed to feel threatened by their supervisees. Another driving factor behind abuse arose from supervisors being bullied by their managers and not being able to retaliate.

Instead, they expressed themselves by misdirecting their anger towards their subordinates who could be viewed as soft targets (Tepper et al., 2008).

6.2.2.3 (b) Perceptions of why social workers abuse supervisors

Social workers agreed that there were instances when they also bullied their supervisors, although not many examples of such instances were given. They mentioned pressure of work as one of the causes for lashing out at their supervisors, as expressed by this participant:

"When we are under pressure, we start fighting with them."

They also regarded the refusal to take reasonable instructions from their supervisors as a form of abuse. This participant said:

"I think also, you refusing to do what you're told to do, purposefully"

Thus, it appears that the supervisees were not the only victims of bullying.

Employees normally identify their supervisors with the organisation. When supervisees are abused by their supervisors, their perception is that the organisation knows about this and supports supervisors with abusive tendencies. In response, those who suffer abuse may resent the organisation and subtly defy its instructions (Tepper et al., 2008). According to Allen and Meyer (1996), abusive behaviour is a sign of workers' lack of identification with the organisation. This means that when social workers either abuse or defy their supervisors, they are indirectly reacting to the organisation. In this situation, supervisors become victims because they personify the organisation and are within reach of the social workers. In this study, there were no suggestions of participants defying their organisation's instruction due to experiencing what they regarded as bullying form their supervisors.

6.2.2.3 (c) Perceptions of the reasons for abuse in supervision

Participants' perceptions of why supervisors sometimes resorted to bullying behaviour varied. One explanation offered was that supervisors bully their supervisees because of their own inability to deal with personal frustrations. One participant expressed it this way:

"I am thinking sometimes they come with their personal problems. They come from home and they take out their stress on us."

Participants did comment that abusive behaviour can be learned from others. Supervisors might be bullied by their managers and then tend to become bullies themselves (borne out by Tepper et al., 2008) as can be seen in this statement:

> *"… I think she was also bullied because she said she is not allowing anyone to take advantage of her. It seems that she persevered a lot for a very long time. So this time, I think the supervisor that used to bully her, changed her to bullying others."*

Another participant viewed bullying by supervisors as a show of power, particularly if a supervisor felt threatened by a subordinate. The participant explained it in the following manner:

> *"Sometimes, when they are threatened by their supervisees, they can react by exerting unnecessary authority, showing subordinates that they are in charge and that they have long been in the organization. That can be bullying."*

6.2.3. **Expectations relating to supervision**

Within the supervisory relationship both supervisor and supervisees have expectations of each other. It is generally accepted that supervisors would have more knowledge and experience than their supervisees, which is why they had been promoted to the supervisory position (Munson, 1979). At the same time, supervisors expect social workers to deliver effective services to clients (Munson, 2002).

6.2.3.1. **Perceptions regarding supervisors' expectations of supervisees**

The main expectation which supervisors have of supervisees is a work ethic. Any other expectations are secondary to this. This participant expressed her understanding of what her supervisor expected:

> *"I think they expect commitment to our work as much as we expect commitment on their side and they expect us to be productive and to execute our duties well and to serve the communities that we are supposed to be serving."*

This was echoed by another participant who expressed this:

> *"For the work to be done. They expect progress."*

The successful delivery of work by supervisees can only take place in a conducive environment which is characterised by good communication, where supervisors listen and give feedback to supervisees (Munson, 2002).

As the responses of the supervisors clearly showed, they shared one main expectation, namely that supervisees applied themselves to their work. Whatever friction existed between supervisors and supervisees was mainly related to the delivery of services by social workers. The study has also revealed, however, the difficult conditions (irregular supervision sessions, lack of resources and heavy workloads) under which the participants operated. These were supervisory issues that needed to be addressed and improved to enable social workers to deliver services in a productive manner and satisfy the expectation that they were committed to their work.

6.2.3.2. **Supervisees' expectations of supervisors**

Participants regarded support as important in their working relationship with their supervisors as this encouraged them and expanded their work-related knowledge and skills. They expressed a need to receive planned individual attention, or the equivalent of individual supervision. They expected open and honest communication with their supervisors who could then point out areas where they, as supervisees, needed to improve in the execution of their work. They also stated that they preferred supervisors to point out their mistakes in an individual supervision session and not in a group. One participant expressed it by saying:

> *"If she is dissatisfied about maybe the rate at which you are working, then she can call you in as an individual and say I am concerned about this, what is the status of certain cases if are they not moving faster."*

This was echoed by another participant who stated:

> *"Actually I expect a supervisor who is not always going to be ok even though there is something that I am not perfectly doing, because I believe it's through supervision whereby I get assisted. I expect to grow professionally through supervision."*

One-on-one communication is preferred as this participant stated:

> *"I expect a supervisor who will encourage or promote the one-on-one conversation whenever there is an issue that needs to be discussed."*

However, the reality of their work situation differed from their expectations. Consequently their morale was dampened, affecting their productivity. The South African *Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Service Practitioners* (DSD, 2017) referred to the lack of supervision as a problem which needed to be addressed. Supervision of social workers continued to be a subject of debate, being the focus of a Social Work Indaba in 2015 where it was declared that social work supervision had to be improved (DSD, 2017).

6.2.3.2 (a) Supervision should include the three main functions

Participants demonstrated their knowledge of the importance of the three main functions of supervision (administration, education and support) by sharing that they expected their supervisors to be competent in them and apply them during supervision sessions as a form of development and holistic professional support. In this regard, participants remarked:

> *"From what I have learned, social work supervision should be educational, administrative and supportive, meaning that your supervisor must support you in everything you do, including your personal matters."*

> *"We are saying we need a three spectrum of supervision: Administrative, educational and support."*

Generally, the administrative function focuses on monitoring the work of social workers, making sure that the policies of the organisation are adhered to, and also making sure that effective and quality services, that meet the needs of clients, are rendered (Ndzuta, 2009; DSD & SACSSP, 2012; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a; NASW & ASWB, 2013). Educational supervision is the development of social workers through direct teaching and the transfer of skills by supervisors (Dan, 2017). The supportive function aims at improving workers' morale, while at the same time enhancing their work satisfaction (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

Participants were most accustomed to the administrative function, that is, when their supervisors monitored their work. Even then, this monitoring was not necessarily empowering as it was hastily done only to establish whether social workers had achieved set targets. Consequently, the latter, too, found themselves chasing targets most of the time instead of applying therapy with regard to their clients, as they had been taught. This left them feeling as though they were not performing social work.

Based on the cry from supervisees that their supervisors had not been sufficiently trained for their responsibilities, it was hard to tell whether supervisors were able to deliver on the educational function. The skills they were able to transfer were those they had learned from their own supervisors when they were still social workers. All the same, social workers expected supervisors to perform the educational function as a way of transferring skills (Openshaw, 2012).

6.2.3.2 (b) Knowledge

It is expected of supervisors to have in-depth knowledge of their work (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009). However, participants admitted that they would be happier with their supervisors if this was the case. Participants expressed their expectations like this:

> *"They need to read the information. They need to research. They need to update their knowledge."*
>
> *"My supervisor should supervise me according to the latest developments in the field. They should know what is happening. So I can learn from them through supervision. They should know what is new in the field, so I can also learn from them."*
>
> *"I want someone who knows what he is doing and saying."*

Supervisors need to engage in continuous professional self-development to stay knowledgeable. Thus, organisations must create opportunities for learning and development for their supervisors so that they, in turn, can transfer knowledge and skills to their supervisees (Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010; NASW & ASWB, 2013). Given the state of supervision described in this study, it cannot be said with certainty that supervisors were knowledgeable – or capable - to teach their supervisees. This was primarily based on the lack of proper training in preparation for their posts.

6.2.3.2 (c) Guidance and assistance with career path

To create a career path for social workers, the main focus should be on their continuous professional development through guidance and the passing on of knowledge and skills (Cojocaru, 2005; NASW & ASWB, 2013). This means that supervisors should commit themselves to developing their social workers' level of maturity so that they can be promoted to higher levels of the profession. Guidance, for example, entails monitoring the work of social

workers and, based on areas of need identified, offering advice and support as part of that monitoring (Cojocaru, 2005).

During the present research it became clear that social workers expected their supervisors to contribute towards their growth through guidance in their work activities, which could lead to upward progression in their careers. This could also be achieved through skills transfer with supervisors delegating some of their own duties to social workers (Openshaw, 2012). In this regard, participants had this to say:

> *"For me, with regard to career pathing is when my supervisor gives me skills, like report writing. The supervisor must also be able to identify my potential. They must also teach me to be a strategic thinker and help me to be independent."*

> *"If they delegate some work to you, giving you some of their tasks. To me it prepares you for bigger tasks."*

Information gathered during interviews revealed that participants appeared to receive mainly guidance in the handling of their cases. Supervisors attempted to develop their supervisees professionally by utilising the knowledge they themselves had previously received from their own supervisors. However, their own limited training hindered them from empowering their supervisees to advance in their careers.

6.2.3.3. **Feedback during supervision**

Supervisors are expected to give honest, clear, specific, credible and both negative and positive feedback to their supervisees (Shulman, 1982; Freeman, 1985). Generally, the supervision platform is used for this purpose. Feedback concentrates mainly on performance and this enables social workers to measure their performance and grow in practice (Abbott & Lyter, 1999). It is a vital instrument – even if sometimes negative (Shulman, 1982; Munson, 1983) and not immediately appreciated – as it allows social workers to learn from their mistakes. Of course, it may not be easy for supervisors either to give negative feedback.

6.2.3.3 (a) Work-related feedback

In the South African context, a recurring challenge is that of supervisors not having enough time to supervise. It follows that social workers are not receiving the feedback they require.

One social worker expressed her need for feedback on performance, saying

"I expect feedback regarding my work and my performance."

Another participant emphasised:

"The feedback should be constructive."

Munson (1983) argues that social workers (and student social workers) should not be given only positive feedback because this creates a stalemate which hampers their growth (Giddings et al., 2006). In this respect the researcher fully supports the findings of literature: Social workers who are deprived of constructive and performance-related feedback will not be confident enough to apply for and/or accept more senior and challenging positions. Furthermore, Giddings et al. (2006) expound that some supervisors believe that, by giving only positive feedback, they are applying strengths-based supervision, which is not the case. While strengths-based theory does focus on the strengths of the individual, this does not imply remaining silent with regard to his or her weaknesses. The emphasis is that feedback must be balanced and must be aimed at encouraging social workers to learn from their mistakes and gauge their performance realistically.

Work-related feedback is one area in which social work supervision certainly requires improvement.

6.2.4. **A description of preferred supervision systems**

There are two main systems of supervision, namely internal and external supervision systems. Internal supervision is described by Openshaw (2012) as a type of supervision which is conducted by supervisors who practise in the same agency or setting as their supervisees.

External supervision, on the other hand, is done by a supervisor who is from outside the organisation, probably belonging to another organisation (Runcan, 2013). In making a decision on whether to use internal or external supervision, an organisation must weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of each. The most common advantage of internal supervision is that supervisors are within reach, which makes them accessible and, therefore, in a position to intervene, particularly in a crisis. One of the reasons why external supervisors are chosen is that, since they are not involved with the internal politics of the organisation, they are regarded as objective and impartial when dealing with supervisees. Other advantages are that social workers are given time to reflect on their work, and they trust external supervisors to maintain confidentiality (Dan, 2017). The main disadvantage of engaging external supervisors is that

they cannot intervene in a crisis since they are not based within the organisation (O'Donoghue et al., 2005; Bradley & Höjer, 2009).

6.2.4.1. **Internal supervision system**

Most participants remarked that they had experienced only internal supervision, stating that they found it advantageous because of the presence and accessibility of supervisors. Some participants made the following comments regarding their experience and preference of internal supervision:

> *"I've only experienced the internal one and it is working well for me. Maybe it is because the internal supervisor knows what we are doing and is readily available. They are available to assist us where we have challenges anytime."*

> *"The reason I prefer the internal one is because the supervisor is within that environment and is at ground level. They know what is happening and also they are available."*

> *"I think the internal one's advantages is that she is here and she will see everything that I experience here."*

The main reason for participants to prefer internal supervision is thus the availability of their supervisors. They were able to seek and receive assistance from them whenever needed. This notion is also confirmed by Dan (2017) and Cojocaru (2005).

Participants also preferred internal supervision because the internal supervisor was known to them and they interacted with them daily, which helped ease their anxiety around supervision. As supervision relies on building relationships between supervisors and supervisees, participants viewed this as difficult with supervisors outside of the organisation (Hughes, 2010; NASW & ASWB, 2013).

Internal supervision, although commonly used, does have challenges, as this participant explained:

> *"And then the disadvantage of internal supervision is that there might be favouritism: a supervisor might like me over others which will affect the quality of social work profession."*

Participants commented on internal supervisors' lack of objectivity when dealing with them. They reported that some supervisors had friends among the social workers and they practised favouritism when evaluating their performance, often to the disadvantage of those who were not their friends (borne out by Openshaw, 2012).

6.2.4.2. **External supervision system**

Some participants preferred external supervisors because they perceived them as neutral, as these participants stated:

> *"The advantage of external supervision is that they won't be biased. They will supervise equally as they don't know you. No favouritism. They will supervise equally based on the policies and the procedures."*

> *"Because there is a distance between us. We are social workers here and they are managers there. So, only your work will talk for you. Not about relationship and friendship."*

The researcher observed that most organisations in South Africa, particularly the DSD, practise internal supervision. While both systems have advantages and disadvantages, the researcher advises the use of both forms of supervision in organisations, considering specifically the importance of unbiased evaluation by external supervision, which brings balance to the supervision of social workers.

6.2.5. **Frameworks for social work supervision**

Models of supervision can assist social work supervisors conceptualise the process of supervision in a holistic manner (Tsui, 2005). In the helping professions, which include social work, models have been used to order ways of thinking and doing (Middleman & Rhodes, 1985). The application of a particular model (or models) depends on the organisation and what it hopes to achieve. An organisation can choose to apply more than one model to supervision. Participants in the study appeared to have limited knowledge of the frameworks of supervision, and this was reflected in their responses. This confirms the non-application of frameworks to social work supervision.

6.2.5.1. **Developmental social work supervision**

When applying the developmental approach to social work supervision, supervisors equip supervisees with skills to enable them to identify their clients' capabilities, assets, empowerment and strengths. This includes knowledge of people's interactions with their environment and how environments, in turn, impact their lives (Ncube, 2019). In short, the researcher concludes that developmental social work supervision empowers social workers to empower their clients. Although it was evident that participants had limited knowledge of developmental supervision, they made efforts to explain that it should assist them to grow in their profession as was stated by this participant:

> *"It is where the social worker keeps growing in the profession and not only stuck on what they have learned at school. When there are new developments in the field, then we go for training. If there are new Acts, you get to be trained on them. So you are not only depending on what you learned at school."*

The importance of a social worker's professional growth was echoed by this participant:

> *"It has to give someone a chance to grow. The word development, it will have to involve positive change."*

Engelbrecht (2019a) agrees with participants who expected developmental supervision to foster empowerment and growth. Similarly, Patel (2015), who is a South African scholar of the social development approach in social work, maintains that disadvantaged individuals and communities must be empowered through programmes which are inclusive. In the case of social work supervision, it is social workers who need to be empowered by their supervisors.

6.2.5.2. **Strengths-based social work supervision**

Social workers expressed the wish that, in line with the strengths-based theory, their supervisors focus on their strengths and not their weaknesses, as these participants noted:

> *"When it comes to supervision, it should be about the supervisor taking note of your positive strength and not focus on your negative."*

> *"The more they focus on your strengths, you improve more than when they focus on your negatives."*

Strengths-based supervision – which mirrors strengths-based counselling – considers what individuals are capable of and not what they cannot do. This practice requires a paradigm shift from the delivery of service and a social treatment approach to a developmental approach (Engelbrecht 2010b). What is important here is for supervisors to help social workers discover and realise their potential and utilise it in their interventions with clients.

From the study itself, it became apparent that, due to the lack of thorough training in the basics and approach-specific supervision, supervisors applied little of the approaches, which prevented full professionalisation of supervision. Improving professionalisation of social work supervision should include training in how to put the selected approaches into practice.

6.2.6. **Opinions on what is needed for effective supervision**

Giving voice to their dissatisfaction with the state of supervision, social workers pointed out areas which required improvement, such as: the training of supervisors in supervision; a combination of experience and qualifications for supervisors; supervisors' workload; support for supervisors; and supervision policy.

6.2.6.1. **Training**

Social workers emphatically recommended formal training for supervisors in the hope that it would be broad enough to equip them with supervision skills, including interpersonal and management skills. Participants assumed that training would not only prepare supervisors, but would also help them to understand their role broadly, as this participant explained:

> *"I think… we expect that she should undergo some sort of training to be equipped and knowledgeable on what supervision is about and what it entails… Also what we expect from the supervisor is role clarification.*
>
> *She should be clear as to her role as supervisor and consistency in terms of the execution of her role."*

According to another participant, supervisors needed to be trained in interpersonal skills:

> *"They must be taught stress management, conflict management and interpersonal relationships."*

Several scholars of social work supervision would agree with these participants, as they emphasised the importance of training for supervisors while at the same time strongly criticising

the lack thereof (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010; Openshaw, 2012). Furthermore, participants believed that training should be done before candidates assumed the position of supervisor. This is supported by Openshaw (2012), who states that supervisors should receive formal training and obtain a qualification in supervision, coupled with ongoing professional development.

In the context of South Africa, it is common knowledge that social workers are promoted to supervisory positions based on their practical experience only, something which the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) has confirmed. A study conducted in North England's Children's Department revealed a similar situation in which social work supervisors assumed their positions without prior training and based only on their experience as social workers (Bradley, 2006). In Hong Kong, supervisors also relied on skills and knowledge garnered from their own supervisors when they were still social workers (Tsui, 2005). However, researchers expect that, once individuals have been promoted to supervisory positions, they would be exposed to continuous in-service or on-the-job training (Bradley et al., 2010).

Consequently, there are growing calls for social work supervision to be formalised through training and awarding a recognised qualification - without discarding the relevance of past practice experience (NASW & ASWB, 2013). The South African Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) does not strongly commit to the issue of a formal qualification for supervisors. It only states that supervisors should attend a supervision course presented by an accredited service provider recognised by the SACSSP. As far back as 1965, however, training of social work supervisors at South African universities was advocated, which indicates that South Africa is in unison with other countries on instituting formal training for social work supervisors (Engelbrecht, 2010a).

6.2.6.2. **Appointment of persons with qualifications, expertise and experience**

The participants emphasised that supervisors needed a suitable balance of qualifications, skills and experience in order to transfer effectively their knowledge and skills to them (the supervisees) through the function of educational supervision. One participant stated that becoming a supervisor based on one's experience in practice was not enough:

> *"Not because of years they have been practising. So there must be some criteria to employ supervisors not because of the number of years. There should be types*

of skills, knowledge, and the expertise to supervise because we are professionals."

Another participant echoed the above.

"I think that the problem with supervision in our workplace is because most of our supervisors are supervisors because of the number of years they have been practising…But I think to be a supervisor, it is not about the number of years, it should be some qualification and skills to be a supervisor, some expertise need to be developed to be supervisors."

The responses of participants presented a picture of the ideal supervisor whom organisations should employ, a person who is able to demonstrate his/her skills while at the same time holding a qualification. The number of years spent as a social worker are not necessarily a guarantee for competent supervision. This perception of constructive supervision is also emphasised by scholars, such as Giddings et al. (2008) and Baglow (2009).

6.2.6.3. **Supervisor workload**

The study revealed that supervisors carried too heavy a workload and that the ratio of supervisees to supervisor was too high. One participant expressed the need for more supervisors to be employed:

"They should also employ more supervisors so that they can focus on supervising."

Echoing this participant, another participant stated the need for supervisors to focus solely on supervision:

"There need to be created more and more supervisor posts so that, if there is more posts, workload is shared evenly. People…they know their responsibilities; they are not overburdened by having three roles to play because they would be definitely exhausted."

Another participant referred to the supervisor: supervisee ratio.

"By assigning less supervisees per supervisor. I'm not sure about the ratio but not one supervisor having a lot of supervisees. Especially when they are still coordinating the programmes."

According to participants, therefore, among the reasons for low quality supervision were distraction and time-constraints on the part of supervisors due to additional responsibilities, as well as mentoring too many supervisees. A solution to this would be to employ more supervisors and allow them to focus solely on supervising. In other words, they should have no other tasks, such as running programmes or managing the entire office. According to several scholars, the only additional tasks recommended for supervisors are those that are related to management (Hughes, 2010; Adamson, 2011; Beddoe, 2012; Egan, 2012). In South Africa and other countries, it is not uncommon for social work supervisors to carry out tasks in addition to supervision (Bogo & McKnight, 2006).

Hughes (2010) notes that some organisations expect supervisors to carry caseloads because of a shortage of social workers - something which occurs in South Africa as well. The DSD's Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) is not firm on the issue of exclusively supervisory responsibilities. Instead, it accommodates other tasks by differentiating between the numbers of supervisees assigned to different categories of supervisors according to the latter's workload. Specifically, the recommendation is that a ratio of 1:6 be applied to supervisors who execute tasks other than supervising, and 1:10 to supervisors who focus only on supervision. However, participants felt strongly that supervisors should focus only on supervision and nothing else.

6.2.6.4. **Managers' support for supervisors**

It was the perception of participants that supervisors were not receiving enough support from their own managers. This became evident when such managers demanded work from supervisors at short notice. As a result, the work schedule of the latter was constantly disrupted to the extent that they were often unable to supervise. Participants blamed this on a lack of assertiveness on the part of supervisors who allowed their managers to disrupt and interfere with their work as was confirmed by this participant:

> *"Their problem is that they just agree with what the managers tell them to do. We hear managers want this and that, without considering how busy we are. If they don't know what they are supposed to do, they just get pushed by the managers up there, which is not good for us."*

Participants were also of the opinion that the demands made by managers bore little relevance to the social services rendered. They added that the managers' demands on supervisors were an indication that they had lost touch with the work of the service office, as this participant put it:

> "*Can't the managers come down to ground level? And listen to what the supervisees are saying in order to improve service delivery."*

Participants agreed that supervisors needed the support of their managers, which they were not receiving at the time of this study (Manthorpe et al., 2015; Engelbrecht, 2019a).

6.2.6.5. **Standardised guideline for supervision**

Despite the existence of the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South* Africa (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), the lack of policy regarding supervision was evident, and pointed out by participants as a challenge. One participant commented:

> *"I think supervision should be structured. It is the structure that we need and that there should also be like a guideline to say this is what you are supposed to follow when you are supervising - and consistency that they must stick to, to make sure that it works."*

Another participant highlighted challenges which were experienced because of a lack of guiding policies:

> *"… But I think if there is uniformity to say if you're a supervisor this is what is expected of you then it will not cause division in the office but we will focus to one goal as an office instead of being split apart, especially because at the end of the day we report as a sub district in this office."*

There was general consensus among participants that there needed to be a policy to standardise and guide supervision as some of the challenges experienced were the result of a lack of clear guidance (Engelbrecht, 2019a). The result was that supervisors were left to their own devices, which explained the lack of uniformity in carrying out supervision. This study revealed that the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) was not fully utilised. Some participants could not articulate the contents of the framework, blaming supervisors and organisations for not making the framework document available to them. There needs to be a manner of ensuring that the Supervision Framework is

implemented in the welfare sector and that more platforms are created for discussions on further development of supervision policies.

6.3. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter elaborated on the experiences of social workers in relation to supervision. There were areas in which social workers were not satisfied, such as the inconsistency of supervision (sometimes not taking place at all); the fact that supervision seemed to be conducted mainly for the discussion of cases and checking on compliance with deadlines; and the lack of support from supervisors. Participants also wished to develop positive relationships with their supervisors. Improvement in these areas was seen as essential to enabling them to render more effective services to their clients.

The next chapter will present the findings of the qualitative data collected from social work supervisors regarding their experiences and needs.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS

7.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the analysis of data regarding social work supervisors' experiences of supervision. Similarities emerged among most of the themes touched upon by both social workers and supervisors during the interviews. In such instances, the researcher made use of the same literature to deliberate on the findings. Data collected were analysed and interpreted using the qualitative data analysis process (Patton, 2015; Schwandt, 2007). This process entailed identifying themes, highlighting those using direct quotations and citing relevant literature that supports them. The following table reflects the profile of DSD supervisors who participated in the study:

Table 7:1: Profile of DSD Supervisors who Participated in the Qualitative Study

Province	District/Region	Number of Supervisors Interviewed	Gender	Race	Age Range	Qualifications	Years of experience as a supervisor
Gauteng	North Rand Region	2	1 Male; 1 Female	All black	40-47	Master's degree in Social Work: 02	6-10 years: 01 11-15 years: 01
Limpopo	Mutale Local Municipality	2	1 Male; 1 Female	All black	39-45	Degree in Social Work: 02	6-10 years: 02
	Makhado local Municipality	2	2 Females	1 white 1 black	39-52	Degree in Social Work: 01 Master's in Social Work: 01	6-10 years: 01 16 years and more: 01
Mpumalanga	Ehlanzeni District. Emalahleni Service Office	2	2 Females	All black	40-52	Degree in Social Work: 01 Master's in Social Work: 01	11-15 years: 02
	Ehlanzeni District. Middleburg Service Office	2	2 Females	All black	39-45	Degree in Social Work: 01 Master's in Social Work:01	06-10 years: 01 0-05 years: 01
North West	Bojanala District: Rustenburg Local Municipality, Phokeng Office	2	2 Females	All black	42-48	Degree in Social Work: 02	06-10ears: 01 0-05 years: 01
	Bojanala District: Madibeng Local Municipality, Brits Service Office	2	2 Females	All black	40-53	Degree in Social Work:02	06-10 years: 02
Totals		**14**	**Males =2** **Females =12**	**Black =13** **White = 1**		**Degree in Social Work: 11** **Master's in Social Work: 03**	**0-05 years: 02** **06-10 years: 08** **11-15 years: 03** **16 years and more: 01**

Source: Researcher (Ndzuta, 2015)

7.1.1. **Profile of DSD supervisors who participated in the qualitative study**

The researcher observed that all participants were above the age of 35. This could be because of the required number of years of experience before one can become a supervisor. According to the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), a minimum of five years of basic social work is required before one becomes eligible for promotion to a supervisory position.

Another observation was that this group of participants had a white supervisor meanwhile the social work participants were all black. The researcher has observed a low number of white social workers throughout her samples, and she wants to attribute this to the fact that the study was conducted in areas with a predominantly black population.

Table 7::2: Profile of the NGO Supervisors who Participated in the Qualitative Study

Province	District/Region	Number of Supervisors interviewed	Gender	Race	Qualifications	Age Range	Years of experience as a supervisor
Gauteng	North Rand Region: Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie (SAVF)	1	Female	White	Master's in Social Work: 01	50-59	16 years and more: 01
Mpumalanga	Ehlanzeni District. Emalahleni. Child Welfare South Africa	1	Female	Black	Master's in Social Work: 01	35-44	0-5 years: 01
Totals		**02**	**Females: 02**	**White =01 Black =01**	**Master's in Social Work: =02**		**0 - 05 years: 01 16 years and more: 01**

Source: Researcher (Ndzuta, 2015)

7.1.2. **Profile of NGO supervisors who participated in the qualitative study.**

In only two provinces, NGOs were available to participate in the study which contributed to the low number of social workers and supervisors interviewed. In the case of the two supervisors interviewed the researcher observed that their years of experience as supervisors corresponded with their age range. One person (aged 50-59 years) had 16+ years' experience as a supervisor while the other (aged 35-39 years) had 5 years' experience as a supervisor.

7.2. **A Description of Themes**

This section focuses on the themes and sub-themes identified in this study. They are discussed as follows:

- Theme 7.2.1: The current state of supervision in South Africa
- Theme 7.2.2: The nature of supervision
- Theme 7.2.3: The preferred supervision systems
- Theme 7.2.4: Frameworks for social work supervision
- Theme 7.2.5: Training in social work supervision
- Theme 7.2.6: Need to improve social work supervision

Table 7:3: Summary of themes, sub-themes and topics

Themes	Sub-themes	Topics
Theme 7.2.1: The current state of social work supervision in South Africa		7.2.1 (a) Lack of professional preparation for supervisory positions
		7.2.1 (b) Supervision framework not utilised
		7.2.1 (c) Emphasis on monitoring, allocation of work, and supervision as sole responsibility
		7.2.1 (d) Lack of structure leading to lack of support
		7.2.1 (e) Supervision contracts
		7.2.1 (f) The ratio of supervisor to social workers
		7.2 1 (g) Training opportunities for supervisees
		7.2.1 (h) Movement towards professional independence
Theme 7.2 2: Analysis of social work supervision as an essential service	Sub-theme 7.2.2.1: Perceptions regarding social workers' need for support through supervision	7.2.2.1 (a) Nature of the profession
		7.2.2.1 (b) New in the profession
	Sub-theme 7.2.2.2.: Perceptions of what support in supervision should entail	7.2.2.2 (a) Professional support
		7.2.2.2 (b) Emotional support
		7.2.2.2. (c) Practical support
	Sub-theme 7.2.2.3: Perceptions of a conducive context for supervision	7.2.2.3 (a) Description of current spatial context
		7.2.2.3 (b) Structure versus flexibility
		7.2.2.3 (c) Open, encouraging and positive communication
	Sub-theme 7.2.2.4: Analysis of the relationship between social workers and their supervisors	7.2.2.4 (a) Supervisor qualities
		7.2.2.4 (b) Interpersonal relationships
		7.2.2.4 (c) Observing confidentiality
		7.2.2.4 (d) Abusive behaviour in supervision
		7.2.2.4 (e) Social workers' abusive behaviour directed at their supervisors
	Sub-theme 7.2 2.5: Perceptions regarding the importance of feedback to supervisees	7.2.2.5 (a) A learning and empowering opportunity
		7.2.2.5 (b) Sharing information
	Sub-theme 7.2. 2.6: Expectations with regard to supervisors	7.2.2.6 (a) Expectations relating to supervisees
		7.2.2.6 (b) Managers' expectations of supervisors
		7.2.2.6 (c) Supervisors' expectations of managers
Theme 7.2.3: Internal versus external supervision systems	Sub-theme 7.2.3.1: Research respondents' stance on internal supervision	
	Sub-theme 7.2.3.2: Research respondents' stance on external supervision	

Themes	Sub-themes	Topics
Theme 7.2.4: Frameworks for social work supervision	Sub-theme 7.2.4.1: Developmental social work supervision	
	Sub-theme 7.2.4.2: Strengths-based social work supervision	
Theme 7.2.5: Reflections on the need to improve social work supervision	Sub-theme 7.2.5.1: Appointment of supervisors.	7.2.5.1 (a) Supervisor/supervisee ratio
	Sub-theme 7.2.5.2: Supervision as a sole responsibility	
	Sub-theme7.5 5.3: Perceptions regarding the importance of a standardised supervision policy	
Theme 7.2.6: Training in social work supervision	Sub-theme 7.2.6.1: The need for training	
	Sub-theme 7.2 6.2: Perceptions regarding what training in supervision should entail	

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

7.2.1. **The current state of supervision in South Africa**

The social work supervisors who participated in the research demonstrated their knowledge of supervision by describing what it should entail, including that they should train, empower and support social workers. They admitted that they needed first to be empowered themselves, and training was one way of doing this. The supervisors also expressed discontent with the current state of supervision in South Africa, largely because they were unable to conduct supervision effectively. They based this on several factors, which are discussed below.

7.2.1 (a) Lack of professional preparation for supervisory positions:

Neither training nor a qualification in social work supervision were considered when social workers were promoted to supervisory positions, which negatively impacted their transition and adjustment to their new and future roles. The position was usually inherited, with supervisors practising supervision based on what they had learned from their previous supervisors. This is reflected by this participant's statement:

> *"I am doing supervision based on what I have experienced from being a social worker. I am not formally trained. So, it will be better for supervisors to have formal training."*

The need for training was emphasised by this participant:

> *"We need to be trained as supervisors on how to do the supervision. The details of supervision."*

7.2.1 (b) Supervision framework not utilised:

Supervisors were not motivated to make use of the DSD's supervision framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) as a guide for supervision. One of the reasons put forward was that they had not been fully introduced to it by their managers. The framework is viewed by many supervisors merely as one of the documents developed by DSD, not realising its value to supervision and to addressing supervision challenges. This was confirmed by one of the participants:

> *"The Framework we are using currently I don't think it is responding to the challenges that we are faced with at this present moment in time."*

According to the supervisors, not using the framework rendered supervision unstructured and inconsistent, partly because there was no time to plan sessions systematically. Instead, they

consulted rather than supervised, attending to their supervisees when the need arose. This is illustrated by this participant who said:

> *"It is just supervision when the need arises."*

7.2.1 (c) Emphasis on monitoring, work allocation and supervision as sole responsibility

Supervisors explained that, as part of their work, they were allocated and had to monitor welfare services programmes which had targets that needed to be met quarterly. This was in addition to their supervisory duties. The targets to be achieved in the welfare programmes made them appear to be chasing numbers more than supervising social workers. This compromised the quality and time of supervision. As one participant expressed it:

> *"You know, as supervisors and coordinators, the Department on a quarterly basis expects us… to report with numbers. There's no quality in numbers because numbers can be faked anytime and we concentrate on these statistics that is so huge that you must make sure that every quarter you present a report and give it to M & E, and they also take it or wherever it goes to. But these numbers…"*

Participants reported that they tended to prioritise programmes which appear in the APP of the DSD when it comes to monitoring. Reporting on the programmes requires that they provide the statistics of people who had received a service in line with those programmes and the target set in the APP. When focusing on monitoring programmes, case management does not receive the necessary attention. However, they admitted that part of their duties was to allocate work to social workers, followed by monitoring, something which is confirmed by Kadushin (1992). One participant had this to say about monitoring being part of supervision:

> *"By doing supervision we are monitoring the implementation of services and developing the social worker."*

Monitoring, which is part of the administrative function, should ideally include looking at the quality of services rendered to clients and ascertaining whether the cases allocated to social workers are managed well (Beddoe, 2012; Lietz, 2013; Carpenter et al., 2015). From the responses of both social workers and supervisors in this study, it has emerged that supervisors were mostly concerned with monitoring the targets of welfare programmes rather than the quality of psycho-social services. This left social workers with the perception that they were being policed, which this social worker expressed:

"It's policing…"

Thus, the process of monitoring needs to be evaluated to ensure that it is not used to merely achieve set targets and statistics, but also to help social workers grow by finding solutions to the cases they handle.

7.2.1 (d) Lack of structure leading to lack of support

Supervisors admitted there was no structure to supervision, with both social workers and supervisors linking this to insufficient time. Supervisors reported becoming demotivated because of this. One supervisor admitted:

"There is no structured supervision for social workers."

Another supervisor added:

"Social workers are demotivated; they think they don't get the full support. It seems as if they are on their own, we don't support them, and they are very demotivated. And some even want to leave the department, they want to go to greener pastures or leave the profession. It is bad."

When structured supervision is conducted, it means that there is an agenda, contractual arrangements are in place, it is regular and consistent, it is case-oriented, it takes cognisance of supervisees' needs, personal development plans have been created for supervisees, performance management and appraisal of supervisees takes place, and the supervision is evaluated (Munson, 2002; DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Chibaya, 2018).

The lack of supervisory structure is a consequence of supervisors' time constraints. This, in turn, leads to lack of support for social workers which they need in order to render quality services to clients (BASW, 2012). The challenges they encounter in their work, such as the growing complexity of client's problems, unfavourable physical work environments, and heavy workloads have the potential to traumatise social workers (NASW & ASWB, 2013). Supervisors indicated that this situation was a reason why social workers felt the need to leave their organisations and, in extreme cases, leave the profession.

7.2.1 (e) Supervision contracts

Participants agreed on the importance of contracts which guide how supervision should be conducted and which clearly specify the expectations of both supervisors and social workers.

They also highlighted that they had contracts with their social workers. The following quotations confirm the need for a contract between social workers and their supervisors:

> *"There's a contract that should be in place between the supervisor and the supervisee and in the contract, it is clearly indicated what are the expectations from the supervisor's side and supervisee."*

> *"…it starts with the contract, supervision contract. You and the supervisee need to lay terms, terms and conditions on how to do supervision and where there are dilemmas what procedure to follow to solve that. Once you agree on that then the environment will be conducive for supervision."*

According to the following quote, a contract must address relationship matters between supervisors and social workers:

> *"So, in that contract you spell out exactly what is important for the relationship, the professional relationship between the supervisor and the social worker."*

Respondents admitted that a negotiated, written contract, regulating the relationship between supervisors and supervisees, and signed by both (as advised by Hughes, 2010), offered a great advantage (NASW & ASWB, 2013). The view of the researcher is that, where written contracts do not exist, it must be difficult to manage and regulate relationships between supervisors and supervisees, and it was easy for supervision to be overlooked. Contracts also assist in drawing boundaries in the supervisory relationship.

DSD supervisors admitted that, even though supervision contracts existed between them and social workers, they struggled to abide by these as their time was consumed by additional duties.

7.2.1 (f) The ratio of supervisor to social workers

Participants reported that the ratio of social workers to supervisors was high, which made it difficult for them to focus on each individual social worker. From the reports of participants, it was clear that the ratio suggested by the supervision framework was not followed. This was expressed by this supervisor who said:

> *"I think it's because of the ratio between social workers and the supervisor. In addition to this, supervisors have other duties."*

The comment of another participant was:

"They have a lot of cases. You will find that one social worker has three hundred cases, so you cannot cope if you do not have the support from your supervisor."

According to the supervision framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), the ratio for supervisors who carry out additional tasks should be 1:6, and for those who only supervise, 1:10. Supervisors were unhappy with this provision, saying that other activities reduced time for supervision.

A study conducted by Bogo and McKnight (2006) in Arizona (USA) revealed a similar situation in which some supervisors only provided supervision, while others carried a caseload in addition to supervision and were also responsible for community work.

As much as it appears that additional tasks for supervisors cannot be avoided, Hughes (2010) suggests that such tasks should mainly be related to management only. Again, in South Africa, if quality supervision is to be achieved, supervisors' work should be limited to supervision, which would also give them the opportunity to become specialists in what they are doing.

7.2.1 (g) Training opportunities for supervisees

Participants reported that training was mainly conducted through educational supervision and the transference of skills. This supervisor said:

"With me, when I do supervision, I focus more on education and administration. I do this because most of them are still fresh from university. Even those that have experience I do check what it is that they know."

Supervisors, when training social workers, also focused on practical issues, for instance, writing reports. One supervisory participant said:

"… teaching them how to write reports, especially court reports. When I attach my signature to a report, it means I am agreeing with what is in it, and when they are in court, they are also representing me as their supervisor. If it is a bad report, my name is also there. So, I try my best to teach them on how to write their reports, even if it is not only for the courts."

When supervisors conduct training, they facilitate learning with regard to theory, skills, induction into the profession, competencies, self-awareness, attitudes and the values and ethics of the profession (Carroll, 2010:1; Dan, 2017).

Supervisors acknowledged that there was a need for social workers to be given continuous on-the-job training besides the theoretical knowledge they acquired at university - although the training should not differ from the theoretical content. As supervisors pass on to their supervisees the knowledge they gathered from their own supervisors, it is important that they be good role models because their skills are, in turn, transferred to future generations of social workers. Role modelling cannot be separated from teaching (Openshaw, 2012; NASW & ASWB, 2013).

7.2.1 (h) Movement towards professional independence

Supervisors are in a position to observe areas in which their supervisees have grown and encourage them, the aim being for them to become independent. This participant commented:

> *"If you see that the social worker is working for a couple of years and you know there's certain elements that she can function independently. I don't need to supervise her all the time anymore."*

Another said of a supervisee:

> *"She is capable of performing a task independently and she acts responsibly so instead of doing the supervision more often it will go over to consultation."*

Supervision must assist social workers to grow and become professionally independent (Hughes, 2010). This is also acknowledged by the supervision framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), which states that social workers who had practised for a period of three years could receive consultative input instead of supervision. The researcher observed that supervisors did see their social workers grow professionally, encouraged this, and allowed them to function independently – which implies trust.

7.2.2. Analysis of social work supervision as an essential service

Supervisors agreed with social workers that they were not able to conduct supervision as expected due to their additional responsibilities. A study in the United States confirmed that their supervisors were not available to supervise social workers sufficiently (United States General Accounting Office [GAO], 2003). The study on the impact of social work supervision in child welfare practice, revealed that supervisors were not giving support to supervisees as the former were often too busy for supervision. In addition to all this, supervisors were not accessible to their supervisees (GAO, 2003). The above findings agree with those of this study,

specifically that supervision in South Africa mostly takes the form of consultation, and that this was initiated by social workers most of the time. This is apparent in this social worker's statement:

> *"… it is mainly consultations, going in and out of the supervisor's office."*

Lack of constructive supervision deprives social workers of the support and other forms of assistance which they need because their work is stressful and demanding (Van Heugten, 2011; Godden, 2012). Constructive supervision offers supervisees vitally important professional skills and knowledge – as well as resilience – to render efficient and insightful services to their clients.

7.2.2.1. **Perceptions regarding social workers' need for support through supervision**

Here below, two important aspects of the social work profession, which make supervision indispensable, are discussed.

The researcher's view is that, in South Africa, it is unlikely that social workers receive this much-needed support as consultation does not guarantee a stable and continuous assistance.

(a) Nature of the profession

There is consensus in the literature that social work is a stressful, complex and demanding profession (Van Heugten, 2011; Godden, 2012; Carpenter et al., 2015; Dan, 2017), mainly because it deals with vulnerable people (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). The type of cases with which social workers are involved have the potential of inducing trauma in them, which requires that they be supported through supervision (Karvinen-Niinikoski, 2004; Van Heugten, 2011; Godden, 2012). Support generates a sense of safety in social workers, who are then likely to manage stress better, experience heightened morale and work satisfaction (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002), as well as identifying more with the organisation (Baglow, 2009). Both social workers and supervisors reported that sometimes the cases which social workers managed affected them emotionally as they would be saddened by the plight of their clients. One social worker admitted that …

> *"…some of these cases affect our social life. Like you are unable to have and socialise with other people. They have an effect."*

A supervisor said:

"Social work is a very emotionally exhausting profession. You must support them with regard to their work and their caseload."

Although it has been said that supervision sessions are not therapy sessions and supervisors are not therapists, Kadushin and Harkness (2002) argue that there will be instances where supervisors are required to offer a form of support that resembles therapy. Such support helps social workers remain resilient despite the work stresses they are faced with (Collins, 2007; Adamson, 2011; Godden, 2012).

(b) New in the profession

Special attention needs to be given to newly employed social workers to help them orientate themselves and settle into the organisation with ease. Such social workers are most in need of support because they lack the necessary skills to deliver effective services to their clients (Ellett & Ellett, 2003), as well as confidence in their knowledge and skills and, therefore, struggle to formulate proper interventions with their clients (Rothstein, 2001). The following comments, made by some of the interviewed supervisors, bear out the above.

"As a way of supporting them, we must orientate them when they are still new. It is our role to be there for them until we are satisfied that they are able

"Some must be supported because they are still new and do not have skills to handle things like conflict, and difficult cases."

"You will find that some of them they are coming straight from college, maybe it's the first year or just say she has a few months working and she does not have experience in dealing with such cases."

Policies that guide the implementation of supervision should indicate that orientation of new social workers be the sole responsibility of supervisors. Thus, the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) stipulates that, as they require more support, newly employed social workers must have supervision sessions fortnightly for at least a period of three years. Only under extraordinary circumstances can supervisory sessions be replaced by consultation before three years have passed; for instance, when a social worker has experienced professional growth quickly and to such a degree that she/he can operate independently (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The supervisor must compile a report motivating why a social worker is moved from supervision to consultation.

Supervisors reported that they did orientate newly employed social workers.

There was, however, a contradiction between the claims of supervisors and those of social workers with some of the latter saying that they were given the task of orientating their new colleagues. According to the social workers, this occurred when their supervisors could not find time to do the orientation themselves. This social worker participant reported on orientation, saying:

> *"Even when it comes to orientation, those things are hardly done because when someone new comes they just look at them and say to social workers: 'Can you orientate for the next three months.'"*

The researcher firmly believes that orientation of social workers by other social workers should not be allowed as it blurs the roles of supervisors and social workers, thereby creating confusion. Social workers who had been tasked with the orientation of new colleagues considered this as supervisors shirking their responsibilities.

7.2.2.2. **Perceptions on what support in supervision should entail**

The role of a social work supervisor is of pivotal importance, as the next section outlines.

Empowering and motivating supervisees:

The main focus of support should be on the professional growth of social workers, and supervisors must create an atmosphere conducive to this (Dan, 2017). One way of doing this is by looking at the strengths of social workers instead of focusing on their weaknesses (Ledford, 2013). Even though their weaknesses should not be ignored, the main point is to empower and professionally develop social workers to be able to deal with their weaknesses without employing punitive measures (Cojocaru, 2005). The desired outcome of support is social workers who are motivated to deliver better services (Carpenter et al., 2015; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2015). Discussing the issue of support, one supervisor said:

> *"If I have time, I think I would, you know, organize individual supervision with every social worker. I would look at their strengths and weaknesses and try maybe, you know, to empower them."*

Transferring skills and knowledge:

Professional support, which is part of the educational function, aims at transferring skills to social workers, leading to their growth in the profession and to their independence (Carroll, 2010).

Being available and approachable:

What social workers need most is for supervisors to be available and willing to listen to them. This is supported by Kadushin and Harkness (2002) when they state that supervisors must not only be available to social workers but must also be approachable. This was confirmed by one interviewed supervisor who remarked:

> *"Support means that you must be there for them."*

7.2.2.2. (a) Professional support

Referring to the evolution of social work supervision in Romania, Runcan (2013) explained that the need for supervision was equated with the need for professional support.

Supervision focuses on teaching, learning and the development of social workers in theory, skills, competencies and self-awareness (Carpenter, et al., 2015) – and only skilled supervisors can transfer these skills to social workers. Supervisors interviewed for this research aligned themselves with the above interpretation of professional support.

> *"Professional support, you know, in terms of ensuring that the social worker is competent to handle a specific case."*

> *"We need to support them with difficult cases."*

> *"My job is to empower, give them knowledge. That is the foundation of our support. In other words, we should give them more training."*

However, it seemed that, often, supervisors supported their supervisees in how to handle cases. This type of support could become challenging when supervisors became preoccupied with this function (too case-management oriented) and neglected other areas of support (Pisani, 2005:42).

Furthermore, supervisors who participated in the study pointed out that, while they were involved in training and skills development of their social workers, they did this based only on

the immediate needs of social workers, something which is more reactive than proactive. The researcher finds it difficult to state definitively that professional support was part of the supervisors' education programme because they did not have a schedule for supervision and, inevitably, there would not be a schedule for teaching either.

7.2.2.2 (b) Emotional support

Supervisors acknowledged the need to support social workers emotionally.

> *"Social work is a very emotionally exhausting profession. You must support them with regard to their work and their caseload."*

Reflecting on the reports of the social workers, supervisors referred to personal matters which most affected social workers emotionally. They believed that, as supervisors, they needed to be observant and detect those issues when they arose, as this participant stated:

> *"... I must be able to figure if the social worker is traumatized and assist her emotionally. I need to do debriefing."*

Another supervisor elaborated:

> *"They also need to be supported emotionally. If they need to be away to attend to a family matter, I must agree to that. Even when I see that the person is at work but he or she is not feeling well, I release them. That is a form of support."*

This supervisor agreed, saying:

> *"You must build that relationship with your supervisee so that you could also assist them when they are having their own challenges because you must be able to see when this person is going to burn out. You must be aware of that and you must attend to them."*

The emphasis should, however, be on emotional support concerning case-related stress. While participants were aware that they could not ignore the personal challenges of their social workers as these had the potential of impacting their work negatively, their interventions were more focused on showing empathy.

7.2.2.2. (c) Practical support

One participant differentiated types of support, saying:

"I think there's a practical support and then there is professional support."

Egan and Kadushin (2004) argue that, where resources are provided for social workers to do their work, the result is work satisfaction. They add that an adequate supply of resources is even more important than receiving emotional support. As part of the practical support to social workers, supervisors are required to supply them with the tools of the trade, such as office space, computers and transport to conduct home visits.

However, these resources were not always available and, in some instances, supervisors were forced to help social workers by using their own resources, for example, offering social workers their own vehicles. This supervisor commented:

"I think having to ensure that they've got tools… office, the computers, they write reports, they do have telephones, they do have vehicles to go and do investigation… support in terms of having resources to work."

Another supervisor discussed the scarcity of resources, saying:

"I must support them when it comes to resources like transport. There is shortage of transport *and some of them are not authorized to drive GG vehicles. There are times when I am obliged to take them wherever they are going with my car."*

Supervisors reported that they themselves also suffered from a lack of resources – which impeded effective supervision. This has also been established by researchers, such as Frumkin (1980), Bogo and Power (1992) and Ornellas (2018), who conducted a study on inadequate supervision and commented on the unavailability of resources.

In the present study, social workers also mentioned how a lack of resources hampered their work. However, some felt that it was the failure of supervisors to advocate for their social workers to be supplied with the necessary tools.

The researcher believes that, for the sake of effective supervision, supervisors will need to be empowered enough to be able to advocate the provision of resources for both themselves and social workers.

7.2.2.3. **Perceptions of a conducive context for supervision**

Creating a conducive context for supervision depends on multiple factors which this study has looked into, namely the training of supervisors, the structure of supervision, the relationship

between supervisors and social workers, and supervision policy. There are other practical areas relating to resources which also came up in the study and which add to the conduciveness of supervision.

7.2.2.3. (a) Description of the current spatial context

According to the interviewed supervisors, lack of office space, as well as space to keep files in an orderly fashion, posed a challenge which impacted on their work and that of the social workers. This supervisor said:

> *"The problem is that we are overcrowded, this environment itself is not conducive for supervision."*

Another explained:

> *"Even record keeping, the way we keep our files. Our files are just piled in the boxes. If you supervise, you must go through the files and it is difficult. You must be able to go through your supervisees' files even if she is not there. But with our system if she's not there you won't be able to draw a file. If the social worker is not there and then a client comes you won't be able to draw the file you will have to phone her and then ask her 'Where I can get that file?' This is because things are mixed up here due to lack of space."*

From the statements of these supervisors, it is clear that the necessary infrastructure was not in place.

7.2.2.3. (b) Structure versus flexibility

Morrison (2003) and Munson (2002) maintain that the structure of supervision can either be formal or informal. The benefits of structure in supervision include work satisfaction, a sense of safety and security, and social workers feeling supported. The South African supervision framework gives a description of how supervision should be conducted with regard to social workers and other social service professionals (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

Supervisors agreed that, although structure was required for formal supervision, some flexibility was needed. Furthermore, the structure should allow for an environment friendly enough to encourage social workers to talk about their challenges. One participant said:

> *"It needs to be structured. That provides some safety to both the supervisor and the social worker."*

Another expressed the need for flexibility:

> *"Being structured does not mean that it must be rigid that it does not accommodate the discussion of matters that are not on the agenda. There must be flexibility."*

This participant elaborated:

> *"To add, it starts with the contract, supervision contract. You and the supervisee need to lay terms, terms and conditions on how to do supervision and where there are dilemmas what procedure to follow to solve that. Once you agree on that then the environment will be conducive for supervision."*

In the South African context, the researcher's perception is that structure in supervision was lacking in implementation, although it exists on paper. This was made clear from the challenge which supervisors reported concerning lack of control over their time. The root problem is one of poor planning which originates with managers and filters down to supervisors. This not only frustrates the latter, but also their supervisees who were uncertain whether supervision would take place or not, and this left them feeling insecure.

7.2.2.3. (c) Open, encouraging and positive communication

Supervision centres on communication, with the responsibility for this resting mostly with supervisors, primarily because they function as a link between management and social workers (Openshaw, 2012). This requires supervisors to process messages both from and to management and social workers and accurately communicate these (Kadushin, 1992). Besides being the link between social workers and management, supervisors carry most of the responsibility for communication with their social workers as they delegate work, review and evaluate work, give feedback and coordinate work (Kadushin, 1992:65). Kadushin (1992) adds that, when supervisees trust their supervisors, it is easy for them to accept messages and communicate in turn. This makes trust a central factor in effective communication.

Supervisors viewed allowing social workers to share their reflections as a good thing -which requires an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding. Honest communication must prevail so that supervisors are able to correct social workers and guide them towards improving their performance, as reflected in the following reflection:

"When you allow them to express themselves during supervision, like it must be a two-way rather than one-way. You allow them to give their own opinion and understanding of what you will be discussing about during that time. If you allow them to express their knowledge and you express yours, it makes them feel that the atmosphere is conducive because I can be able to talk and express myself. It is democratic."

Another supervisor explained:

"And honesty with your supervisees that when she is wrong you will be able to tell her but in a very good tone so that she will be able to change. You must really be very honest and share your feelings and say 'this and this and this you didn't do well, but you have done this and this and this well."

This study revealed that supervisors recognised the importance of communication and believed that they practised it. Social workers, however, did not agree, and some reported that, when they initiated contact or consultation with their supervisors in their organisations, communication was not reciprocal and free flowing. In their experience, there were instances when their supervisors were forced to communicate with them, such as when it was time for annual performance evaluations. This was expressed by a participant who said:

"…because supervision is only being done when there is Performance Evaluation on the table. That is when we sit down and we talk and that is where we contract for the Performance Evaluation, but other than that nothing is happening."

It was only during performance evaluations that they had the rare opportunity to have a formal session with their supervisor, and these evaluation sessions were stressful for them and their supervisors. They believed that the reason why their supervisors were stressed during performance evaluations was because their (the supervisees') performance was moderated by senior managers and, therefore, they (the supervisors) had no choice but to conduct these sessions.

There would be no need for tension if supervision took place consistently because each session would also be used to evaluate the performance of social workers, rather than waiting for the end of the financial year to do this.

7.2.2.4. **Analysis of the relationship between social workers and their supervisors**

Trust between social workers and their supervisors is usually observed in the context of a relationship where there is support, empathy and confidentiality (NASW & ASWB, 2013: 7). This trust is built over time and supervisors should work on this by displaying empathy for their supervisees. Where there is trust, social workers experience a sense of security and are also able to practise, reflect and explore new ways of working (Carpenter et al., 2015; CFCECAS, 2015). Only a sense of security in the supervisory relationship will give them the courage to begin disclosing matters that bother them, both professional and personal.

7.2.2.4. (a) Supervisor qualities

Another way of teaching and training social workers is through role modelling (Openshaw, 2012) as they can learn professional attributes through observing how their supervisors do their work – namely, diligently (Dan, 2017).

Supervisors were aware that, in order to gain their supervisees' trust, they needed to be role models, as this participant expressed:

> *"I must also be a role model."*

7.2.2.4. (b) Interpersonal relationships

Supervisors reported that their relationships with their supervisees needed to be kept professional:

> *"And also … if you don't mix friendship with your work and there is no favouritism. Just working. You must have a working relationship."*

Agreeing with this, another participant said:

> *"And then the relationship must be more professional than personal."*

In the relationship between supervisors and their supervisees, the former are hierarchically on a higher level than the latter and thus hold more power and authority (NASW & ASWB, 2013). As such the relationship has defined boundaries (Cousins, 2004). For instance, one of the boundaries is that supervisors may not have a romantic relationship with their supervisees (NASW & ASWB, 2013). However, this hierarchical relationship does not shun the principles of the strengths-based approach, which include partnership and participation (Engelbrecht, 2019a).

The researcher is of the view that, for the supervisory relationship to be positive, supervisors must create a conducive atmosphere and be open-minded towards social workers and the ideas they bring to supervision.

7.2.2.4. (c) Observing confidentiality

Supervisors create a sense of security in social workers by being able to keep confidential information to themselves. A study by Rosenblatt and Meyer (1975) revealed that the level of students' disclosure to their supervisors was based on the students' perception of whether their supervisors were harsh and judgemental or not. Where students perceived their supervisors as harsh and judgemental, they practised non-disclosure as a way of coping.

Supervisors agreed that social workers were more likely to trust them if they maintained confidentiality. They explained that keeping information shared with them confidential was one way of showing respect for their social workers. One participant shared:

> *"I think confidentiality is very important…They must know that whatever they discuss with me I will keep to myself."*

Another agreed:

> *"I think the basis of respecting one another is to always create a confidential atmosphere."*

According to the present study, while supervisors agreed with social workers that confidentiality needed to be maintained - and felt that they did so - the social workers themselves seemed to disagree. Reports from social workers suggested that their supervisors were not able to maintain confidentiality and, therefore, they were reluctant to discuss certain issues with them, particularly personal matters. Confirming this, a social worker stated:

> *"I remember telling my supervisor about some personal stuff. Within minutes it was known. I was so offended. So, that breaks the trust."*

As people who had been trained as social workers themselves, supervisors should clearly understand the principle and value of confidentiality and be aware of the implications of breaking it, including losing the trust of their subordinates.

7.2.2.4. (d) Descriptions of abusive behaviour by supervisors

Supervisors admitted that abuse, which Davys et al. (2017) call harmful supervision, existed in social work supervision and that it took different forms. Depriving social workers of the opportunity to participate in decision-making was considered abuse, akin to dictatorship, and something that killed their morale. Disrespecting social workers by shouting at them was, according to these supervisors, also a form of abuse. On decision-making, this supervisor said:

> *"Hmm… maybe making decisions for them or pressing down decisions, pressing down things down their throat."*

From a supervisee's perspective:

> *"Like the supervisor does not consult you but makes decisions. When they don't allow you to use your own discretion as a social worker."*

Another supervisor went further, saying:

> *"Then it's bullying according to me if we decide for them then that is bullying. We kill their self-esteem because it's as if they are just there and they are puppets. You can't dictate to other people, who are all professionals, you're all adults."*

This supervisor elaborated:

> *"From top to down. I am the supervisor. Do what I say. Don't do what I do. I come late. I take three-hour lunch, but the supervisee must take 30 minutes lunch, that is bullying tactics."*

As in any relationship, the abuse could take place both ways, with supervisors abusing their social workers and vice versa (Tepper et al., 2008). Since supervisors are in leadership positions, those who engage in abusive behaviours are demonstrating destructive forms of leadership (Hannah et al., 2013) which will be rejected and met with hostility by supervisees (Innes et al., 2005).

Abuse is also present in the day-to-day interaction between supervisors and social workers. Undermining supervisees was also viewed by supervisors as a form of abuse, as these supervisors stated:

> *"Bullying is in the way a person talks to a person, which is undermining."*

"Reprimanding your supervisees in the passages is disrespectful and bullying."

Abuse is usually aimed at creating fear and it belittles the recipient (Tepper, 2000). It takes a great deal of energy to stand up to abusive supervisors, which many who deal with such abuse may not have (Hannah et al., 2013).

7.2.2.4. (e) Social workers' abusive behaviour directed at their supervisors

Supervisors acknowledged that some social workers bully their supervisors, as this participant admitted:

"People who explode when they are reprimanded, maybe when they have not been able to stick to deadlines."

Another said of their experience:

"You find that the supervisees will even threaten to take you to the unions because that's what's happening, you know, within the department. That is also bullying."

From the statements of supervisors it can be concluded that some social workers used abuse or aggression as a way of covering up their omissions or mistakes. Social workers would also abuse their supervisors as a form of retaliation for perceived abusive acts by the latter (Folger, 1993).

The difficulty with abuse is that those who are being abused usually assume that the organisation is aware of their plight but is doing nothing about it (Tepper et al., 2008). They may then respond by defying the organisation which, they feel, is ultimately responsible for the bullying (Tepper et al., 2008). According to Allen and Meyer (1996), abusive behaviour is a sign of social workers' lack of identification with the organisation, which also leads to defiance. This means that, when social workers either abuse or defy their supervisors, the problem might be related to their dissatisfaction with the organisation - with supervisors becoming victims because they personify the organisation and are within reach of the abusers.

While supervisors did not elaborate on why social workers abused them, the social workers justified their acts of abuse by referring to work pressure, as this response indicates:

"When we are under pressure, we start fighting with them."

It does not matter what reasons are put forward for engaging in abusive behaviour; what needs to be understood is that it is counter-productive and does not yield the desired results. The researcher is of the view that abuse is a destructive show of power by anyone who perpetrates it.

7.2.2.5. **Perceptions regarding the importance of feedback to supervisees**

Feedback by supervisors is important as it assists social workers to gauge their performance and helps them grow in practice (NASW & ASWB, 2013). Supervisors must be prepared to give both positive and negative feedback – even if the latter is unwelcome. Negative feedback points out supervisees' inefficient work, and receiving such feedback helps them to improve (Munson, 1983).

7.2.2.5. (a) A learning and empowering opportunity

When goals have been set for social workers, providing honest feedback, both positive and negative, can help them understand how far they have progressed towards achieving these goals (NASW & ASWB, 2013). They learn from their mistakes and grow in their professionalism (Cousins, 2004; Giddings et al., 2006). Where the feedback reflects good performance, the morale of social workers is boosted, as these supervisors stated:

> *"It boosts the morale. You give both negative and positive feedback. And where there is negative feedback, you need to assist the social worker to turn it into positive. You must find a way of making negative feedback positive, thus making it constructive."*

> *"I think it is good for a person to know where I still have to improve on and is also good for their self-esteem and for their professional growth to know, ok in this area I have done well. Feedback encourages them to work harder."*

This study revealed that supervisors agreed on the necessity of giving feedback to social workers - and their responses gave the impression that they did give feedback during supervision sessions. However, the following question arises: If supervisors did not have time to do supervision, when did they give feedback to their supervisees? The main area in which social workers might have received feedback was through their caseloads as the little time that was available for supervision was utilised for meetings about cases.

7.2.2.5. (b) Sharing information

Supervisors reported that they shared information, which they had received from their managers and other related platforms, with their social workers. They categorised this as giving feedback, as this supervisor explained:

> *"So that they will be informed. Like maybe if I went to the workshop, I come back, I give them feedback."*

Another agreed, saying:

> *"Sometimes we have the meeting, management meeting. When I come back, I give them the feedback on the issues that they have asked."*

Social workers confirmed that their supervisors shared information regarding meetings and workshops which they had attended.

7.2.2.6. **Expectations with regard to supervisors**

The supervisory position comes with the expectation that supervisors will perform certain tasks and fulfil certain obligations, the main obligation being that of conducting supervision. As part of supervision, supervisors are expected to transfer the skills of the profession to their supervisees, either through direct teaching or role modelling, which is done in and outside the supervision setting (NASW & ASWB, 2013). They are also expected to be the link between social workers and senior management (Openshaw, 2012).

7.2.2.6 (a) Supervisors' expectations of supervisees

The main expectation that supervisors have of social workers is to do their work professionally, namely serving clients competently. This supervisor remarked:

> *"Obviously I expect them to do their work, to deliver."*

Another said:

> *"I expect them to service the clients in an effective way. I expect that the clients served must at the end smile and not frown. I expect them to do their work and at the end clients must be satisfied."*

Participants indicated that social workers were performing even when conditions were not conducive, such as when they did not have enough resources in the form of office space or vehicles to conduct home visits. However, it was interesting to note that supervisors

acknowledged their sometimes unrealistic and unfair expectations of their supervisees when the latter were expected to perform under trying circumstances – and without the benefit of constructive supervision. These supervisors admitted the following:

> *"And they must be able to meet the due dates even when we don't give supervision but they must be able to meet to those due dates and attend to the cases thoroughly…"*

> *"We expect them to perform even though we know it is not possible."*

The researcher is of the view that working conditions for social workers can be made conducive when supervisors advocate the needs of social workers to senior managers. Furthermore, consistent supervision will help reduce unrealistic expectations as supervisors will come to know the needs of social workers and areas in which they need to be supported.

7.2.2.6 (b) Managers' expectations of supervisors

While supervisors are expected to conduct supervision as their main function, their senior managers also expect them to perform in other areas, including making production- and service-rendering decisions, keeping control of costs and maintaining a high productivity and morale among the staff (DuBrin, 1997). In addition to this, Plunkett and Greer (2000: 12) outline additional expectations of supervisors: operating within company values and promote company goals, striving for constant improvement, using the organisation's resources effectively, and keeping their managers informed about the unit's status. From the expectations outlined, it is evident that supervisors hold an important position in an organisation which demands a high level of responsibility and accountability.

The present research revealed that managers expected supervisors to perform well, although they sometimes needed to do so under difficult circumstances, often without the necessary resources, as these comments demonstrate:

> *"They expect me to be on duty. They expect me to do the responsibilities that are given to me. They expect me to do the job on time because you're given timeframes."*

> *"They expect me to supervise… and they expect us to transfer a skill."*

In the South African context, therefore, the main question would be: If supervisors are to fulfil these expectations, as outlined by Plunkett and Greer (2000), are they receiving enough support from their managers? Supervisors' concerns that emerged during the course of this study highlighted areas in which they felt incapacitated. Managers interfered with the schedules of supervisors to the extent of reducing the time for supervision - an indication that supervisors had little or no say over their own activities. It is unfair of managers to expect supervisors to perform effectively and productively when they are not given the space and the independence to do so. Stanley and Goddard (2002) acknowledge that there is lack of support for supervisors, especially from their managers.

7.2.2.6 (c) Supervisors' expectations of their managers

The main expectation which supervisors had of their managers was that the latter offer them supervision as well, which was viewed as a form of support. The reality was that this rarely took place (Bradley et al., 2010; Manthorpe et al., 2015. In addition to this, they expected their managers to support them in all ways necessary, whether emotional or practical, and by making available the resources they needed. Supervisors spoke about their needs:

> *"Supervisors must be supervised as well and be given support by their managers."*

> *"We need resources, we need cars, and we need cell phones because we are using our own airtime every day. Every day when I come here I make sure that very early in the morning I buy airtime so that I can communicate with our supervisees who are in other offices which are very far away because I cannot travel I cannot go there every time I need to make sure that everything is going well in that particular service office."*

> *"We also need to be supported by our managers. If I am sick, I need my manager to inquire as to how I am. That to me is support. Even for my family matters.*

> *"If I have a bereavement, my manager should show interest. They must also stop to instruct us to attend meetings which are not relevant to what we are doing."*

In the case of the supervisors in this study, support at a personal level, such as being checked on by their managers when they were ill, was something that they valued. It would appear that managers were expected to be to supervisors what supervisors should be to their social worker

supervisees. In fact, during their supervisory sessions, managers were counted on to offer supervisors something akin to therapy when the need arose, despite the caution that supervision sessions are not supposed to be used for therapy (Dan, 2017).

With regard to the provision of resources, managers should understand that the help they offer to supervisors filters down and benefits social workers and ultimately their clients. However, supervisors also indicated that they sometimes did not receive the support they needed because their managers were not trained as social workers. This meant that they did not understand what social work entailed and what the accompanying requirements were - as described by this participant:

> *"The problem with our managers maybe with some that we have experienced is that most of the managers or some of the managers are not even social workers. So, if a person is a manager and is not a social worker, how will he support you? How will he supervise you?"*

In addition to this, managers were reported to show lack of assertiveness with their own superiors, some of whom were politicians. Politicians were reported to demand that priority be given to their programmes, regardless of the plans and schedules of the managers and supervisors. As this participant stated:

> *"There is a lot of political interference."*

The supervision framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:31) prohibits persons who are not social workers from managing social work departments or organisations or supervising social workers when it states: "Only social workers may act as social workers' supervisors." This is supported by the NASW & ASWB (2013:11) in their statement that social workers "should seek supervision or consultation from another social worker…" However, in the reality of the South African situation, this can apply only in the DSD, which is a department dominated by social workers. In other departments, where social work is not the main core, such as in the Department of Health, social workers find themselves under the supervision of professionals who are not social workers by training - for instance, doctors (Manthorpe et al., 2015; Engelbrecht, 2015).

Policies, such as the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), must be enforced to ensure that workers in the helping professions, or at least social workers and social work supervisors, are supervised and managed by persons

with the same professional training. Furthermore, managers of supervisors must be assertive with their own senior managers who report to politicians by not allowing their own work plans to be derailed to accommodate the demands of politicians (Manthorpe et al., 2015; Engelbrecht, 2015).

7.2.3. **Internal versus external supervision systems**

As previously discussed, *internal* supervisors practise in the same organisation as their supervisees, while *external* supervision is done by supervisors from outside the organisation (Runcan, 2013). The difference between internal and external supervision is that the former generally focuses on administrative matters while the latter focuses more on professional practice, which makes external supervision more meaningful and appealing to social workers (Beddoe, 2012; Egan, 2012).

Both systems have advantages and disadvantages which need to be weighed up when an organisation chooses which one to use. The most common advantage of internal supervision is that supervisors are within reach, therefore, accessible and in a position to intervene, particularly in a crisis. One disadvantage of internal supervision is bureaucracy, which stifles the process of supervision and drives some organisations to opt for an outside supervisor (Bradley et al., 2010).

The reasons why organisations choose external supervision vary and include the following: (a) since external supervisors are not enmeshed with the internal politics of the organisation, they are regarded as objective when dealing with supervisees; (b) social workers are given time to reflect between engagements; and (c) social workers trust external supervisors to keep their discussions confidential (Itzhaky, 2001; Dan, 2017). A disadvantage of engaging external supervisors is that, because they are not continuously based at the organisation, their relationship with social workers may never stabilise. Another disadvantage of external supervision is that it carries an extra cost for the organisation, and this might be unaffordable for them (Beddoe, 2012).

7.2.3.1. **Research respondents' stance on internal supervision**

Participants preferred internal supervision, although they also appreciated advantages of external supervision. The fact that they and their supervisors interacted with each other frequently, if not daily, was a motivation for the choice of the internal system.

Another advantage mentioned was that, unlike external supervisors, the internal supervisor knew how the organisation functioned. A participant explained this, saying:

> *"With the internal, that person is interacting with the supervisee almost every day, you know, she understands the culture of the Department."*

In agreement, this participant said:

> *"It will be good if the supervisor is an internal supervisor because he or she will know about the situations…"*

The perception was that, because internal supervisors were permanently placed, they had knowledge of daily occurrences in the organisation, could closely monitor the work of social workers, and would be more responsive to issues even beyond the scope of supervision itself – such as advocating adequate resources.

In South Africa, the internal system of supervision is the general norm (Bradley et al., 2010). However, this does not necessarily mean that supervisors were able to attend to social workers immediately or when they were required to do so. Throughout this study, social workers pointed out the lack of supervision due to the unavailability of supervisors because of their overloaded schedules, even when they were part of the organisation's staff. This then calls for a careful look at external supervision if internal supervision cannot be improved. At the time of this study, however, internal supervision remained the popular choice (Egan, 2012).

7.2.3.2. **Research respondents' stance on external supervision**

Participants reflected on the advantages and disadvantages of external supervision and mentioned points echoed by researchers, such as Busse (2009) and Openshaw (2012). The advantage of the external supervisor remaining neutral and objective is perceived as leading to greater professionalism in their application of supervision (Busse, 2009). On the other hand, the external supervisor, because of limited knowledge of the daily complexities of the organisation, might not be able to play an advocacy role for their–supervisees (Openshaw, 2012). Supervisees did acknowledge the value of the external system, perceiving the external supervisor as a person who would have more knowledge. These are the comments made by supervisees:

> *"With the external that person shall have been on contract so normally if a person is on contract, she delivers."*

"I think I would prefer the external; someone coming from a different organisation because it would give me an opportunity to learn more like what's happening out there, you know, from the different organisation. How are they handling their cases, which tools they are using in monitoring?"

"The external one would give social workers more knowledge."

Participants assumed that an external supervisor would approach matters differently to an internal supervisor and would also introduce new skills and knowledge. This would then give social workers the opportunity to broaden their professional horizons.

It might be beneficial to consider using external supervision to a greater degree in South Africa, which would alleviate the problems of internal supervisors being unable to focus fully on supervision. The functionality of external supervision needs to be explored, particularly when the advantages and disadvantages thereof are known.

7.2.4. **Frameworks for social work supervision**

There seems to be little knowledge about the theoretical frameworks and their application to the process of supervision as was revealed by participants' responses.

7.2.4.1. **Developmental social work supervision**

The understanding of supervisors was that the developmental theory must influence the professional growth of social workers. This participant said:

"For me, development goes with growth…Developmental supervision should be growth-oriented."

Agreeing, another supervisor stated:

"If new developments accommodate growth, then it is developmental…"

Both supervisors and supervisees explained that developmental supervision carried elements of the empowerment approach, that is, empowerment and growth, which is supported by Engelbrecht (2014). One social worker commented:

"It has to give someone a chance to grow. The word development, it will have to involve positive change."

The developmental approach appeared to be the preferred practice in South Africa, judging from the knowledge displayed by social workers and supervisors when compared to their understanding of other approaches. The developmental approach was designed to address inequity, inequality and discrimination regarding access to services and to meet the basic needs of the population. Thus, the social development approach is clearly an effort to redistribute the country's resources and, at the same time, to practise inclusivity (Patel & Hochfeld, 2013). Notwithstanding this, the responses of participants revealed that it was not commonly practised.

7.2.4.2. **Strengths-based social work supervision**

Participants agreed that strengths-based social work supervision was about encouraging social workers in areas in which they performed best - thus making use of their strengths. It also included identifying social workers' potential and making them aware of it. One supervisor explained:

> *"In strength-based supervision we look at the strengths of the person and we motivate more and encourage more on that. Not forgetting what a person is doing, but encouraging her on the untapped potential. For example, I have cases from institutions and I needed people to do them. The people who have volunteered to them are doing their best. As a result they are enjoying their job. This is something that we just tapped in and they are doing their best."*

This supervisor agreed, saying:

> *"When you are with the colleague, don't look at what she is capable of now or what she is excelling at now. I must look at that unused potential that the colleague has…"*

The strengths-based approach, as a theory of social work practice, focuses on people's strengths, assets, capacities, abilities, resilience and resources (Ledford, 2013) and what they can do best, rather than seeing people as being pathological and prone to failures. The strengths-based approach is based on such key concepts as empowerment, partnership, facilitation and participation (Saleebey, 2013).

Thus, the strengths-based practice is about changing the way individuals and their capabilities are understood and seeks to move away from the traditional paradigm of problem-solving oriented supervision (Engelbrecht 2010b). However, except for what appeared to be some

theoretical knowledge of this approach, there was no concrete proof that supervisors applied it to supervision.

7.2.5. **Reflections on the need to improve social work supervision**

The study revealed various areas as problematic and requiring overhauling. These are summarised here:

- Participants referred to a shortage of supervisors, particularly in the DSD, exacerbated by many of the available supervisors being unable to focus only on supervision as they had other tasks to perform, such as managing programmes, or dealing with cases themselves. Participants recommended that organisations and the DSD employ supervisors to focus purely on supervision.
- The ratio of supervisor to social workers was described as high, despite the recommendations of the DSD's supervision framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).
- All interviewed supervisors were of the firm view that supervision should be an exclusive function with supervisors focusing solely on supervision.

It was apparent that the introduction of the supervision framework had not standardised supervision, with provincial DSD offices applying social work supervision differently. Most provinces were reported as giving supervisors other responsibilities in addition to supervision. In this study, Gauteng emerged as the only province in which supervisors focused only on supervision.

7.2.5.1. **Appointment of supervisors**

The reports of supervisors highlighted questionable practices with regard to appointing supervisors. At times, it was not clear whether supervisors were officially appointed to their posts or whether they were supervising on an ad hoc basis, as this participant expressed:

> *"…if we've got appointed supervisors."*

7.2.5.1 (a) Supervisor/supervisee ratio

Supervisors expressed the desire to supervise fewer social workers than they were at the time because that would help them pay greater attention to each individual.

> *"If you are supervising only three, you are able to identify the gaps and you are also able to attend to each and every challenge that they are having. But if you*

have more supervisees, you end up not seeing them, due to time and the work that you are doing."

"I think on that ratio, maybe they must have something that is standardized. I think 1:5 okay one is to five. Okay I think manageable is one is to five."

Despite the recommended ratios contained in the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), each organisation appeared to apply this differently, and the supervisors expressed concerns that the recommendations of the supervision framework seemed not to be applied.

7.2.5.2. **Supervision as a sole responsibility**

There was a repeated call for supervisors to focus on supervision as their sole responsibility as this participant stated:

"I will say that the Department (DSD) must get people who will specialise on supervision."

In agreement, this participant elaborated:

"If supervisors in Gauteng are doing only supervision, the same must apply here in the North-West."

While the study conducted by Bogo and McKnight (2006) appeared to support the stance taken in South Africa, which allows supervisors to be allocated extra tasks in addition to supervision, and while this may be unavoidable, Hughes (2010) suggests that additional tasks for supervisors should mainly be those related to management. Again, in the context of South Africa, if quality supervision is to be achieved, supervisors should be given the space to practise supervision only. This will also give supervisors the opportunity to become specialists in supervision. Supervisors who participated in this study admitted that they would like to focus only on supervising social workers without doing additional tasks.

7.2.5.3. **Perceptions regarding the importance of a standardised supervision policy**

Despite the existence of the DSD's *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa*, participants reported a partial (or complete lack of) adherence to supervision policy or guidelines. This participant said:

"We don't have a policy and we are aware that other provinces are outsmarting others. So it means there is no uniformity in the Social Development. Some provinces have got supervisors others don't have, instead they've got coordinators. Others are more exposed; others are deprived."

Another agreed, saying:

"Must also have guidelines – yes on supervision."

The non-*existence* (or non-implementation) of policies in social work supervision is a challenge that goes beyond South Africa. A study conducted in England on social work supervision revealed that many social care organisations did not have a supervision policy, and those that had a policy were not necessarily implementing it (NISW, 1995). A later study conducted in Australia on social work supervision revealed that roughly two-thirds (66.4%) of the respondents had supervision policies in place (Egan, 2012).

Those within the social service sector, specifically social workers and their supervisors, need to make concerted efforts to implement the available policies, including the supervision framework. Supervisors, however, regard the current supervision framework as not addressing the challenges and needs of supervision, as this participant stated:

"…The framework we are using currently I don't think it is responding to the challenges that we are faced with at this present moment in time."

Since some of the respondents held this perception, opportunities should be created for the development of new social work supervision policies which would address challenges more effectively.

7.2.6. **Training in social work supervision**

The literature supports the training of social work supervisors, also emphasising that this training be formalised with a qualification issued on completion (Openshaw, 2012; NASW & ASWB, 2013). The NASW & ASWB went further, suggesting that supervisors should hold a degree from an accredited School of Social Work.

The South African Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:32) is neither firm nor specific regarding qualifications, stating only that supervisors should "attend a supervision course presented by an accredited service provider." This soft stance has created ambiguity

concerning the criteria that should govern the appointment of social work supervisors, allowing many organisations to determine their own requirements. What seems to have become a universal requirement - also applicable in South Africa - is that the prospective supervisor should have some years of experience as a social worker. This was criticised by participants in this study as an inadequate qualification for promotion to a supervisory position.

7.2.6.1. **The need for training**

Throughout this study, social workers and supervisors were concerned over the lack of training of those who are appointed as supervisors. Supervisors expressed a need for training before they assumed the position of supervisor, coupled with further and continuous coaching, such as in-service training, after the assumption of a supervisory position. This is apparent from the following remarks:

> *We desperately also need training on supervision."*
>
> *"Even with training, it should be provided continuously."*
>
> *"I am doing supervision based on what I have experienced from being a social worker. I am not formally trained. So, it will be better for supervisors to have formal training."*

It is a clear indication that experience alone is insufficient, and that a combination of qualifications and experience is required (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; NASW & ASWB, 2013).

7.2.6.2. **Perceptions regarding what training in supervision should entail**

There is predominantly a need for training in how to conduct supervision. In addition to this, supervisors needed to be trained regarding the functions of management, as evident from the following comments:

> *"We need to be trained as supervisors on how to do the supervision. The details of supervision."*
>
> *"Supervision training should be on planning, organising, leading and control. Those are the key areas of supervision. Because once you are able to do that, then you have a smooth-running of your programme."*

While some attention needs to be paid to management issues as part of supervision training, other matters which have an impact on supervision, such as the supervisory relationship and the art of giving feedback, must be covered as well (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

7.3. Summary of the Chapter

In this qualitative phase of the research, supervisors gave their views on the state of social work supervision based on their experiences. What stood out in the discussions was that they could not solely focus on supervision as they had to carry out other tasks as well,-which meant that supervision time was restricted. This was, in part, due to a lack of understanding and support from their managers who interfered with their day-to-day planning by giving them extra tasks which did not qualify as supervision.

The deliberations of supervisors on the state of supervision in South Africa were a call for reforms in social work supervision. The next chapter covers the quantitative findings and includes comparisons of both research methods (qualitative and quantitative).

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION OF QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS AND COMPARISON OF THE TWO METHODOLOGIES

8.1. Introduction

The researcher administered questionnaires to respondents in the provinces where the study was undertaken to collect data. This chapter is divided into two sections: The first section presents the quantitative data collected from social workers, while the second section deals with the quantitative data gathered from social work supervisors. The respondents to the questionnaires were the same persons who participated in the interviews, as well as their colleagues who were not able to take part in the interviews. The questionnaires were administered to as many respondents as possible.

To conduct this study, the researcher followed a convergent parallel research design. This is a research design which involves collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data during the same phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In line with the convergent parallel design, in this chapter the researcher draws comparisons between the qualitative and quantitative findings on themes which were addressed by both methods, and then interprets the data. Comparisons are supported by quotations from the qualitative findings and literature. This chapter begins with the biographical data (Table 8.1) of DSD and NGO social workers who responded to the questionnaires and gives a summary of these data.

Table 8:1: Profile of DSD and NGO Social Workers who Participated in the Quantitative Study

Gender	Female: 82 = 77%	Male: 25 = 23%						**Totals: Number: 107= 100%**
Race	Black: 107= 100%	White : 0						**107 = 100%**
Home Language	Setswana 30 = 28%	Tshivenda 43= 40.1%	Sepedi 06 = 5.6%	IsiNdebele 08 = 7.4%	SiSwati 08 = 7.4%	IsiZulu 10 = 9.3%	Other (Shona) 02 =1.8%	**107 = 100%**
Age Range	25-29: 17= 16%	30-34: 45= 42%	35-39: 27= 25%	40-44: 08 7.4%	45-49: 10= 9.3%			**107 = 100%**
Academic Qualifications	Degree in Social Work: 09 = 8.4%	Post-grad. Degree in Social Work: 98 = 91.5%						**107 = 100%**
Years of Experience as a Social Worker	1-05: 17 = 15.8%	06-12: 45 = 42.0%	13-15: 27 = 25.2%	16 years and more: 18 = 16.8%				**107 = 100%**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

8.1.1. **The profiles of DSD and NGO social work respondents**

Out of a total of 107 respondents, there were 82 female respondents (76.6%) and 25 male respondents (23.3%). All respondents were black, which reflects the demographics of the country, as described in detail in the qualitative research section (Chapter 6). The explanation of the demographics is supported by Stats SA's (2011) census data.

The study was conducted in the four provinces of Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the North West. In these provinces social workers are predominantly black, but their populations speak various languages. In Gauteng, a province which is host to migrant workers from all regions of South Africa because of the work opportunities, speakers of all of South Africa's indigenous languages can be found. Limpopo, which had a high number of participants who spoke Venda (28.0%), also had some Pedi-speaking participants (5.6%). The demographics of the Mpumalanga Province were reflected by participants who spoke Ndebele, Swati and Zulu. An interesting phenomenon in Mpumalanga was that one NGO had two Shona-speaking social workers in its employ. The presence of a range of languages in each province also meant that social workers needed to be conversant in these languages so as to best serve the clients.

The age range (25-49 years) of the respondents broadly represents South African society. The assumption was that some of those aged 50 and above might have been promoted to supervisory positions based on their professional experience, while others might have left the profession due to limited chances of promotion. As social workers consider a four-year qualification equivalent to a post-graduate degree, the statistics present 98 out of the 107 respondents (91, 5%) as holding a post-graduate degree. The majority of the respondents (42%) had 6 to 12 years' experience as social workers. This is a fair reflection of the social work population in South Africa.

8.2. **Quantitative Findings based on Social Workers' Responses**

Questions posed using the quantitative method were designed to mirror those of the qualitative method - with a few exceptions. The researcher observed that, for similar questions, there were stark differences between responses to the semi-structured interview questions and responses to the questionnaire. In their responses to the questionnaire, the social workers largely displayed satisfaction in many areas of supervision, whereas in the interviews they exhibited great frustration when presented with the same questions and themes. There were also questions in the questionnaire to which they did not respond. According to research protocol (Delport &

Roestenburg, in De Vos et al., 2011), the researcher was required to remain in the background with minimal participation while respondents were completing the questionnaire and, therefore, had no influence on this activity.

The following discussions reflect responses to the questionnaire.

8.2.1. **Need for training in supervision**

Table 8.2 displays the responses regarding supervisors' need for training.

Table 8:2: Supervisors Requiring Training in Supervision

Supervisor requires training in supervision	Responses	Frequency	Percent
	Yes	52	48.6
	No	19	17.8
	Do not know	4	3.7
	Missing Value	32	29.9
	Total (Answered)	75	70.1
	Total (Participants)	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Regarding the need for training in supervision (Table 8.2), 48.6% of the respondents agreed that there was a need for supervisors to receive training in the subject. Only 17.8% deemed this not necessary, while 29.9% did not respond to the question. However, the need for training before a promotion to supervisor position was emphatically endorsed in the qualitative findings, as is confirmed by this comment:

> *"Yes. I think supervision should entail formal qualification…"*

> *"I am doing supervision based on what I have experienced from being a social worker. I am not formally trained. So, it will be better for supervisors to have formal training."*

The notion of not considering only supervisors' social work experience for promotion is also underscored by Botha (2002:5), who states that selecting supervisors from those who perform best as operative workers – as is normally done - might be counterproductive, as this does not guarantee that "the incumbent would be an efficient supervisor." This supports the concept that experience must be coupled with a qualification to be eligible for promotion as a supervisor.

8.2.2. **Theoretical framework**

The following table displays data with regard to the application of social work supervision according to theoretical approaches.

Table 8:3: The Application of Social Work Supervision Models

Is supervision applied in your organisation based on any theoretical approach?	Responses	Frequency	Percent
	Yes	50	46.7
	No	53	49.5
	Total (Answered)	103	96.3
	Missing value	4	3.7
	Total (Participants)	107	100.0
The organisation practises developmental social work supervision.	Yes	72	67.3
	No	28	26.2
	Total (Answered)	100	93.5
	Missing value	7	6.5
	Total (Participants)	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

The questionnaire contained questions pertaining to organisations' use of a specific theoretical approach to supervision. According to Table 8.3, 46.7% of the respondents acknowledged that their organisations applied a particular model, with the most common one being the developmental approach, as indicated by 67.3% of the social workers. The organisations of 49.5% of respondents did not practise any theoretical approach, as far as the respondents were aware of. According to 26.2% of participants, even the developmental approach was not practised by their organisations.

However, the qualitative data present a very different scenario: social workers' responses revealed that they lacked knowledge of these models. This, and the quantitative data in Table 8.3, indicate that some organisations might not be applying any of the approaches. Nevertheless, social workers agreed that developmental social work and supervision should promote growth of the practitioner, as is reflected in the following comment:

> *"It is where the social worker keeps growing in the profession and not only stuck on what they have learned at school…"*

The lack of application of theoretical approaches, whether to the general practice of social work or to planned supervision, is of great concern, as social workers seem to survive on consultation - usually unplanned – and this deprives them of professional growth.

8.2.3. **The role of gender and culture in supervision**

Table 8.4 focuses on whether gender and culture influenced social work supervision.

Table 8:4: Gender and Culture Playing a Role in Supervision

	Responses	Frequency	Percent
Does gender play a role in supervision?	Yes	21	19.6
	No	82	76.6
	Total (Answered)	103	96.3
	Missing value	4	3.7
	Total (Participants)	**107**	**100.0**
Does culture play a role in supervision?	Yes	31	29.0
	No	71	66.4
	Total (Answered)	102	95.3
	Missing value	5	4.7
	Total (Participants)	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Gender and culture did not seem to have an influence on supervision, be it negative or positive. This was shown by the responses of social workers, as 76.6% of them said gender did not play a role, and 66.4% viewed culture as not playing a role in supervision.

This is because, generally, many social workers and supervisors worked in their places of birth or origin where their own cultures were practised, thereby making it easy for them to understand each other. Those who migrated to other areas gave themselves time to adapt to the culture they found themselves in, which helped them understand each other during the process of supervision. In contrast to these findings, various authors believe that gender, culture and race can influence supervision, particularly if supervisors are insensitive to issues of diversity (Shulman, 1982; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Munson, 2002). In this context, Kadushin and Harkness (2002) urge supervisors to remain neutral in their treatment of supervisees. The same neutrality is required from social workers when dealing with clients. Over-identification with personal culture can interfere with perceptions of the individuals one is dealing with, in this case, leading to clouded judgement on matters relating to supervisors/supervisees, as well as clients (Munson, 2002). These questions were not part of the qualitative study.

8.2.4. **Trusting relationships**

Table 8.5 focuses on whether social workers trusted their supervisors

Table 8:5: Supervisee Trusting Supervisor

Do you trust your supervisor?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	74	69.2
	No	32	29.9
	Do not know		
	Total	106	99.1
	Missing value	1	.9
	Total	**107**	**100.0**
Does your supervisor adhere to the principle of confidentiality?	Yes	69	64.5
	No	37	34.6
	Total	106	99.1
	Missing value	1	.9
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

One of the cornerstones of social work supervision is the trust which exists in the professional relationship between social workers and their supervisors (Cousins, 2004). Greater responsibility is placed on supervisors to create conditions conducive for their supervisees to trust them.

One motivating factor which generates trust is when supervisors are perceived as maintaining confidentiality (NASW & ASWB, 2013). In this regard, and according to Table 8.5, 69.2% of the social workers indicated that they trusted their supervisors, while 29.9% did not trust their supervisors, and 64.5% agreed that their supervisors adhered to the principle of confidentiality.

As was shown by the qualitative findings, trust depended on the type of relationship that existed between social workers and their supervisors. Those who had experienced positive relationships with their supervisors were inclined to trust them, which also encouraged the participants to disclose their personal matters. This participant remarked:

> *"With my supervisor you can bring any personal problems and work-related issues."*

In contrast to a trusting relationship, social workers felt betrayed by supervisors who disclosed information that was shared in confidence. One participant expressed it in the following way:

> *"I remember telling my supervisor about some personal stuff. Within minutes it was known. I was so offended. So, that breaks the trust."*

The result of such behaviour by supervisors was that social workers stopped trusting them.

8.2.5. **Supervisors' professionalism**

Table 8.6 focuses on whether supervisors acted professionally towards social workers.

Table 8:6: Professional Conduct of Supervisors Towards Supervisees

Does your supervisor act professionally towards you?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	No	30	28.0
	Total	105	98.1
	Missing value	2	1.9
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

According to Table 8.6, 70.1% of the social workers agreed that their supervisors acted professionally towards them. Only 28% experienced unprofessional conduct by their supervisors. Professionalism, in the view of participants, was when supervisors were competent in their work, were more knowledgeable of the profession than their supervisees, were able to make decisions, and acknowledge their mistakes. This view of professionalism is echoed by Carpenter et al. (2015) and inspires confidence and trust in supervisees, as this social worker explained:

> *"I would trust a supervisor who has self-realization. The one who understands herself or himself. The one who understands what she is doing, so he or she must be self-realized before she can expect any other thing from anyone. That is the one that I can trust."*

In addition to this, and according to social workers, professionalism is when supervisors treat them with respect, whilst the opposite is considered to be unprofessional.

8.2.6. **Time for reflection**

Table 8.7 focuses on whether supervisors gave social workers time to reflect during supervision.

Table 8:7: Giving Time to Reflect on Practices during Supervision

Does your supervisor give you time to reflect during supervision?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	72	67.3
	No	35	32.7
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Table 8.7 indicates that most social workers (67.3%) acknowledged that they were afforded opportunities to reflect during supervision. As gathered during the research, in many organisations the focus of supervision was generally on case management, which leads to the

conclusion that the reflections of social workers were mostly concerned with their cases. Of the social workers, 32.7% reported that they were not given opportunities to reflect during supervision.

Supervision can be the platform for social workers to reflect and learn (Carroll, 2009a) as they critically think about their work experiences and related emotions. This helps them grow professionally as they come to understand their actions in the context of their agencies. For reflection to take place, supervisors must create a conducive climate in which social workers feel free to express themselves (Hughes, 2010). The qualitative study did not have a question relating to reflection.

8.2.7. **Supervision support**

Table 8.8 focuses on whether social workers felt supported by their supervisors

Table 8:8: Support for Supervisees and Supervisors

Do you feel supported by your supervisor?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	72	67.3
	No	30	28.0
	Total (Answered)	105	95.3
	Missing value	2	1.9
	Total (Participants)	**107**	**100.0**
Do you think your supervisors are supported by their managers?	Yes	46	43.0
	No	55	51.4
	Total (Answered)	101	94.4
	Missing value	6	5.6
	Total (Participants)	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Supervision is the main platform for social workers to receive support (Dan, 2017) in order to deal with the challenges they encounter in their work, such as complex problems presented by clients, unfavourable physical work environments and heavy workloads, which can, potentially, induce trauma in social workers (NASW & ASWB, 2013). Thus most support is needed with the cases they manage. Supervisory support will also help them make professional judgements and decisions when working with their clients (BASW, 2012). Moreover, the likelihood is that they will develop trust for their supervisors. It is, therefore, the responsibility of supervisors to create a supportive atmosphere which will generate trust in their supervisees (Shulman, 1982).

Table 8.8 shows that most social workers (67.3%) reported that they received support from their supervisors, while 28% said they had not received support.

The qualitative findings and discussions showed that different types of support were required by social workers, including emotional support, practical support and support with cases. However, social workers mostly received support regarding cases, although they considered emotional support as most important. Some decried the lack of emotional support, reporting this as eventually having a negative effect on their work performance. It could be concluded from the qualitative study that supervisors were not providing enough emotional support to their social workers. Illustrating this, two participants said:

> *"As much as I am an employee, I am a person as well. I am an individual. That is why it makes it hard for us to open up sometimes because you are not given an opportunity to share them. All the time it's work."*

> *"Unless if you are brave enough to hint that there is something wrong in your personal well-being. But yes, the focus is mostly on the work that we do."*

The lack of support was partially caused by supervisors being overloaded with work, which meant that they were not able to focus solely on supervision. This is illustrated by the following statement:

> *"They are both coordinating the programs and supervising at the same time. So by the time that I am free, she is busy and by the time that she is free I am busy."*

When the social workers were asked whether supervisors were supported by their managers, 51.4% of the respondents believed that their supervisors had not received support from their managers, while 43% thought they had. Supervisors expressed the desire to be supported by their managers, but they also indicated that these expectations were not usually met. This lack of support could result in their experiencing burnout (Engelbrecht, 2019a). Manthorpe et al. (2015) also highlight the need for supervisors to be supported.

8.2.8. **Supervision policy**

Table 8.9 looks at whether organisations have a policy in supervision

Table 8:9: The Existence of a Supervision Policy in the Organisation

Does your organisation have a supervision policy?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	51	47.7
	No	44	41.1
	Total	95	88.8
	Missing value	12	11
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

There is little difference between the percentage responses to this question, with 47.7% of respondents agreeing that their organisation had a supervision policy and 41.1% saying they did not (Table 8.9). The most commonly known policy document in the welfare sector is the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), which aims to bring structure to supervision. Although this framework has been made available to all organisations, particularly the employees of DSD, it was gathered from some of the participants' responses that it is not fully utilised. Some respondents were unaware of its existence, as can be deduced from this respondent's statement:

> *"There should also be like a guideline to say this is what you are supposed to follow when you are supervising..."*

The percentage of respondents who reported that their organisation did not have a policy on supervision is, at 41.1%, a significant figure, which has left both social workers and supervisors with a lack of direction.

8.2.9. **Quality time for supervision**

Table 8.10 looks at whether social workers received quality supervision from their supervisors.

Table 8:10: Offering Quality Supervision, Making Time for Advice and Consultation

Function	Description	Frequency	Percent
Does the supervisor offer you quality supervision	Not descriptive of my supervisor	10	9.3
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	24	22.4
	Descriptive of my supervisor	24	22.4
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	20	18.7
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	27	25.2
	Total answered	105	98.1
	Missing value	2	1.9
	Total number of participants	**107**	**100.0**
Making time for me for advice and consultation.	Not descriptive of my supervisor	7	6.5
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	23	21.5
	Descriptive of my supervisor	16	15.0
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	24	22.4
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	32	29.9
	Total answered	102	95.3
	Missing value	5	4.7
	Total number of participants	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Table 8.10 shows that most respondents (66, 3%) affirmed that they had received quality supervision (from 'descriptive of' to 'perfectly descriptive of my supervisor'). This response differs sharply from the qualitative findings which indicated that respondents felt that they were receiving poor supervision and, at times, not receiving supervision at all. Here, only 9.3% of respondents reported not receiving quality supervision at all.

Quality supervision requires making time for social workers and, in this way, offering support. This was often not possible because managers put supervisors under constant pressure to meet other targets which were not related to supervision, but which included the number of cases which social workers were supposed to manage within specified time frames. This participant explained:

> *"Even the supervisors when they supervise us they ask the numbers, how many have you placed, that's where the focus is. The other theoretical areas, theoretical basis and theoretical fields are just out."*

As a result, supervisors usually found themselves focusing on task management – predominantly on targets and statistics - such as the management of cases and ensuring that social workers complied with regulatory and contractual mandates. In essence, supervisors did far more monitoring than guiding and supporting, whereas supervision should ideally focus on the *quality* of services rendered to clients and ensure that social workers were managing the cases allocated to them well (Beddoe, 2012; Lietz, 2013; Carpenter et al, 2015).

On the question of supervisors making time for advice and consultation, most respondents (67.3%) - from 'descriptive of' to 'perfectly descriptive of my supervisor' - affirmed that they did receive consultation from their supervisor. This participant agreed, saying:

> *"We are on a consultation basis…"*

Consultation is described as an activity which is done at the request of the social worker and does not focus on administration (Cloete, 2012). The qualitative findings revealed that, while there was a lack of supervision of social workers, supervisors were available for consultation. Consultation is useful because it can be unplanned, and social workers can approach supervisors to request this, which eases the scheduling burden for supervisors (Engelbrecht, 2019a).

8.2.10. **Supervision skills**

Table 8.11 looks at whether supervisors had supervision skills.

Table 8:11: Are Supervisors Equipped with Supervision Skills?

Is your supervisor equipped with supervision skills?	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Not descriptive of my supervisor	8	7.5
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	24	22.4
	Descriptive of my supervisor	25	23.4
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	26	24.3
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	22	20.6
	Total	105	98.1
	Missing system	2	1.9
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Most of the responses (69% - from 'descriptive' to 'perfectly descriptive of my supervisor') showed that respondents saw their supervisors as being equipped with the necessary supervision skills. This also contrasted with the qualitative findings where there was an outcry that supervisors did not have skills in supervision due to the lack of training, as shown by this statement:

> *"I think…we expect that she should undergo some sort of training to be equipped and knowledgeable on what supervision is about and what it entails…"*

The training of supervisors should be broad enough to include general and specific management and supervision issues (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010; DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

8.2.11. **Supervision feedback**

Table 8.12 looks at whether social workers received helpful and timeous feedback from their supervisors.

Table 8:12: Receiving Timeous and Helpful Feedback from your Supervisor

Do you receive timeous and helpful feedback from your supervisor?	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Not descriptive of my supervisor	10	9.3
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	28	26.2
	Descriptive of my supervisor	20	18.7
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	18	16.8
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	27	25.2
	Total	103	96.3
	Missing value	4	3.7
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

According to Table 8.12, there was a small margin of difference between those who wholeheartedly agreed that they received timeous feedback from their supervisors (25.2%) and those who said they occasionally received it (26.2%). A reason for not receiving feedback timeously, which emerged repeatedly in the qualitative findings, was that supervisors were overwhelmed by work and could not focus only on supervision. Despite this, social workers expected feedback from supervisors on their performance, as this response shows:

"I expect feedback regarding my work and my performance."

Social workers are meant to be given feedback by their supervisors - mostly on their work and performance (NASW & ASWB, 2013). This needs to be a balanced feedback, informing social workers about both good and bad performance in order to help them grow in their practice (Abbott & Lyter, 1998). The researcher fully supports this stance.

The qualitative findings focused only on social workers receiving feedback without being specific about it being timeous or not; 9.3% of the respondents reported that they did not at all receive feedback from their supervisors.

8.2.12. **Evaluation**

Table 8.13 looks at whether supervisors evaluated their supervisees.

Table 8:13: Receiving Honest and Constructive Evaluation

	Description	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Receiving honest and constructive evaluation	Not descriptive of my supervisor	8	7.5
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	20	18.7
	Descriptive of my supervisor	19	17.8
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	25	23.4
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	28	26.2
	Total of those who responded	**100**	**93.5**
	Missing value	7	6.5
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

One of the tasks of supervision should be to evaluate the performance of social workers and determine deficiencies so that corrective measures can be taken. Table 8.13 shows that the percentage of participants who believed that they received honest and constructive evaluation

was 26.2%. Those who responded that they occasionally received constructive evaluation constituted 18.7%.

The qualitative findings revealed that sometimes the evaluations of social workers by supervisors were unfair and dishonest. Honest feedback is based on honest evaluation because both are indicators of the performance of social workers. It is not always easy for supervisors to give balanced feedback, especially when they inform social workers about poor performance. Nevertheless, social workers still expect fair feedback from their supervisors, as this statement illustrates:

> *"I expect fairness. The reason I am saying this is that we are normally being evaluated for our performance now and again. So, what I have seen in the two sessions is that she automatically knows what she is going to give you because you are new, irrespective of all the proof that you have, that show that you have performed outstandingly. Because you are new you are not expected to be rated more than 4 or 5."*

According to Munson (1983), feedback must be given, whether it is good or bad. In the DSD, the annual evaluation of performance is usually a sensitive issue because it carries with it a financial reward for those who perform above expectations. Social workers reported experiencing unfair treatment during these evaluations, with supervisors rating their social worker friends highly so that they could qualify for a financial reward.

8.2.13. **Role modelling**

Table 8.14 focuses on whether supervisors were good role models to social workers.

Table 8:14: Providing a Good Model for the Profession

Providing a good role model for the profession	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Not descriptive of my supervisor	10	9.3
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	18	16.8
	Descriptive of my supervisor	17	15.9
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	29	27.1
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	27	25.2
	Total	101	94.4
	Missing value	6	5.6
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Most respondents (68.2% - from 'descriptive' to 'perfectly descriptive of my supervisor') confirmed that they perceived their supervisors as good role models. Modelling is generally displayed by a person's behaviour and cannot be taught didactically, and supervisors are expected to be good role models for their supervisees (Kadushin, 1992; Openshaw, 2012). Social workers were inclined to trust supervisors whom they perceived as good role models and to whom they could relate, feeling free to discuss matters that affected them.

The qualitative findings revealed that some social workers trusted their supervisors while others did not. Those supervisors who had earned the trust of their supervisees demonstrated consistency between their behaviour and what they said, between their instructions to their supervisees and what they themselves did. Some supervisees had experience of supervisors who contradicted themselves, as this statement illustrates:

> *"If the supervisor tells you something and does something else…"*

Another example of supervisors failing to act as positive role models was the perception that they were unable to maintain confidentiality, resulting in social workers' distrust.

8.2.14. **Autonomy and direction**

Table 8.15 gives statistics on whether supervisors encouraged social workers to work autonomously.

Table 8:15: Encourage Autonomy while Providing Direction

	Description	Frequency	Percent
Encourage autonomy while providing direction	Not descriptive of my supervisor	9	8.4
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	20	18.7
	Descriptive of my supervisor	19	17.8
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	26	24.3
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	23	21.5
	Total	97	90.7
	Missing value	10	9.3
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Most respondents (63.6% – a combination of 'perfectly descriptive', 'usually descriptive', and 'descriptive') agreed that their supervisors allowed them autonomy while giving them direction. It was not clear whether the respondents had a clear understanding of the meaning of either

'autonomy' or 'receiving direction' from their supervisors. The researcher is of the view that the autonomy referred to by the respondents may have arisen as an unintended consequence of the absence of supervision due to issues discussed in previous sections.

The qualitative findings revealed that, in contrast to being allowed autonomy, there were instances where social workers felt they were being micro-managed and policed as described by these statements:

"It is policing…"

"They also police us…"

On the other hand, providing direction is the same as leading and, as leaders, supervisors must be aware that they are in a position to influence social workers. The direction which social workers assumed they received from their supervisors came in the form of the advice they were given on those occasions when they consulted with their supervisors regarding their cases and other related matters.

8.2.15. **Strengths and weaknesses**

Table 8.16 focuses on whether supervisors applied the strengths-based approach when dealing with social workers.

Table 8:16: Encouraging Me to Understand my own Strengths and Weaknesses

	Description	Frequency	Percent
Encouraging me to understand my own strengths and weaknesses	Not descriptive of my supervisor	13	12.1
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	13	12.1
	Descriptive of my supervisor	21	19.6
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	31	29.0
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	26	24.3
	Total	**104**	**97.2**
	Missing value	3	2.8
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

The data indicate that 72.9% of the respondents acknowledged that their supervisors offered them balanced supervision by encouraging them to understand their strengths, abilities and capabilities, as well as their weaknesses. This theme should be understood in the context of the strengths-based approach, in which supervisors are not supposed to focus only on the weaknesses of their social workers but also on their strengths, thus empowering their

supervisees (Ledford, 2013). In the study conducted by Lietz and Rounds (2009:130), one of the participants expressed the following: "I would like to receive constructive criticism from my supervisor, instead of just telling me I am doing a good job."

The qualitative findings revealed that supervisors did not have enough time to supervise, let alone identify and focus on the strengths of social workers. Rather, the focus was mainly on discussing cases, as this response confirms:

> *"… We will sit and talk about your files, your back log. It is not something that happens often".*

The researcher is of the view that the strengths and weaknesses usually highlighted by supervisors were more concerned with the evaluation of cases, that is, areas in which a social worker was good or weak in relation to the cases they managed.

8.2.16. **Developing social workers' skills**

Table 8.17 focuses on whether supervisors created opportunities for social workers to develop new skills.

Table 8:17: Creating Opportunities for you to Develop New Skills

	Description	Frequency	Percent
Supervisors creating opportunities for you to develop new skills	Not descriptive of my supervisor	13	12.1
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	15	14.0
	Descriptive of my supervisor	22	20.6
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	23	21.5
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	29	27.1
	Total	**102**	**95.3**
	Missing value	5	4.7
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Of all the respondents, 69.2% were of the view that their supervisors created opportunities for them to grow and develop. The qualitative findings made it clear that development was needed and was linked to education.

Social work supervision should in itself be a platform for supervisors to develop the professional capacity of social workers (Bradley et al., 2010; Lietz, 2013), and one area in which new knowledge and skills are developed is through educational supervision which this statement confirms:

"That is when the supervisor offers education…"

8.2.17. **Educational support**

Table 8.18 focuses on supervisors giving educational support to social workers.

Table 8:18: Do You Receive Educational Support?

Do you receive educational support?	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Not descriptive of my supervisor	15	14.0
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	22	20.6
	Descriptive of my supervisor	33	30.8
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	15	14.0
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	15	14.0
	Total	**100**	**93.5**
	Missing value	7	6.5
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Out of the 93.5% who responded to this question, only 14% said that they received educational support from their supervisors. The low percentage of those who claimed they received educational support was an indication of a situation characterised by the lack of supervision. As with other areas identified by social workers as lacking in supervision, educational support was also deficient in that it was dominated by the discussion of cases. This is illustrated by this qualitative study participant, who said:

"… We will sit and talk about your files, your back log. It is not something that happens often".

In as much as respondents perceived their supervisors as not giving them educational support, they were content with the level of the transferral of skills. They did not seem to realise that the transferral of skills and professional development which their supervisors offered them was the same as educational support.

8.2.18. **Administrative support**

Table 8.19 focuses on the level of administrative support which social workers received from their supervisors.

Table 8:19: Do You Receive Administrative Support?

Do you receive administrative support?	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Not descriptive of my supervisor	15	14.0
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	13	12.1
	Descriptive of my supervisor	29	27.1
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	23	21.5
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	17	15.9
	Total	97	90.7
	Missing value	10	9.3
	Total	107	100.0
Do you receive caseload management support	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Not descriptive of my supervisor	12	11.2
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	22	20.6
	Descriptive of my supervisor	28	26.2
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	17	15.9
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	20	18.7
	Total	99	92.5
	Missing value	8	7.5
	Total	107	100.0

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Of the 90.7% of respondents to the first question, only 15.9% stated that they did receive administrative support, which would indicate a low level of support in this area. However, this is contrary to the qualitative findings which showed that social workers received more administrative support. The 18.7% who agreed that they received a high level of case management support could be linked to the fact that most monitoring was around cases – which this statement illustrates:

> *"But for me she is more on the administrative side because that is where she checks your cases. If you have lapsed orders, what is happening with the cases; how many cases do you have, stuff like that. So, for me she is more on the administrative part, and support.*

To a large extent, social workers received more support in this area of supervision than in others, as this function was mostly applied because of its monitoring element (Bradley et al., 2010; Beddoe, 2012).

8.2.19. **Provision of resources**

Table 8.20 focuses on whether supervisors were resourceful.

Table 8:20: Is the Supervisor a very Resourceful Person?

	Description	Frequency	Percent
The supervisor Is a very resourceful Person.	Not descriptive of my supervisor	9	8.4
	Occasionally descriptive of my supervisor	15	14.0
	Descriptive of my supervisor	29	27.1
	Usually descriptive of my supervisor	19	17.8
	Perfectly descriptive of my supervisor	29	27.1
	Total	**101**	**94.4**
	Missing value	6	5.6
	Total	107	100.0

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Of the respondents, 72% ('descriptive' – 'usually descriptive' – 'perfectly descriptive') agreed that their supervisors were a good resource – as is to be expected; they have more experience in the practice of social work as this participant stated:

> *"The supervisors have more experience than us, so they can support us on all issues we come across."*

It is, therefore, the view of the researcher that supervisors were being resourceful when they gave advice to their social workers.

In the qualitative research, the lack of material resources was also mentioned, as this statement shows:

> *"Sometimes we do not have transport to get to a case so I need support. Driving and transporting me."*

This was also a source of frustration for supervisors (Frumkin, 1980; Bogo & Power, 1992) who are expected to be resourceful in all respects, from being resourceful with regard to knowledge of the field of social work to providing material resources to their supervisees (SACSSP, 2016). However, it was not always possible for supervisors to provide the resources required because they were, in turn, dependent on their managers for resources. Egan and Kadushin (2004) conducted a study – in a different context - of managers' ability to provide resources and established that, when managers were able to provide resources, their subordinates expressed satisfaction with their work which, in turn, met the expectations of their clients

8.3. Pathological Versus Developmental Attitude of Supervisors

This section aims at establishing whether social work supervision was participatory. Responses in this section differed greatly from the qualitative data because here supervisees painted a picture of a democratic, developmental and participatory supervision style. One of the respondents called it

"…democratic leadership."

During the interviews, however, social workers were generally dissatisfied with the state of supervision, considering it too authoritarian. Supervisors' conduct came under scrutiny, although social workers understood that supervisors' behaviour was affected by the challenges they faced at work, such as work overload and lack of support from their managers. These challenges can be linked to the autocratic behaviour displayed by supervisors which was also interpreted by social workers as abuse. All the themes in this section held the common thread of a need for supervision to be strengths-based, participatory and empowering. As a result, references are the same and will not be repeated in each block of themes.

8.3.1. Pathological versus developmental

This Table focuses on the pathological versus developmental attitudes of supervisors.

Table 8.21: Pathological versus developmental attitude of a supervisor

Table 8:21: Pathological Versus Developmental Attitude of a Supervisor

	Responses	Frequency	Percent
The supervisor teaches and the social worker is taught.	Yes	27	25.2
	No	67	62.6
Both supervisor and social worker teach and they learn from each other.	Yes	71	66.4
	No	23	21.5
The supervisor is the all-knowing expert and the social worker is the layperson.	Yes	18	16.8
	No	73	68.2
The supervisor knows s/he is not all-knowing and appreciates the knowledge of the social worker.	Yes	75	70.1
	No	16	15.0
The supervisor is the only one who does the thinking.	Yes	13	12.1
	No	77	72.0
Both supervisor and social worker do the critical and reflective thinking.	Yes	77	72.0
	No	13	12.1
The supervisor talks and the social worker listens.	Yes	23	21.5
	No	68	63.6

Both the supervisor and the social worker talk and listen.	Yes	71	66.4
	No	21	19.6
The supervisor makes the decisions and the social worker implements them.	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	28	26.2
	No	67	62.6
	Total	**95**	**88.8**
	Missing system	12	11.2
	Total	107	100.0
The supervisor and the social worker make joint decisions, based on what is meaningful to both.	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	73	68.2
	No	21	19.6
	Total	**94**	**87.9**
	Missing value	13	12.1
	Total	107	100.0

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Responses in the first cluster of questions indicated that both supervisors and supervisees learned from each other, which was an indication of participatory supervision. Respondents, constituting 62, 6% of the total, experienced that their supervisors did not impose themselves as teachers, but were also willing to learn from their supervisees. To support this, 66.4% specified that both supervisors and social workers taught each other during supervision, and 70.1% saying that their supervisors did not consider themselves as all-knowing.

Supporting the participatory and strengths-based nature of their supervision, participants in a study conducted by Lietz and Rounds (2009:129) had this to say: "My supervisor is receptive to communication and is willing to consider what I have to offer." - "My supervisor will ask for my opinion." - "There is never a time I felt inferior to my supervisor." Supervisors should admit when they lack knowledge and not present themselves as all-knowing, as this respondent in the present study noted:

> *"He or she if maybe doesn't know the answer to something that the supervisee has asked, he or she should be able to acknowledge that…"*

The first set of four statements is more concerned with the interaction between supervisors and supervisees, where neither is dominant. Regarding reflection and critical thinking (5th - 8th statements), 72% of the respondents agreed that both supervisors and supervisees engaged in critical thinking, while 66.4% agreed that both supervisors and supervisees talked and listened to each other.

In a developmental setting, decisions are taken jointly by supervisors and supervisees, as reflected by 62.6% and 68.2% of responses to the last two statements. Involving supervisees in decision-making processes can be empowering (Engelbrecht, 2019a) and can stimulate growth. This participant said:

> *"I expect my supervisor to involve me in decision making. Whatever decision she is making regarding my work she should first talk to me."*

8.3.2. **Supervision content**

Table 8.22 focuses on supervisors and supervisees working together in choosing the content of supervision.

Table 8:22: Supervisor and Supervisee Choosing Content

	Responses	Frequency	Percent
The supervisor selects the content of the supervision programme, while the supervisee remains uninvolved and simply accepts everything.	Yes	19	17.8
	No	64	59.8
Supervisor and supervisee jointly participate in choosing the content.	Yes	67	62.6
	No	16	15.0

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

These statements sought to ascertain whether social workers participated in choosing the content of supervision. Both statements indicate that supervisors cooperated with their supervisees in selecting the content of supervision, with confirmation from 59.8% and 62.6% of respondents respectively.

While, according to the quantitative data, social workers confirmed their involvement, the qualitative research revealed that they were only minimally involved, as this response shows:

> *"Yes, usually after the session, you will set a date for the next session… Then she will ask you if you have something to add."*

The Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) supports the involvement of social workers in the selection of supervision content when referring to 'mutual participation'. This framework also suggests that social workers and supervisors work together when the supervision contract, which should indicate both parties' roles and responsibilities, is developed. It and the supervision agenda, which must be negotiated and agreed upon, also contain the supervisees' personal developmental plan (Dan, 2017; Engelbrecht, 2019a).

8.3.3. **Authority versus control**

Table 8.23 looks at whether supervisors are able to exercise authority and control while at the same time respecting social workers.

Table 8:23: Authority, Control and Respect by Supervisor

The supervisor uses his/her personal authority to control the worker.	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	22	20.6
	No	64	59.8
	Missing value	21	20
	Total		
Supervisor's authority is based on mutual respect	Yes	66	61.7
	No	19	17.8
	Missing value		
	Total		

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Of the participants, 59.8% acknowledged that, in their exercise of power, supervisors respected them. Furthermore, 61.7% of the participants confirmed that there was mutual respect between them and their supervisors. The following statement from the qualitative findings confirms these assertions:

> *"It is all about respecting my opinion. Acknowledging that I have my own mind and my own way of doing things."*

These questions sought to establish whether there was a misuse of power by supervisors. The supervisory position, although it represents management at a relatively low level, is accompanied by power and authority. In this regard, supervisors must exercise their power with respect (Lietz & Rounds, 2009).

8.3.4. **Turn-over of social workers**

Table 8.24 looks at the reasons why social workers leave the profession.

Table 8:24: Why do Social Workers Leave the Profession?

Why would a social worker leave his/her profession?	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	High caseload	18	16.8
	Lack of supervision	7	6.5
	No career pathing	31	29.0
	Other	24	22.4
	Total	**80**	**74.8**
	Missing value	27	25.2
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

A variety of reasons emerged for social workers leaving the profession, with the absence of career pathing placed at the top of the list by 29% of respondents. Career pathing is largely dependent on the quality of supervision received because it contributes to equipping social workers with additional professional skills and development and thus furthers their careers (NASW & ASWB, 2013).

The qualitative findings revealed that social workers associated career pathing with their supervisors' delegating tasks at a higher level than those they usually performed, as this participant explained:

> *"What happens with us, when the supervisor is not around, they make you act as a supervisor for a day and that is when you get a feel of how it is to be a supervisor? They give us more responsibility."*

They viewed this as empowering, a form of professional development and preparation for higher level posts (borne out by Lietz & Rounds, 2009; NASW & ASWB, 2013). Of concern here is that 25.2% of respondents did not respond to the question, which is a relatively high percentage.

8.3.5. **Supervision focus**

Table 8.25 looks at what supervisors focus on when conducting supervision.

Table 8:25: Area of Focus During Supervision

	Description	Frequency	Percent
Supervision focus	Caseload management	20	18.7
	Educational supervision	8	7.5
	Administrative matters	5	4.7
	Support	18	16.8
	Empowerment	12	11.2
	Developmental	14	13.1
	Total	**77**	**72.0**
	Missing value	30	28.0
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Although 28% of the participants did not respond to this question, 18.7% reported that the focus of their supervision was on caseload management, attributable to supervisors' time-constraints. This supervisee had this to say:

> *"We will sit and talk about your files…"*

The reality is that supervision is dominated by the discussion of cases, as can be seen in this study, and this is characteristic of supervision in South Africa (Baginsky et al., 2010; Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010).

Another area emphasised with regard to supervision was that of support - although only 16.8% of respondents acknowledging this as their experience. It is commendable that some supervisors do focus on supporting social workers, as the qualitative findings revealed that the need for support was high. Social workers require support not only for cases but also on personal matters, as this statement illustrates:

> *"When my supervisor allows me time to attend to my family problems, I feel I am supported in that way."*

Supportive supervision reduces work-related stress, fosters self-awareness in social workers and enhances their ability to cope with stress (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Tsui, 2005; Bogo & McKnight, 2006).

8.3.6. **Level of morale among social workers**

Table 8.26 looks at the morale among social workers.

Table 8:26: Social Workers' Morale

Level of morale among social workers	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Extremely low	7	6.5
	Low	14	13.1
	Average	37	34.6
	High	21	19.6
	Excellent	11	10.3
	Total	90	84.1
	Missing System	17	15.9
	Total	107	100.0

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

The study revealed levels of morale which were indicative of the general state of social work supervision in South Africa. The highest percentage of responses (34.6%) showed the morale of social workers as being average.

The low morale reflected in the qualitative findings was generally attributed to lack of support from their supervisors, which social workers found stressful. This participant said:

> *"I think as social workers, we do need support because the kind of work we do ... most of the time it is risky and dangerous."*

In an environment in which supervision is lacking, there cannot be support, but this does not take away from the fact that social workers need on-going support (BASW, 2012).

8.3.7. **Supervision frequency**

Table 8.27 focuses on how often social workers received supervision.

Table 8:27: The Frequency of Supervision

How often do you receive supervision?	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Weekly	9	8.4
	Monthly	24	22.4
	Bi-Monthly	11	10.3
	Once every 3-6 months	19	17.8
	Once a year	4	3.7
	Never	16	15.0
	Other	9	8.4
	Total	92	86.0
	Missing value	15	14.0
	Total	107	100.0

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

The dominant response to this question, at 22.4%, was that supervision was conducted monthly, with 15% of respondents stating that they did not receive supervision at all. The qualitative findings confirm this picture of supervision which was lacking and even non-existent, as this statement shows:

> *"I don't remember having any supervision with my supervisor…"*

The Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) suggests that supervision of social workers should take place monthly.

8.3.8. **How recent was the last supervision?**

Table 8.28 focuses on when last social workers received supervision.

Table 8:28: When Last Did You Have a Supervision Session?

When last did you have a supervision session?	Description	Frequency	Percent
	Last week	13	12.1
	Last month	34	31.8
	2-3 months ago	17	15.9
	4-6 months ago	4	3.7
	More than 6 months ago	8	7.5
	Did not have supervision	19	17.8
	Total	95	88.8
	Missing value	12	11.2
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data

Many social workers (17.8%) reported that they had not received supervision at all. This was confirmed by the qualitative findings, with a social worker stating:

"…It does not exist."

A large percentage of respondents (31.8%) indicated that they were last supervised a month previously. This might be confirmation that in many organisations, supervision takes place on a monthly basis, which is in line with the recommendations of the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

8.3.9. Distance between supervisor and supervisee

Table 8.29 focuses on whether supervisors were located in the same organisation as social workers.

Table 8.29: Geographical distance between supervisor and supervisee

Table 8:29: Geographical Distance Between Supervisor and Supervisee

Geographical distance between supervisor and supervisee	Description	Frequency	Percent
	Same (office) organisation with my supervisor (no travelling required)	53	49.5
	Between 0-10 km	28	26.2
	Between 10-50 km	10	9.3
	Between 50-100 km	3	2.8
	More than 100 km	1	.9
	Total	95	88.8
	Missing System	12	11.2
	Total	**107**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

The distance between the social workers and their supervisors inevitably has an impact on supervision. Table 8.29 shows that 49.5% of the respondents were based in the same organisation as their supervisors, with travelling not required for supervision to be conducted. Supervisors and social workers sharing the same building reflects the internal system of supervision, which is mostly practised and preferred in South Africa. The main advantage of this system is that supervisors are within reach whenever social workers need them, as this participant explained:

> *"The reason I will prefer the internal one is because the supervisor is within that environment… They know what is happening and also they are available."*

There were also instances in which supervisors and social workers were stationed in buildings several kilometres apart but were employed by the same organisation. While this was not a case of external supervision, it shared one of its disadvantages in that the supervisor was not within reach when needed. This was one of the reasons why external supervision was the system least preferred by social workers, as was revealed in the qualitative research.

8.4. Quantitative Findings Based on Responses from Social Work Supervisors

8.4.1. Biographical information of supervisors

The table in this section summarises the gender, race, age range of the research sample, levels of education, and years of experience as social work supervisors.

Table 8:30: Profile of DSD and NGO Supervisors who Participated in the Quantitative Study

Gender	Female: 18 = 78.3%	Male: 05 = 21.7%						**TOTALS** **Number: 23** **=100%**
Race	Black: 21 = 91.3%	White : 02 8.7%						**Black and White: 23** **= 100%**
Home Language	Setswana: 06 = 26.1%	Tshivenda: 09 = 39.1%	Afrikaans : 02 = 8.7%	IsiXhosa: 01 = 4.3%	IsiZulu : 04 = 17.4%	Other (Shona):01 = 4.3%		**All: 23** **= 100%**
Age Range	25-29: 0 = 0%	30-34: 05 = 21.7%	35-39: 10 = 43.5%	40-44: 06 = 26.1%	45-49: 0 0%	50-54: 01 4.3%	55 and older : 01 = 4.3%	**All: 23** **=100%**
Qualification in Supervision	Masters in Social Work: 01 = 4.3%	Post-graduate diploma in supervision: 01 = 4.3%	Certificate: 02 = 8.6%	Workshop: 06 = 26.0%	In-service training: 06 = 26.0%	Workshop and in-service training : 01 = 4.3%	No qualification in supervision : 05 = 21.7%	**All: 23** **=100%**
Years of Experience as a Supervisor	1-3 years: 10 = 43.5%	04 -07 years: 11 = 47.8%	08-15 years: 01 = 4.3%	16 years and more: 01 = 4.3%				**All: 23** **=100%**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

8.4.1.1. **Analysing the profile of DSD and NGO supervisor respondents**

The profile of supervisors in this quantitative section of the study is, in some aspects, similar to the profile of the social workers: a large number of supervisor respondents were females, namely 18 (78.3%), as opposed to 5 male respondents (21.7%).

The dominant race represented was the black race with 21 participants (91.3%). Only two respondents were white (8.7%). This is also a reflection of the demographics of the provinces in which the study was conducted.

The dominant language of the participants, which reflected the geographical location of many of them, was Tshivenda at 39.1%, followed by Setswana at 26.1%. Afrikaans (8.7%) was found in Gauteng, while IsiZulu (17.4%) and IsiXhosa (4.3%) were found in Mpumalanga. An interesting phenomenon was observed in Mpumalanga where one organisation, an NGO, had a Shona-speaking supervisor in its employ, meaning their recruitment was not limited to South African citizens. This supervisor was able to speak IsiZulu. The spread of the participants' languages across the provinces reflected South African demographics.

The ages of the respondents ranged from 30 to 55 years and above. This age-range also reflected the years of experience a person needed to have before being promoted to a supervisory position – which was, usually, a period of five years. It is also an interesting observation that, in this study, there were no supervisors between the ages of 45 and 49, while there was only one supervisor in the range of 55 years and older. What happens to those over the age of 45 could be the subject of further research.

Ten respondents (43.5%) had 1-3 years of experience. The majority (47.8%) had 4-7 years of experience, and only one supervisor had more than 16 years' experience in supervision. With regard to qualifications, only one person had a post-graduate diploma in supervision. The rest had obtained various non-graduate certificates, including some who had been offered only in-service training in supervision.

Five participants (21.7%) had not been trained in supervision at all, which confirms the findings of this study, namely that supervisors raised concerns with regard to their lack of training for their position leaving them feeling inadequate to render effective supervision.

8.4.2. Quantitative Findings obtained from Social Work Supervisors

8.4.2.1. Supervision qualification

Table 8.31 reflects supervisors' responses regarding their training as supervisors.

Table 8:31: Supervisors Holding a Formal Qualification in Supervision

Do you have a formal qualification in supervision?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	3	13%
	No	20	87%
	Do not know		
	Total		
	Missing value		
	Total	**23**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Table 8.31 shows that 87% of the respondents did not hold a formal qualification. They are reflected in the biographical profile as having been exposed either to workshops on social work supervision or in-service training. This percentage also includes those who have never been exposed to any type of training in supervision. One respondent held a post-graduate diploma in supervision, while two had obtained a certificate. Munson (2002) conducted a survey which revealed that over 60% of supervisors who participated did not have prior formal training for the post, which further confirms that social work supervisors in South Africa are promoted to their position without proper prior training.

The high percentage of supervisors without formal qualifications raises the concern whether social work supervision is taken seriously and whether it is given the status it deserves in South Africa. This was confirmed by the qualitative findings as supervisors complained about their lack of training in preparation for their position as supervisors. This supervisor stated:

> *"I am doing supervision based on what I have as experience from being a social worker. I am not formally trained. So, it will be better for supervisors to have formal training."*

Experience alone was not enough to qualify social workers as supervisors, as is confirmed by this extract from the qualitative study:

> *"Yes. I think supervision should entail formal qualification…"*

This is so because supervisory positions require certain managerial skills which the social worker who becomes a supervisor may not inherently possess and which can only be acquired

through training. The trend of promoting social workers to supervisory positions was largely based on their good performance as social workers, but this criterion does not guarantee that they will become good supervisors. As Kadushin and Harkness (2002:295) state: "[t]he current promotional situation risks the possibility that the agency may lose a competent worker to gain an incompetent supervisor."

8.4.3. **Supervision tasks**

Table 8.32 focuses on tasks carried out by supervisors in addition to supervision.

Table 8:32: Tasks Relating to Supervision

Which of the following tasks can be done in combination with supervision?	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Having a caseload	2	8.6
	Management tasks	9	39.1
	Combination of caseload and management tasks	1	4.3
	Supervision must not be combined with any of the above	11	47.8
	Total	**23**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

The qualitative findings revealed that supervisors wanted to focus only on supervision without performing other additional tasks. Table 8.32 shows that 47.8% of respondents wanted to do only supervision. However, the reality was that most of them had been given other tasks in addition to supervision, as this extract shows:

> *"We are just doing everything haphazardly. We are not specialising. We are just Jacks of all trades and at the end of the day even you yourself when you call yourself a supervisor you don't know what you are doing."*

An interesting response was that of those who wanted supervision to be coupled with management tasks (39.1%). This is justifiable because supervision is a management position and adding certain management tasks may be empowering to supervisors. However, not every respondents agreed with this stance:

> *"As a service point we are acting as managers. We are managing everything. As a result, we end up not focusing on what we are here for, which is supervising. Supervision is our core, but we are not doing it."*

The *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) does not take a strong position on the matter of supervisors doing supervision only (see Section 7.2.5).

According to the supervision framework, the ratio of supervisor to social workers for those who focus only on supervision is 1:10, and for those who perform additional tasks it is 1:6 (DSD & SACSSP, 2012: 31).

8.4.4. **Trusting supervisees**

Table 8.33 focuses on whether supervisors trusted social workers.

Table 8:33: Trusting Supervisees

Do you trust your supervisees?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	16	69.5
	No	4	17.3
	Some of them	3	13
	Do not know	0	
	Total answered	23	99.8
	Missing value	0	
	Total	**23**	**100**

Source: Research data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Most supervisors (69.5%) revealed that they trusted their social workers, while 17.3% did not trust their supervisees. Further questions were not asked to determine the circumstances under which supervisors trusted or distrusted social workers. In the qualitative study, the theme of trust was limited to social workers trusting their supervisors, and the findings have been discussed in Section 6.2.1.5. However, supervision ideally exists and thrives within a trusting relationship (Munson, 1983).

8.4.5. **Confidentiality**

Table 8.34 focuses on whether supervisors perceive social workers as adhering to the principle of confidentiality.

Table 8:34: Adherence to Confidentiality by Social Worker

Do you think your supervisees adhere to the principle of confidentiality?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	14	60.8
	No	6	26.0
	Some of them	3	13.0
	Do not know		
	Total		
	Missing System		
	Total	**23**	**100**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Mandatory confidentiality is among the principles and values of social work which make up the cornerstones of social work practice, and thus supervisors are justified to expect confidentiality from their supervisees.

This question did not form part of the semi-structured interviews but, in hindsight, it should have been included. Table 8.34 shows that 60.8% of the supervisors believed that social workers adhered to the principle of confidentiality, while 26% thought they did not. With regard to those who were perceived as violating confidentiality, the following question should have been asked: "What would you, as supervisor, do to ensure that social workers maintained confidentiality?" However, this question was not asked in the qualitative study.

8.4.6. **Theoretical approaches**

Table 8.35 focuses on whether theoretical approaches were applied in supervision.

Table 8:35: Theoretical Approaches Applied in Supervision

Do you think supervision applied in your organisation is based on any theoretical model?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	7	30.4
	No	16	69.5
	Do not know		
	Total	**23**	**100**
Does your organisation practise developmental social work?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	13	56.5
	No	10	43.4
	Do not know		
	Total	23	100
Are you of the opinion that:	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Supervision in your organisation is developmental?	7	30.4
	Supervision generally is developmental?	9	39.1
	Yes for both	3	13.0
	No for both	3	13.0
	Not fully developmental in both areas	1	4.3
	Total		99.8
	Missing value	0	
	Total	23	100

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

In the same way that organisations are expected to apply theoretical approaches to the practice of social work, these should be applied to supervision as well. Most respondents (69.5%) thought that their organisations did not apply a theoretical model, while 30.4% of respondents thought that different models were applied to supervision in their organisations. The qualitative

findings revealed that there was a lack of understanding of theoretical approaches on the part of both social workers and supervisors, which was confirmed by the responses in Table 8.35. The most popular approach known to both social workers and supervisors was the developmental approach. The general understanding of the developmental approach, which both social workers and supervisors claimed to apply in their organisations, was that it must develop a professional identity, from beginner to mid-level and, finally, to an advanced level. This was expressed by a participant who said:

> *"For me development goes with growth… Developmental supervision should be growth oriented…"*

Many of the respondents (56.5%) agreed that this approach was practised in their organisations and seemed to be more familiar with it than the other approaches. Furthermore, 39% of the respondents believed that organisations, in general, made use of the developmental approach when conducting supervision.

8.4.7. **Support by management**

Table 8.36 focuses on whether supervisors receive support from their managers.

Table 8:36: Supervisors Receiving Support from their Managers

Do you feel supported by your management?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	4	17.3
	No	16	69.5
	Sometimes	3	13.0
	Total	**23**	**100**

Source: Research data (Ndzuta, 2015)

As much as there is a need for social workers to be supported, supervisors also need to be supported by their managers. It was, therefore, of concern that 69.5% of the respondents indicated that they were not supported by their managers. From the qualitative findings, it was not clear whether supervisors received the support they needed from their managers. They mostly expressed it as a desire to be supported, as this participant stated:

> "*We also need to be supported by our managers. If I am sick, I need my manager to inquire as to how I am. That to me is support. Even for my family matters. If I have a bereavement, my manager should show interest…"*

The literature confirms that supervisors require support and that their managers should create a conducive environment for them to discuss their own challenges with regard to supervisory matters (Manthorpe et al., 2015; Engelbrecht, 2019a).

8.4.8. **Supervision of supervisors**

Table 8.37 focuses on whether supervisors are supervised by their managers.

Table 8:37: Receiving Supervision or Consultation from Managers

Do you, as a supervisor, receive:	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Supervision from your managers?	0	0
	Consultation from your managers?	13	56.5
	None of the above	7	30.4
	Sometimes	2	8.6
	Total	22	95.5
	Missing value	1	4.3
	Total	23	100

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

The need for support from managers goes hand in hand with the need for supervision. The lack of support for supervisors was an indication that supervision might be lacking as well because support in the social work profession is mostly given and received through supervision. That 56.5% of respondents indicated that they received only consultation and 30.4% stated that they received neither supervision nor consultation, is cause for concern. In the qualitative study, supervisors seemed to understand the plight of their managers, whose schedules were constantly disrupted by those they reported to, and they also empathised with them, as is obvious in this remark:

> *"Even with our manager, she plans that she will have meetings with us. Those plans never materialise because they also get disrupted by her seniors."*

Bradley et al. (2010:9) confirmed that supervisors sometimes do not themselves receive supervision when they stated: "Supervisors do not receive formally structured supervision and have to rely on the informal support from colleagues or the director of the organisation." The qualitative study revealed that supervisors appeared to have accepted the fact that they were not supervised and supported as they wished.

8.4.9. **Background training of managers who supervise supervisors**

Table 8.38 focuses on whether managers of supervisors were themselves social workers by profession.

Table 8:38: Supervision of Supervisors by Managers who are not Social Workers by Profession

Are you supervised by:	**Description**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	A manager who is a social worker by profession?	17	73.9
	A manager who is not asocial worker?	6	26.0
	Do not know	0	0
	Total	**23**	**100**
	Missing value	0	0
	Total	23	100

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

The Supervision Framework makes it mandatory for social workers, including supervisors who themselves are social workers by profession, to be supervised by managers who are also professional social workers (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Although most respondents (73.9%) indicated that their managers were social workers, there were those (26%) whose managers were not social workers. This was borne out by the qualitative study, as is apparent from this extract:

> *"The problem with our managers maybe with some that we have experienced is that most of the managers or some of the managers are not even social workers. So if a person is a manager and is not a social worker, how will he support you? How will he supervise you?"*

This is disquieting when we consider the ethics of the profession and issues such as confidentiality. A manager who is not a social worker may also not be able to intervene in matters relating to clients, as the person would not have the necessary and relevant training. In this regard, the provisions of the Supervision Framework would need to be fully implemented.

Engelbrecht (2015) also reports a situation in which both social workers and their supervisors are supervised by managers who are not social workers by training and profession.

8.4.10. Career growth for supervisors

Table 8.39 focuses on the potential for supervisors to grow in their career.

Table 8:39: Career Growth for Supervisor

Does your organisation offer you opportunities for career growth?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	6	26.0
	No	17	73.9
	Do not know		
	Total		99.9
	Missing value	0	
	Total	**23**	**100**

Source: Research Data

Of the supervisors, 73.9% decried the lack of opportunities for career growth. This was a major source of frustration for them. In the context of South African social work supervision, the Occupational Specific Dispensation (OSD) has played a role in limiting the career growth of both social workers and social work supervisors. The requirements of the OSD are that one should complete a total of 10 years in one rank or on one level before being eligible for promotion to a higher rank. This has become a great source of frustration to the social work fraternity because people feel that their movement to higher levels in the profession is gravely delayed. This was one of the reasons why social workers and their supervisors suffered from low morale with some choosing to leave the profession. Despite efforts by social workers in the DSD to have the OSD policy amended, nothing has been done thus far. The qualitative study addressed the career path of only social workers.

8.4.11. Culture and gender playing a role in supervision

Table 8.40 focuses on whether culture and gender played a role in supervision.

Table 8:40: Culture and Gender Playing a Role in Supervision

Does culture play a role in supervision?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	9	39.1
	No	14	60.8
	Do not know		
	Total	23	99.9
	Missing value	0	
	Total	23	100
Does gender play a role in supervision?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	4	17.3
	No	19	82.6
	Do not know		
	Total	23	99.9
	Missing value	0	
	Total	23	100

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Culture and gender did not appear to play a role in supervision. This can be deduced from Table 8.40 which shows that 60.8% of respondents indicated that culture did not play a role in supervision, and neither did gender (82.6% of responses). Respondents who commented on gender issues cited examples of male social workers undermining a female supervisor and that some supervisees might not feel free to disclose their problems to a supervisor of the opposite sex. Culture and gender were not part of the semi-structured interview questions; so there is no comparison to be made.

8.4.12. **On-going training for supervisors**

Table 8.41 focuses on whether supervisors received continuous training.

Table 8:41: On-going Training for Supervisor

Do you receive on-going training in your work?	**Responses**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
	Yes	5	21.7
	No	15	65.2
	Sometimes	3	13.0
	Total	23	99.9
	Missing value	0	
	Total	**23**	**100**

Source: Research Data (Ndzuta, 2015)

Table 8.41 shows that 65.2% of the respondents indicated that there was no on-going training for supervisors. The situation becomes overwhelming for supervisors, particularly since most of them indicated that they did not receive prior training for the post. In the qualitative study, supervisors expressed a need for training and that it should be continuous:

"Even with training, training should be provided continuously..."

In support of this, the need for continuous training for supervisors is emphasised by (Openshaw, 2012).

8.5. **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter presented the quantitative data findings of the study. Data which were analysed in this chapter were collected by way of administering questionnaires to respondents in the provinces and offices where the study was done. The two sections of the chapter presented quantitative findings collected from (a) social workers and (b) supervisors, in the sampled provinces. The findings were then compared to those of the qualitative study and supported by literature and quotations from respondents.

To a certain extent the quantitative findings supported and confirmed the qualitative findings. These combined findings took the researcher to the development of guidelines on social work supervision which are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9: TOWARDS GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

9.1. Introduction

From the early years of its development, social work supervision has always been part of social work (Kadushin, 1992; Davys & Beddoe, 2010). Supervision is a platform where social workers give account of their work, at the same time being given the opportunity to learn and develop professionally (Manthorpe et al., 2015; Rankine, 2019). Social work supervisors are responsible for the learning and development of social workers (Carroll, 2010). The state of social work supervision in South Africa, as explored by this study, necessitated the development of guidelines in order to address those areas which were identified as gaps in the implementation of social work supervision and to propose future ways of conducting supervision.

9.2. The Process followed in developing the Guidelines

One of the objectives of this study was to develop guidelines for social work supervision, and the theoretical framework which the researcher chose is the strengths-based approach (Chapter 4). Moreover, the guidelines were developed based on the findings and recommendations of the study. These findings are elaborated upon in this chapter and are discussed after the presentation of the strengths-based approach. Consultation with regard to the development of guidelines was also done – online due to COVID-19 restrictions - with social workers and supervisors who had not been part of the study. The social workers and supervisors who were consulted are employees of the Department of Social Development. The rationale for consulting persons outside the study itself was to collect additional pointers and insights and compare the inputs of the participants with those of non-participants to establish objectivity and neutrality.

The researcher had earmarked certain non-participants and had requested their participation in the workshop via email, which gave details of the workshop (held on 19 March 2021) and included an attachment of the chapter on the guidelines.

The participants gave input mostly on the necessity of applying a theoretical framework for social work supervision as, according to their observations, such an approach was not implemented. Thus, they supported the study's call for the implementation of a theoretical framework. Some social workers raised the subject of supervisory relationships and agreed with the participants of the study that managers and supervisors were often more concerned with the work being done than having the needs of supervisors and social workers met. Other inputs referred to how the chapter was structured, with suggestions for combining some topics which

appeared to address the same issues but were placed under different headings. The consultation on the guidelines also served as a quality-assurance measure which added value to the chapter.

9.3. Purpose of the Guidelines

The purpose of the guidelines is:

a) to guide social workers and social work supervisors, both in the DSD and the NGOs, regarding the practice of social work supervision,
b) to address the current state of social work supervision in South Africa with a view to improving it, and
c) to recommend the strengths-based approach as one of the models to apply in social work supervision.

9.4. The Focus of Social Work Supervision

Social work supervision should ideally focus on the implementation of the three functions of supervision: administration, education and support. Of the three, the one most practised is the administrative function. This is because of its characteristic of focusing on managerial matters, such as making sure that social workers comply with the policies and procedures of the organisation. This focus makes supervision appear more administrative rather than addressing therapeutic matters relating to clients.

The administrative function also emphasises accountability. Here social workers are made to account for their work, including how they intervened in their cases and whether they meet deadlines (O'Donoghue, 2015). The application of the administrative function is not a problem in itself. What is challenging is when it is applied to the disadvantage, or to the exclusion, of the educational and support functions.

The reality is that supervision is dominated by the discussion of cases, something which is also a characteristic of supervision in South Africa (Baginsky et al., 2010; Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010). There are three other focus areas which need to be addressed by supervision, namely the approaches chosen by organisations for supervision, supervisory relationships and supervision systems. The guidelines developed here are intended to address these three areas.

9.4.1. **Positive aspect of social work supervision**

The positive aspect of social work supervision in South Africa is that it is applied in most organisations, both in the DSD and NGOs. Supervision is expected to be structured, planned, with an agenda and sufficient time allocations. Where this cannot happen, consultation is used as a substitute. Another positive aspect is that the DSD has developed policy frameworks as a way of improving social work supervision: the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) and the *Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers (*DSD, 2006) which was revised in 2017.

9.5. **The Implementation Scope of the Guidelines**

The guidelines focus on areas which, as revealed by the findings of this study, have received less consideration in the sphere of social work supervision: approaches to social work supervision, supervisory relationships, supervision systems, training in supervision and supervision policy. With regard to the approaches, the guidelines focus on the strengths-based approach. However, the developmental and the learning organisation approaches are also discussed due to their linkages to, and similarities with, the strengths-based approach.

9.5.1. **The concepts of a model versus an approach**

The term 'approach' is used interchangeably with the term 'model' (Botha, 2002; Tsui, 2012). Botha (2002) offers an explanation of the difference between the two concepts. An approach, in the context of social work supervision, is a method used to conceptualise social work supervision, while models explain the supervisory process. Engelbrecht (2019:160) adds the viewpoint that models or approaches in supervision are based on the organisation's way of functioning, meaning that an organisation can be identified or be known by its implementation of a particular model or approach.

For the guidelines presented here, the researcher has opted to use the term 'approach' instead of 'models'. This chapter describes approaches applicable in social work and social work supervision. The next section discusses these approaches, starting with the social development approach.

9.5.2. **Three notable approaches to social work supervision**

9.5.2.1. **The social development/developmental approach**

To define developmental social work, Patel (2015:127) states that "developmental social work is informed by the social development approach to social welfare and involves the practical and appropriate application of knowledge, skills and values to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, groups and communities in their social context…" For the purpose of this discussion, the phrases 'social development' and 'developmental social work' are used interchangeably.

Patel (2015) further posits that, in the context of social work, social workers who practise this approach are change agents. They aim to promote social change by directing their interventions at the individual's interaction with the environment and the environment's impact on them (Lombard, 2019). The delivery of services using the developmental approach, as defined by Patel, takes place at the individual (micro), family and group (mezzo), and community and societal (macro) levels. This approach makes use of a multi-disciplinary approach, combining knowledge offered by different professionals in different government department clusters, such as the social protection and community development, and the economic and employment cluster, to mention just two (Midgley, 2014). This is to ensure the effective delivery of services to vulnerable and poor people.

Social work supervision within the context of a developmental approach

The application of the developmental approach in supervision mirrors its application to clients because of its empowerment element (Patel, 2015). Speaking about social work supervision in the development context means referring to it as an agent of change in social, economic and political environments (Noble & Irwin, 2009). These authors further propose that changes in the political and socio-economic environment bring new challenges to the fore, such as the escalating margins of inequality, migration, crime and poverty, racism and xenophobia. Applying their practice knowledge (Adams et al., 2009), social workers, in their line of duty, are expected to respond to these challenges. Thus, social work supervisors are called upon to equip and empower social workers with skills that will enable them to empower their clients to survive under these changing circumstances (Lombard, 2019). Developmental social work supervision also introduces supervisees to the strengths-based approach.

9.5.2.2. **The strengths-based approach**

In this approach, supervisors have the task of equipping supervisees with skills that help develop their awareness and alertness to the clients' capabilities, assets and strengths, including knowledge of people's interaction with their environment and how that environment, in turn, impacts their lives (Ncube, 2019). Supervisees should focus their interventions on the capabilities and strengths of clients as opposed to their shortcomings. Similarly, supervisors should, at the same time, help social workers identify their own strengths and capabilities (Engelbrecht, 2019b).

The strengths perspective, which requires social workers to believe that clients can transform and move beyond their challenges (Ledford, 2013), promotes partnership between clients and social workers so that they can jointly intervene in the client's situation. Furthermore, partnership between social workers and clients mirrors the relationship of social workers and supervisors.

The characteristics of a strengths-based approach to social work practice and social work supervision

The characteristics of the strengths-based approach as it is applied in supervision will be discussed as articulated by Engelbrecht (2010a), Ledford (2013) and Pulla (2013; 2014a).

The strengths-based approach considers the following:

- The strengths-based approach focuses on the individual's strengths, competencies, capacities, capabilities and resilience, on interventions rather than problems.
- All individuals, families, groups and communities have their inherent or inborn strengths. These are the strengths that must be discovered during therapy so that they are utilised to address existing problems. People have abilities, strengths and knowledge to recover from negative feedback and move on in their lives and careers despite their challenges.
- Strengths-based practices are empowering in nature. Clients and social workers are empowered to make decisions about their lives and about their cases.
- The relationship between supervisors and social workers is non-hierarchical, even though the seniority status of supervisors is recognised.
- Supervisors must assess their supervisees' strengths and acknowledge that social workers have talents and abilities. They must also believe in the abilities of their supervisees.
- Supervisors work on building their supervisees' skills and facilitate growth.

- Supervisors must look at supervisees as people who want to change and who also are sincere in their quest to help their clients.

The pathological approach to supervision

The term 'pathological' is borrowed from the medical field where it diagnoses a health problem; in much the same way can it be used in the field of social work (Ledford, 2013). This pathological, or deficit, approach is also called the 'traditional' approach because it has traditionally been applied to identify and solve problems through social work interventions and supervision (Engelbrecht 2010b; Ledford, 2013). To appreciate the strengths-based approach as a way of intervention in social work practice and supervision, it is important to understand the characteristics of the pathological approach first (Ledford, 2013; Baron & Stanley, 2019). These characteristics are listed as follows:

- It is problem-focused as it zeros in on the challenge as presented by the social worker (or client) with a view to solving it.
- It does not take into cognisance the person's strengths which, if considered, can be used in addressing the challenges, whether at the level of the individual, families, or communities**.** Recognising the strengths of social workers does encourage them to address the challenges of their clients with much confidence.
- The relationship is hierarchical in nature, whether it is between the client and a social worker or a social worker and a supervisor.
- During supervision sessions and in line with the hierarchical relationship, the supervisor takes charge of the supervision process and is also regarded as a change agent who owns the outcomes of this process.
- As supervisors are in charge, their responsibility is to correct and guide their supervisees.
- The deficit-focused approach diagnoses the supervisee's shortcomings, errors and possible lack of experience and stigmatises him/her for being unable to rectify these.

In contrast to the above pathological approach the following discussion highlights the characteristics of the strengths-based approach as it is applied to clients.

The main differences between pathological and strengths-based supervision is that the deficit supervision focuses on the inadequacies of supervisees, while the strengths-based supervision focuses on their abilities and capabilities. The differences, as outlined by Engelbrecht (2004), are given in Table 9.1.

Table 9:1: Summary of the Characteristics of the Pathological Approach Versus the Strengths-based Approach in Supervision

Pathological Attitude	**Strengths-Based Attitude**
The supervisor teaches and the social worker is taught.	Both the supervisor and the social worker are involved in the teaching and they learn from each other.
The supervisor is the all-knowing expert and the social worker is the layperson.	The supervisor is aware of the fact that he/she is not the all-knowing expert and appreciates the social worker's knowledge and experience.
The supervisor is the only one who does the thinking.	The supervisor and the social worker are jointly involved in critical, reflective and imaginative thinking.
The supervisor speaks and the social worker listens	Both the supervisor and the social worker speak and listen.
The supervisor disciplines and the social worker is disciplined.	The supervisor and the social worker are in constant interaction and strive to meet each other's needs instead of administering the discipline and being the victim.
The supervisor makes the decisions and the social worker implements them.	The supervisor and the social worker make joint decisions, based on what is meaningful to both.
The supervisor models and the social worker copies the model.	The social worker is actively involved in meaningful experiences, which the supervisor facilitates.
The supervisor selects the content of the supervision programme, while the social worker remains uninvolved and simply accepts everything.	The supervisor and the social worker jointly participate in choosing the content of the supervision programme and changing it as their needs change.
The supervisor uses his/her personal authority to control the social worker.	The supervisor uses his/her personal traits to maintain authority, which is based on mutual respect.
The supervisor personalises the learning process, while the social worker is only an object.	Together the supervisor and the social worker personalise the learning process and they share ownership of the teaching.

Source: adapted from Engelbrecht (2004)

The components of the pathological versus the strengths-based supervision models depicted in Table 9.1 illustrate that the general attitude of supervisors in pathological supervision shows unilateralism, as they portray the attitude of 'knowing-it-all'. On the other hand, the strengths-based approach to supervision is one of partnership and cooperation.

The focus of strengths-based supervision

***The uniqueness of individuals*:**

The premise of the strengths-based approach is that it is person-centred with a focus on individuals and their uniqueness. Since people are different – in this case social workers – their needs are also different and, therefore, a general 'one size fits all' approach will not help them (Beddoe, 2015). Thus, social work supervision should be tailored to suit each individual supervisee (Engelbrecht 2010b; Baron & Stanley, 2019). The researcher wishes to state that, here, it means that supervisors cannot prescribe the direction of supervision. The needs of those who are being supervised take precedence over the process, and supervision should be structured to address these needs.

It is important to note that focusing on the strengths of social workers does not mean that problems do not exist or that they must not be attended to. We concentrate on what social workers have done and can do best; we assist them to handle those problem areas which they previously could not deal with satisfactorily.

Professional empowerment:

The strengths-based approach, which leads to empowerment, is one of the fundamentals of social work (Pulla, 2017) and allows persons, be they social workers or clients, the opportunity to "understand their individuality, strengths, wishes and priorities" (Baron & Stanley, 2019:45). Furthermore, Baron and Stanley (2019:28) describe empowerment as "giving someone official authority or freedom to do something." Such a person, having been guided (Ledford, 2013), can then make independent decisions and find power in themselves. Similarly, in supervision, social workers are guided but should be given the freedom to decide on the method of their interventions with cases and their work in general. This assists them to grow professionally, develop self-esteem and become confident (Pulla, 2017).

The reality is, however, that in an average organisation, decisions are taken by management and are then disseminated to the social workers. Engelbrecht's (2014) suggestion that social workers should also be involved in decision-making pertaining to the broader organisation itself then seems to be a far way off.

Acknowledging and developing expertise:

Strengths-based supervision allows social workers to be experts in their therapeutic processes and interventions, and supervisors must allow them the opportunity to relate their experiences with clients, how they intervened, their failures, fears and successes, and how they plan to improve on their intervention the next time around (Cojocaru, 2010). Here, being an expert means that workers take the lead in the supervision process as they have the greater knowledge of their clients' situations. This is contrary to the usual supervision and intervention process (Baron & Stanley, 2019).

Goal setting:

The strengths-based approach also allows social workers to set their own goals, the main goal being to advance their career and work continuously towards this desired improvement (Ledford, 2013). Social workers should also set goals for each supervision session, with the help of their supervisors who can ask them questions in order to formulate such goals. Supervisees would then realise that they are active participants in the supervision session (Ledford, 2013).

Supervisors could ask the following strengths-based questions, as suggested by Ledford (2013:5), to establish the goals of social workers in the supervision session:

- "What is your goal for coming today?"
- "What would you like to accomplish today?"
- "What are your best hopes for today's meeting?"

Implementing the strengths-based approach to social work supervision

The application of the strengths-based approach in social work supervision mirrors its application in interventions with the clients, although it does not mean that social workers must be viewed and treated as clients by supervisors (Cojocaru, 2010). In addition to the mirroring process, Cojocaru (2010) offers two concepts which describe the strengths-based approach as *appreciative* supervision.

Transfer: In 'transfer', social workers relate to their supervisors the experiences they have had with their clients during counselling, which includes the emotions and fears they (the supervisees) went through.

Counter-transfer is when supervisors respond to social workers the way social workers would have responded to their clients, which also points to the fact that a therapeutic relationship exists in appreciative supervision. The essence of counter-transfer is that, while social workers apply therapy to their clients, so do supervisors to social workers. Interestingly enough, in this counter-transfer process, social workers are given the opportunity to behave with their supervisors the way their clients behaved with them.

The role of supervisors in the strengths-based approach

In the context of strengths-based supervision, the researcher wishes to explain that supervisors who practise the strengths-based approach will inevitably transfer this approach to their supervisees. The following are some of the roles of supervisors as expressed by Ledford (2013):

(a) Facilitator

The role of supervisors in the strengths-based supervision is to facilitate, guide, and encourage supervisees to identify their strengths (Ledford, 2013; Pulla, 2017). In the strengths-based supervision, as much as they are guided, social workers must be allowed the space for self-determination while supervisors adopt a non-judgemental attitude (Baron & Stanley, 2019). If they want to encourage supervisees to be independent, supervisors must not adopt the position of experts and must not dominate or take over the supervision session (Pulla, 2017).

(b) Communicator

Here supervisors communicate their commitment to strengths-based practice. Supervisors demonstrate their commitment by advocating for and the practising the strengths-based supervision in their organisations. Supervisors must also provide opportunities for their supervisees to learn and/or practice strengths-based techniques and interventions.

9.5.2.3. **The learning organisation approach**

Senge (2006) describes learning organisations as organisations which enhance the growth of their employees by encouraging continuous learning and the discovery of their strengths and abilities. They simultaneously develop new practising skills as well.

From this description, the researcher has observed the following about the learning organisation:

- People are given the opportunity to be creative through learning.
- By being creative, people find new ways of solving problems.

- People work as a team.
- Learning is continuous.

A learning organisation uplifts employees in the following manner, as explained by Senge (2006):

- People move from being helpless to seeing themselves as active participants in shaping their future, a notion which carries a similarity with the strengths-based approach as articulated by Engelbrecht (2010b).
- Employees are helped to move from being confined to their current situation (which is characterised by a sense of hopelessness) to looking into the future with hope.

Senge's (2006) learning structures are discussed below.

Systems-thinking

Systems-thinking involves understanding how parts of the system are interconnected form a whole. Thus, learning is achieved when people in the organisation are able to connect parts of the system into a bigger picture, thereby forming a whole. The researcher is of the view that, in the case of social work supervisors who are part of a learning organisation, systems- thinking means that they are able to guide their supervisees into seeing how parts of a client's problems are related to each other. In the systems-theory, the environment within which the person exists impacts his/her life and, therefore, all its aspects need to be connected to form the whole picture of the problem.

Personal mastery

According to Senge (2006), personal mastery is a process in which people continue to learn until they master certain skills. The researcher wishes to expound on this by stating that the organisation benefits when supervisors have created an atmosphere which allows social workers to master skills, such as participation and decision-making. The organisation benefits in that it develops independent and resilient workers.

Mental models

Mental models consist of the perceptions and imaginings which people have about the world around them (Senge, 2006). According to Senge (2006), perceptions about the world motivate people to act to change their situations. The learning organisation must, therefore, be the one to change first so that it is able to facilitate change in its employees. The researcher wants to link the mental models with the notion of the strengths-based approach in which people are

encouraged to move from a state of helplessness into that of discovering their inner strengths, abilities and capabilities (Ledford, 2013; Pulla, 2017).

Building a shared vision

Senge (2006) explains that a vision starts with an individual, but must then be shared with the broader organisation. An organisational vision refers to its own future position and what it seeks to achieve. Senge adds that an organisation which has a vision encourages people to learn as they work towards achieving that vision. It is the view of the researcher that where the organisation has a vision, its employees become aligned to that vision.

Team learning

Team learning happens when employees of the organisation are capacitated as a group – by building on personal mastery and a shared vision - until they achieve their desired goal (Senge 2006). Senge (2006) adds that the staff of the organisation can only learn and grow together when the organisation has created conducive conditions for that to take place.

Senge (2006) further argues that, for a learning organisation to exist and function, a paradigm shift is necessary, requiring a new type of leadership which differs from what he calls traditional leadership and compares the two.

Traditional leadership is characterised by leaders who set direction and make decisions without allowing the participation of employees because they assume that people are powerless, lack personal vision and cannot master change, and that their deficits can only be fixed by their leaders. In a constructive learning organisation, however, leaders facilitate learning and build organisations in which staff continually expand their capabilities (Senge, 2006).

In line with this discussion of the learning organisation, the researcher wishes to argue that, for the learning approach to flourish, organisations should create a conducive atmosphere in which workers can learn. Employees need to be given an opportunity to participate and work in partnership with the organisation in matters which concern them, including participating in decision making.

9.5.3. Similarities between the developmental, strengths-based and the learning approaches

The following discussion focuses on similarities between the developmental, strengths-based and the learning approaches. They all have common elements, namely supporting clients and

are also guided by such elements as empowerment, strengths, abilities, participation, partnership and resilience (Lombard, 2019:48).

Participation

Participation is advocated so that people become involved in areas which concern their lives, including participation in decision-making. In the context of supervision, social workers should be afforded that opportunity by their supervisors and senior managers in order to contribute in matters relating to service delivery. As they participate in, for example, planning for services to be rendered, they develop a sense of ownership of the services and programmes that have been jointly agreed upon. The participation of social workers should be taken further to include matters pertaining to supervision and related decisions.

Partnership

Partnership, which is linked to participation, means that social workers view themselves as partners with their supervisors and are also treated as such by the latter. As with participation, partnership is evident when supervisors and social workers plan and make joint decisions on matters of service delivery.

9.6. The Current State of Social Work Supervision in South Africa

The present research has found very little evidence that the strengths-based and other approaches are applied in social work and social work supervision. Besides the theoretical framework, there are other areas of social work supervision which are also not satisfactorily applied, which is a reflection of the current state of social work supervision in South Africa.

Social work supervision, as it is currently practised, poses challenges particularly in areas, such as supervisory relationships, supervision support, supervision systems, supervision training and supervision policy. The following discussion focuses on these areas and offers recommendations on how these gaps and shortcomings might be addressed.

9.6.1. Supervisory Relationships

Supervision takes place within the context of a relationship between supervisors and supervisees, more so in the strengths-based approach (Hughes, 2010; NASW & ASWB, 2013). Relationships can, however, be positive or negative.

9.6.1.1. **Positive relationships**

The success of supervision is strengthened by positive relationships between supervisors and supervisees (Parker, 2017). In the general practice of supervision, the relationship between supervisors and supervisees is characterised by power differences, with supervisors, who hold a managerial position, wielding more power that supervisees (Rankine, 2019).

Unless supervisors accept their supervisees as colleagues, these power inequalities could make the latter uneasy with regard to discussing professional matters that pose a hindrance to them in delivering services (Rankine, 2019).

The strengths-based approach calls for partnership between supervisors and supervisees. This does not remove the higher status of supervisors according to the hierarchical structure of the organisation, but calls for supervisees to be treated as people with the ability and capacity to participate in supervisory and other service-related matters, and that their input is valuable.

Generally, in a non-strengths-based environment in which supervisors lead and manage supervision, social workers experience these supervisors as judgemental and will not feel free to express themselves, including talking about their successes (Ledford, 2013; Baron & Stanley, 2019). The non-strengths-based atmosphere is one in which supervisors present themselves as knowing everything and wanting to fix all the work-related challenges presented to them by their supervisees. However, a positive relationship between supervisors and social workers should entail the following qualities**:**

- **Partnership:** The strengths-based relationship is a collaborative one in which supervisors and social workers are partners and colleagues, where supervisors value the views of supervisees (Ledford, 2013), and both parties consult on matters pertaining to service delivery.
- **Trust:** A relationship between supervisors and social workers is centred on trust and this trust is built over time (Rankine, 2019). Supervisors play a significant role in gaining their social workers' trust by showing them empathy and allowing them freely to participate in supervision, make contributions and disclose matters which trouble them - both professionally and personally (Baron & Stanley, 2019). Where there is trust, social workers experience a sense of security and are able freely to implement, reflect on and explore new ways of practice (Carpenter, et al., 2015; CFCECAS, 2015). Meanwhile, where a sense of security is lacking, workers usually shy away from disclosing issues,

even if their challenges are affecting their work performance (Ledford, 2013). One of the causes of mistrust between social workers and their supervisors is when social workers feel betrayed by their supervisors. One example of betrayal is when supervisors are unable to maintain confidentiality on matters shared with them by their supervisees, particularly personal matters (Cousins, 2004).

- **Empathy**: The relationship must be empathetic, even allowing social workers to make mistakes from which they will learn (NASW, 2013).
- **Communication:** Open and honest communication is an important element of the relationship. Here, supervisors are required to listen carefully to their supervisees in order to understand their strengths and then relaying these back to them (Baron & Stanley, 2019).
- **Respect**: The relationship must be based on mutual respect where there is collaboration and supervisors respect the views of their supervisees (Parker, 2017).
- **Feedback:** Feedback is important and should take place as follows, according to Kadushin and Harkness (2014):

  Feedback should be given as soon as possible after the performance, should be as specific as possible, objective and concrete, not judgemental, should highlight good performance and its effects, and should not focus on the supervisee as a person, but as a professional. It should be tied to what the supervisor wants the supervisee to learn, involve sharing ideas rather than giving advice, and should also explore alternatives rather than give answers.
- **Reflection**: Social work supervisors must encourage supervisees to reflect on how they have made an impact in a particular case (Manthorpe et al., 2015; Ledford, 2013; Rankine, 2019). In the context of the strengths-based approach, social workers should reflect on their own experiences and how they think their clients experienced their intervention. Similarly, when supervisors relay back to social workers what they have said, that is a way of reflecting.

9.6.1.2. **Negative relationships**

Negative relationships in supervision are also called abusive and harmful supervision (Davys et al., 2017), defined as "sustained forms of non-physical hostility perpetrated by managers against their subordinates for example loud outbursts, undermining and belittling" (Tepper et al., 2008:72). Davys et al. describe harmful supervision as situations in which action or inaction

on the part of the supervisor is known to cause harm, mainly by not assisting a supervisee when needed – with which the present researcher fully concurs. Negative relationships are a source of fear, and when supervisees are fearful they may not be able to give honest feedback because they fear victimisation (Davys et al., 2017).

Supervisors are expected to be positive role models to their supervisees, the purpose of modelling being that supervisees learn from the modelled behaviour. In the event of supervisors modelling abusive behaviour, there is a high possibility that supervisees will learn that behaviour and use it against their own supervisees when they are promoted to a supervisory position. However, abusive behaviour is not only unleashed on supervisees by supervisors. Supervisors, at times, do experience the very abusive behaviour they display to their supervisees when supervisees retaliate and abuse their supervisors (Folger, 1993; NASW & ASWB, 2013).

Abusive supervision drains the energy of supervisees, as standing up to such treatment requires much energy which they may not have (Hannah et al., 2013).

As with all negative relationships, abuse makes supervisees feel vulnerable and confused. They are vulnerable because they always expect negativity from their supervisors. The confusion is caused by the fact that supervisees experience their supervisors as unpredictable and, therefore, they do not freely attend supervision sessions, doing so only because it is a requirement (Davys et al., 2017).

Social workers and supervisors interpret abusive supervision differently. Sometimes social workers interpret the pressure that is exerted on them when supervisors demand work at short notice as abuse. The researcher is, therefore, of the view that, if this pressure becomes a pattern or a trend, then it can be classified as abuse. There is also pressure that is exerted on social workers resulting from supervisors' neglect of their own duties, and when they are pressed to deliver and submit, they turn the pressure onto social workers (Davys et al., 2017). The pressure exerted on supervisees due to negligence by supervisors does suit the description of abuse. What should be noted is that supervisory abuse and all other negative relationships are counterproductive. An abusive relationship is the very opposite of a strengths-based relationship.

9.6.2. **Supervision support**

Support (mainly emotional and professional) focuses on helping social workers render quality services to clients (BASW, 2012).

Emotional support includes listening to matters which affect their personal lives (NASW & ASWB, 2013). Support in supervision also includes, among other things, debriefing social workers who have experienced trauma in the course of their work and helping staff release tension by expressing their fears and concerns (Lietz, 2013). Social workers gain more confidence in their work when they feel supported (Schmidt, 2008; Baglow, 2009; BASW, 2012; NASW & ASWB, 2013).

Professional support focuses on the teaching, learning and development of social workers in theory, skills, competencies and self-awareness, which leads to professional growth and independence (Carroll, 2010). Runcan (2013) explains that when social work evolved in Romania, the need for supervision was equated with the need for professional support, indicating the importance of professional support in supervision.

9.6.3. **Supervision systems**

The two systems of supervision are the internal and external ones. The internal one is where the supervisor is in the same organisation with the supervisees, sharing the same employer while the external one is where the supervisor is from outside or belonging to another organisation (Beddoe, 2012; Runcan, 2013). Historically, organisations are known to provide internal supervision (Egan, 2012) and this is also typical of South Africa.

9.6.3.1. **Internal supervision**

Internal supervision is generally experienced as focusing more on administrative and organizational matters, where the focus is on whether social workers have achieved their targets, including complying with deadlines on their cases. This might present itself as a disadvantage, particularly if it is used to the exclusion of other supervision aspects and functions.

Internal supervision takes place within the organisation where the supervisor also holds the position of manager and team leader. These supervisors are accountable to the organisation, as are their supervisees. Internal supervisors are also called line managers (Beddoe, 2012).

Advantages of internal supervision

Internal supervision has remained the most popular one over the years (Egan, 2012) because supervisors know the structure of the organisation and are deemed as being in a better position to advocate for the needs of social workers (Openshaw, 2012).

Another advantage, as observed by the researcher, is that internal supervisors, because of their presence in the organisation, can continuously monitor supervisees to ascertain whether they are meeting the outcomes and targets of the organisation, as well as offer immediate assistance if needed.

Disadvantages of internal supervision

As discussed previously, the main disadvantage of internal supervision is that it seems to focus more on managerial issues to the neglect of supervisees' individual learning and strengths (Beddoe, 2010). These managerial issues include the management of risks, control of the supervisees' work, surveillance work and administration. Other disadvantages of internal supervision are discussed here.

- The emphasis here is on performance, the completion of tasks and accountability, to the neglect of professional matters and growth, as well as nurturing constructive relationships (Engelbrecht & Höjer, 2010; O'Donoghue, 2015; Rankine, 2019).
- Since internal supervision emphasises the power of supervisors and not relationships, supervisees are not free to discuss their areas of weakness in practice (Rankine, 2019). The hierarchical level occupied by internal supervisors tends to be a stumbling block for positive relationships in internal supervision.
- The promotion of internal supervisors sometimes overlooks qualifications and competence as requirements, as they are then promoted because of their years of experience in the same organisation – a reward for long service. In such instances, these supervisors are not empowered enough to deliver quality supervision as they have not been properly prepared. What they know is what they learned from their own supervisors. This, in turn, disadvantages their supervisees who will find that there is little to learn from their supervisors (Hair, 2012; Carpenter et al., 2013; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).
- Internal supervisors tend to have multiple roles which include being a supervisor and a line manager with managerial tasks, such as ensuring that organisational expectations are met (Beddoe, 2012). Thus internal supervisors juggle tasks, which increases the risk of supervision being neglected.

9.6.3.2. **External supervision**

External supervision takes place between supervisors and workers who do not work for the same organisation and it can take place in a different location to their normal working

environment (Beddoe, 2012). According to Mo and Tsui (2018), external supervision is more concerned with education and lifelong development. As with internal supervision, external supervision has its advantages and disadvantages.

Furthermore, external supervision is perceived as focusing on professional matters, such as educational supervision, which adds to the development of social workers (Beddoe, 2012; Egan, 2012). Organisations are at liberty to choose between the two systems, bearing in mind that they both have advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of external supervision

- External supervision focuses on the education, learning and knowledge base of supervisees (Harvey & Henderson, 2014; White, 2015; Mo & Tsui, 2018).
- Since the external supervisor is not an employee of the organisation, social workers are able to reflect without fearing reprisal. This is because the external supervisor is not embroiled in internal squabbles which would make the supervisee reluctant to give free and honest reflections of supervision and other service delivery matters (Rankine, 2019).
- Because it usually comes as a private service, the quality of external supervision is high and matches its cost (Beddoe, 2012).
- The nature of external supervision is that of partnership and collaboration. Supervisees are active participants as they are given opportunities to decide what should constitute the agenda of supervision (Beddoe & Davys, 2016).

Disadvantages of external supervision

The main challenge with external supervision lies in the relationship between the external supervisor and the managers of the organisation. It is not clear whether the external supervisor should be subjected to the rules of the organisation and, if so, to what degree the organisation should advise the external supervisor (Beddoe & Davys, 2016). Furthermore, since external supervision is a service sourced from outside the organisation - at market-related rates - this may be costly for the organisation (Beddoe, 2012).

While internal supervision has been commonly used, this does not mean that external supervision should not be explored. It is up to organisations to choose the most appropriate system, based on the needs of supervisees and the organisation at large.

9.6.4. **Training of supervisors**

Following an era when the promotion of social workers to supervisory positions was based purely on their years of experience as social workers, there are growing calls for supervisors to have a formal training in social work supervision (Openshaw, 2012; NASW & ASWB, 2013). To add to this, NASW & ASWB (2013) expressed the need for supervisors to hold relevant qualifications - to the extent of suggesting a qualification at the level of a degree from an accredited school of social work. The South African supervision framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:32) also supports training for supervisors when it states that supervisors should "attend a supervision course presented by an accredited service provider…" This training must include, but not be limited to, management functions, management skills, labour relations and inter-personal relationships (Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010; DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The supervision framework is not, however, specific regarding the level of qualification to be set as a requirement for one to be a supervisor.

There are also growing calls for indigenisation of supervision content, as with social work content, so that it relates to and reflects the environments in which it is to be applied (Abo El Nasar & Eltaiba, 2016). In the context of Africa and South Africa, social work theory, and subsequently the theory of social work supervision, must be aligned with the circumstances, experiences, values and norms of local cultures (Osei-Hwedie & Boateng, 2018).

The supervision framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) did not delineate social work supervision in the context of the needs of South African social workers. Instead, it is perceived as having drawn much of its content from North American theories (Engelbrecht, 2013). Therefore, the future development of supervision theory in South Africa should consider factoring in the way supervision needs to be practised locally, which means indigenisation.

9.6.5. **Supervision policy**

The supervision framework of the DSD (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) is the current standard policy available in South Africa for use in the supervision of social workers and other social service professionals. There is a need for an overarching supervision policy for the South African welfare sector, as well as for context-based internal organisational policies on social work supervision. Policies should consider the geographical area of the work setting, the nature of the social work agency and the type of social work services rendered (Joseph, 2017; Parker, 2017).

9.7. Summary of the Chapter

These guidelines focused mainly on three approaches applicable to social work supervision: the developmental approach, the strengths-based approach and the learning organisation approach. While these approaches were discussed separately, the similarities between them were also considered. The discussion of these approaches emanated from the theoretical framework of this study and thus recommends the strengths-based approach. The guidelines also discussed other important areas impacting social work supervision, specifically, supervisory relationships, supervision support**,** supervision systems, training of supervisors and supervision policy. The discussion revealed areas in which there are challenges to implementation, followed by recommendations regarding what could be done to overcome these.

The next chapter summarises the findings of this study and offers recommendations as to what should be done to improve social work supervision and what areas should be considered for future research.

CHAPTER 10: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises and integrates the sets of qualitative and quantitative findings based on the themes explored during interviews and with the help of questionnaires and draws conclusions which are followed by recommendations.

10.2 Summary of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

Qualitative and quantitative findings are summarised here, in line with the themes of this study.

10.2.1. The current state of supervision in South Africa

This study revealed that the current state of supervision in South Africa is characterised by the following shortcomings.

a) Supervision is dominated by the administrative function, which focuses more on monitoring, to the neglect of the educational and supportive functions.
b) Training needs for social workers and supervisors are not addressed and later limit their career movement as they find themselves under-equipped for higher posts which are accompanied by increased responsibilities.
c) Supervision, as it is conducted in South Africa, lacks structure which results in supervisors not feeling obligated to conduct supervision. This leads to casual and occasional supervision which, in most instances, remains undocumented. In some instances, there is no supervision at all.
d) Often supervisors are distracted by other unrelated duties which leads to insufficient or, in some extreme circumstances, no supervision of social workers at all.

10.2.2. Supervision support

Social workers do not receive the necessary support from their supervisors with the latter's workload being cited as one of the reasons. Similarly, supervisors are also not well supported by their managers.

10.2.3. Supervisory relationships

Supervisors and supervisees experience positive and negative relationships with each other. Positive relationships enhance the growth of social workers professionally as they feel

supported by their supervisors. Negative relationships include abusive supervision which has a demoralising effect on social workers.

10.2.4. **Expectations in supervision**

Expectations of social workers regarding their supervisors is that they must support them. On the other hand, supervisors expect social workers to render quality services to clients while also complying with the organisation's policies. Similar to social workers, supervisors expect support from their managers.

10.2.5. **Supervision systems**

The study revealed that both internal and external supervision, including their advantages and disadvantages, should be considered. There was a call, especially by social workers, for the introduction of external supervision in organisations as they were concerned that internal supervisors were not focusing only on supervision, but on other duties as well, which restricts the time that should be spent on supervision.

10.2.6. **Supervision frameworks**

The study brought to light that theoretical approaches were not applied in supervision, and participants demonstrated little knowledge of them.

10.2.7. **Supervision training**

Supervisors were not trained in supervision before assuming their post, neither were they exposed to continuous on-the-job training. It is this lack of training which usually made them feel inadequate in the performance of their supervisory duties.

10.2.8. **Supervision policy**

There is poor compliance with the *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), which is the current national policy framework in respect of social work supervision. There is also a need for the development of further policies on social work supervision.

10.3 **Recommendations based on the Findings of the Study**

The study makes the following recommendations regarding areas of concern:

10.3.1. **Ratio of supervisor to social workers**

The ratios suggested by the *Supervision Framework for Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) are 1:10 for supervisors who focus solely on supervision and 1:6 for those who have other tasks in addition to supervision. This study has, however, revealed that most supervisors shoulder extra tasks in addition to supervision and the suggested ratios were not observed.

Recommendation: It is recommended that organisations should abide by the ratios suggested by the *Supervision Framework for Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). A provision should be made for the review of these ratios when the Framework is reviewed.

The researcher also recommends that the ratio of social workers to supervisor should depend on the number of cases each social worker carries. Having six social workers to supervise may not mean less work for supervisors given that many social workers carry as many as 300 cases instead of the recommended 60 per social worker.

10.3.2. **Supervision structure is lacking**

Participants demonstrated knowledge of the structure of supervision by stating that it should include: a contract between supervisors and supervisees, the suggested frequency of supervision, a supervision agenda with date, time, and venue for supervision, and the developmental needs of supervisees must be addressed during supervision. In most instances this structure was not adhered to by supervisors due to lack of planning, which resulted in inconsistent supervision and gave the impression that supervisors did not prioritise supervision.

Recommendation: Managers in echelons higher than that of supervisors, particularly those managers who are social workers by training, should take charge and make sure that supervisors have documented plans for their supervisory duties - and follow these plans.

10.3.3. **Supervision support**

Social workers perceived themselves as not being sufficiently supported by their supervisors from whom they require professional, emotional and material support. They perceived the lack of support as partially the consequence of supervisors themselves not being supported by their managers. Incidents were cited by both social workers and supervisors where supervisors were summoned by their managers or instructed to attend to an emergency, forcing them to leave or

postpone supervision sessions. Supervisors reported that they experienced a significant lack of support in cases where their managers were not social workers by training, and thus seemingly unable to give them support because they did not have knowledge of the stresses of the social work profession.

Recommendation: It is recommended that social work supervisors be allowed to focus only on supervision to give social workers the support they need. It is also recommended that roles and the job description of supervisors be clearly defined. Tasks which may be delegated to supervisors should remain within the scope of their management activities.

In the same way that supervisors are social workers by profession, it is recommended that supervisors be supervised by managers who are also social workers by training.

10.3.4. **Supervisory relationships**

Social work supervisors and social workers do at times experience both positive and negative relationships with each other. A positive relationship is characterised by trust and this study revealed that there were times when trust was lacking. Although supervisors expressed trust in social workers, social workers explained that they found it difficult to trust their supervisors, particularly with their personal matters, because some supervisors lacked the ability to maintain confidentiality.

Negative relationships were characterised by social workers and supervisors abusing each other, which was assumed to be due to high caseloads/workloads on both sides. In addition to this, the study revealed that abuse also occurred where there was a lack of understanding of each other and when the supervisory relationship was not strong.

Recommendation: The recommendation is that supervisors should hold frequent supervision sessions as this would give them the opportunity to come to know their supervisees. This would ultimately build trust and reduce the chances of their abusing each other. Continuous on-the-job training for supervisors would also help them gain more understanding of what is expected of them, including maintaining confidentiality.

10.3.5. **Expectations in supervision**

While social workers expected support from their supervisors, the latter expected support from their managers as well.

Generally, supervisors expected social workers to do their work diligently. Expectations by social workers included supervisors transferring skills, acting as role models and contributing towards their career path. The study also revealed that supervisors expected to be supported by their managers, something which they received only minimally. The study revealed that unmet expectations created a sense of frustration in both social workers and supervisors.

Recommendation: The recommendation here is that expectations can only be specified through clarifying the roles of social workers and supervisors to ensure that they have realistic expectations of each other. However, they can only be met if the responsibilities attached to these roles are respected and adhered to by everyone involved.

10.3.6. **Supervision systems**

The study also covered the internal and external supervision systems. Participants expressed their views on these two systems and weighed in on their advantages and disadvantages. There was a call for organisations to practise external supervision as well which, as the study revealed, is not being practised in South Africa

Recommendation: It is recommended that both systems be applied and that more efforts be made to increase external supervision due to its advantages.

10.3.7. **Supervision frameworks**

The study revealed that theoretical approaches were not applied to supervision and participants demonstrated very little knowledge of them. This posed a challenge in that it made social work supervision appear less professional. The question arose as to how then the process of supervision was guided if the theoretical approaches were not applied.

Recommendation: The researcher recommends that it should be compulsory for a welfare organisation, which practises social work, to apply a particular approach (or approaches) to both social work and social work supervision. In addition, strict conditions should be set for these organisations which would help monitor the application of these approaches. One of the conditions should be the insistence on recorded proof of the implementation of these approaches, or at least an approach, in order for the organisation to qualify for funding. In the case of the DSD, the Supervision Framework and other policies should monitor the existence and implementation of approaches, both in social work and social work supervision.

10.3.8. **Supervision training**

The majority of social workers and supervisors expressed frustration over the lack of prior training in supervision for supervisors. This negatively affected social workers who found that the transferral of knowledge and skills by their untrained supervisors was limited. Social work supervisors, in turn, were frustrated as they lacked confidence and felt that they were not empowered enough to do justice by their supervisees**.** Training in social work supervision would contribute to its professionalisation.

Recommendation: Regarding training on supervision, it is recommended that:

a) institutions of higher education, which train social workers, should offer a course of social work supervision as part of their curriculum and that this should be a compulsory course for all social work students;
b) more accredited organisations conducting training in social work supervision should emerge;
c) organisations practising social work should have a standing social work supervision course which is offered to all social workers irrespective of whether they have ambitions of becoming a supervisor or not. This should be augmented by on-going, on-the-job training for those who have assumed the position of social work supervisor.
d) Supervision training should focus on areas, such as supervisory relationships and the theoretical framework of social work supervision, but not be limited to these.

10.3.9. **Supervision policy**

There is a need for further policies in social work supervision. The main document guiding supervision at the time of the study was the DSD's *Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa* (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Despite this, the study showed that there was little or no compliance with this document, partly because there were no consequences for not applying it.

Recommendation: The study recommends that further standardised policies should be developed in social work supervision, clearly stipulating what needs to be done in supervision. Furthermore, tough measures should be taken against those who do not comply with existing social work supervision policies.

10.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study would make a substantial contribution to the body of knowledge if they were augmented by further studies suggested here.

10.4.1. Internal versus external supervision:

Based on the concerns pertaining to issues of trust with internal supervisors, including the lack of confidentiality on the part of some supervisors, a qualitative study on the supervisory systems is recommended. This research should look at the benefits of both the internal and external systems of supervision, citing the advantages and disadvantages of each. This could help guide organisations when deciding on which supervisory system to adopt.

10.4.2. Management of supervisors:

A qualitative study should be conducted with respect to the management of social work supervisors. The experiences of social work supervisors who are supervised by managers who are not social workers by profession, should be explored. Non-social work managers in charge of supervisors goes against the call by the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) that social workers and supervisors, should be supervised by only other social workers, including managers.

10.4.3. Why do social work organisations not apply theoretical frameworks to supervision?

Research should be conducted to establish the reasons why organisations do not apply a theoretical framework to social work supervision. The researcher links this lack of application of approaches to difficulties by organisations to integrate theory with practice. This might also be an indication of the need for the continuous training of social work supervisors so that they have knowledge of the approaches applicable to supervision.

10.5 Reflections on Conducting the Study

The researcher had to follow a long process of obtaining permission to conduct research in the provincial Departments of Social Development, which included first receiving permission from the national DSD office, followed by applying for the same in each province. This process delayed the progress of the study as the researcher was waiting for provinces to respond. Ironically, the process of obtaining this permission was more cumbersome in the DSD than in the NGOs, despite the fact that the researcher was a DSD employee. Obtaining permission from

the relevant authorities did not guarantee the cooperation and participation of the respondents. The researcher needed to convince them to participate by explaining to them the importance of the study. Despite this, some intimated scepticism arising from feelings of helplessness as they did not really believe that there would be a positive change in supervision arising from this study.

Another experience of the researcher was that participants made use of the interview sessions to express their frustrations regarding how social work supervision was being conducted in South Africa. The researcher had to make sure constantly that the respondents remained focused on the questions asked and the subject at hand, while at the same time also debriefing them.

10.6 Conclusion

The findings of this study provided a wide range of answers to questions around social work supervision and the way it was conducted. Among the findings of this study were challenges to social work supervision, such as the insufficient training for social work supervisors, a shortage of policies and the lack of enforcement and implementation of existing ones, and an absence of leadership. There was clear evidence that social work supervision was not given the priority it deserved, and this then had a ripple-effect on the work of both supervisors and social workers. One way of moving social work supervision into the foreground would be by making it a priority and speciality, which would allow supervisors to focus only on supervision.

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ANNEXURE A: SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

1. How would you describe the state of social work supervision in South Africa, currently?
2. Why should social workers be supported by their supervisors? / What type of support do you require from your supervisors?
3. Which supervision system would you prefer? (Internal; external) and why? Give the advantages and of each system.
4. What is the focus of your supervision? /which matters are you not allowed bringing in the supervision session? How does the fact that you are not allowed to bring some issues in supervision affect your work?
5. What do you expect from your supervisor? /Supervision?
6. Is there bullying in supervision? What behaviour from your supervisor do you regard as bullying and why do you think bullying takes place in supervision?
7. What would you describe as a professional conduct from a social worker/supervisor?
8. What makes a trusting relationship between social workers and their supervisors?
9. In what way do supervisors play a role in the promotion (careeer pathing) of social workers?
10. What is developmental supervision?
11. What should social work supervision training entail?
12. In what way should social work supervision be improved?

ANNEXURE B: SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONS FOR SUPERVISORS:

1. How would you describe the state of supervision in South Africa, currently?
2. What do you regard as support for your social workers?
3. Why should social workers be supported by their supervisors?
4. Which supervision system would you prefer? (Internal; external) and why? Give the advantages and of each system.
5. What does you supervision session focus on? What do you think your supervision session should focus on?
6. What do you expect from the supervisees? What is it that is expected from you by your supervisees, management and other stakeholders?
7. Is it important to give feedback to supervisees? If yes, why do you think it is important to give feedback to social workers?
8. What is: (i) Developmental Social Work?
   (ii) Developmental Social Work Supervision?
   (iii) Explain how you are applying these.
   What is :(i) Strengths-based Social Work?
   (ii)Strengths-based Social Work supervision.
   (iii) Explain how you are applying these
9. What makes a trusting relationship between social workers and their supervisors?
10. What would you regard as a conducive context for supervision?
11. Does bullying takes place in supervision? If yes, what do you regard as bullying behaviour by supervisors? What do you regard as bullying behaviour by social workers? Why do you think bullying takes place in supervision?
12. What should social work supervision training entail?
13. How important is it to have a standardized supervision policy in place and what should it entail?
14. How important is it for social work supervisors to be trained in supervision?
15. How (in which areas) should social work supervision be improved?

ANNEXURE C: QUESTIONNNAIRE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

YES/NO ANSWERS

1. Does your supervisor need training in supervision?

Yes	No

2. Does your supervisor act professionally towards you?

Yes	No

3. Do you trust your supervisor?

Yes	No

If no, why not? Explain:
……
……..……
……
……
……

4. Do you think your supervisor adheres to the principle of confidentiality?

Yes	No

5. Are you given time to reflect on practice during supervision?

Yes	No

6. Do you think supervision applied in your organization is based on any theoretical model?

Yes	No

7. Does your organization practice developmental social work?

Yes	No

8. Do you feel supported by your supervisor?

Yes	No

9. Do you think your supervisor is supported by the management of your organization?

Yes	No

10. Does culture play a role in supervision?

Yes	No

11. Does gender play a role in supervision?

Yes	No

12. Is there a policy on supervision in your organization?

Yes	No

To what extent does your supervisor do the following? Rate, using the scale of 1 to 5 on each matter.

A. Professional Functions

Ratings are described as follows:

5= perfectly descriptive of my supervisor

4= usually descriptive of my supervisor

3= descriptive of my supervisor

2= occasionally descriptive of my supervisor

1=never descriptive of my supervisor

1.	Giving you quality supervision	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Being equipped with supervision skills?	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Getting timely and helpful feedback from your supervisor	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Receiving honest and constructive evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Giving honest and constructive evaluation?	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Providing good role model for the profession	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Encourage autonomy while providing direction	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Encouraging me to understand my own strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Demonstrates a high level of clinical competence in intervention and case conceptualization.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Demonstrates a high level of clinical competence in integrating theory, research with clinical practice	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Demonstrates a high level of competence in dealing with research with ethical/legal issues	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Creating opportunities for you to develop new skills	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Create opportunities for personal growth	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Demonstrate understanding of the complexity of my work	1	2	3	4	5
15.	At what level do you receive the following?					
	(i) Educational support?	1	2	3	4	5
	(ii) Administrative support?	1	2	3	4	5
	(iii) Caseload management?	1	2	3	4	5
16.	You are allowed to reflect during supervision	1	2	3	4	5

17. Support you get from your supervisor	1	2	3	4	5
18. Making time for me for advising and consultation	1	2	3	4	5
19. Encourages me to go to conferences and workshops	1	2	3	4	5
20. Serves as a good resource person	1	2	3	4	5

B. PSYCHOSOCIAL FUNCTIONS

1. Provide emotional support	1	2	3	4	5
2. Accepting me the way I am	1	2	3	4	5
3. Encouraging my efforts	1	2	3	4	5
4. Affirming me	1	2	3	4	5
5. Respect my values and views	1	2	3	4	5
6. Respecting my cultural heritage	1	2	3	4	5
7. Respecting my opinions even when s/he disagrees with me	1	2	3	4	5
8. Listening to me with empathy	1	2	3	4	5
9. Caring about my well-being	1	2	3	4	5
10. Caring about me as a person	1	2	3	4	5
11. Sharing with me openly his/her feelings	1	2	3	4	5
12. Inspiring me to grow as a person	1	2	3	4	5
13. Establishing a relationship of mutuality and trust	1	2	3	4	5
14. Providing a safe environment for me to talk about my anxieties	1	2	3	4	5
15. Showing interest in my future plans	1	2	3	4	5
16. Giving me counselling and advice whenever I need it	1	2	3	4	5
17. Willing to invest time and energy in helping me	1	2	3	4	5
18. Demonstrating sensitivity to my needs and feelings	1	2	3	4	5
19. Delighting in passing on his/her experience to me	1	2	3	4	5
20. Expressing confidence in me and in my potential	1	2	3	4	5

Adapted from Wong. 1999

TICK BOX

Make a tick next to the statement that applies to you.

	Tick Box		Tick Box
The supervisor teaches and the worker is taught		Both the supervisor and the worker are involved in the teaching and they learn from each other	
The supervisor is the all-knowing expert and the worker is the layperson		The supervisor is aware of the fact that he/she is not the all-knowing expert and appreciates the worker's knowledge and experience	
The supervisor is the only one who does the thinking		The supervisor and the worker are jointly involved in critical, reflective and imaginative thinking	
The supervisor talks and the worker listens		Both the supervisor and the worker talk and listen	
The supervisor disciplines and the worker is disciplined		The supervisor and the worker are in constant interaction and strive to meet each other's needs instead of administering the discipline and being the victim	
The supervisor makes the decisions and the worker implements them		The supervisor and the worker make joint decisions, based on what is meaningful to both	
The supervisor models and the worker copies the model		The worker is actively involved in meaningful experiences, which the supervisor facilitates	
The supervisor selects the content of the supervision programme, while the worker remains uninvolved and simply accepts everything		The supervisor and the worker jointly participate in choosing the content of the supervision programme and changing it as their needs change	
The supervisor uses his/her personal authority to control the worker		The supervisor uses his/her personal traits to maintain authority, which is based on mutual respect	
The supervisor personalises the learning process, while the worker is only an object		Together the supervisor and the worker personalise the learning process and they share ownership of the teaching.	

Make a tick next to the statement that applies to you

	Tick Box		Tick Box
A sincere and warm attitude		A suspicious attitude	
A conciliatory attitude		A homogenized attitude (an attitude of regarding everyone as the same and that people should be avoided)	
An understanding attitude		An attitude of pity	
An accepting attitude		An attitude based on stereotyping	
An eager-to-learn attitude (does your supervisor show eagerness to learn even if it is from you?)		An attitude of over identification (over-identification with other a particular culture).	
A realistic attitude		A closed attitude with regard to history.	

Adapted from Engelbrecht: 2004

OTHER QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

1. Who decides on the content of your supervision?

Management	Your Supervisor	Both you and your Supervisor?	Other

2. Who should decide on the content of your supervision?

Management	Your Supervisor	Both you and your Supervisor?	Other

3. What are the causes of social workers leaving the profession? Number them according to their order of importance, with 1 being the least important and 4 being the most important

High caseload	Lack of supervision	No career pathing	Other

4. What should supervision focus on?

Number them according to their order of importance, with 1 being the least important and 6 being the most important

Caseload management	Educational supervision	Administrative matters	Support	Empowerment	Developmental

If other, please explain the area supervision should focus on……..

……

……

5. How would you rate your morale now?

Extremely low	Low	Average	High	Excellent

6. What is your current caseload?

30 cases	60 cases	100 cases	Other

7. How often do you receive supervision?

Weekly	Monthly	Bi-monthly	between 3-6 months	Once a year	Never	Other (explain)

8. When was your last supervision? Tick what is relevant for you (one box only)

Last week	Last month	2-3 months ago	4-6 months ago	More than 6 months ago	Did not have supervision

9. What is the distance (in kilometres) between you and your supervisors?

Same (office) organization with my supervisor (no travelling required)	Between 0-10 km	Between 10- 50 km	Between 50-100 km	More than 100 km

10 Which theoretical model of supervision is practised by your organization?

Agency Model	Developmental Model	Competence Model	Integrative Model	Other (explain which)	Don't know

11. Which theoretical model of supervision would you prefer to be applied?

Agency Model	Developmental Model	Competence Model	Integrative Model	Other (explain which)

ANNEXURE D: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SUPERVISORS

1. Do you have a formal qualification in supervision?

Yes	No

2. What qualification do you hold in supervision?

PHD	
Masters	
Post-graduate Diploma	
Certificate	
Workshop	
In-service Training	

3. Which of the following tasks can be done in combination with supervision?

Having a caseload	
Management tasks	
Supervision must not be combined with any of the above	

4. Do you trust your supervisees?

Yes	No

5. Do you think your supervisees adhere to the principle of confidentiality?

Yes	No

6. Do you think supervision applied in your organization is based on any theoretical model?

Yes	No

If yes, which model? .....
……
……..

7. Does your organization practice developmental social work?

Yes	No

8. Are you of the opinion that:

Supervision in your organization is developmental?	
Supervision generally is developmental?	

9. Do you feel supported by your management?

Yes	No

10. Do you as a supervisor get:

Supervision from your managers?	
Consultation from your managers?	

11. Are you supervised by:

A manager who is a social worker by profession?	
A manager who is a non-social worker?	

12. Does your organization offer you opportunities for career growth?

Yes	No

13. Does culture play a role in supervision?

Yes	No

If yes, what role?

……
……
……
……
……

14. Does gender play a role in supervision?

Yes	No

If yes, what role? .....
……
……..……
……..……
……

15. Do you receive on-going training in your job?

Yes	No

ANNEXURE E: INFORMATION SHEET

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959, Fax: 27 21-959

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Exploring the state of social work supervision in South Africa.

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Joyce Ramabulana-Ndzuta, a doctoral student at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you have been identified as a social worker and social work supervisor who have certain experiences in social work supervision. The purpose of this research is to explore the state of social work supervision in South Africa.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to participate in focus groups interview and individual interviews which will require you to describe you the state of supervision in South Africa and your experience in supervision. Describing your experiences in supervision will assist you to look back at how supervision has been done in the Welfare Sector, identifying gaps and influencing changes that you want to see in the future. Interviews will be conducted in an interview room in neutral venues and NGO offices, in the provinces which have been identified for the research. These interviews are estimated to last 2-3 hours. A possible follow-up interview may be requested. The interviews will focus on the state of supervision in South Africa, which will include the experiences of social workers in supervision. You will also be asked to participate in a survey for the quantitative part of the study. On-line survey will be done by way of distributing on-line questionnaires to all social workers.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, the researcher will ensure that only she and the study supervisor have access to the data. All data will be stored in a locked cabinet to which the researcher alone has access.

Your name will be masked in the recording and you will be assigned a pseudo name when the coding and analysing of the data is done. Therefore, your name will not be included on the data collected; a code will be placed on the data collected, an identification key will allow the researcher to link the data to your identity and only the researcher will have access to this identification key. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning potential harm to you or others.

This researcher will request you to audiotape the interview. The tapes will be made to ensure that the researcher is able to record everything that you say. It will also help the researcher to write down the whole interview after it has been conducted by listening to the tapes. The tape will be stored digitally on the researcher's personal computer and it will be protected by a password known only to the researcher. The tapes will be used only for transcribing the interview between the participants and the researcher and will be disposed of once the study has been fully completed.

___ I agree to be audio-taped during my participation in this study.

___ I do not agree to be audio-taped during my participation in this study.

The researcher will conduct her interviews in English as it is the language best understood by every qualified social worker.

Questionnaires will be distributed online for the quantitative part of the study. Participants will be requested to indicate online by making a mark on the appropriate block if they are willing to participate in the research.

What are the risks of this research?

There may be some risks from participating in this research study, although minimal. The research is an exploration of the state of social work supervision in South Africa which includes the experiences of social workers in supervision. Describing these might evoke some emotions within you which could cause you to feel uncomfortable, angry and sad.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research will help you in your practice as a social worker and as a social work supervisor. The findings will help the authorities in the Department of Social Development to gain more understanding on the current state of social work supervision in South Africa and what is

required to improve it. The study will make recommendations on what to be improved in social work supervision.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If during the course of the interview you wish to terminate, you may inform the researcher who will ensure that any negative consequences of the study receive the attention of a counsellor.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by *Joyce Ramabulana-Ndzuta and* the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Joyce Ndzuta at the Department of Social Development; 134 Pretorius Street; HSRC Building; Pretoria. (012) 312 7970; cell number: 076 316 2266 or email: ndzuta.joyce@gmail.com

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Head of Department: Social Work

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences:

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

This research is approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.

ANNEXURE F: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959, Fax: 27 21-959

Title of Research Project: Exploring the state of social work supervision in South Africa for the development of Guidelines in Social Work Supervision

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way. I agree to be audio-taped during my participation in the study. I also agree not to disclose any information that was discussed during the group discussion.

Participant's name……..

Participant's signature……..

Witness's name……..

Witness's signature……..

Date……

ANNEXURE G: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:

Annexure G1 Profile of DSD Social Workers Who Participated In the Qualitative Study

Province	District/Region	Number of Focus Groups Conducted	Number of Social Workers in each Focus Group	Gender	Race	Qualifications	Age Range	Years of Experience as a Social Workers
Gauteng	North Rand Region	02	Focus Group 1:02 Focus Group 2:02	Focus Group 1: 02 Females Focus Group 2: 01 Male; 01 Female	Black Black	Degree in social work: 02 Masters in Social Work: 02	29-45	6-12 years: 01 13- 15 years: 01 16 and more: 02
Limpopo	Mutale Local Municipality	Mutale: 01	Mutale: 04	Mutale: 1 male, 3 females	Black	Degree in Social Work: 04	32-44	06-12 years : 02 13-15 years: 02
	Makhado local Municipality	Makhado: 01	Makhado: 04	Makhado: 1 male, 3 females	Black	Degree in social work: 3 Masters in Social Work:1	30-40	6-12 years: 01 13-15 years: 02 16 and more: 01
Mpumalanga	Enhlanzeni District. Emalahleni Service Office	01	04	3 females; 1 male	Black	Degree in social work: 04	30-45	6-12 years: 0 13-15 years: 02 16 years and more: 02
	Enhlanzeni District. Middleburg Service Office	01	04	4 Females	Black	Degree in Social Work: 02 Masters in social work: 02	27-39	6-12 years: 02 13-15 years: 02
	Bojanala District: Rustenburg, Phokeng Office	01	04	4 females	Black	Degree in Social Work: 04	29-42	6-12 years: 01 13-15 years: 03

Province	District/Region	Number of Focus Groups Conducted	Number of Social Workers in each Focus Group	Gender	Race	Qualifications	Age Range	Years of Experience as a Social Workers
North West	Bojanala District: Madibeng, Brits Service Office	01	04	3 females; 1 male	Black	Degree in Social Work:04	32-47	6-12 years: 01 13-15 years: 02 16 years and more: 01
Totals		**Focus Groups 08**	**28**	**Females: 23** **Males: 05**	**28**	**Degree in social work: 23** **Masters in social work: 05**		**6-12 years = 08** **13-15 years = 14** **16 years and more = 06**

Annexure G2: Profile of the NGO Social Workers Who Participated In the Qualitative Study

Province	District/Region	Number of Focus Groups Conducted	Number of Social Workers in each Focus Group	Gender and race	Age Range	Qualifications	Years of Experience as a Social Worker
Gauteng	North Rand Region: Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie (SAVF)	1	2	**Gender:** Female: 02 **Race:** White: 01 Black: 01	33-47	Degree in Social Work: 01 Masters in Social Work: 01	06-12 years: 01 13 –15years: 01
Mpumalanga	Enhlanzeni District. Emalahleni. Child Welfare South Africa	1	2	**Gender:** Female: 02 **Race:** Black: 02	30-42	Degree in Social Work: 02	06-12 years: 02
North West	Bojanala District: Rustenburg Local Municipality. FAMSA	No Focus Group. Only 1 social worker interviewed	1	**Gender:** Female: 01 **Race:** Black: 01	25- 32	Degree in Social Work: 01	0-05 years: 01
Totals		**2**	**5**	**Gender** Females = 05 **Race** Black = 04 White = 01		**Degree in Social Work =04** **Masters in Social Work =01**	**0-05 years: 01** **06-12 years: 03** **13-15 years: 01**

G3: Profile of DSD Supervisors Who Participated In the Qualitative Study

Province	District/Region	Number of Supervisors Interviewed	Gender	Race	Age Range	Qualifications	Years of experience as a supervisor
Gauteng	North Rand Region	2	1 Male; 1 Female	All black	40-47	Degree to Masters in Social Work: 02	6-10 years: 01 11-15 years: 01
Limpopo	Mutale Local Municipality	2	1 Male; 1 Female	All black	39-45	Degree in Social Work: 02	6-10 years: 02
	Makhado local Municipality	2	2 Females	1 white 1 black	39-52	Degree to in Social Work: 01 Masters in social work: 01	6-10 years: 01 16 years and more: 01
Mpumalanga	Enhlanzeni District. Emalahleni Service Office	2	2 Females	All black	40-52	Degree in Social Work: 01 Masters in social work: 01	11-15 years: 02
	Enhlanzeni District. Middleburg Service Office	2	2 Females	All black	39-45	Degree in Social Work: 01 Masters in social work:01	06-10 years: 01 0-05 years: 01
North West	Bojanala District: Rustenburg Local Municipality, Phokeng Office	2	2 Females	All black	42-48	Degree in Social Work: 02	06-11ears: 01 0-05 years: 01
	Bojanala District: Madibeng Local Municipality, Brits Service Office	2	2 Females	All black	40-53	Degree in Social Work:02	06-10 years: 02
Totals		**14**	**Males =2** **Females =12**	**Black =13** **White = 1**		**Degree in Social Work: 11**	**0-05 years: 02** **06-10 years: 08**

						Masters in Social Work: 03	**11-15 years: 03** **16 years and more: 01**

G4: Profile of the NGO Supervisors Who Participated In the Qualitative Study

Province	**District/Region**	**Number of Supervisors interviewed**	**Gender**	**Race**	**Qualifications**	**Age Range**	**Years of experience as a supervisor**
Gauteng	North Rand Region: Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie (SAVF)	1	Female	White	Masters in Social Work: 01	50-59	16 years and more: 01
Mpumalanga	Enhlanzeni District. Emalahleni. Child Welfare South Africa	1	Female	Black	Masters in Social Work: 01	35-44	0-5 years: 01
Totals		**02**	**Females: 02**	**White =01** **Black =01**	**Masters in Social Work: =02**		**0 - 05 years: 01** **16 years and more: 01**

G5: Profile of DSD and NGO Social Workers who participated in the Quantitative Study

Gender	Female: 82 = 77%	Male: 25 = 23%		**Totals:** **Number: 107** **= 100%**
Race	Black: 107 = 100%	White : 0		**107** **= 100%**

Home Language	Setswana : 30 = 28%	Tshivenda : 43 = 40.1%	Sepedi: 06 = 5.6%	IsiNdebele: 08 = 7.4%	SiSwati: 08 = 7.4%	IsiZulu: 10 = 9.3%	Other (Shona) 02 = 1.8%	**107** **= 100%**
Age Range	25-29: 17 = 16%	30-34: 45 = 42%	35-39: 27 = 25%	40-44: 08 7.4%	45-49: 10 9.3%			**107** **= 100%**
Academic Qualifications	Degree Social Work: 09 = 8.4%	Post Graduate Degree in Social Work: 98 = 91.5%						**107** **= 100%**
Years of Experience as a Social Worker	1-05: 17 = 15.8%	06-12: 45 = 42.0%	13-15: 27 = 25.2%	16 years and more: 18 = 16.8%				**107** **= 100%**

G6: Profile of DSD and NGO Supervisors who participated in the Quantitative Study

Gender	Female: 18 = 78.3%	Male: 05 = 21.7%						**TOTALS** **Number: 23** **=100%**
Race	Black: 21 = 91.3%	White : 02 8.7%						**Black and White: 23** **= 100%**
Home Language	Setswana: 06 = 26.1%	Tshivenda: 09 = 39.1%	Afrikaans : 02 = 8.7%	IsiXhosa: 01 = 4.3%	IsiZulu : 04 = 17.4%	Other (Shona):01 = 4.3%		**All: 23** **= 100%**
Age Range	25-29: 0 = 0%	30-34: 05 = 21.7%	35-39: 10 = 43.5%	40-44: 06 = 26.1%	45-49: 0 0%	50-54: 01 4.3%	55 and older : 01 = 4.3%	**All: 23** **=100%**

Qualification in Supervision	Masters in Social Work: 01 = 4.3%	Post-graduate diploma in supervision: 01 = 4.3%	Certificate : 02 = 8.6%	Workshop: 06 = 26.0%	In-service training: 06 = 26.0%	Workshop and in-service training : 01 = 4.3%	No qualification in supervision : 05 = 21.7%	**All: 23 =100%**
Years of Experience as a Supervisor	1-3 years: 10 = 43.5%	04 -07 years: 11 = 47.8%	08-15 years: 01 = 4.3%	16 years and more: 01 = 4.3%				**All: 23 =100%**