

Supervision – the power to save? An exploration of the role supervision can play in a social worker's decision to resign in the child protection field

A report on a study project presented to the Department of Social Work, School of Human and Community Development, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts by course work and research report in Occupational Social Work.

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Declaration:

I, Kirsty Hunter, declare that this research report is my own unaided work and that I have given full acknowledgement in the sources I have used. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Social Work in Occupational Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree for examination at any other University.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

With the celebration of the 25th anniversaries of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) having occurred recently it seems an appropriate time to review the factors that contribute towards the actualization of these rights (Imoh, 2014). It is argued that whilst these treaties marked a significant turning point for children's rights internationally, in Africa the impact of the treaties on children's lived experiences has been limited (Imoh, 2014). Despite South Africa's commitment to the protection of children, the socio-economic challenges facing the country are significant and these often place children in precarious positions.

The current research explores the role of effective social work supervision in the South African child protection field on the retention of social workers. The research study postulates that effective social work supervision may act as a mediating variable in relation to the commonly cited challenges social workers experience thereby reducing turnover. Retention of child protection social workers is viewed as a significant area of inquiry as previous international research has linked staff turnover, amongst other factors, to an increased likelihood of poor outcomes for children. This chapter provides an outline of the rationale for this study; key concepts are identified and a structure for the research report is given.

1.2. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY AND PROBLEM FORMULATION

Child protection social workers are on the frontline of the fight against child abuse and neglect. It is through social workers that children's rights are actualized making social workers central to the development of South African society and South Africa's adherence to the various treaties related to the protection of children's rights. The protection of vulnerable children is crucial as child abuse and neglect can often have devastating consequences for children. The most severe consequence of failure in the child protection system is the death of a child owing to abuse or neglect. This sadly has been alleged to be the case in the high profile death of Victoria Climbié at age eight in February 2000 owing to physical abuse in the United Kingdom (Munro Report, 2011).

A review of the circumstances that lead to Victoria's death, despite the involvement of child protection social workers and numerous allegations of physical abuse, revealed certain flaws in the child protection system in the United Kingdom and led to widespread reforms (BBC News, 2001). The most serious of the failures in the child protection system was identified as the allocation of the case to an already overburdened and inexperienced social worker. In addition, the review revealed that the responsible social worker's supervisor was taken time off as a result of "mental illness" at the time of the investigation. The acting supervisor confirmed that she had not read the case file nor provided the social worker with any type of supervision during the investigation of the case. The review noted that Mrs Mairs (the acting supervisor) came from the "ostrich school of management – keep your head buried in the sand and don't see what is going on". (BBC News, 2001).

In South Africa, allegations of failures in the child protection system have also been alleged in the case of the death of three-year old Jamie Faith Naidoo owing to physical abuse and long-term torture alleged by her grandmother and mother in Havenside, Durban, South Africa in November 2014 (Dzanibe, 2014). The case file noted that Jamie and her two older siblings were in foster care with their grandmother under the supervision of local Child Welfare (Perumal, 2015). There was community outcry over the death as her abuse was alleged to have been reported to social workers, the South African Police Service and the local councillors, but no action was taken. Chatsworth Child Welfare noted chronic underfunding and a shortage of staff as contributing factors in his case being inadequately investigated (Perumal, 2015). Unlike the case of Victoria Climbié, which initiated widespread reform in the United Kingdom, the case of Jamie Naidoo appears to have not altered the child protection system in South Africa.

On a psychological level, Doyle (2006) argues that research has suggested that follow-up studies of abused children have found that the former victims often experience emotional and behavioural difficulties. (Doyle, 2006; Hiebert-Murphy & Woytkiw, 1999). Furthermore, Zielinski (2009) argues that victims of child maltreatment are at higher levels of risk for financial and employment related difficulties in adulthood. He argues that there is a, "substantial societal cost from this problem through lost economic productivity and tax revenue and increased social spending" (Zielinski, 2009, p.666).

Given the consequences of child protection system failures, it is important that organisational issues in the system are given the highest priority. Various international researchers have noted the impact that high levels of staff turnover have on child protection structures. This statement is borne out in the Strolin-Goltzman, Kollar and Trinkle (2010) research in the United States. In a unique study, these researchers explored the experiences of youths in foster care of the turnover of social workers. The study participants indicated that a change of social worker was a largely negative experience. The loss of stability re-traumatized them and affected their ability to trust future social workers. It also affected the permanency planning of their case (Strolin-Goltzman, Kollar and Trinkle, 2010). However a few youths stated that it gave them an opportunity for a second chance where they had had difficulty bonding with their social worker (Strolin-Goltzman, Kollar and Trinkle, 2010). In the researchers' own experience, voluntary staff turnover has led to cases of abuse taking additional time to be investigated as new social workers must familiarize themselves with the child protection agency and protocols. The researcher also notes that voluntary staff turnover of social workers can lead to delays in finalizing court cases. It can also result in a breakdown of trust between the social worker and the child.

Previous research (Renner, Porter, Preister, 2009; Dill & Bogo, 2009) indicates that effective supervision is central for quality service provision to beneficiaries and reducing social worker turnover. The commitment of South Africa to promoting effective social work supervision can be seen in initiatives by the Department of Social Development and the South African Association of Social Services Professionals. The Department of Social Development's Retention Management and Supervision Framework makes it clear that supervision is central to social work. This was echoed at the recent Social Work Indaba held in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal in March 2015 under the banner of "*Revitalizing Social Work practice in South Africa*" where it was argued that supervision is crucial to the achievement of the best possible outcomes for beneficiaries (Social Work Indaba, 2015).

Best practice supervision guidelines see the role of the supervisor as fulfilling a variety of functions that include administrative, supportive and educational dimensions (Kardusian, 1992; Shulman, 1991). Administrative guidance and oversight is one of the most evident functions of social work supervision. This is particularly important in the child protection field where practice is guided by legislation and where high levels of oversight exist. Emotional support is also seen as a crucial function of effective supervision as it potentially mitigates, directly or indirectly, against many of the commonly cited reasons for

dissatisfaction and turnover in this field (Bostock, Carpetener, & Webb, 2013). These reasons include a lack of growth opportunities, burnout, role ambiguity, occupational stress and depersonalization because of high levels of bureaucracy (Bostock, Carpetener, & Webb, 2013). Emotional support is also thought to prevent burnout in social workers (Horwitz, 2006). Finally, supervision is seen as encouraging reflection on practice that should result in social workers developing and refining their skills. Effective supervision should result in a range of positive consequences for the sector including engaged, committed and involved social workers who practice their skills with vigour, dedication and enthusiasm (Schaufeli, 2013).

Despite the recognition of the importance of the role of supervision in supporting and mitigating risks facing social workers in South Africa, key research into this area has predominately taken place in first-world countries. This research cannot therefore account for the influence of South African specific dynamics on voluntary staff turnover in this field. In South Africa, only limited research into the link between turnover and supervision in the child protection field exists. Earle's (2008) research is the only comprehensive, published investigation into social work personnel challenges in South Africa. However, her research looked at a broad sweep of problems and specifically addresses the lack of available social workers in the social service field and does not examine the challenges relating to turnover in any depth. Engelbrecht (2010; 2012; 2014) also focuses his academic research on supervision in the child protection field in South Africa. These two studies provide a descriptive account of social work supervision and the challenges facing its practice, but have not explored supervision in relation to the turnover of social workers.

The limited local research leaves the critical area of social work retention management in the child protection field under-researched. This study proposes to investigate the potential role that supervision can play in influencing or mitigating, directly or indirectly, voluntary staff turnover in the child protection field with the aim of stimulating critical engagement with the practice and provision of supervision in the child protection field. This research should also synthesize social workers' views on this topic and contribute towards a collective discussion and the development of interventions to retain child protection social workers in non-profit organisations. The reduction of voluntary staff turnover could result in the improvement of the quality of services that children in need of care and protection receive in South Africa. This would reduce the negative long-term consequences of child abuse for adult survivors.

1.3. AIMS

1.3.1. PRIMARY AIM

The primary aim of the study is to interrogate the role of effective social work supervision on a social worker's decision to leave the employment of a child protection organisation in Gauteng.

1.3.2. SECONDARY AIMS

- To provide a descriptive account of supervision provided to social workers in the child protection field
- To determine if social work supervision in social worker's previous child protection organisations met their needs as social work professionals
- To explore the reasons social workers decided to leave their previous child protection organisations
- To elucidate social workers views on if supervision played a role in their decision to leave a child protection organisation.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What has the nature and extent been of the social work supervision child protection social workers residing in Johannesburg, South Africa?
- What are social workers' views on the potential role that supervision can play in a social worker's decision to leave or remain in child protection agencies?

1.5. UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

This study has taken place within a qualitative epistemology that recognises that there is no objectivity. With this in mind, it is noted that the researcher began the current research project with the following underlying assumptions:

- Child protection social work is a stressful and complex profession. It involves juggling legislative requirements, norms and standards and structural factors in an effort to protect and ensure positive outcomes for vulnerable children. Social workers bear the weight of responsibility (Travis, Lizano, Mor Barak, 2015; McGowan, Auerbach, Conroy, Augaberger & Shudrich, 2010; Horwitz, 2006).

- Effective supervision is essential for social workers and serves to improve the outcomes for clients in any field, especially in the child protection field (Renner, Porter, Preister, 2009; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Social Work Indaba, 2015; and Draft Framework for Supervision, 2011).
- A stable child protection workforce is an important element of a functioning child welfare system and voluntary staff turnover is problematic in the South Africa context (Levy, Poertner, Lieberman, 2012; and Recruitment and Retention Strategy, n.d.).

1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research used an exploratory-descriptive instrumental case study research design within the qualitative paradigm. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was used to identify 12 social workers who met the participant inclusion criteria and were based in Gauteng. Theoretical saturation was used to determine the most appropriate sample size. The participants were largely representative of the general child protection social work population in South Africa. The researcher utilised a face-to-face individual interview with each participant. The interviews were facilitated through the use of a semi-structured interview schedule. The data collection instrument was developed in accordance with the research objectives and reference to previous international and national literature. The use of a semi-structured data collection instrument allowed the researcher to gain in-depth narratives of the participants lived experiences of supervision and to interrogate their reasons for resignation. The data collected were analysed using thematic analysis that focused on both inductive and deductive analysis. The data are presented in a timeline format to capture the participants' journeys in the child protection field.

1.7. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Table 1.1 *Definition of key concepts*

Voluntary staff turnover	Voluntary staff turnover, exits or voluntary separations refer to an employee's decision to resign from his/her current employment. This category excludes redundancies, retirements and firing of employees (Ongori, 2007).
Child protection	"Child protection is the process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect. It involves measures and structures designed to prevent and respond to abuse and neglect" (RCPH, 2016)
Child welfare	Child welfare is defined as services for children who are victims of abuse and neglect, and social work is the profession responsible for implementing policy (Bacon, 2007).
Employee retention	The Business Dictionary (2016) defines employee retention as "an effort by a business to maintain a working environment that supports staff to remain with a company. Many employee retention policies are aimed at addressing the various needs of employees to enhance their job satisfaction and reduce the substantial costs involved in hiring and training new staff."
Effective supervision	Effective supervision encompasses three elements: task assistance; support and supervision style; and influence (Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun & Xie, 2009).
Child welfare social worker or child protection social worker	Child welfare or child protection social workers are employed in a field of social work that involves keeping the best interests of all children at the fore. Statutory child welfare, or child protection social workers work to protect children from deplorable situations including child abuse and neglect. These

	social workers make sure that children's needs are met by working in accordance with the Children's Act No.38 of 2005 (as amended) (Careersinpsychology, n.d.)
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1.8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the main potential limitations to the study is a concern about the generalisability of the research. This is a limitation of both the sample size and the case study research design. The use of a snowball sampling method was another limitation as it could have biased the sample. Attempts were made to overcome these limitations through the use of in-depth data collection, saturation and enhancing the transferability and credibility of the research.

Other limitations of the research methodology include concerns about interviewer bias and instrument reactivity. Finally, although every effort has been made to ensure conformability, thematic content analysis is not objective and the researcher's own subjectivity and experience in the child protection field may have influenced the interpretation of the findings. This was addressed through the use of correspondence checking with a colleague to ensure the themes generated by the researcher were representative of the participants' narratives.

1.9. ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

Chapter one provides an introduction to the study, a statement of the problem and rationale for the research, the purpose and scope of the study, an overview of the research design and methodology, a definition of key concepts, and the limitations of the study. Chapter Two presents an overview of the literature and theoretical framework underpinning the study. Chapter Three contains a detailed description of the research design and methodology. Chapter Four discusses the findings that emerged from the study. Chapter Five summarises the main results, draws conclusions and makes recommendations for government, social work practice and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Turnover has been a preoccupation of researchers since the advent of modern working relationships in the twentieth century owing to the perceived costs of turnover to organisations. The complexity around understanding turnover emerges as organisations represent a collection of individuals each with their own personalities, responsibilities and values that are drawn together by an organisation's purpose and mission to work towards a common goal (Landy & Conte, 2007). For child protection agencies, the common goal and purpose is to ensure that children are safe and afforded the opportunity to fulfil their future potential. However this work is not undertaken in a vacuum and the achievement of these goals is influenced by an individual social worker's personality, the organisation in which he/she operates and external environmental factors. Various international and South African researchers (Chou & Roberts, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2010; Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun & Xie, 2009) have explored the importance of supervision in social work and the provision of supervision in the child protection field. These studies argue that supervision has the potential to mediate the challenges facing child protection social workers in the field and thereby reduce voluntary staff turnover.

With these questions in mind, this section is divided into four focus areas each examining a different aspect of the literature related to the research question. The first section contextualizes the study through a discussion of the situation of children in South African and the characteristics of child protection in South Africa. The second area of focus is on providing an in-depth discussion of social work supervision and its various forms of practice. The third section draws on theory from a variety of sources to provide a systemic perspective on the factors influencing voluntary staff turnover. This section also brings together national and international research on the topic of voluntary turnover in social services and the impact of voluntary staff turnover on the quality of child protection services. In the fourth area reference is made to the current retention strategies used by the Department of Social

Development in South Africa and examines international best practice models on the retention of social workers.

2.2. CHILD PROTECTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Child protection is arguably the most important function of social work and is a field in which all the social work principles, training and values come together to address this complex problem that can have long-term consequences for any society. Child protection in South Africa refers to a variety of different activities all aimed at ensuring children are able to reach their potential and includes activities that range from prevention to intervention in families and children.

While there is no accessible data available on the number of social workers employed in the child protection field in South Africa, this field arguably employs the largest number of social workers in South Africa. This is unsurprising as Matthews, Jamieson, Lake and Smith (2014) state that as of mid-2012 there were 18.6 million children in South Africa under the age of 18 accounting for 36% of South Africa's total population. This research has highlighted one aspect of government and society's response to the rights and needs of children – statutory services – to ensure that children are kept safe from any unnecessary harm or risk. The scope of the child protection issues in South Africa can be seen in Rochat, Mokomane, Mitchell and The Directorate (2015) argument that orphaning and abandonment are on the rise, which increases the urgent need for child protection social workers. In addition, the Presidency (2009) has stated that of the children in residential care facilities 30% are there because of abuse and neglect, 24% because of abandonment and 11% as a result of orphaning. However, the data on children in residential care is difficult to access so the figures should be viewed with caution. These authors note that this is, “likely an underestimation given the proliferation of unregistered homes” (Rochat et al., 2015, p.2).

Schmid (2006) argues that all child welfare systems are an interplay of three factors: how the state and family interact in relation to child rearing, the level of integration of the child welfare system and perceptions around alternative care. Understanding the framework of child welfare in specific countries allows for an understanding to emerge of the countries' methods of intervention, priorities, and they measure success and failure. Schmid (2006)

identifies three key models of child welfare that are used worldwide to ensure children's rights are protected. These models are:

- **Family services model** highlights features collaboration, integration, and prevention. The model is imposed universally and utilises court interventions to investigate and understand the nature of abuse. The key outcome of these investigations is mutual agreement within families to address the causes of the abuse. Schmid (2006) argues that this model can be seen in a variety of indigenous communities in Canada, America, New Zealand and Australia.
- **The Community Care Model** prioritizes the interdependence of child, family and community arguing that abuse can be resolved by including the extended family and community in decision making regarding the child. Within this model, keeping the child within the family is viewed as crucial. Schmid (2006) argues that elements of this can be seen in the Australian system.
- **The Child Protection Model** is the most pervasive approach and is used to understand and resolve child abuse and is present in most Anglo-American contexts. This model holds parents responsible for the child's well-being and is predominately reactive. Within this system, child protection tends to be a stand-alone function that is adversarial and based on investigation. It is argued that this model is residual and remedial in its approach and prioritises the managerial perspective.

In South Africa, the Child Protection Model has dominated for a number of years and has been shaped by colonialism and apartheid (Schmid, 2006). Recognizing the deficiencies of this model within the South African context, child protection practice and theory has undergone radical transformation in the last 20 years moving away from a residual welfare system to embracing a social development paradigm (Rautenbach & Maistry, 2010). Schmid (2008, p.1) argues that the social development paradigm with, "it's family-centred, rights-oriented, community-based, participatory, generalist and intersectoral approach is presented as a correction to the expert-driven, pathologising, individualistic, discriminatory and costly approaches of the past". This model of child welfare in South Africa priorities collaborative work with "beneficiaries" and "clients" of child protection services stresses holistic and preventative interventions.

The shifts in the child protection system have caused significant challenges for social workers with regards to implementation as they have realigned a variety of different structures, systems and practices, including the introduction of new legislation and the merging of government departments. These changes have resulted in opaque structures, role ambiguity and fluctuating role expectations. South African social workers face unique challenges as they try to work with clients who are influenced by structural inequalities and systemic problems. Previous research by Mavimbela (2015); Mavimbela (2009); Engelbrecht (2010; 2012) and Earle (2008) indicates that South African social workers are faced with dangerous working conditions, a lack of resources, understaffing and high workloads, a lack of service integration and a poor professional image. All these factors ultimately impact on the provision of services to children. Legislation and policy often appear to assume an ideal working environment with clear cut cases and accessible resources. However, social workers must work within the deficiencies of the system and adapt processes to the lived reality of child protection work.

The following section expands on the various influences on the child protection system in South Africa as outlined in figure 2.1.



Figure 2.1 *Factors influencing social work in South Africa*

2.2.1. STRUCTURAL AND SYSTEMIC ISSUES

Any service delivery model in South Africa must take into account a variety of challenges born out of the unique make-up of South African society and the legacies of apartheid that have created a number of structural issues. These include challenges relating to high rates of poverty, substance abuse, violence and HIV/AIDS. Each of these factors has a direct influence on child protection. The discussion below provides a brief overview of each of these societal issues.

2.2.1.1 Poverty

Research in South Africa is contradictory on levels of poverty. According to the Department of Social Development (2013), 46% of the South African population lived on less than R551.75 per month in 2011 (DSD, 2013). The 2011 Census revealed that less than 60% of the country has access to basic amenities such as flush toilets. In addition, a significant number of South African's still live in informal settlements or in overcrowded urban buildings (Department of Social Development, 2013). The DSD (2013) report states that the majority of the country's poor rely on social services to survive with over nine million recipients of the child support grant alone in 2011. The high level of poverty in South African society impacts extensively on the child protection system as families seek assistance from social workers to meet their most basic needs. This often serves to overwhelm the system resulting in images of social work as an occupation that only hands out food parcels. Poverty can result in children being placed in dangerous living circumstances as a result of unsanitary housing arrangements, overcrowding, failure to access medical care because of the cost, or failure to make appropriate child care arrangements owing to cost.

2.2.1.2 HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to affect South Africa's socio-economic landscape with antenatal prevalence data indicating that in 2011 5.38 million South African adults and children were infected with HIV. In 2009, it was estimated that there were 334 000 infected children. Fortunately, the data suggests that the HIV prevalence rate has stabilized at 29% (DSD, 2013). However, the infection rate has resulted in a number of challenges for children. Research indicates that 810 000 children have lost both parents as a result of a number of factors, but the rates are largely attributed to HIV/AIDS (Matthews et al., 2014). This has resulted in an overwhelming number of children entering the foster care system. Lombard & Sibanda (2015) argue that the foster care system is overwhelmed as families apply for foster

care grants, which is substantially higher than the child support grant, to care for orphaned children. This has resulted in a situation where, “children who are in need of cash and not much in need of care” come into the child protection system (Lombard & Sibanda, 2015, p.338).

2.2.1.3 Substance Abuse

In addition, there are a variety of social evils that plague South Africa. The Department of Social Development (2013) suggests that on average South Africa’s drugs use is twice the international norm. South Africa is one of the top 10 countries consuming the most alcohol. Substance abuse has been closely associated with increased levels of crime, domestic violence and child abuse (DSD, 2013).

2.2.1.4 Violence

In addition a significant number of children in South Africa are victims of crime. PAN Children (2012, p.2), in a situational analysis of the child protection system in South Africa, notes that in 2010/11, the South African Police Service recorded 54 225 crimes against children. Of these, 28 128 were sexual offences with common assault making up 13 387 and assault the remaining 11 018 (PAN Children, 2012). The high level of violence against children in South Africa is also evident in news headlines in the last two years that included: “*Dad kills two, self in Potch*” (News24, 2013); “*Raped, murdered toddler Jamie Naidoo laid to rest*” (SABC News, 2014); “*Girl, 4, found hanging from tree after alleged rape*” (News24, 2015); “*Primary school pupils suspended after rape allegation*” (News24, 2015); “*Woman arrested for dumping baby in PE*” (News24, 2015); and “*Mpumalanga child rape-accused skips court*” (News24, 2015). These headlines speak to shocking crimes against children and highlight their prevalence in South African. This “culture of violence” against children necessitates a strong child protection intervention. This environment also takes an emotional toll on social workers in the field as they seek to identify and intervene in complex cases.

2.2.2. CHALLENGES IN SOCIAL WORKER’S WORK ENVIRONMENT:

In his opening remarks, Gary Newton, US Government Special Adviser for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, noted during the Social Welfare Workforce Strengthening Conference in 2011 in South Africa that: “What should be the world’s strongest and most important workforce – those who care for and protect children – is too often neglected, understaffed and

underfunded” (Social Welfare Workforce Strengthening Conference Report, 2011, p.6). Horwitz (2006, p.2) highlights a child protection social worker’s role and experience precisely in the following quote:

They listen as clients describe facts and feelings related to depression, anger and loss. They work in clients’ homes, schools and communities and directly view the deprivation and abuse that permeate their clients’ lives. Child welfare workers are often unable to provide services that their clients clearly need and are involved in decisions both to remove children from their parents care and to allow children to remain in potentially abusive situations. They observe their clients’ travails and make inherently fallible decisions that can alleviate or exacerbate client suffering. Other professionals are often critical of their work and clients at times threaten and assault them. In return for this exposure to deprivation and violence, these workers receive moderate pay, work in overburdened settings and are often blamed for the very problems they are trying to address.

These conditions make it difficult for social workers to achieve positive outcomes for children. The section below identifies the key challenges in the provision of statutory child protection services that have been noted in previous research.

2.2.2.1 Shortage of social workers

Research by Moloi (2012) suggests that 16 740 social workers are registered with the South African Council of Social Service Professionals. Of these social workers, Moloi (2012) argues that 6 655 (40%) are employed by the government; 2 634 (16%) by non-profit or non-governmental organisations and 7 451(45%) either employed in the private sector or not actively practising social work. In Gauteng, there are 553 social workers employed by non-profit organisations and 1 398 employed by government (Moloi, 2012). This means that the ratio of social workers to the national population is 1:5 446 and the ratio of social workers to the Gauteng population is 1:5 806 (Moloi, 2012). Moloi (2012) argues that according to the Department of Social Development, the country would require 16 504 social workers to carry out the social welfare needs of children, in terms of the Children’s Act No 38 of 2005 (as amended). This means that 99% of all the registered social workers in South Africa would need to be involved in tasks in line with the Children`s Act. As evidenced by the statistics

provided above only 9 053 social workers work with vulnerable children. Furthermore, many of the social workers will be working in fields such as substance abuse, probation, palliative care and HIV/AIDS programmes, thus reducing the pool of social workers available to work in child protection even further. The shortage of social workers contributes towards high workloads and subsequent system failures.

2.2.2.2 High workload

Dr Maria Mabetoa (2011, Social Welfare Workforce Strengthening Conference Report, p.12) states that success in protecting children relies heavily on a strong social welfare workforce, “but heavy workloads and poor working conditions contribute to poor retention of social workers and other skilled workforce members” thus weakening the ability of the social welfare workforce to meet the country’s child protection goals and objectives.

Naidoo and Kasiram (2006, cited in Earle, 2008) state that social workers in South Africa typically have caseloads of over 120 cases each and as such struggle to provide clients with a quality service. Earle’s (2008) research indicates that 63% of child welfare social workers have caseloads of more than 60, while 36% have caseloads of more than 100. However anecdotal evidence suggests that in some organisations caseloads can range between 200 to 450 cases per social worker. The extent of the system’s inability to cope is evidenced by the fact that over 110 000 foster care grants lapsed in the two years between April 2009 and March 2011 owing to social workers not being able to meet the administrative requirements related to extending the orders through the court system (Matthews et al., 2014). The lapsing of these orders resulted in 110 000 grants not being paid to families with potentially significant effects on the families’ ability to care for the children. The lapsed grants also meant that the social workers’ focus turned to dealing with this problem and reduced the time available for new cases or investigations. The consequences of the heavy workloads in child protection are noted by Earle (2008, p.6) who argues that: “in such circumstances negligence is almost unavoidable”.

2.2.2.3 Complexity

Among the challenges facing child protection social workers is the ever-increasing complexity of serving social work clients (Horwitz, 2006). The growing complexity of cases in the child protection field is in part created by macro issues such as the influx of refugees into South Africa, increased levels of child trafficking and challenging economic conditions

related to the global economic environment. The increasing complexity in the child protection field is also a result of a lack of resources and challenging bureaucracy that consumes social workers' time and makes meaningful intervening almost impossible. An example of this bureaucratic complexity is evident in the fact that a child's birth cannot be registered at Home Affairs if the parents do not have identity documents. The lack of a birth certificate means the case in court can often not be finalized. This complexity is also evident when dealing with children with disabilities, who often bear the brunt of a lack of resources, especially as government departments work in silos making it incredibly difficult to access educational, healthcare and residential care services (Department of Social Development, 2009; DSD, DWCPD & UNICEF, 2012).

2.2.2.4 Dangerous working conditions

Tabane (2003), quoted in a South African newspaper article, reports on the working conditions of social workers. Tabane (2003) refers to a report commissioned by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) that notes that: "It [social work] is high-risk work where they [social workers] may be faced with abuse, physical danger, and threats of violence in trying to protect vulnerable groups ... There have been cases where social workers have been killed, hurt and physically assaulted". This concern for the safety of social workers is echoed in a study conducted by Alpaslan & Schenck in 2012 where social workers working in rural communities in South Africa noted high levels of aggression towards them. They narrated incidents of violence including occasions where clients set their dogs on social workers, worries about being assaulted for intervening in domestic disputes and an incident where a social worker was held at gunpoint in his office (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012). This finding is collaborated by Malese (2015) in a study that noted that social workers received high levels of verbal abuse from clients. Given the real risks faced by social workers, it is evident that there will be occasions where they are reluctant to carry out investigations or work in certain communities.

2.2.2.5 Professional image & Salary

Patel, Schmid and Hochfield (2012, p.215) note that South Africa uses a "pluralist model of service delivery" where child protection services are provided by both government and non-profit or non-governmental organisations. Remuneration is a constant and universal source of complaint by social workers. Although social workers employed in different sectors

undertake the same child protection work, they receive radically different benefits and salaries. This is mainly as a result of the lower subsidy that NGOs are paid for social workers by the Department of Social Development. This means that social workers working in non-profit or non-governmental organisations can earn up to 37% less than their counterparts employed by government (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012, p.377; NGO Pulse, 2014). This is a source of constant frustration for non-profit organisations as they report a high turnover of social workers as they leave for better paid posts in government (NGO Pulse, 2014). Funding challenges also result in social workers working within the NGO sector not being paid because of the delayed payment of government subsidies (Loffell, 2012). Loffell (2012) notes that most social services in Gauteng are delivered by non-profit organisations and they are a crucial part of the social service system. These organisations are expected to be self-funding, which justifies the payment of a lower subsidy.

A number of local studies on the professional image of social work have noted that the role of social workers is poorly understood (Davidson, 2005; Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012). It is acknowledged that the public perceive social workers as the “dustbins” for communities’ problems or the “incompetent people who remove children” (Davidson, 2005; Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012). As is the case internationally, social workers in South Africa are often criticised when there are failures in the system, but are rarely recognised for a job well done. This poor perception of social workers has an effect on social workers’ self-perception and their status as professionals within the helping professions (Davidson, 2005).

2.3. SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

In the context of the challenging work environment and structural societal problems, the role of supervision in assisting social workers to provide effective and quality services to clients is crucial (Tsui, 2005). In addition, supervision has been identified as one of the key factors in determining social worker job satisfaction and assisting social workers in coping with the more difficult aspects of working in the helping professions (Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun, Xie, 2009; Tsui, 2005). However, social work supervision is not an uncontested area and with social workers working in a variety of different settings, fields and with different types of clients a ‘one size fits all’ model does not seem possible.

2.3.1. HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

To understand current supervision practices and theories, it is useful to examine the history of supervision internationally and in South Africa as well as to review some of the factors that have affected its development. Tsui (2005) divides the history of social work supervision into five broad stages as shown in the table below. Tsui (2005) argues that at each stage different environmental and theoretical developments influence a change in the way supervision in social work is viewed. Initially, supervision mirrored its informal origins by focusing on administrative compliance. It eventually progressed to the understanding of supervision that we have in the 21st century with its managerialism and quantity focus that has been an outcome of neoliberal policies and a change in the epistemology of social problems (Bradley, Engelbrecht & Hojer, 2010).

Table 3.1 *Stages in the development of Supervision*

<u>Stage one</u>	Tsui (2005) argues that supervision in North America originated within the Charity Organisation Societies' movement in the late 1800s. Within these organisations untrained volunteers provided the majority of services and supervision was seen as serving an educational function. Supervision developed as a stable workforce of agency visitors was formulated (Tsui, 2005). Senior staff within these organisations focused on: "program planning, assigning workloads to the volunteers, and assessing the results of service delivery" (Tsui, 2005, p.3). This incorporated an administrative function as well as an educational function into supervision as the focus was helping largely unqualified workers perform their roles as social workers (Baglow, 2009).
<u>Stage two</u>	Tsui (2005) argues that the focus shifted in the early 1900s as supervision courses were offered within universities. In the 1920s, social work training also changed from occurring within organisations to taking place in universities. This brought about an increased focus on supervision as educational and individual supervision sessions were used to monitor fieldwork placements. Kadushin (1992) differs in his understanding of the early history of social work supervision. Kadushin (1992) argues that in the early stages, elements of educational and supportive supervision can be seen

	<p>alongside the administrative focus. Engelbrecht (2010) suggests that the development of supervision in South Africa occurred along the same route, but with a slight delay as the first formal supervision courses emerged 74 years after the first social welfare organisation was formed in the country.</p>
<u>Stage three</u>	<p>In the third stage of the development of supervision internationally, the field of social work began to integrate aspects of psychoanalysis, which was the dominant paradigm in the 1930s, into the work with clients and theories on helping (Tsui, 2005). The focus of supervision began to be viewed in relation to its therapeutic or human relations' potential (Baglow, 2009). However, Engelbrecht (2010) argues that in South Africa supervision was still viewed as administrative as late as the 1960s.</p>
<u>Stage four</u>	<p>The fourth stage of the development of supervision is significantly influenced by the growing professionalization of social workers.</p>
<u>Stage five</u>	<p>According to Tsui (2005), the current stage has been influenced by ideologies of managerialism that emerged in the 1980s. Managerialism sees a need for increased accountability and “value for money” as its guiding principles. These ideas have resulted in the focus in supervision being on “job performance, standardization, documentation and cost awareness” (Tsui, 2005, p.8). Bradley, Engelbrecht and Hojer (2010) posit that there has been a rise in New Public Management or “new managerialism” philosophies within welfare systems internationally brought about by the recent financial crisis and high levels of government debt. These ideas prioritize outcomes rather than process in social work (Bradley, Engelbrecht & Hojer, 2010). This means that the dominant function of supervision in the 21st century is often seen to be administrative.</p>

2.3.2. DEVELOPMENT OF SUPERVISION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Given South Africa's unique history, the development of supervision has loosely followed the same international route. However, supervision has also been affected by significant events in South Africa such as apartheid, international isolation and the eventual democratic elections and the end of apartheid in 1994. Engelbrecht (2010) argues that supervision in South Africa between 1975 and 1990 received a great deal of scholarly interest. During this period, an understanding of the variety of supervisory functions emerged and supervision came to be viewed as more than just an administrative process (Engelbrecht, 2010).

However, following the end of Apartheid in 1994, the social welfare system experienced rapid change and re-alignment as a fragmented and racially divided social welfare system had to be integrated to follow the principles set out in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and the White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997 (Engelbrecht, 2010). In addition, social work in South Africa in 1997 witnessed a mass migration of its workforce with many South African social workers leaving for international opportunities (Engelbrecht, 2010). Engelbrecht (2010) terms this the lost generation of social workers and argues that this contributed towards the deterioration of supervisory knowledge and skills in South Africa. During this period, the focus in social work shifted to dealing with the crisis that the AIDS epidemic created (Schmid, 2006). Poverty, AIDs and trauma are viewed as having overwhelmed a fledgling social welfare system as caseloads rose and the demand for services increased beyond the available resources (Schmid, 2006).

The consequences of the "brain drain" can be seen in the declaration of social work as a scarce skill in 2006 and the development of the Recruitment and Retention Plan for Social Development in 2009. In addition, there was recognition that the quality of services and the productivity of social workers had significantly declined in response to a lack of supervision (Draft Framework for Supervision, 2011). Supervision was once again seen to be necessary to assist social workers to deal with the range of challenges facing South Africa. This led to the development of the Draft Framework for Management and Supervision within the Social Work Profession in South Africa in 2011 written by the Department of Social Development and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). It is hoped that this framework and a renewed focus on supervision will assist in moving social services in South Africa from a chaotic, overwhelmed and "failing profession" to a responsive, rights based

and coordinated system that strives towards best practice ideals (Bradley, Engelbrecht & Hojer, 2010).

It is with this context in mind and a respect for the history of social work that the concept of supervision is explored in more depth below.

2.3.3. THEORISING SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

At its most basic, the definition of supervision as an overseer is contained in the actual meaning of the word “supervision”, which is derived from the Latin words *super* (“over”) and *videre* (“to watch, to see”) (Kadushin, 1992, p.18). In the discussion of the history of social work above, social work practice incorporates the dominant theories of various periods and as such defining supervision in social work is complex as it can be defined in a variety of different ways depending on an individual’s theoretical orientation (Tsui, 2005). This section presents three seminal theorists’ understandings of social work supervision. Kadushin (1992) argues for a functional model of supervision, Shulman (1991) developed the interactional model of supervision and Tsui (2005) puts forward a comprehensive model of social work supervision.

Kadushin’s (1992) work conceptualization of supervision is the foundation of many social workers’ understanding of supervision (Bradley, Engelbrecht & Hojer, 2010). Kadushin (1992, p.23) defines social work supervision in the following manner:

“A social work supervisor is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance, and evaluate the on-the-job performance of the supervisees for whose work he 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. The supervisor’s ultimate objective is to deliver to agency clients the best possible service, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in accordance with agency policies and procedures.”

Here Kadushin (1992) highlights the objective of supervision, the activities a supervisor performs, the key skills a supervisor uses and the fact that this takes place within an interactional relationship. Bradley, Engelbrecht & Hojer (2010, p.775) assert that the functions identified by Kadushin (1992) have “withstood the passage of time”. However, the balance of the importance of the functions depends on different underlying ideologies.

Shulman (1991) recognises the importance of the functions that Kadushin (1992) notes, but prioritises the relationship and supportive functions of supervision. Shulman has developed an: “interactional model of supervision that argues that the key to supervision is to create a positive relationship as it is through the relationship that the supervisor can exercise his/her influence”. Farkas, Hoge, Kraemer Tebes, Matlin, Migdole, Money & Shulman (2011) aver that interactional supervision is: “widely used in social work practice in part because it focuses supervisors on helping their supervisees develop practical competencies in managing key interactional contexts relevant to practice” (Farkas, Hoge, Kraemer Tebes, Matlin, Migdole, Money & Shulman, 2011, p.1). A key part of Shulman’s interactional model of supervision is the notion of parallel processes (Shulman, 1991). This concept highlights the fact that influence is multi-dimensional, which means that the supervisor/supervisee relationship can affect the social worker/client relationship as well as the parent/child relationship (Shulman, 1991). This emphasis allows Shulman’s model to transfer some of the core tenants of the helping relationship to the supervisor relationship. Amongst these skills are the importance of a solid, trusting relationship between the participants, and honesty, genuineness and appropriate use of skill (Shulman, 1991).

The third model emanates from Tsui’s (2005) work to contextualize supervision practices within a cultural context. Tsui (2005) states that social work supervision includes the use of authority, the expression of emotions and the exchange of information between the supervisor and supervisee. Tsui (2005) also notes that supervision is a form of indirect social work practice and should reflect the values of the social work profession. However, Tsui’s (2005) model deviates from traditional supervision models as he argues that as the social work client is part of the interaction process of supervision the cultural environment must be considered. This model notes that: “culture deeply influences the problems of clients, the solutions to these problems, the intervention approach of the supervisee, the roles and the styles of the supervisors, and the organisational goals and processes of the agency” (Tsui, 2005, p.45). This model might have particular relevance to the South Africa context of 11 different official languages and even more cultures, each which impacts on the supervisor, supervisee and client.

In South Africa, the Draft Framework for Supervision (2011) has been developed to unify the practice of social work supervision and provide basic norms. This framework (2011, p.5) defines social work supervision as follows: “Social work supervision is an interactional and

interminable process within the context of a positive, anti-discriminatory relationship, based on distinct theories, models and perspectives on supervision whereby a social work supervisor supervises a social work practitioner by performing educational, supportive and administrative functions in order to promote efficient and professional rendering of social work services”.

In this comprehensive definition, reference is made to both Shulman’s (1991) and Kadushin’s (1992) views on supervision in that both the functions of supervision and the centrality of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee are acknowledged. Definitions of supervision are not neutral if they are to be influenced by dominant theories during a period. Given South Africa’s history, it is no surprise that an anti-discriminatory relationship is highlighted in the definition. The definition in the Draft Framework also acknowledges some of the tensions in social work by explicitly stating that it sees supervision as “interminable” and that supervisions aim is to provide “efficient...” services, suggesting an adoption of a new managerialism ideology. Bradley, Engelbrecht & Hojer (2010) propose that from new managerialism ideology, definitions of supervision are likely to emphasise the administrative functions of supervision, whereas operating from a person-centred ideology the supportive aspects of supervision are likely to gain prominence.

Kadushin (1992) and Tsui (2005) note that social work is a complex field dealing with every aspect of the human experience and that this makes supervision inherently difficult to define or operationalize as each situation, individual or context needs a different approach. Wonnacott (2011) suggests that the four parenting styles relate to four supervision styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful. Each style promotes a particular type of reaction from a social worker and effective supervision is closely linked to the authoritative supervision style. Pearson (2013, p.6) notes that appropriate parenting styles: “positively influence self-regulation, social responsibility, competence, independence, resilience, individuality, high self-esteem, and internal control”. The same can be said of the supervisory relationship, especially with newly qualified workers where the supervisor is responsible for their socialization into the social work profession and the style of supervision can affect what type of professional supervisees become.

Wonnacott (2011) states that authoritative supervision is warm and responsive. The supervisor is able to set clear boundaries and expectations while being highly assertive in interactions (Wonnacott, 2011). The authoritative supervisor is able to work collaboratively

with supervisees and can be flexible in adapting his/her style to factor in the individual supervisee's needs (Wonnacott, 2011). Wonnacott (2011) suggests that the use of this style of supervision results in a confident and secure social worker who is able to engage in adaptive and reflexive problem solving. Authoritarian supervision is rule based, with no regard for feelings and at times is hostile towards supervisees (Wonnacott, 2011). This inflexible and conservative approach to supervision can potentially result in a social worker who is anxious, dependant or rigid in his/her thinking with a predominately defensive approach to problem solving. Pearson (2013) notes that the authoritarian style stifles reflexive or critical thinking as it promotes obedience. In contrast to an authoritarian supervision style, permissive supervision is defined as highly responsive, undemanding and non-confrontational (Wonnacott, 2011). Pearson (2013) notes that supervisors using a permissive supervision style often use manipulation and guilt to meet needs. This *lassie faire* approach to supervision can result in a social worker who is unfocused, autonomous and engages in escapism with low levels of resilience (Wonnacott, 2011; Pearson, 2013). The final supervision style identified is that of neglectful supervision, which is lacking in warmth and consistency resulting in an anxious, isolated, and ineffective social worker who is unclear of his/her role. This style of supervision is likely to result in a social worker who utilises avoidance problem solving (Wonnacott, 2011).

2.3.4. EXPLORING THE FUNCTIONS OF SUPERVISION

As discussed, Shulman (1991), Tsui (2005) and Kardusian (1992) are recognized as the seminal theorists on social work supervision. Whilst these theorists come from different theoretical backgrounds, they all draw on an understanding of supervision as incorporating three crucial elements: administrative, educational and supportive functions (Brittian & Potter, 2009).

It is recognized that the separation of the functions in practice is not possible as they often overlap; however, it is useful to discuss them separately to gain an in-depth understanding.

2.3.4.1 Administrative Function

The administrative function of supervision focuses on ensuring that the rules and procedures involved in child protection work are adhered to by staff. These procedures include norms and standards of report writing, legal requirements and capturing statistics (Baglow, 2009). Kadushin (1992) points out that this function deals with organisational bureaucracy and lists

of tasks associated with administrative supervision. The focus is on human resource tasks such as recruitment, performance appraisals and monitoring day to day activities. Nobel and Irwin (2009) posit that under new managerialism ideology, the administrative function of supervision is prioritized.

2.3.4.2 Educational Function

The educational function recognizes that child protection workers need a substantial amount of knowledge to do their jobs effectively and focuses on enhancing a social worker's professional growth (Baglow, 2009). Educational supervision ensures that supervisees are utilizing best practice techniques and models when intervening with clients (Brittian & Potter, 2009). Kadushin (1992) views educational supervision as involving not only knowing the content social workers need to learn, but being able to provide an environment and utilize techniques that enable social workers to learn. Kadushin (1992) notes that supervisors must adopt the value of acceptance if they are to be successful in providing educational supervision as supervisees who feel judged will not engage with new knowledge or skills. In addition educational supervision needs to be individualized and this can be done through a linking of learning to the supervisee's personal development plan (Draft Framework for Supervision, 2011).

2.3.4.3 Supportive Function

Supportive supervision aims to help social workers cope with the emotional pressure of working in the child protection field (Baglow, 2009). Mor Barak et al. (2009) proposes that supportive supervision entails listening to and supporting workers in coping with job related stress and assisting them with managing work/life balance. In doing this, supervisors are seen as "stress managers" (Brittian & Potter, 2009). These authors argue that supervisors have the responsibility of ensuring that supervisees have the skills to deal with stress and that their response to stress is adaptive. This is done through a variety of different supportive functions. Shulman (1991) argues that supervision is a "safety valve" for supervisees that allows them to talk about what did not go well and what was challenging them and in so doing relieve their stress. Shulman (1991) goes on to suggest that supervision should do more than allow social workers to survive their roles; supervision should encourage social workers' vitality in the commission of their jobs thus maintaining their passion and enthusiasm. It is within the supportive function of supervision that both of these elements can be worked on.

2.3.4.4 Mediation Function

Baglow (2009) notes that Shulman (1982) has introduced a fourth function of supervision: mediation. Mediation as an element of social work supervision that focuses on negotiating encounters between social workers and larger systems (Baglow, 2009). Mediation can be seen as crucial in today's social work practice with the involvement of various stakeholders and the increase in bureaucracy.

2.3.5. DIFFERENT FORMATS OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

2.3.5.1. Individual

When social work supervision is envisaged, it is normally face-to-face individual supervision that comes to mind. In this situation, supervision is normally structured and formal and is often initiated by the supervisor. The sessions typically last 45 minutes or more and notes are taken. The Draft Framework for Supervision (2011) states that individual supervision should have an agenda that is linked to the social worker's professional development plan (PDP) and that for the first year of practice, individual supervision should take place fortnightly. While seemingly straightforward, individual supervision has caused some debate on its hierarchical nature and the supervisor's use of power. Bogo and Dill (2008) state that supervisors "walk a tightrope" in balancing their use of power against the needs of social workers to grow and trust in the supervisor with the ethical obligation to ensure that clients receive the best service. This balancing act requires a supervisor who is reflective and who prioritizes a reciprocal relationship with supervisees (Bogo & Dill, 2008). In addition there has been some debate in the profession about the merits of external vs internal supervisors.

2.3.5.2. Group supervision

Kadushin (1992) says that group supervision can be distinguished from other group activities by the purpose of the group formation. In group supervision, supervisors gather supervisees who are operating in the same field for formal supervision. Kadushin (1992) notes that the purpose of group supervision is not the supervisee's personal development. This format of supervision allows supervisees to develop as a team, learn from others' experiences and reassure colleagues who are struggling (Kadushin, 1992). Munson (2005) cautions that while group supervision is beneficial, its outcomes depend of the organisation and preparation of the supervisor. Whilst this method is often adopted to save time, it rarely does as not all issues can be addressed in group supervision and supervisors often have to run individual

session in tandem with group sessions (Munson, 2005). It is also noted that group supervision can suffer from the same disadvantages that normal group work can in that the group can be hijacked by an individual participant, it can become a negative or uncontained space and requires a high level of skill to facilitate. Kadushin (1992) notes that group supervision cannot be seen as synonymous with in-service training, lunches or team building activities.

2.3.5.3. Peer Supervision

Golia and McGovern (2013, p.16) define peer supervision as: “any facilitated, planned or ad hoc interactions with colleagues of similar experience levels, particularly clinical social workers, psychologists and other mental health counsellors-in-training, in both dyadic and group contexts, for the purposes of clinical training, professional development, and mutual aid and affinity”. This definition is quite broad, thus for the purposes of this study, peer supervision is considered to be informal, spontaneous and ad hoc support or case discussions between two colleagues in similar positions, which according to Golia & McGovern (2013), can be termed ad hoc peer supervision to differentiate it from other types of peer supervision.

Goila and McGovern (2013) note that not much research has been conducted on the permutations and benefits of ad hoc peer supervision. Hare and Frankena (1972) note that amongst the many benefits of peer supervision are the fact that it can decrease isolation and create mutual support for professionals thereby reducing occupational stress. In addition, research has indicated that peer supervision allows for greater flexibility and innovation in intervention models (Hare & Frankena, 1972). However, there is a caution that the utility of peer supervision depends on avoiding the sharing of ignorance (Hare & Frankena, 1972). This point links into the negatives of peer supervision, which does not meet the legal and ethical requirements of social work supervision and it is therefore important that ad hoc peer supervision is always used in conjunction with other, more formal supervision approaches (Golia & McGovern, 2013).

2.3.5.4. Mentoring

Engelbrecht (2012) points out that mentorship in social work supervision has grown in popularity in recent years. Mentorship has a range of different definitions depending on the contextual environment. In the social work context, mentorship is usually an informal process, where a more senior social worker serves as a role model for a protégé who is a

junior professional (Engelbrecht, 2012). Mentorship allows protégés to observe, consult and copy their mentors outside of the evaluative dimension of the supervisory function (Engelbrecht, 2012). Engelbrecht (2012) explain that in the South African context, mentorship is especially important for newly qualified social workers and falls within a developmental approach to supervision.

2.3.5.5. Consultation

The concept of consultation is part of the debate around whether or not social work supervision should be interminable. Consultation in the South African context is defined as assuming: “a voluntary meeting between professional peers, initiated by the consultee who seeks advice or reaction from a selected consultant, presumably because the consultant has expertise in the area of concern.... There is a take it or leave it mentality depending on the consultee’s determination of the worth of the consultation” (Middleman & Rhodes, 1985 cited in Engelbrecht, 2012, p.6). Consultation should also be seen as one of the function of a developmental approach to supervision that presupposes a level of competence on the consultants’ part and is usually used in difficult or complex cases where additional guidance or a sounding board are required. It is also noted that the less formal consultation should also seek to enhance social workers’ professional education and development (Engelbrecht, 2012). Engelbrecht (2012) argues that there is a danger that consultation could be used as an excuse to not provide effective supervision to social workers.

2.3.5.6. Supervision through technology

Recent developments in technology can assist rural, remote or understaffed organisations receive long-distance supervision (Openshaw, 2012). Various forms of technology can be used to provide supervision including video conferencing or online streaming through services such as Skype and Facetime; email, text message or instant message services such as gchat, whatsapp; social media, for example Facebook; or teleconferencing or phone calls (Arnekrans, DuFresne, Neylan & Rose, 2014). Technology offers supervisors and supervisees a range of alternatives and ranges from a low skill level to a high technological skill level. Bernard and Goodyear (2014) suggest that there are many benefits to using technological advances in supervision. Amongst these is the fact that technology decreases the time lost to travelling to and from supervision. As technology can take place anywhere, it can provide greater flexibility around scheduling supervision appointments. As supervisors and supervisees do not need to be in close proximity to one another for supervision to take place,

technology expands the pool of potential supervisors and thereby reducing the disadvantages of working in rural or remote areas.

In addition, many forms of supervision using technology leave a digital trail that can be accessed easily for accountability (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). However, ethical and practical challenges exist in technology based supervision. Arnekrans et al. (2014) identify issue around confidentiality, data security and informed consent. However, they note that with careful planning and awareness these problems can be overcome. Some supervisors or supervisees may be uncomfortable with the lack of direct face to face supervision and feel that it inhibits the development of the relationship. Technologically based supervision relies on the IT skills of the participants and where one participant is not confident using IT the process can become challenging (Arnekrans et al, 2014).

2.3.6. SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Research into the role of social work supervision in South Africa indicates its seminal importance in ensuring quality services and retaining social workers. Social work supervision in the child protection setting is critical not just in relation to administrative and time management functions, but also to keep social workers from feeling overwhelmed and stressed.

This section provides an overview of previous research into social work supervision in South Africa highlighting the trends. The discussion will be organized around the topics of supervisors' position within the agency, competency and training, format and structure of supervision, and current debates and challenges facing supervision in South Africa.

2.3.6.1. Key characteristics of supervisors in South Africa

As the table below indicates, social work supervisors are typically middle managers reporting to a director or board of management (Engelbrecht, 2013). Supervisors have typically not had any formal supervisory training and rely on their own experiences (Engelbrecht, 2013). Finally, it is noted that supervision is typically crisis management rather than structured or regular (Mavimbela, 2009).

Table 3.2 *Characteristics of supervisors in South Africa*

Position of supervisor	Previous studies into the social work supervision in the child protection field in South Africa have identified that supervisors are typically regarded as occupying a middle management role within their organisations and that supervision is normally an internal activity within an organisation (Bradley, Engelbrecht, Hojer, 2010).
Competency and training	<p>The competency and training of social work supervisors has been criticised. Bradley, Engelbrecht, Hojer (2010) argue that in 2006, it was generally admitted that lack of structured supervision was negatively affecting the profession and that many of the supervisors lacked the capacity to conduct quality supervision.</p> <p>Engelbrecht (2013) points out that supervisors rely on their own experiences of supervision and their practical experience as social workers as most have not attended accredited supervision training. Mavimbela (2009), in a small qualitative study, states that his findings suggest that supervisors who have been with the Department of Social Development the longest, received supervision training. This indicates that in the past more emphasis was placed on training supervisors as opposed to the current approach of: “I guess the mere fact that you are promoted to a supervisory role means that you have gained enough knowledge and experience to take on the role of being a supervisor” (Mavimbela, 2009, p.20). This approach to supervisor training is perhaps the reason for challenges in the current provision of supervision.</p>
Format and structure	Engelbrecht (2013) and Mavimbela (2009) found that supervision sessions were often cancelled owing to other pressures and involved more “on the run” crisis management at

	the request of the supervisee. Mavimbela (2009) also found that because of shortages of supervisors, the role fell to rotating supervisors who were often not available when supervisees had a crisis. In these situations, peer consultation or supervision was relied upon.
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2.3.6.2. Supervision challenges in South Africa

A variety of different challenges and contested areas exist in the practice of social work supervision. Amongst these are issues related to a shortage of supervisors, issues around social worker independence vs interminable supervision, multi-cultural supervision and generational issues. In addition, a crucial challenge noted by researchers is the concern around the ability of supervisors to be open and honest when they are also the responsible for performance appraisals.

2.3.6.2.1. Shortage of supervisors

Authors such as Engelbrecht (2013) note that one of the challenges facing supervision in South Africa is a chronic shortage of supervisors. Research indicates that supervisors often supervise up to 20 social workers; a high workload. Overworked supervisors are going to take short cuts to meet the demands of the organisation.

2.3.6.2.2. Interminable supervision

Research also highlights tensions between concepts of interminable supervision and independence. Engelbrecht (2013) and Mavimbela (2009) highlight this tension with some of the study participants referring to on-going supervision making them feel like students again. The participants indicate the importance of their own independence and autonomy in decision making in relation to their clients. The prevalence of this attitude in local research indicates that it is a significant element of the organisational culture of a number of child protection organisations. Mavimbela's (2009p.19) study illustrates this attitude clearly in the following statement by a participant: "these are qualified social workers, they do not need constant monitoring, you find that my services as a supervisor are only required for administrative tasks, you know, to put a signature here, to authorize this, to resolve conflicts, things like that".

2.3.6.2.3. Multi-cultural and multi-generational supervision

International and local research indicates that the practice of supervision in modern social work is experiencing a variety of challenges. Studies show that cultural norms around age and respect have led to clashes within the supervisory relationship (Mavimbela, 2009). Age also plays a role in the orientation and perspective of the social worker and supervisor with senior social workers or supervisors often working from a perspective that prioritizes deficiencies and pathologising issues (Mavimbela, 2009). The Human Capital Trends Report for South Africa (2015) notes that the entry of millennials into the workforce has meant new strategies are needed to engage and manage this generation because of the differences in their value systems. This report notes that millennials want to engage in meaningful work, take ownership of products, dislike rigid structure and favour networking. This extends to the supervision of millennial social workers where formats and structures may not be as meaningful as they were for previous generations.

2.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter explored child protection social work and the challenges experienced by social workers operating within the South African context. Previous research has noted the challenging environment in which social workers in South Africa operate citing challenges such as staff shortages, high rates of substance abuse, a lack of resources and high levels of violence in society. This chapter also identifies the key characteristics of social work supervision internationally and locally. This chapter explores some of the key tensions noted by previous researchers in relation to social work supervision. Importantly this chapter also explores the determinants for effective supervision in the child protection field. The next chapter addresses the remaining aspects of the research topic by exploring a variety of different models, constructs or concepts related to employee retention and voluntary staff turnover.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter examined the role of the child protection social worker in South Africa and the determinants for effective supervision. The discussion illustrated the importance of child protection social workers and the serious challenges experienced nationally and internationally in retaining social workers within the child protection field. This study argues that effective supervision can moderate turnover in the child protection field. Given this, it is necessary to explore briefly the field of organisational behaviour to understand the dynamics and processes involved in voluntary staff turnover. Disciplines such as economics, psychology and sociology have approached the phenomenon of voluntary staff turnover from different perspectives based on their underlying philosophies or paradigms. Despite the focus on modelling turnover, few models have led to successful predictions of turnover (Ongori, 2007). This has led to a variety of different models, constructs or concepts that are thought to play a role in understanding retention and voluntary staff turnover. The discussion below provides an overview of the most prominent of these theories and is divided into two sections. The first section explores the reasons voluntary staff turnover is important to organisations; the second examines a variety of models, constructs and processes advanced by theorists to explain and predict turnover.

3.2. IMPORTANT CONCEPTS IN RELATION OF ORGANISATIONAL EXITS

Voluntary staff turnover, exits or voluntary separations refer to an employee's decision to resign from his/her current employment. This classification excludes redundancies, retirements and firing of employees (Ongori, 2007). Staff turnover is often categorized as avoidable or unavoidable by researchers. Morrell, Loan-Clarke, Wilkinson (2002) state that avoidable turnover is employee instigated and could have been prevented by an organisation. Unavoidable turnover is employee instigated, but out of the control of an organisation such as the relocation of a partner (Morrell, Loan-Clarke, Wilkinson; 2002). Turnover is also often identified as dysfunctional or functional turnover. Researchers attempt to differentiate turnover of high performing or scarce skilled employees (dysfunctional turnover) from the

turnover of low performing or easily replaceable employees (functional turnover) (Morrell, Loan-Clarke, Wilkinson; 2002). In this study it is understood that social work is categorized as a scarce skill (Earle, 2008), that all social work turnover is dysfunctional, but the key question is if the turnover of social workers is avoidable or unavoidable.

3.3. IMPORTANCE OF TURNOVER RESEARCH

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2012) argues that there is no set level at which point voluntary staff turnover becomes problematic for organisations. However, as employees are the backbone of any organisation, voluntary staff turnover undoubtedly affects an organisation. Siebert and Zubanov (2009) propose that the effects of employee turnover on organisations can be contested. The consequences of voluntary employee turnover are usually divided into direct and indirect costs. These costs include high financial costs; exit problems; productivity losses and workflow interruptions; fluctuations in service quality; loss of expertise; administrative problems; and potential for increased dissatisfaction amongst remaining employees as they cover additional workloads (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000; Phillips and Connell, 2003; Tziner & Birati, 1996). Some authors note a number of positive consequences of staff turnover, including the turnover of poor performing employees (Siebert & Zubanov, 2009). Siebert and Zubanov (2009) point out that the selection process is not always successful in identifying employees that will be a good match for the position or organisation. Where a poor match is recognised, turnover is functional as it enables the employee and organisation to seek a better fit. In addition, the turnover of senior staff members or managers can open growth pathways for more junior employees. Furthermore, a certain level of turnover keeps an organisation from stagnating as new skills, ideas and perspectives are constantly entering the workplace via new employees (Quest, 2015).

No worldwide statistics on rates of voluntary turnover in all sectors are available. Country specific staff turnover rates are captured by various branches of research. According to Quest, Staffing Solutions (2015), it is forecast that employee turnover worldwide is set to top 161.7 million people in 2015 and continue to grow to 192 million people by 2018. The latest accessible research (unfortunately in 2007) into staff turnover in South Africa suggests an overall turnover rate of 12.3% across all sectors (Deloitte & Touche, 2007 cited in Izwe Consulting, n.d.). A more recent study by Quest Staffing Solutions (2015) maintains that the average South African job tenure in 2014 was 47 months, the highest it had been since 2008.

This indicates that the retention rate of employees has increased consistently in South Africa. This increase is likely a result of high unemployment and the effects of the global recession making it more risky for employees to change jobs. More concerning, Vittee (2015) indicates that a State of Employee Engagement Survey conducted in 2014 highlights that South Africa has experienced a serious decreased in the levels of staff involvement, including the encouragement of sharing ideas and managers' proficiency in leading and communicating with their teams. Research shows that despite increased retention rates, South African employees are on the whole dissatisfied with their current employment.

Of importance to the current study, Statistics South Africa (2014) research states that the Community and Social Services industry is the biggest employer in seven of the nine provinces, representing 23.1% of employed adults. The largest employment gains between 2008 and 2014 were also seen in the Community and Social Services industry, with this industry increasing its labour force by 717 000 (Statistics South Africa, 2014). Earle-Mallesson (2009) points out that general social worker turnover rates were 40.4% in 2006. In the same time period the turnover rate for supervisory positions was 16.1% and the turnover rate for management level positions in the social services in 2006 was 16.9% (Earle-Mallesson, 2009). Earle-Mallesson (2009) notes that these statistics do not reflect challenges related to government vs non-profit organisations or rural vs urban locations. The rates reported for Child Welfare South Africa in Mpumalanga in 2006 were cited at 155.6% (Earle-Mallesson, 2009). Government concern is evidenced by the declaration of social work as a scarce skill and the development of the Recruitment and Retention Plan 2009 by the Department of Social Development.

Despite debates on the consequences of turnover, understanding the phenomenon of voluntary staff turnover and how and why it occurs is important. Research into models of voluntary staff turnover fall loosely into three categories: theories that explain why it occurs; theories that explain how an employee decides to leave; and explanatory constructs and predictors of voluntary staff turnover (Hom, 2011). Previous research into staff turnover in the South African child protection field often fails to place the study results within a holistic model of turnover. Thus the discussion below links research data on child protection with the concepts and models put forward by theorists in the field.

3.4. CONCEPTS AND MODELS OF VOLUNTARY STAFF TURNOVER

As illustrated in figure 2.2, this section will first deal with employees' subjective assessment of their working conditions (job satisfaction) and sense of fulfilment and the second section deals with employees' reactions to their assessments

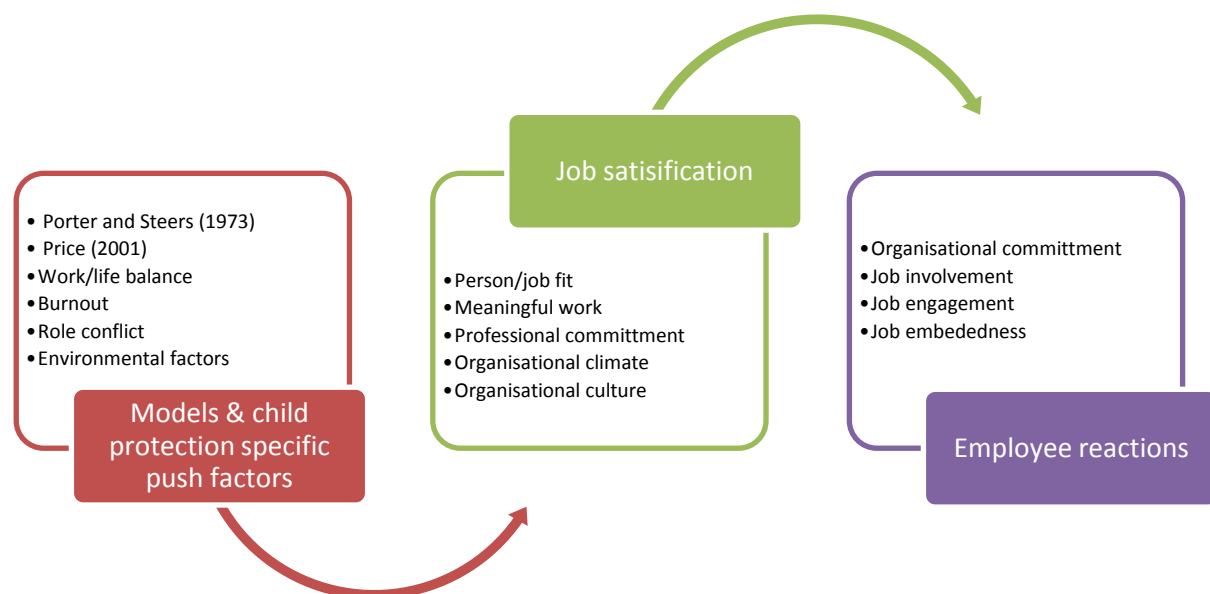


Figure 2.2 Overview of voluntary staff turnover concepts and models

3.4.1. MODELS

Morrell, Loan-Clarke and Wilkinson (2002) propose two schools of turnover models. The labour market school examines turnover in relation to concepts such as rational economic choice, availability of job opportunities, job search and supply and demand (Morrell, Loan-Clarke & Wilkinson, 2002); the psychological school focuses on affect rather than decisions (Morrell, Loan-Clarke & Wilkinson, 2002). In the psychological school, concepts such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction, role stress and organisational climate have been the focus of research (Morrell, Loan-Clarke & Wilkinson, 2002). The continuous focus on modelling turnover aims to predict turnover within organisations and to intervene to prevent turnover and increase retention. The psychological school of turnover models proposes a range of models each developing on the weaknesses of previous models.

Porter and Steers' 1973 model (Hilton, 2015; Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, Eberly, 2008) proposes that employees' expectations are the main driving force behind turnover. They add that there are four key categories of factors that influence an employee's turnover intention. These categories are identified as: organisation-wide factors, immediate work environment factors, job content factors and personal factors. This is a useful framework in which to place the variety of different theories and concepts related to the reasons for withdrawal from the organisation and the turnover process.

Mobley, Griffeth, Hand and Meglino's 1979 expanded model also falls within the psychological school of turnover research. This model attempts to offer a more comprehensive account of turnover than previous models. They argue that there are four important determinants of turnover: "job satisfaction, expected utility of alternative roles within the organisation, expected utility of alternative roles outside the organisation and non-work values and roles" (Morrell, Loan-Clarke & Wilkinson, 2001, p.37).

While based on Price's (1977) earlier work, Price and Mueller (1981, 1986) proposes a comprehensive structural model highlighting the effect of environmental, individual and structural variables on turnover (Price, 2001; Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, Eberly, 2008). This model represents a refinement of a variety of concepts and measurements and includes 22 determinants of turnover (Price, 2001). These determinants include opportunity, kinship responsibility, general training, job involvement, positive/negative affectivity, autonomy, disruptive justice, job stress, pay, promotional chances, routinisation, social support (Price, 2001). The researchers suggest that all these factors impact on job satisfaction and organisational commitment, which in turn impacts on an employee's engagement level and intention to stay (Price, 2001). It is noted that no model can predict turnover for all professions in all contexts and in all causes (Ongori, 2007).

3.4.2. MODELS OF TURNOVER IN RELATION TO CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORK

Not all of the variables listed in the models discussed have been studied in relation to the turnover intentions of child protection social workers. However, the discussion below summarises key research findings on turnover in the child protection field and explores the link between the identified push factors and the models discussed above.

3.4.2.1. Routinisation

Price (2001) defines the concept of routinisation as a determinant of turnover and argues that employees leave as their positions become repetitive. Social workers in the Cahalane and Sites (2008) study stated that bureaucracy often contributed to their intention to leave as did high workloads. Many social workers felt that they were not able to make the desired impact with children because of these organisational challenges. The research undertaken by Cahalane and Sites (2008) shows that social workers who had left their role had a “profound sense of dissatisfaction” and perceived few opportunities to make use of their skills or abilities owing to rigid procedures and policies. The notion of premature routinisation as part of the burnout continuum is apposite to this determinant of turnover for social workers (Brown & Bourne, 1996).

Environmental push factors have been highlighted by social work theorists such as Ferguson (2009), who proposes that no social welfare system in the world has been left unaffected by neo-liberalism and the rise of managerialism. Ferguson (2009) argues that many social workers have been made to feel de-skilled and mere administrators.

3.4.2.2. Autonomy

Price (2001) says that an essential determinant of turnover is the structural variable of autonomy, which is defined as the power an employee has over his/her work. This variable links with current trends in social work that have identified growing dissatisfaction amongst social workers internationally centred on their lack of power. Many authors (Ferguson, 2009; Nobel & Irwin, 2009) have noted that social work in the new millennium is becoming increasingly bureaucratic and most social workers find this frustrating.

South African child protection work is a highly legislated field as all social worker activities are determined by the Children’s Act No.38 of 2005 (as amended), Child Justice Act No. 75 of 2008, Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and various norms and standards developed by the Department of Social Development. While no research has been done in South African on the impact of increased levels of bureaucracy on social work, inferences can be made from international research with similar child protection systems. Burke (2012) highlights a survey of the way in which British social workers spent their working week. This study shows that they spent only 15% of their time working face-to-face with service users (Burke, 2012). The survey indicates that social workers spent 35% of their time on

administrative tasks, 12% of their time attending meetings, 11% travelling and 11% on the telephone. This research paints a picture of a field that appears to have lost contact with service users and its *raison d'être*.

Bell DeTienne, Agle, Phillips and Ingerson (2012) undertook a study on nurses, in which they argue that moral distress occurs when an individual is aware of the moral course of action, but is restricted because of institutionalized obstacles. This leads to psychological disequilibrium often resulting in increased fatigue, lower job satisfaction and heightened levels of turnover (Bell DeTienne et al., 2012). Moral distress is linked with job autonomy and occurs in a setting of increased bureaucracy where professionals are unable to use their own judgment. The Munro Report (2011), commissioned following the death of Victoria Climbié in the United Kingdom, notes with concern the restrictions placed on social workers' use of their own professional judgment and the way in which this impeded their ability to act when investigating child abuse or neglect.

While the Bell DeTienne et al. (2012) study was conducted on nurses, it is possible that moral distress is a useful concept for explaining social workers distress as they seek to navigate bureaucracy to achieve the best outcomes for a child. The Bell DeTienne et al. (2012) study notes that supervision has a significant role to play in helping workers cope with moral distress and that younger workers experience greater levels of moral distress indicating the importance of professional guidance.

3.4.2.3. Job Stress:

Stress is seen as a key determinant in a number of turnover models. Price and Mueller, for example, view job stress as having four dimensions: resource inadequacy, role ambiguity, role conflict and workload (Price, 2001). The definition of job stress is expanded to include hindrance and challenge stressors defined by Holtom, Mitchell, Lee and Eberly (2008); Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling & Boudreau (2000) and Podsakoff (2007). Hindrance stressors refer to organisational politics, situational constraints, role conflict and role overload (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee & Eberly, 2008). Challenge stressors refer to stress related pressure to complete tasks, responsibility and job complexity (Podsakoff, 2007). Hindrance stressors are generally associated with decreased job satisfaction and intention to leave. However, challenge stressors are only functional up to a certain point. Podsakoff (2007) notes that once the stress exceeds an employee's coping skills, the stress acts as a turnover determinant.

These formulations of stress offer additional clarity on the dynamics of stress and provide a better understanding on the impact of stress on social workers' turnover decisions.

Furnham (2005) argues that social work falls into a category of occupations that are highly stressful owing to danger, extreme pressure or because they have responsibility without control. Um and Harrison (1998) suggest that role ambiguity and conflict in the social work profession appears to have a greater impact on job strain than role stressors in other occupations. These researchers state that this is because there are a variety of stressors inherent in working in social services that serve to exacerbate the impact of role stressors on social workers. Furnham (2005, p.366) describes role ambiguity as: "stress resulting from uncertainty". This can occur in social work when the outcomes of an intervention for a child's future are not clear. This uncertainty, combined with a need to make the right decision, makes social work an extremely stressful profession.

According to Furnham (2005), role stresses lead to lower satisfaction, lowered self-confidence, low motivation to work and higher intentions to leave amongst social workers. Supervision can significantly reduce role conflict and help social workers deal with the effects of role overload as well as provide the guidance needed to reduce ambiguity. Chou and Robert (2008) note that high levels of job tension and lower levels of supervisory support are related to a greater intention to leave.

Finally, the most well-researched push factor in the helping professions is that of burnout. Burnout was classically defined by Maslach and Jackson (1981, pp. 99 cited in Du Plooy and Roodt, 2010, p.2) as a: "syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently amongst individuals who do 'people-work' of some kind". Burnout is also thought to involve depersonalization and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Du Plooy and Roodt, 2010). Social workers experiencing burnout as defined by these three affective states would then struggle to find the passion or motivation that led them to practice social work. However, the concept of burnout does not capture the traumatic antecedents to the syndrome. Horwitz (2006) notes that child protection social workers are often witness to difficult and violent experiences and hear their clients' stories of traumatic experiences. Malase's (2013) research into violence in the workplace found that the majority of the participants in his study had witnessed or been the victim of emotional or physical abuse from clients. The participants in this study narrated stories of witnessing domestic violence, of being insulted and often being in the middle of fights between clients (Malase, 2013).

Another example of the dangerous work conditions and exposure to violence is the case of a social worker who was intervening in a divorce case and was shot by the child's father before the father shot himself and his ex-wife (News24, 2013).

Horwitz (2006) notes that this exposure to different traumatic experiences can cause a variety of traumatic effects in social workers that can result in cognitive changes about the self and the environment that can culminate in burnout. Burnout is viewed as the end stage of stress and treatment of burnout involves employee making significant lifestyle changes, one of which could be leaving the organisation. One controversial idea identifies the resignation of burnout employees as ultimately positive for child protection organisations because burned out social workers are unlikely to produce work that is highly efficient, or compassionate, and these employees are likely to have high levels of absenteeism, challenge authority and reduce the morale of the team. Given the potential negative impact of burnout employees on the organisations overall functioning, turnover of burnout employees can be considered functional turnover that ultimately allows an organisation to replenish its skills base.

3.4.2.4. Kinship responsibility

Price (2001) argues that kinship responsibility is an important moderator of job satisfaction for employees. A recent conceptualization of this construct is that of work/family conflict or work/life balance. Work/family conflict is defined by Levy, Poertner, and Lieberman (p. 177, 2012) as: "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect". This relationship can be multi-directional with family responsibilities impacting negatively on work responsibilities and vice versa. Levy et al's. (2012) research argues that this concept is inadequately investigated in literature on turnover in child protection organisation. Smith's (2005) study into why child welfare social workers remain in their role found that workplace arrangements that facilitate a work/life balance promote employee commitment and consequently retention. For example, organisations that are accepting of an employee's need to take time off to attend to the needs of his/her children are likely to retain social workers who are mothers as this situation will enable a work/life balance for them.

3.4.2.5. Salary and Promotional Opportunities:

Loewenberg (2014) argues that social work turnover as a result of remuneration dissatisfaction is not often considered by researchers because of the “vocational nature” of social work. However, Lowenberg (2014) cites a number of small-scale research projects into social work turnover that note that salary is an important determinant for social workers. The relevance of salaries as a push factor for turnover in social workers can also be seen in Whitaker et al’s, (2006) research where 73% of participants indicated that pay was a variable that might make them change their position. Wermeling (2009) notes that salary often contributes towards social workers’ decisions to leave, but is not the primary reason for leaving. Salary is also seen as an important retention variable in the Recruitment and Retention Strategy proposed by the Department of Social Development (2009), which suggests an improvement in compensation and benefits for social workers as part of its strategy.

3.4.2.6. Social Support:

The current research focuses on supervision as a factor with the potential to mediate other factors, exacerbate them or ameliorate them. This research is supported by Price’s (2001) research. Price studied three dimensions of social support: supervisory, peer and kinship and found that only supervisory support has an impact on job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Price, 2001). The current research draws on Price’s model and postulates that social work supervisory support in the child protection field might act as a moderating variable in turnover in that it is believed that social work supervisory support can act to decrease or increase the strength of the environmental, structural or individual variables that lead to job satisfaction/dissatisfaction, or organisational commitment. However, this does not underestimate the uniqueness of employees and the fact that different factors are important to different employees.

3.4.3. DELVING INTO JOB SATISFACTION:

Job satisfaction is an overarching construct that consists of a variety of different elements that differ greatly among researchers (Chou and Robert, 2008). Job satisfaction simply refers to the extent to which an employee likes his/her work (Levy, Poertner, and Lieberman, 2012). Determinates of whether or not an employee likes his/her job typically involve many of the concepts discussed in earlier sections. It is argued that job satisfaction is an affective outcome and is determined by an individual’s assessment of the work environment (e.g. leadership,

group support and job characteristics) (Chou and Robert, 2008). A variety of research has indicated that job satisfaction is an important predictor of intention to leave and a contributing factor towards retention. Chou and Robert (2008) point out that institutional support and supervisor support are linked to job satisfaction.

Based on personal values, interests and life situation, each employee examines the conditions of the job role and decides if it is fulfilling his/her needs. A variety of constructs have been developed to help research into this area. These include employees' assessment of the person-job fit, organisational culture, organisational climate and ultimately personal job satisfaction. These factors inform the way in which employees engage and interact with their job roles. The following section provides a brief overview of each of these constructs and examines them in relation to turnover.

3.4.3.1. Person/job fit:

One of the foundational concepts related to turnover is that of person/job fit. This construct examines the extent to which the interests, skills and abilities of an individual are compatible, or a good fit, with the job (Landy and Conte, 2007). Person/job fit has evolved to person/organisation fit to account for a compatibility of values between the individual employee and the organisation (Landy and Conte, 2007). The level of compatibility is assumed to influence an employee's level of job satisfaction and therefore his/her intention to leave or stay in a position.

3.4.3.2. Organisational culture:

Another factor commonly cited in research on voluntary staff turnover is organisational culture. Sage (2010) states that organisational culture refers merely to the way things are done in organisations and relates to norms and expectations.

Previous researchers have argued that employees leave an organisation because of a negative or damaging organisational culture that it not compatible with their values or beliefs. For example, an organisational culture might be a covertly racist culture, which results in the promotion of white social workers over African social workers, or an organisation might have a particular religious culture making it difficult for employees who practice an alternative religion to fit into the company.

Landy and Conte (2007) argue that it is through employee socialization that an employee develops an understanding of organisational culture. This determines the compatibility between an organisation and an employee (Landy and Conte, 2007). The level of person/organisation alignment impacts on an employee's job involvement and commitment (Landy and Conte, 2007). These authors note the importance of mentoring to increasing the level of the person/organisation fit.

3.4.3.3. Organisational Climate:

Related to the concept of organisational culture, organisational climate refers to the perceived attributes of an organisation that employees have induced from the way the organisation and its members work with one another and their environment (Srivastav, 2009). Simplistically, climate explains the operational elements in the organisation whilst culture explains the reasons behind these elements (Srivastav, 2009). According to Calahane and Sites (2008), organisational climate consists of employees' relationship to the following components: job satisfaction; emotional exhaustion; organisational commitment; growth and advancement; fairness; role conflict; role overload; cooperation; depersonalization; personal achievement; and supervision.

Each of these components is thought to combine to create a negative or positive organisational climate, which in turn affects the quality of the work and staff turnover. The alignment between working conditions and employers and employees' expectations determines if a relationship can be productive to both parties (Ewait, 1991). If there is non-alignment it is likely that an employee will be highly dissatisfied and seek work elsewhere. As with organisational culture, the impact of orientation and socialization can assist social workers in developing a closer relationship with their organisation.

3.4.3.4. Meaningful work:

Geldenhuys, Laba and Venter (2014) stress the importance of meaningful work and psychological meaningfulness in the workplace today. These authors define meaningful work as: "the degree to which the employee experiences the job as one which is generally meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile" (Hackman & Oldham, 1975 cited in Geldenhuys, Laba & Venter, p.3, 2014). Psychological meaningfulness is defined as: "the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideas or standards" (May, Glison & Hartner, 2004 cited in Geldenhuys, Laba & Venter, p.3, 2014). It is argued that a crucial

aspect of engaged employees is that they perceive the meaningfulness of their work, (Kahn, 1990; Maslach et al. 2001; Towers Perrin, 2003). Aktouf (1992) argues that a lack of perceived meaningfulness can result in employees who become less motivated and feel alienated from their work.

Meaningful work is an important concern for the millennial generation who are just entering the workforce (Human Capital Trends Report for South Africa, 2015). It is argued that millennials need to understand the “why” for them to be motivated and engaged in their workplace activities. While social work appears inherently meaningful, Burke (2012) states that a survey of the way in which British social workers spent their working week has indicated that they spend a meagre 15% of their time working face-to-face with service users. The survey shows that social workers spent 35% of their time on administrative tasks, 12% of their time attending meetings, 11% travelling and 11% on the telephone. This administrative focus can decrease the perceived meaningfulness of the role of child protection social workers.

3.4.4. CONSTRUCTS TO PREDICT INTENTION TO LEAVE OR STAY

The concepts discussed above all refer to subjective assessments of happiness in one’s job. It is also important to remember that push factors are necessary to turnover, but not sufficient for the decision to resign and pull factors are also needed. Concepts such as ease of movement, cost benefit analysis and continuance commitment offer some explanatory support to understanding why some employees stay despite high levels of dissatisfaction. A variety of constructs can be used to understand employee withdrawal and eventual exit from an organisation. This in turn influences the behaviour of employees – increasing or decreasing their intention to leave or stay in their current employment. This behaviour has been studied intensely and categorized by a variety of authors. The concepts below are the most prominent and have largely been drawn from industrial psychology.

3.4.4.1. Organisational Commitment:

Hilton (2015) cites Rusu (2013) as stating that no consensus has been reached among researchers on a standard definition for organisational commitment. Instead, each researcher defines organisational commitment in reference to his/her own particular model (Hilton, 2015). Hilton (2015) says that one of the earliest investigations into the concept of organisational commitment was done by Sheldon (1971) who defined it as: “an attitude or an

orientation towards the organisation which links or attaches the identity of the person to the organisation (Sheldon, 1971, p.143 cited in Hilton, 2015, p.41). Early theorists continued to define organisational commitment in relation to the affective component of the psychological contract between an organisation and an employee. Allen and Meyer (1997) broadened the concept by arguing for a three-component model of organisational commitment that identified affective, continuance commitment, and normative commitment as aspects of organisational commitment. Hilton (2015) notes that the three-component model has received the most support amongst researchers. Rusu (2013) posits that when an employee and an organisation's values align, affective commitment arises. It is argued that employees with a high affective commitment level strongly support an organisation and its values and goals. This leads to feelings of belonging, loyalty and pride amongst employees. Hilton (2015) suggests that this type of commitment is not based on economic exchange, but rather on relationships and beliefs.

Continuance commitment is related to an individual's fear of loss of investment made in an organisation and perceived lack of alternatives (Allen & Meyer, 1997). Allen and Meyer (1997) argue that continuance commitment is a result of employees staying within an organisation as a result of need. Normative commitment relates to an employee's sense of duty or feeling and an obligation to stay within an organisation (Hilton, 2015; Meyer & Allen, 1997).

3.4.4.2. Job involvement:

Job involvement refers to the degree to which one identifies with one's current job (Chauhan, 2009). Blau and Boal (1987) state that job involvement refers to the degree to which an employee's job is important to his/her self-image and the extent to which an employee identifies psychologically with the job. Job involvement is typically thought of as a personal characteristic that is formed as part of an employee's reaction to his/her working conditions (Chaundan, 2009). Job involvement has been identified as a reaction to five job dimensions: task variety, autonomy, task identity, feedback and friendship opportunities (Chaudan, 2009). In relation to child protection work, job involvement has links to the meaning of the work to the employee. While a high level of job involvement is a positive indicator of an employee's decision to remain with an organisation, it might also lead to burnout and should be viewed with caution. Job involvement for social workers might relate in part to the standing and prestige that they get from community members and from being viewed as helpful.

3.4.4.3. Job Engagement/Disengagement:

As with organisational commitment, there are a variety of different definitions of job engagement (Sakovska, 2012). Broadly speaking, the concept appears to be defined in relation to a variety of different levels: personal, job, work and organisation (Schaufeli, 2013).

Kahn (1990, p.694) defined personal engagement as the: “harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work roles: in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally, and mentally during role performances”. Here Kahn (1990) appears to argue that personal engagement within the work place involves bringing your authentic self into your work through a positive state of mind directed towards work tasks (Schaufeli, 2013). Saks (2006) developed on Kahn’s work and provides a multi-dimensional approach to engagement that draws on social exchange theory. This conceptualisation views engagement as a type of reciprocity as an employee can pay back the organisation for the resources it provides in terms of salary, rewards or recognition, by being engaged in the work (Saks, 2006). It is proposed that employee engagement consists of both job engagement and organisational engagement (Saks, 2006). For Saks (2006), job engagement refers to an employee who is present “psychologically” in relation to the work tasks. Organisational engagement refers to an employee being present “psychologically” within the workplace/organisation (Sakovska, 2012; Schaufeli, 2013).

Other researchers define work engagement as the antithesis to burnout and as: “a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption” (Bakker, González-Romá, Salanova & Schaufeli, 2002, p.74). Schaufeli (2013) defines vigour as referring to high levels of energy and mental resilience in employees while attending to work tasks. This is behaviourally viewed as the willingness of an employee to invest effort in his/her work, and persistence in the face of difficulties (Schaufeli, 2013). The second concept – dedication – refers to an employee being involved in the work, and “experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” (Schaufeli, 2013, p.6). The third component of work engagement is absorption, which refers to an employee being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in the work to such an extent that time passes quickly and he/she might have difficulty detaching him/herself from work (Schaufeli, 2013). The significant of engagement can be seen in a range of studies that

indicate that high levels of engagement can result in increased organisational commitment, better attendance and high job performance (Schaufeli, 2013). High levels of engagement have also been shown to mediate employee turnover (Svouska, 2012).

3.4.4.4. Job Embeddedness:

Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski and Erez (2001) propose the concept of job embeddedness to understand the reasons employees stay in their positions. This concept aligns with other concepts such as continuance commitment, but the slight differences make it important to mention on its own (Hom, 2011). It is suggested that this construct has three dimensions: links: formal or informal connections to others in an organisation and community; sacrifice: perceived costs of material and psychological benefits lost if an employee resigns; and fit: compatibility or comfort with the work and external environments (Hom, 2011, p.337). Here employees remain with an organisation for a variety of reasons that might not necessarily have anything to do with job satisfaction. For example, someone whose children go to school near his/her workplace might avoid leaving because of the difficulties of collecting the children, or an employee might have a good relationship with a manager that results in a decision to stay so as not to lose the psychological benefit of support. In child protection, the links and embeddedness might also related to relationships with the children on the caseloads, an understanding of the local networks, or comfort with the language that the community speaks.

3.4.5. PROCESS MODELS OF TURNOVER

Turnover process models propose that once employees displays low commitment, poor job fit or is disengaged from work, they begin a process of deciding to leave an organisation. Process model of turnover seeks to understand the resignation decision making process. It is believed that understanding the process of turnover will allow for the predication of turnover and intervention in employees turnover decision making process. While there are a plethora of process models in relation to voluntary staff turnover, only March and Simon`s (1958) model and Lee and Mitchell`s unfolding model (1994) will be discussed as they are viewed as the most appropriate for the context of the study.

March and Simon (1958) are acknowledged as seminal researches of process models of turnover. Their model introduces the concepts of ease of an individual`s movement

(perceived number and type of job alternatives) and desirability of movement (levels of job satisfaction) (Hom, 2011). March and Simon (1958) argue that turnover decisions as made by employees use a cost benefit framework. This thesis aligns with the constructs of continuance commitment and job embeddedness discussed earlier.

Subsequent theories have built on March and Simon's concepts of ease of movement and desirability. An alternative model of voluntary staff turnover is Lee and Mitchell's (1994) unfolding model of voluntary turnover. This model introduces the notion of shock into the turnover process and moves away from understanding turnover as resulting from employees' job dissatisfaction reaching critical levels. This model argues that employees leave because they experience a shock, which motivates them to consider leaving their current employment. Shocks can be negative, positive, neutral or expected; unexpected and internal or external (Donnelly & Quirn, 2006). For example, a shock can be an unexpected job offer, a merger, or a change in marital state.

Other key concepts in this theory include the idea of a script, which Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, Daniel & Hill (1999) suggest is an individual's pre-existing plan for dealing with the shock, which is based on previous experiences, observations and social expectations. Lee and Mitchell (1994) also introduce the idea of image violations that occur following a shock when there is a disjunction between an individual's values, goals, and strategies for goal attainment and his/her current position. These concepts lead to four decision making pathways activated by a shock.

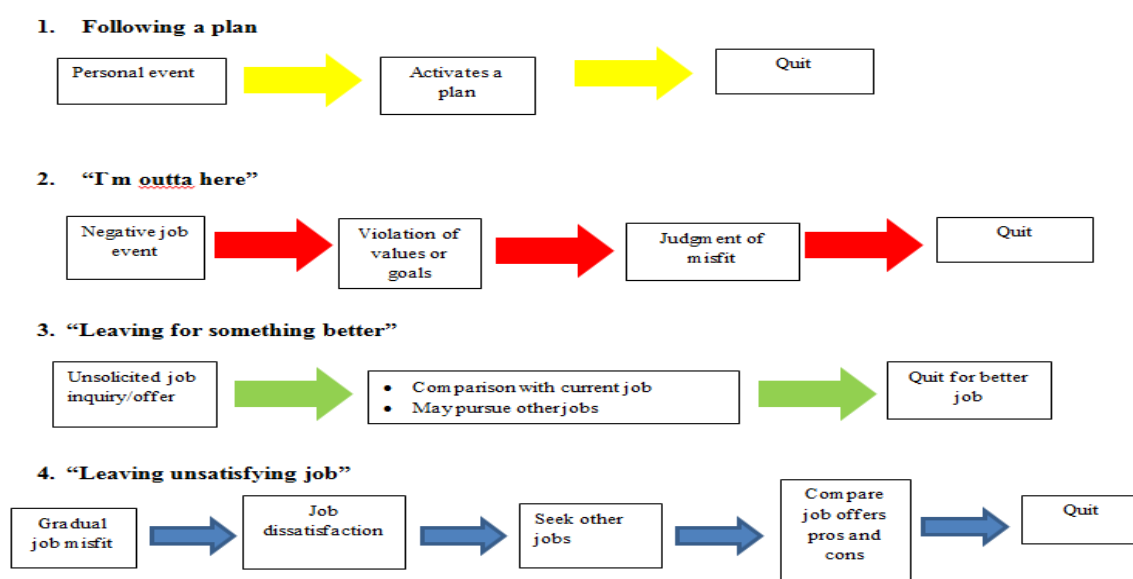


Figure 2.3 Lee and Mitchell (1994) Unfolding Model of Turnover

In the first pathway described above, an employee leaves an organisation not having considered any alternatives. The second pathway illustrates an employee's experiences of image violations as a result of a shock followed by a decision to leave without considering alternatives. The third pathway involves an employee searching and evaluating alternative positions and scenarios. In the fourth pathway, a person does not experience a shock, but instead gradually changes his/her personal images to the point when he/she no longer feels that the organisation offers job satisfaction and he/she begins to search and evaluate alternatives (Donnelly & Quirn, 2006). The unfolding model of voluntary turnover appears to account for a common-sense understanding of how voluntary turnover occurs and the various ways employees quit their jobs. It can be argued that supervisory support can moderate the shock an employee experiences in the same way job embeddedness can (Donnelly and Quirn, 2006). Responsive and attentive supervision addresses the shock before employees begin to explore the cost of leaving. Supervision should be able to reduce the image violations caused by shock.

These concepts and models can explain voluntary staff turnover, however, country specific dynamics and industry specific factors can influence an employee's decision to leave an organisation.

3.5. ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGIES TO RETAIN SOCIAL WORKERS

Given that there is a vacancy rate of between 50% and 60% amongst professional and paraprofessionals in the social services field in Africa, and half of those employed leave their positions within five years of being employed, a robust retention strategy is a necessity (Social Welfare Workforce Strengthening Conference Report, 2011).

Ongori (2007) states that management has different options to address turnover and these include increased attention to the recruitment and selection processes as well as adjusting job tasks and/or salary. In child protection literature on retention strategies, intervention is normally related to what are considered to be the main push and pull factors of voluntary staff turnover. McMahon (1999) provides some suggestions for retaining child protection social workers in welfare organisations in North Carolina. Amongst the suggestions are better compensation, changes in caseload standards to reduce the number of cases social workers manage, improving the reputation of child welfare, increased specialized training in child protection and flexible hours (McMahon, 1999). Chiller and Crisp (2012) have proposed, in

their Australian based study, that regular professional supervision has a significant impact on retention rates.

These strategies match the Recruitment and Retention Strategy adopted by the Department of Social Development. This strategy aims to address some of the core factors behind voluntary staff turnover in South Africa. It argues for an increase in the quality of supervision, a range of tangible and intangible rewards for good work and that attention is paid to occupational health and safety standards (Recruitment and Retention Strategy, n.d). This policy document also points out that it is important to align the Recruitment and Retention Strategy with the Public Service Employee Health and Wellness Programme to facilitate more support for social workers (Recruitment and Retention Strategy, n.d.). While this document offers hope for improved working conditions for social workers in government, it is impractical for social workers employed by non-profit organisations as additional funding to implement some of the suggested reforms has not been made available.

3.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The core tenants of occupational social work theory have been described in this study to understand the influence of supervision as a mediating construct in relation to voluntary staff turnover. Occupational social work theory: “is a call to focus on the interface or goodness-of-fit between employees/families/communities and the workplace/organisation/corporation” (Van Breda, 2009, p.286). Occupational social work theory argues that there is a reciprocal relationship between each element and draws on the ecosystems approach and the notion of person/environment fit (Mor Barak, 2008). Johnson and Yanca (2007, p.128) state that an ecosystem: “includes the person, all of the systems with which the person(s) interacts, and the larger environment, along with the transactions among the person(s) and systems”. Utilizing this framework will enable a researcher to understand the way that the environment (organisational climate and culture, resources, challenging work) interact and is determined by an individual to produce an outcome like voluntary staff turnover. In addition, this understanding highlights the relationship between child protection organisations; supervision; social workers and clients and the reciprocal relationship that this continuum ultimately has to South African society.

Occupational social work theory argues for binocular vision of situations (Van Breda and Du Plessis, 2009). This entails the use of a lens through which to view the everyday problems

and struggles involving individuals and families while simultaneously using a lens to see the larger picture that involves the macro forces at play in a situation (Van Breda and Du Plessis, 2009). In the context of this study, binocular vision allows for a simultaneous view of the macro forces that affect voluntary staff turnover and supervision such as funding policies, neo-liberal principles, and the challenges facing South Africa as well as a view of the challenges and everyday practice of supervision and social workers' lived experiences of working in the child protection field.

Finally, occupational social work theory allows a researcher to prioritize and use a variety of theories to understand the workplace and in so doing prioritize the person-as-an-employee. Van Breda (2009, p.287) defines person-as-an-employee as a client system that focuses on the: "occupational needs of employees, such as their ability to cope with work-related stress, interpersonal conflict in the workplace and the negative spill over of work stress into the family". This focus aligns closely with the supportive function of supervision and as such using this concept as a framework for understanding the responses of research participants adds depth to the study.

Mor Barak (2008) argues that occupational social work theory has evolved to an understanding of the role of work in human life and prioritizing this much neglected space in social work theory. This strategy makes occupational social work theory a useful framework for drawing together social work supervision and its impact on social work and social workers in the child protection field.

3.7. CONCLUSION

Social work supervision is recognized as an important mediator of an employee's intention to leave an organisation. Cahalane and Sites (2008), in their research with social workers based in the United States, note that supervision is a key issue for social workers. Many social workers in their study indicated that they left roles because they did not feel supported by their supervisors. This finding is supported by Fakunmoju et al's. (2010) argument that low supervisory support is positively correlated with a social worker's intention to leave his/her current position. These researchers argue that supervision has a significant relationship to job stress and that when employees are experiencing high levels of job stress, quality supervision is able to decrease the stress levels (Fakunmoju, 2010). Findings by Barak, Levin, Nissly and Lane (2006) also note that social workers mentioned quality supervision as one of the reasons they would remain in a position.

This chapter contextualised the practice of social work in South Africa by drawing on research into the key challenges facing South African society. Particular attention is paid to the challenges facing social work, namely a shortage of social workers, high workloads, dangerous working conditions and concerns around remuneration. The literature review has also examined the key components of the child protection field in South Africa arguing that various international and national legislation and agreements made intervening to protect children a legal obligation in South Africa, however, the quality of this intervention is questioned. This section also discusses some of the features of child protection organisations in South Africa and looks at previous research into the factors that prompt employees to leave their current positions.

This chapter also explores the variables that previous researchers have suggested lead to job dissatisfaction and briefly identifies the three turnover models. These variables are linked to previous research on voluntary staff turnover in the social work field. The reactions of employees following becoming dissatisfied with their role are discussed in relation to organisational commitment, engagement and job involvement. Finally, the decision making process involved in deciding to exit an organisation is explored. It is noted that the traditional views of turnover, present a picture of employees who becomes dissatisfied with their work, their organisational commitment, the decrease in job involvement and engagement, and the decision making process based on a cost benefit analysis. Finally, international literature and the Department of Social Developments Recruitment and Retention strategy (n.d.) show the different retention strategies in child protection organisations.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the exploratory-descriptive instrumental case study research design and methodology underpinning the study. The sampling strategy, the research tool, the method of data collection and analysis are explored in depth. The chapter also addressed the limitations of the study and discusses the studies adherence to ethical principles in research.

4.2. RESEARCH APPROACH

This research has taken place within the qualitative research paradigm. According to McRoy (1995 cited in De Vos, Delport, Fouche & Strydom, 2004, p.79): “the qualitative paradigm stems from an anti-positivistic, interpretative approach, is idiographic and thus holistic in nature, and aims to mainly to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life”. This paradigm was utilized as its focus on a “holistic” understanding of the data and an “emic perspective” enabled the researcher to focus on gaining in-depth, rich data on the way in which participants were living the reality of their experiences in the child protection field.

4.3. TYPE OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Maxwell (2005) states that a research design is the plan for how a researcher will conduct the research. It is argued that in qualitative research, the design should be reflective and flexible allowing a researcher to continuously adjust, amend and re-focus elements of the design as the research process unfolds (Maxwell, 2005).

Furthermore, Henning, Smit and Van Rensburg (2004) note the importance of a “goodness of fit” between research design and method. These authors identify the existence of a variety of research designs or ‘genres’ within the qualitative paradigm and that ‘goodness of fit’ should be the criteria on which a design is selected (Henning, Smit & Van Rensburg, 2004). Bearing in mind the idea of a “goodness of fit”, this study was conducted within an exploratory-descriptive instrumental case study design.

De Vos, Delpont, Fouche & Strydom (2004, p.275) define case study research citing Creswell (1998) as: “a case study can be regarded as an exploration or in-depth analysis of a ‘bounded system’ (bounded by time and/or place) ...the case being studied can refer to a process, activity, event, programme or individual or multiple individuals”. Drawing on Creswell’s (1998) definition, the current case study focuses on the “process” of turnover among child protection social workers.

Baxter and Jack (2008, p.545) argue that a case study should be used when:

- (a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions
- (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study
- (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomena under study
- (d) or the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and the context.

The case study approach was selected for the current research as the focus is on understanding the “how and why” of turnover amongst statutory child protection social workers in Gauteng. Furthermore, the use of an instrumental case study design is the most appropriate design as voluntary staff turnover in the child protection field is a clearly defined problem supported by an extensive amount of international research. This design allowed the researcher to elaborate on previous theories and place them within a South Africa context. An instrumental case study approach is usually used to: “elaborate on a theory or gain a better understanding of a social issue.... The case study merely serves the purpose of facilitating the researchers’ gaining of knowledge about the social issue” (De Vos, Delpont, Fouche & Strydom, 2004, p. 276).

However, there is little information about voluntary staff turnover in the South African context, which has allowed this researcher to use previous theory and examine its applicability to a new context focusing on the how and why of the similarities and differences in previous research. In this study, the context (child protection in South Africa) and the phenomenon (turnover) were considered inseparable and, as suggested by Baxter and Jack (2008), it is believed that context is relevant to turnover.

A key emphasis of the research is on an exploratory-descriptive approach. Blaikie (2000, p.60) argues that descriptive research refers to research that is: “directed towards discovering and describing the characteristics of and patterns in some social phenomenon”. In the current

research, a descriptive study is utilized to delineate social workers' experiences of supervision. The exploratory aspect of the study identifies the main determinants of voluntary staff turnover and the role of effective social work supervision as a moderating concept.

The researcher acknowledges that there is a great deal of diversity in case study research methodologies. De Vos, Delpont, Fouche & Strydom (2004) also note that there is little consensus on what constitutes a case study or a "bounded system". However, Baxter and Jack (2008) argue that binding a case refers to specifying the scope of the study so that it is clear what will be studied and what will not be studied. These authors note the similarity of binding with the development of sampling inclusion and exclusion criteria (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This infers that a case is bounded by time as participants needed to have left a child protection organisation in the preceding five years. The case is also bounded by profession and location as the study only includes statutory child protection social workers who are currently based in Gauteng.

4.4. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION, SAMPLING STRATEGY AND SAMPLE

4.4.1. Research Population

According to Bless and Higson-Smith (1995), the term "population" refers to the whole set of individuals or phenomenon that the researcher wants to account for in the research. In this research, the study population consists of registered social workers who have worked in statutory child protection organisations in Gauteng.

Scant recent quantitative data exists on the number of social workers working specifically in the child protection field. According to Moloi (2012), there are 16 740 registered social workers in South Africa. Of these 1 951 are based in Gauteng. This is further sub-divided into 553 social workers employed by non-profit organisations and 1 398 employed by government (Moloi, 2012). Unfortunately, the social workers' field of work was not included in Moloi's (2012) study, thus there is no way of knowing how many of the 1 951 social workers in Gauteng are working in the statutory child protection field and therefore no clear quantification of the study population. However, as a case study design was used, theoretical saturation rather than representativeness informed the sampling strategy.

4.4.2. Sampling Strategy and Sample

Given the case study design of the research, the researcher felt that a combination of purposive and snowball sampling was the most appropriate sampling strategy. Purposive sampling is a sampling method where researchers choose participants based on their judgment that the individual possesses most of the characteristics desired for the research (Punch, 2014). Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method that utilises a referral basis where participants refer other potential participants to the researcher (Terre Blanche, Durkheim & Kelly, 2008; Punch, 2014). In this study, a number of participants were identified by the researcher as having met the sampling inclusion criteria and during the interviews, participants were asked if they could recommend a friend or colleague who might also meet the participant inclusion criteria. In addition, a request to participate was placed on two South African social work Facebook pages: the National Association of Social Workers (South Africa) and The South African Council for Social Service Professionals. When a potential participant was referred to the researcher, or self-identified that they met the inclusion criteria as posted on the Facebook pages, the potential participant was contacted via email and provided with information on the study and asked to answer a few questions on their employment history to ensure that they did in fact meet the sampling inclusion criteria. Once it was established that they met the sampling criteria and were willing to voluntarily participate in the study, a time and date was arranged for a face-to-face interview.

The argument supporting the use of samples in research, is that a small number of cases drawn from the research population should be able to give a researcher insight into what can be expected of the whole study population (De Vos, Delport, Fouche & Strydom, 2004; Punch, 2014). As the researcher did not have access to a national databases or list of social workers working in the child protection field in South Africa, it was difficult to establish an exact sample size or percentage that would be representative.

Terre Blanche, Durkheim and Kelly (2008) propose that the number of cases sampled in case study research is dependent on the extent of the literature and development of the field of study. These authors note that in a field that has been extensively researched requires a smaller sample of cases (Terre Blanche, Durkheim & Kelly, 2008). As the study of voluntary staff turnover and turnover in the child protection field has been extensively researched internationally, theoretical saturation was used as the main criteria in determining the most appropriate sample size in this research.

Terre Blanche, Durkheim & Kelly (2008) state that theoretical saturation occurs when new data collected does not add to or develop the emerging interpretative account. The researcher, therefore, concluded that theoretical saturation had been reached after 12 face-to-face, individual interviews.

4.4.3. Participant Inclusion Criteria

The following criteria were identified for inclusion in the study:

- Are currently registered social workers with the South African Council of Social Service Professionals
- Have worked previously for a statutory child protection organisation for a period of at least three months to ensure they are immersed in the organisational culture and climate
- Have resigned from the employment of a statutory child protection organisation within the previous five years.

4.5. RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND STRATEGY

4.5.1. Data Collection

The research method used in this study is a face-to-face, individual interview. De Vos, Strydom and Delport (2004) state that researchers commonly use semi-structured interviews to gain an in-depth picture of a participant's view, beliefs or ideas on a topic. This tool was considered appropriate for the current study as the researcher wanted to understand the participants' thoughts and experiences of supervision and the relationship to turnover. One of the benefits of a semi-structured interview is that it allows the researcher flexibility to explore constructs as they emerged in an interview (De Vos, Strydom & Delport, 2004). However, a weakness of this method is that it relies heavily on a researcher's interview skill level (Terre Blanche, Durkheim & Kelly, 2008).

A semi-structured interview schedule was used as the data collection instrument. An interview schedule is a set of predetermined questions that might be used at appropriate times during an interview to elicit information about the phenomenon under study (De Vos, Strydom & Delport, 2011). The interview schedule (see Appendix D) was developed using the literature covered in the literature review and aligns with the research's key aims and

objectives. The rationale for the inclusion of the various themes and topics in the interview schedule is presented in table 4.1.

In the current study, there were concerns around reactivity decreasing the dependability of the research instrument and about the process of asking the question on participants' decisions to resign and experiences of supervision that might have resulted in participants reporting on their experiences of supervision either more negatively or positively than they normally would have. These concerns relate to the concept of memory decay and social desirability. Punch (2014) points out that social desirability refers to participants telling a researcher what will make them look good or what they think the researcher wants to know. Memory decay is a psychological concept that refers to the accuracy of the storage and retrieval of memories.

The researcher tried to overcome these limitations by carefully designing the interview schedule to begin with basic non-reactive questions such as length of employment, previous studies, type of work undertaken, etc. as recommended by De Vos, Delport, Fouche and Strydom (2004). The confidentiality of the research study was emphasized at the start of the interview so that the participants would not have any concerns around the consequences of their statements. In an attempt to combat memory decay, the research designed the research instrument with multiple measures of the same concept using an iterative questioning approach as advised by Terre Blanche, Durkheim and Kelly (2008). The study also excluded participants who had resigned from a child protection organisation more than five years ago as it was felt that experiences that took place over five years ago would be subject to a greater degree of memory decay thereby reducing the reliability of the data collected.

The data collection method was facilitated in all 12 interviews by the researcher in the same language medium (English). While not all the participants were first language English speakers, written and spoken English is a requirement of the position as social workers need to submit reports in English. Therefore, it was assumed that all of the participants would be English literate and that the use of English would not harm the reliability of the research instrument. The standardization of the data collection should ensure the dependability of the data collection procedure.

All of the research participants were provided with a participant information sheet (Appendix A) and asked to consent in writing to being a part of the study. A convenient time and venue for the semi-structured interview was arranged on a one-to-one basis with each participant.

Each interview was recorded and a separate consent form was used to obtain permission for this from each participant (Appendix C).

4.5.2. Interview Schedule

The trustworthiness of the interview schedule developed for use in the current study was enhanced through the systemic alignment of each question to the research objectives and literature as can be seen in table 4.1.

Table 4.1 *Rationale for inclusion of items in interview schedule*

No.	Question	Research objective	Motivation
1	Demographics		Starting with this section was recommended by De Vos, Delport, Fouche & Strydom (2004) as this is believed to reduce reactivity.
2.1	What motivated you to become a social worker?	Objective 3	This question sought to understand the likely person/job fit with the child protection field as this is a significant concept in retention management (Landy & Conte, 2007).
2.2	Can you tell me a bit about your career history? Qualified in? Different agencies worked at?	Objective 1	This question also aimed to provide the research with scaffolding on which to understand the discussion below regarding the participant's experiences of supervision. The question also sought to compare the employment history statistics with those provided by South African researchers such as Bradley, Engelbrecht and Hojer (2010) and Mavimbela (2009).
2.4	What led to you joining the agency that is the focus of this discussion?	Objective 3	The aim of the question was to unpack motivation and as such pick up on the soundness of the person/organisation fit. This fit is argued to have a significant impact on job satisfaction and voluntary staff turnover (Landy & Conte, 2007).

3.1	Can you tell me about the last child welfare agency you worked at?	Objective 1	Linked with objective one, this question aimed to provide context for the study and the supervision received. This is an important dimension of Tsui's (2005) model of supervision, which investigates the organisation as a dimension of the supervision and argues that neglect of this variable in supervision can negatively impact on the quality of supervision provided.
3.2	Can you tell me about your roles and responsibilities in your last child protection organisation?	Objective 1	The supervision received will be correlated with the nature of the work of the participants.
3.3	What did you enjoy about working in the child protection field?	Objective 3	A variety of organisational retention concepts have at their core an understanding of job satisfaction (Chou & Robert, 2008; Levy, Poertner & Lieberman, 2012). This question sought to explore the factors that contributed towards the participant's job satisfaction. In addition, it sought to understand the factors that kept them in their role for the duration of their employment.
3.4	What challenges did you experience whilst working in the child protection field?	Objective 3	This line of questioning aims to explore push factors such as those identified in Price's (2001) structural model of turnover.
4.1	If you had to use four or so descriptive words to capture your experiences of supervision what would they be?	Objective 1 & 3	Shulman's (1991) definition of social work supervision prioritises the relationship. In understanding participants' personal perceptions of the supervision received, this question explored participants' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with supervision.

4.2	Can you tell me about the nature and extent of the supervision you had at your last job?	Objective 1	Bradley, Engelbrecht & Hojer (2010) and the Draft Framework for Supervision (2011) note the damaging effect of a lack of structure and reliable supervision on supervisees. As such this question explored the supervision provided to participants in the organisation that was the focus of the research discussion.
4.3	How did your supervisor orientate you to supervision in this agency?	Objective 2	In the Recruitment and Retention Strategy (n.d.), social work supervision is proposed as a retention factor. The Draft Framework for Supervision (2011) was developed to provide best practice guidelines for supervisors and as such should serve as the basis for effective supervision. These questions aimed at understanding the implementation of this policy with the view that effective supervision will reduce turnover.
4.4	Where there any policies regarding supervision?		
4.5	In child welfare a lot of focus is often put on case management, was this your experience and how did you find this focus?	Objective 2 & 3	Kadushin (1992) states that the administration function of supervision is important and appears to see this function as mediating between the social worker and the systems in child protection Irwin (2009) and Bradley, Engelbrecht and Hojer (2010) see the rise of new managerialism as prioritising this function at the expense of others and thereby decreasing social workers job satisfaction. Given these arguments this question sought to understand the participants' experiences of the case management function and focus.

4.6	Please describe the ways in which your supervisor focused on education in the supervision sessions and outside them?	Objective 2 & 3	Baglow (2009) argues that supervision should perform an educational function. This ensures that supervisees are using the best practice techniques and models with clients and thereby improving the quality of the service provided to clients (Baglow, 2009). This also links with a sense of professional growth that is identified as a common retention factor (Price, 2001).
4.7	How often were you able to talk to our supervisor in-depth about the emotional impact of an event or task?	Objective 1 & 2	Shulman (1991) states that effective supervision fulfils a supportive function. This allows supervisees to “let off steam” and in doing so prevents burnout and enhances the organisational commitment of the supervisee. This also aligns with the push factors identified in Price’s (2001) structural model of turnover. This matches the third objective of the research.
4.8	How did you feel about raising difficulties you had with clients or with completing tasks with your supervisor?		
5.1	How do you think your supervisor accounted for your professional development as a child protection social worker in the type of supervision she/he provided you with?	Objective 1	Developmental approach to social work supervision.
5.2	What role do you think you played in the supervision relationship?	Objective 2	It is widely recognised that the supervisory relationship consists of two parties who act to improve or disrupt supervision. Shulman (1991) notes that the quality of this relationship is crucial to effective supervision. This item therefore sought to understand the role that the participant might have played in the establishment of a certain type of relationship to provide a less biased description of supervision in the current study.

5.3	Do you think the resources and structure of your agency as well as its geographical location played any role in the type of supervision you received?	Objective 2	Engelbrecht (2013) notes the differences in supervision between rural and urban areas. This question sought to understand if the findings in Gauteng would correspond with findings from other regions. This item also aimed to draw in an understanding of the environmental and structural dimensions of effective supervision to provide a holistic description of supervision and participants' experiences of it.
6.1	How would you describe supervision in the child protection field as opposed to other fields in social work?	Objective 2	Horwitz, 2006 suggests that supervision in the child protection field is crucial because of the high levels of trauma witnessed, legislative oversight and the complexity involved in intervening in a child's life. This item sought to understand if participants felt similarly.
6.2	If you were able to give your previous supervisor a message now what would it be?	Objective 4	This open ended question sought to provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on the discussion to enable closure and containment should any of the data have elicited emotional responses.

7.1	What did you think was the main reason you decided to leave the last child protection organisation you worked for?	Objective 3	<p>These questions all aimed at understanding the key push factors for participants and offer them perceptions of the role of supervision in their decision to exit the organisation.</p> <p>This question aims to align with Price's (2001) structural model of turnover. In addition, these questions are linked to research done by Calahane and Sites (2008); Chou and Robert (2008); Furham (2005); and Horwitz (2006), which all explore reasons for social work turnover in different international countries.</p>
7.2	Do you think the supervision you received was a factor that contributed towards your decision to leave your organisation?	Objective 4	
7.3	How did your supervisor respond to your decision to leave?	Objective 4	<p>This question sought to explore both if any organisational retention strategies were used to try to encourage the participants to remain and the nature of their relationship with their supervisor. In understanding the retention strategy that might have been used, the question sought to link this with the Recruitment and Retention Strategy proposed by the Department of Social Development (n.d.) and develop an understanding of the effectiveness of these strategies.</p>
8.1	Did you vacillate between going and staying – If so, what changed your mind each time?	Objectives 3 & 4	<p>These items explore the proposed model of turnover put forward by Lee and Mitchell (1994). This model argues that there are four distinct pathways employees take when leaving their employment (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). In order to understand retention factors an understanding of the cognitive</p>
8.2	Describe your search for an alternative job		
8.3	How easily is it to find a suitable alternative job?		

8.4	What eventually made you decide on that particular job?		pathway to turnover is necessary so as to examine supervisions role.
8.5	Did you consider the economic consequences in making the decision to leave?		

4.6. PRE-TEST

As recommended by Punch (2014), the research strategy allows for the pre-testing of the interview schedule. The interview schedule was pre-tested on two occasions with four participants. The first pre-test was conducted with two research participants who met the inclusion criteria. This pre-test determined that the initial schedule was too broad and focused on too many different factors that previous research had indicated might lead to voluntary turnover. This resulted in only superficial information being obtained on turnover decisions. There was also a concern about the researcher's utilization of appropriate interviewing skills. Thus, the researcher amended the interview schedule to focus on one element related to turnover rather than numerous elements. A second pre-test was done on the new interview schedule with another two research participants who met the inclusion criteria. The amended schedule provided a better level of in-depth data. Following reflection on the researcher's interview style, the second interview schedule was adopted. The use of pre-tests is important as they allow a researcher to amend the semi-structured interview schedule to enhance dependability and credibility (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2008).

4.7. DATA ANALYSIS

Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen & Kyngas (2014) propose that thematic content analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that seeks to describe the phenomenon under research by reducing the data collected to categories or concepts based on the research questions. The process is conducted in an objective and systemic manner using either an inductive or deductive approach (Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen & Kyngas, 2014). Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2008, p.321) state that it is important in interpretive analysis such as thematic analysis, that a researcher stays close to the data as the purpose is to provide a thick description of the: "characteristics, processes, transactions, and contexts that constitute the phenomenon being studied".

The steps followed in undertaking thematic analysis are presented in the table below. These steps were adapted from Terre Blanche, Durkheim and Kelly (2008, p. 322-326):

Table 4.2 *Data analysis process*

STEPS	PROCEDURE ADOPTED
Step one: Familiarization and immersion	This step was achieved through the transcription of the interviews. In addition, reading and re-reading transcripts of the interviews allowed for immersion in the data.
Step two and three: Inducing themes and coding	Terre Blanche, Durkheim & Kelly (2008) state that inducing themes refers to establishing the organizing themes that naturally occur in the qualitative data. Establishing themes was accomplished by grouping common views or statements together.
Step four: Elaboration	In this step, the purpose was to refine the coding system established to allow it to incorporate the multiple meanings that the data might contain (Terre Blanche, Durkheim & Kelly, 2008). To achieve this step, the researcher re-examined the themes established earlier and explored them in greater depth.
Step five: Interpretation and checking	The final step that was undertaken was interpretation. Here coherence of the researcher's argument was checked. In this step, contradictions, over simplifications or over-interpretations of the data were noted and explained (Terre Blanche, Durkheim & Kelly, 2008). In addition, correspondence checking recommended by Pretorius and De la Rey (2004) was done. This procedure involved the use of a colleague to analyse the categorization of data and compare the analysis of themes by the primary researcher to check for correspondence. However, it is acknowledged that using the researcher's colleague rather than an independent evaluator,

	constituted a limitation of the study. The use of correspondence checking served to enhance the credibility and confirmability of the research findings. To further increase credibility, representative quotes were included in discussion of the research findings (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).
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4.8. CREDIBILITY, TRANSFERABILITY, DEPENDABILITY AND CONFIRMABILITY

A qualitative case study research design was used in this research study and the construct of trustworthiness was used to determine the quality of the research study. Trustworthiness is often seen as an alternative to the quantitative constructs such as reliability, validity and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These authors maintain that trustworthiness can be measured through four constructs: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These constructs will be discussed individually below.

4.8.1. Transferability

Transferability refers to: “the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other settings or groups” (Polit & Hungler, 1999, p.717 cited in Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p.6). The criterion of transferability is less reliant on statistical accuracy and probability sampling than validity, its quantitative equivalent. Bryman (2004) argues that as qualitative research focuses on in-depth contextual accounts provided by a small sample, external validity is not a significant factor in the research as the aim is to understand one phenomenon in detail rather than be able to state a general trend or make a blanket statement about the study population. Transferability was increased in the current study through the purposive sampling of participants who had previously worked at different statutory child protection organisations based in a wide geographic area and managed by different affiliate bodies.

4.8.2. Dependability

The dependability of the data collection tool has been enhanced by the use of De Vos, Delpont, Fouche & Strydom's (2004) guidelines on the structure of questions or themes in an interview schedule. This guideline suggests structuring the order of questions from simple to complex and from broad to specific (De Vos, Delpont, Fouche & Strydom, 2004). Linking the interview schedule to the main aims of the research and to literature on voluntary staff turnover also ensured that the instrument was dependable.

4.8.3. Credibility

The criterion of credibility in research is related to the quantitative notion of internal validity. This criterion has been addressed in the current research by utilizing correspondence checking or peer checking as recommended by Pretorius and De la Rey (2004) and Rolfe (2006). The procedure involves the use of a colleague who is knowledgeable on the subject matter to re-analyse a random selection of interview transcripts. Following the independent analysis, the researcher and peer conducted a comparison of codes and themes generated. To further increase credibility, representative quotes are included in the discussion of the research findings (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). As suggested by Smith and Noble (2015) during the analysis where possible deviant themes are used, the findings should be challenged and patterns uncovered in the other cases to enhance the credibility of the analysis.

4.8.4. Confirmability

Shenton (2004) states that confirmability refers to the extent that the study's results are an authentic representation of the participants' themes and experiences rather than the researcher's perspective or viewpoint. To ensure that this study adhered to the criterion of confirmability, the researcher used peer support and debriefing from colleagues to retain objectivity during the data analysis process.

4.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

During the research, great attention was paid to the adherence of a range of ethical considerations that were identified by Terre Blanche, Durkheim & Kelly (2008) and De Vos, Delpont, Fouche & Strydom (2004). The steps taken to ensure adherence to each of these ethical principles is presented in the table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 *Ethical principles observed in research*

Ethical principle	Steps taken to adhere to the principle
Avoidance of harm or non-maleficence	The principle of non-maleficence requires that a researcher protect the research participants from indirect or direct harm as a result of their participation in the research study (Terre Blanche, Durkheim & Kelly., 2006). As the research did not deal with traumatic or sensitive topics, it should not have evoked any distressful feelings for participants. However, participants were informed that should they feel that they needed counselling as a result of the interview discussion, counselling could be arranged on an as-needed basis depending on the participant's location. Participants were made aware of this via the participant information sheet.
Informed consent	An information sheet was used to explain the purpose of the research, the research questions and any risks or benefits to the participants. A copy of the participant information sheet is included in Appendix A. These steps ensured that informed consent was obtained. Informed consent requires that all possible information is given to participants on the: "goal of the investigation, the procedures that will be followed during the investigation, the possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which the respondents may be exposed, and the credibility of the researcher..." (De Vos, 2002, p.25). Participants were asked to sign a consent form stating that they had read and understood the participant information sheet. A copy of a consent form can be found in Appendix B. As the researcher recorded the interviews, a separate consent form was used to provide for this (Appendix C).
Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from the study	Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation in the research study. The researcher also explained that if there were any questions that they were not

	<p>comfortable with, they could decline to answer. It was also explained to the participants that they could withdraw from the research project at any time without fear of negative consequences. This approach ensured that the ethical principle of autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons was met (Terre Blanche, 2006). Terre Blanche (2006) argues that a researcher has a duty to inform participants of any possible risks or costs of participating in the research. The principle of autonomy means that it is their right to choose to participate once they have received this information (Terre Blanche, 2006). This was explained in the participant information sheet (see Appendix A).</p>
Coercion and perverse incentives	<p>Terre Blanche, Durkheim & Kelly. (2008) argue that the use of coercion or perverse incentives negates the voluntary participation of individuals in the research project. For this reason, it was clearly explained to the participants in the information sheet that there were no financial benefits or work-related benefits for participation in the research project.</p>
Deception	<p>There was no need to deceive the participants on the nature of the proposed research; as informed consent was sought through the information sheet.</p>
Violation of privacy/ anonymity/confidentiality	<p>Confidentiality is an important consideration and the researcher took every step possible to ensure that in writing up the findings, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. This was done by assigning each research participant a unique code for data analysis that prevented them from being identified. In addition, all research material was stored in a secure location and information stored on a computer was coded and password protected.</p>

Approval of studies by institutional ethics committees or review boards	Ethics clearance was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-medical).
Publication of findings and feedback given to participants	Participants were advised about the research storage and that they could request summaries of the final report.

4.10. LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

One of the main potential limitations of the study is a concern about the generalizability of the research. This is a limitation of both the sample size and the case study research design. The use of a snowball sampling method was another limitation as it could have biased the sample. Other limitations of the research methodology include concerns around interviewer bias and instrument reactivity. The current study raised concerns around reactivity decreasing the dependability of the research instrument; that the process of asking question on the participants' decisions for resigning and experiences of supervision might have resulted in participants reporting on their experiences of supervision either more negatively or positively than they normally would. These concerns relate to the concept of memory decay and social desirability. Finally, while every effort has been made to ensure conformability, thematic content analysis is not objective and the researcher's own subjectivity and experience in the child protection field may have biased the interpretation of the findings. Bias was addressed through correspondence checking with a colleague to ensure the themes generated by the researcher were representative of the participants' narratives.

4.11. CONCLUSION

The current research uses an exploratory-descriptive instrumental case study research design within the qualitative paradigm to provide an account of the lived experience of child protection social workers and the factors that result in voluntary staff turnover. Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic content analysis. Limitations of the study relate to generalizability and possible reactivity and bias.

All ethical guidelines have been observed and discussed in relation to the study. It is anticipated that the study will contribute towards the field of child protection social work in South Africa by synthesizing social workers' views on the topic of voluntary staff turnover and contribute towards a collective discussion on ways to retain child protection social workers in non-profit organisation. The data obtained can then be used to inform intervention strategies that retain staff and prevent avoidable staff turnover in this field thereby increasing the quality of services to children in need of care and protection.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data collected through semi-structured interviews with the 12 study participants identified through snowball and purposive sampling methods. The data was analysed using thematic analysis, which employs both an inductive and deductive process to generate themes and sub-themes in relation to the main research objectives. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the demographic profile of the participants. The remaining sections are organized according to participants' timeline or "journey" in the child protection field. This timeline begins with participants' initial motivations to study social work, experiences of the child protection field, experiences of supervision and finally their decision to leave the organisation.

5.2. DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

As the table below illustrates, the study participants were predominately from European or African backgrounds. Of the 12 participants, 10 were female and two male. This is consistent with Earle-Mallesson (2009) and Patel's (2009) argument that social work is a gendered profession with an average of 89.3% of social workers being female. The majority of the participants were in their mid-twenties at the time of the interview. The figure below shows the age breakdown of participants. Earle-Mallesson (2009) notes that the majority of social workers active in the labour market are between the ages of 25 and 34 years.

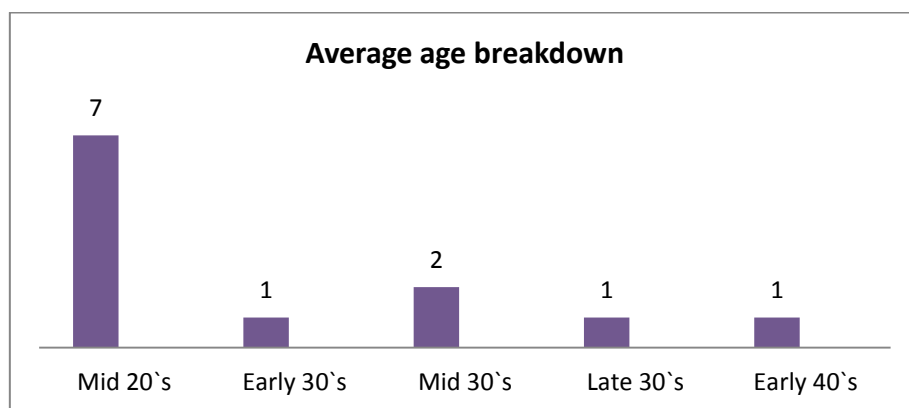


Figure 5.1 *Average age breakdown of participants (n=12)*

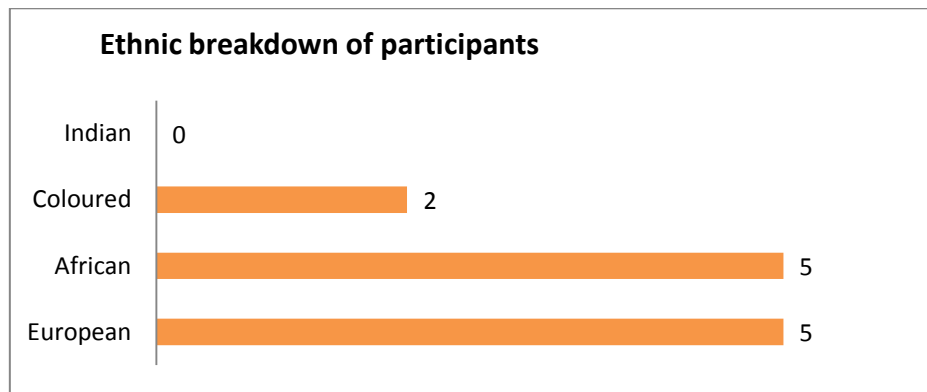


Figure 5.2 *Ethnic breakdown of participants (n=12)*

The study participants were largely representative of the social work population. However, the equal number of African and European participants is not representative of the general population of social workers. Earle-Mallessen (2009) points out that data suggests that social workers are predominately African (48.9%) and European (32.1%). It is likely that because the snowball sampling was used and the researcher herself is from European descent, that white child protection social workers are slightly over-represented in the current study.

The study participants had on average been qualified social workers for 4.5 years at the time of the interview. The participants reported that their average length of service at the child protection organisation that was the focus on the interview was two years, with five months representing the shortest duration and four years the longest duration. Three participants discussed their experiences working in statutory child protection for the Department of Social Development and the remaining nine participants described their experiences working in non-governmental organisations that were designated child protection organisations as per the Children's Act No.38 of 2005 (as amended). Geographically, the participants' organisations were spread throughout Gauteng covering areas in the north, south, west and east suburbs of Johannesburg.

The participants came from a diverse educational background including UNISA; the University of Venda, University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Johannesburg and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. Five of the participants had completed their masters in social work. While there is no accessible data on

educational levels amongst social workers in South Africa, it is likely that the sample in this research is over-represented in terms of educational level. The over-representation of social workers with post-graduate qualifications could be attributed to the snowballing sample strategy, the participants may have been more willing to take the time to be involved in a research study as they also had to complete their own research.

5.3. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

To accurately capture the participants' experiences and the context in which they worked, the findings are presented in chronological order or along a timeline that aims to represent participants' journey in the child protection field. The themes and sub-themes that were developed through a combination of inductive and deductive analysis, are linked with the four key objectives of the study. An overview of the findings is provided in the table below.

Table 5.1 *Organisation of data analysis chapter*

THEME	SUB-THEMES	OBJECTIVE
Becoming a social worker		Objective 3: To explore the reasons social workers decided to leave their previous child protection organisations.
Joining the child protection field		
Working in the child protection field	- Type, frequency and nature of supervision	Objective 1: To provide a descriptive account of the supervision provided to social workers in the child protection field
Social workers experiences of the supervision received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective supervision - Contrasting views - Supportive spaces 	Objective 2: To understand if social work supervision in their previous child protection organisations met their needs as social work professionals.

Leaving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Triggers - Secondary reasons - Decision pathway 	Objective 3: To explore the reasons social workers decided to leave their previous child protection organisation.
Social workers perceptions of effective supervision as a retention factor		Objective 4: To elucidate social workers' views on if supervision played a role in their decision to leave a child protection organisation.

5.3.1. BECOMING A SOCIAL WORKER

The research study investigated participants' initial motivations for becoming social workers as motivation contributes towards the alignment of people with their profession (Conte & Landy, 2007). The participant's narratives revealed that the important reasons for becoming social workers were a passion for helping and perceptions that social work was more 'hands on' than psychology. The participants' key motivations are summarized in the table below.

Table 5.2 *Participant's motivations for becoming a social worker*

INITIAL MOTIVATION	PARTICIPANT
Wanted to work with children not in child protection	P4 P3
Wanted a broader role than psychology offered	P5 P8 P11
Being engaged with the community	P10
Family history of helping	P2 P9 P12
Wanted to help based on own personal history	P6 P1

The listed reasons for wanting to become a social worker suggest a strong intrinsic motivation. Reeve (2001, p.118) defines intrinsic motivation as: "the innate propensity

to engage one's interests and to exercise one's capacities and, in doing so, to seek out and master optimal challenges". Intrinsic motivation then refers to motivation that emerges from an individual's personality, beliefs and values. Participants' intrinsic motivation is illustrated in one participant's statement that highlighted the desire to help based on personal history:

"For me it was more of a personal decision, you know. I didn't have such a good time growing up and I was raised by a single mother and seeing the challenges that I went through as a child I thought perhaps social work will be one field where I can really help people through similar situations or who are experiences the same situation that I grew up in." (P6).

This participant's intrinsic motivations came with high levels of expectation of the social work field. Intrinsic motivations are likely to lead to commitment to the profession of social work. In addition, a good person/job fit should lead to higher levels of job satisfaction as participants' values are aligned with the profession (Conte & Landy, 2007). Participants did not mention extrinsic motivators such as a salary, reward or prestige. This relates to the idea of social work as a "calling" in that social workers are not typically motivated to join the profession by profit (Munro, 2011).

5.3.2. JOINING THE CHILD PROTECTION FIELD

Person/job fit is also linked with the concepts of person/organisation alignment in that the employees' values and expectations need to match what an organisation can provide (Conte & Landy, 2007). It is argued that retention begins at the moment a person is hired and that poor fit will result in either dismissal or voluntary staff turnover. Motivations for joining the child protection agency are explored during the study. The majority of participants appeared not to have made a considered decision to enter the child protection field, but rather "fell into it" as new graduates looking for employment.

These themes are presented in table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3 *Participants' motivations for entering the child protection field*

REASON FOR ENTERING THE CHILD PROTECTION FIELD	PARTICIPANT
Offered job based on internship	P11
Position facilitated work/life balance	P2
Wanted to do community work and accepted the role with idea that I could move from child protection to community work	P10
Weren't many jobs for new graduate	P4 P3 P8 P9 P1
Bursary	P6 P5 P12

As opposed to intrinsic motivations for entering the social work profession, the participants appeared to have been motivated by extrinsic factors to enter child protection. Extrinsic motivation arises from environmental incentives and consequences (Reeve, 2001). However, it must be noted that individuals are generally motivated to act through a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Reeve, 2001). One participant's statement shows that accepting a position in child protection was based on both work/life balance concerns and an easy option owing to being "head-hunted" for the position as a result of the participant's internship at the organisation.

"I got a call from the X manager, I had done my internship there during my third year and the manager was quite impressed and she wanted to know if I'm in a position? Would I like to work there? Statutory was not one of my favourites I have to say. I think maybe my own perception of it and also maybe because you know input from other intern students, you know they would never want to do the statutory work and I think that maybe at that point in time that clouded my views so when they phoned me I was like it was 5 minutes away from where I lived and it was just around the corner from where my child was attending crèche. It was just perfect so I took on the position." (P2).

Intrinsic motivations for entering the social work field might lead to high levels of professional commitment; extrinsic motivations for working in child protection might lead to low levels of organisational commitment. However, this participant had very few expectations of the child protection field as opposed to high levels of expectations of social work.

5.3.7. WORKING IN THE CHILD PROTECTION FIELD

The first objective of the current study is to provide a descriptive account of the type, frequency and nature of the supervision provided to social workers in the statutory child protection field. This section begins by noting the characteristics of the participants' work in child protection. The frequency of supervision and the modality used are also discussed in this descriptive account. Finally, the function of the supervision received is described.

5.3.7.1. Context of child protection

The current research design views the data obtained and the analysis of that data as intertwined with the context of the research participants. The participants' demographics, general perceptions and overall experiences of the child protection field are viewed as colouring and providing richness to the data obtained. With this position in mind, this section explores the nature of the participants' roles in child protection and the organisation in which they worked.

Of the 12 participants interviewed, only one entered the child protection organisation that was the focus of the discussion with previous experience. The remaining 11 were newly qualified social workers entering the child protection field for the first time. A number of the participants described their entry into the child protection field in terms reminiscent of Bates, Immins, Parker, Keen, Rutter, Brown and Zsigo's (2010) argument that newly qualified social workers receive a "baptism by fire". This was particularly evident in one participant's comment that:

"So because for me child welfare was my first job straight from varsity. I just arrived there and there were files waiting for me. She [supervisor] didn't have the time to orientate me or to do a handover..." (P1).

None of the participants reported receiving a formal, structured induction into the child protection field or supervision. Of the 12 participants, none remembered their organisation as having had a formal supervision policy.

Overview of participant's work context

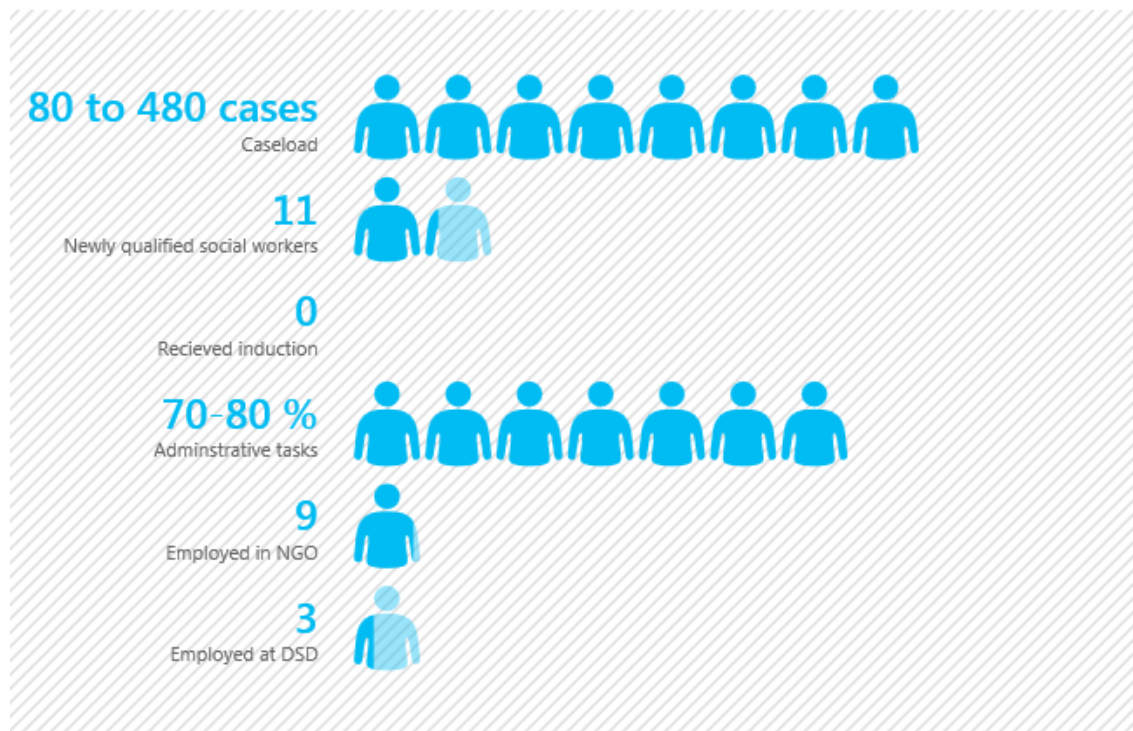


Figure 5.3 Overview of participants' context in child protection

The participants indicated that as child protection social workers, their tasks were reactive and included intakes of new clients; generic assistance; investigations; removals; finalizing of court cases; and supervising foster care placements. A small number of participants mentioned conducting preventative tasks that included holiday programmes and parenting skills' workshops. A number of participants mentioned that they spent 70% to 80% of their time on administrative tasks including report writing, which left little time for direct service provision to beneficiaries. The caseloads of the participants varied from between 80 to 480 cases with an overall average of about 100 cases per participant.

The structure of the organisation that was the focus of the discussion also varied from non-governmental organisations to government organisations. The 9 participants who worked for non-governmental organisation reported that a relatively flat organisational structure with participants reporting to a supervisor who reported directly to the director. The non-governmental organisations were usually organized as a series of

satellite offices based in local communities with supervisors often traveling to different offices. The three participants who worked for the Department of Social Development noted a rigid hierarchy. In these settings, participants reported to a supervisor who in turn reported to a series of managers. Participants related that there was almost no contact with the senior management of the Department of Social Development. Participants working for the Department of Social Development also noted that their supervisors frequently travelled to various satellite offices and supervised a number of different social work teams.

5.3.3.2. Frequency of supervision

Of the 12 social workers interviewed, five indicated that they had received structured supervision on a monthly, bi-monthly or weekly basis. The remaining seven social workers said that there was no set time for supervision, but rather their supervisor had an “open door policy”. When unpacking the term, the participants indicated that an “open door policy” meant that they approached their supervisors when they had a problem with one of their cases and the supervision dealt with that challenge by providing largely administrative or procedural guidance. This is illustrated by the following comment:

*“...so supervision became a problem solving 10 minutes rather than case management and dealing with the work that you have to do on a daily basis”
(P5).*

5.3.3.3. Format and type of supervision

Various authors (Kadushin, 1992; Engelbrecht, 2012; Munson 2005) note that the functions of supervision can be distinguished from the modality or format of supervision. Modality in this context refers to the method or format used to provide supervision: group, individual, or technologically driven. The supervision formats used to provide supervision have various strengths and weaknesses and these serve to influence the nature of the supervision received.

The participants reported that supervision was predominately on an individual basis. Of the 12 participants, four noted that they had been part of group supervision at some

point during their tenure. Participants, who had been part of a group supervision process, indicated that when it was structured and consistent, the format provided them with an opportunity to learn from their peers and normalise many of their experiences within the child protection field.

Five participants noted that their supervisor was available on WhatsApp (an internet message service) or via text messages and email. Participants based in satellite offices noted that they frequently used these methods to make contact with their supervisors in between formal supervision. This supervision modality was predominately used for administrative supervision such as editing of court reports, providing resources and dealing with technicalities in the Children's Act.

Mentorship, consultation and formal clinical, administrative or educational supervision are noted by Engelbrecht (2012) as different types of supervision. These types of supervision are distinguished by the function and aim of the supervision. These types of supervision are typically linked to different stages in a social workers professional development. Two participants said that they had received supervision in the form of mentorship, but this was often by accident. In the first case the participant noted that when he/she was first employed, the supervisor did not have a driver's licence so the participant would drive her to home visits and have an opportunity to observe the supervisor's method of engaging with clients. The other participant who received mentorship noted that she and her colleague did not have driver's licenses they would walk to home visits. The participant notes that:

"The area was so big and we would do home visits by foot. At the time it was sort of scary and belittling of my profession but she sort of made the passion for social work and the administrative aspect of home visits so enjoyable ...so you know she taught me a lot of things about grassroots work. Her experience came in handy so she was amazing." (P3).

The challenges provided the participant with an opportunity to observe the social auxiliary worker who had been with the organisation for a number of years and learn through mentorship about engaging with clients and the community.

The majority of the participants received supervision in line with a consultation approach as indicated by the “open door policy”. None of the participants were able to identify additional types of supervision that they received, for example clinical supervision.

5.3.4. SOCIAL WORKERS PERCEPTIONS ON WHETHER SUPERVISION MET THEIR NEEDS

There is strong evidence in previous research that supervision acts as a socialization tool through which new social workers learn the values, beliefs and expectations of the field and organisation. Howarth (2015) argues that the supervisory relationship and organisational culture/climate significantly influence a social worker’s sense of professionalism, confidence and ability to function in the child protection field. This section of the research findings explores the nature of the supervision received by the participants and links this to whether or not the participants felt the supervision they received met their needs as professionals.

To avoid bias through a subjective assessment of effective supervision, this study has employed the supervision frameworks provided by Kadushin (1992) and Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun and Xie (2009). It is noted that effective supervision encompasses three elements task assistance; support; and supervision style and influence (Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun & Xie, 2009). The meeting of participants’ needs as professionals will be judged in relation to their receipt effective supervision. This argument is supported by Bostock, Carpetener, and Webb (2013) who state that the dimensions of supervision noted above have been shown to positively impact on social workers’ levels of job satisfaction, self-efficacy and empowerment, burnout levels, workload management and case analysis and planning.

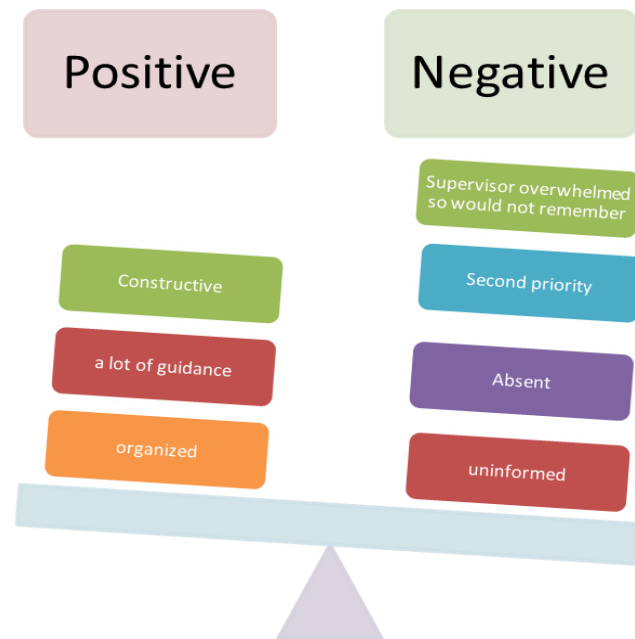


Figure 5.4 *Adjectives used by participants to describe supervision*

Participants' experiences of supervision are unpacked in the section below in relation to each of these elements to determine if they received effective supervision.

5.3.4.1. Offer guidance and education on work related issues in a knowledgeable and skilful manner

The first component to Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun and Xie's (2009) definition of effective supervision relates to task assistance. These authors argue that task assistance includes helping workers engage in problem solving, develop skills and providing instrumental assistance to supervisees (Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun & Xie, 2009). Task assistance necessarily has to take place within the context of a supportive and trusting relationship between the supervisor and supervisee. This highlights the importance of the context in which supervision takes place and draws attention back to Shulman's model of interactional supervision.

Of the 12 participants, three indicated that the supervision they received was not conducted in a "skilful" manner. This is illustrated by a participant statement that:

“There I tried to stay away from supervision as much as possible because umm in my opinion our supervisor or the head of the organisation she didn’t know anything. She had been out of social work for more than ten years ... then she returned to social work so she had no idea about the new Children’s Act” (P7).

The lack of educational focus was also evident in the statements below, which shows that these participants felt that their supervision focused on crisis management rather than education:

“It’s not structured it’s when you have a problem come. You don’t just go for supervision because it should be done or because it’s a norm.” (P5)

“I think absent would be the first word that comes to mind because there wasn’t really much of it you know or maybe people didn’t see it as important” (P6).

Three of the participants referred to their supervision as “informative” (P3); “enlightening” (P12); and “as back up” (P9). However, when these adjectives were explored it was clear that the supervision was only at its most basic and superficial. For example, informative and enlightening supervision referred to being informed of resources in the area to assist them in placing children or accessing support for clients. This included being allowed to copy the supervisor’s resource file or the supervisor having made a call to colleagues to gather information. In these situations, there is no focus on the development of the participant, but rather on solving the problem and moving on.

This is in contrast to the supervision experienced by the remaining three participants. These participants noted that their supervision was structured, one-on-one and consistent. Participants noted that their supervisors encouraged them to grow as professionals through task assistance related to understanding terms such as the best interest of the child, accompanying them to difficult interactions and developing their report writing through constructive feedback. This is evident in a participant’s comment on the organisations focus on understanding the client:

“I think she, I think she saw the uniqueness of every case, so I think when you’re dealing with foster care and that’s the majority of the case load it can become quite a lot you know and I think she kind of found the uniqueness of

each client, which in social work is quite important. Yes, ja, So she would encouraged us you know go look deeper, go and see the client for who the client is and not just put you in a box for foster care” (P8).

In the preceding statements, the supervision the participants received was able to focus on challenges experienced, personal growth, mentorship, guidance and education. This encouraged the participants to engage with the clients, stay true to their values as social workers and built a sense of professional integrity and commitment in the participants. The importance of supervision in participants’ development was summarised by a participant who noted:

“I look at my growth and it’s really thanks to her. If I have a supervisor now I will measure them according to a certain standard. If I get a report from another social worker I look at it critically, which is not always right, but there is certain things I want to be in place because I was taught that way. It must make sense because we are professionals as social worker’s...the foundation for me was laid [in supervision]. So I really want to say that I had a great supervisor that did that for me” (P2).

In examining the extent to which the participants received adequate task assistance from their supervisors, it should be noted that nine of the participants did not receive supervision that focused on developing their skills as professionals. Participants ascribed this deficiency to the fact that these aspects of supervision were not valued by supervisors. As noted earlier, the lack of structured supervision impinged on the ability to provide educational or instrumental task assistance as no relationship or organisational culture or context had been established.

5.3.4.2. Provide emotional and social support to staff

Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun and Xie (2009) state that the emotional element of effective supervision focuses on responding to employees’ emotional needs in terms of job related stress. This argument is supported by Brittan and Potter (2009) and Shulman (1991) research into social work supervision. In the current study, only three of the 12 participants said that they had received consistent and in-depth emotional and social support from their supervisors. The remaining nine participants said that support was either inconsistent, superficial or totally absent. In relation to superficial emotional support one participant noted the following:

“You know she would give me good advice whilst sitting there but tomorrow when I speak to her about it, she wouldn’t remember what it was about, you know what I am saying, so um, she just didn’t have it in her, she was really struggling herself to cope with life” (P9).

The theme of superficial support was echoed by three participants who noted that supervisors often supervised many social workers while managing their own caseloads making it difficult for participants to spend time with them. When the three participants did access their supervisors, they felt that their supervisor was not coping and therefore could not be relied upon to assist them emotionally. When emotional difficulties were raised with the supervisor, participants stated that they were given superficial solutions like leave approval, suggestions to delegate, or told not to worry they would cope. These solutions sent a strong message to the participants that they were expected to cope and that failure to do so was a result of personal weaknesses.

The reasons supervisors focused on simple remedies rather than responding in an empathic and skilful manner is outside the scope of this study, but it is noted that this approach was illustrative of an avoidance coping strategy. A number of participants appear to have modelled this and used avoidance as a coping mechanism. Avoidance of the emotional aspects of their roles led to the participants disengaging from the emotion of their work, which created premature routinisation and monotony as all the uniqueness and connection in child protection work was avoided to enable them to cope.

The remaining six participants noted that the supportive elements of supervision were absent. These participants felt that the focus in supervision was exclusively on numbers. This is evidenced by the following quotes:

“So that was my main challenge – support – and I was told you know just get on with it, find a way of working it out. So what I used to do is work on weekends or after hours and I actually had burnout and that’s what- after I had it a few times I saw that, you know burnout it becomes like a repetitive cycle over the years as I want to handle everything and micromanage everything so I became extremely burnout and became a bit cynical after some time and I was not really liking the profession. And with that lack of support at times I would deal with issues in the foster care system such as

abuse and neglect and I would need a bit of debriefing a bit of support but I wouldn't get any formal supervision for that. You would tell colleagues about it and they would be like that's part of it so just deal with it" (P12).

"Not really for me supervision that I have experienced was more of how far are you on this, what's the progress. It was more of reporting. But supportive as to you are in this role and you understand the challenges and all of those things that kind of support was not really there. You are expected to get in there and do whatever you need to do and other things you deal with it later" (P6).

The theme that emerges from the above quotes is that of a social worker devoid of emotion. The participants who received no supportive supervision were repeatedly given the message that to be a professional means to cope with the emotional impact of the work on your own. As with the participants who received superficial support these participants often repressed or avoided the emotional aspects of their work. Of the nine participants who reported that they felt that the supervision they received was not supportive, a number noted that they ultimately left their roles because of feeling emotionally overwhelmed by the work.

If emotional support is the cornerstone of effective supervision, then the majority of the participants in this study (75%) did not receive effective supervision. Mor Barak et al. (2009) state that emotional support in supervision has been shown to increase job satisfaction, decrease emotional exhaustion and reduce levels of burnout. The impact of the ineffective supervision on the participants is discussed in later sections in more detail.

5.3.4.3. Interact effectively with and influence supervisees

This dimension of effective supervision relates to supervisees' perceptions of having received quality supervision (Mor Barak et al., 2009). This dimension relates to social workers self-assessment of their professional competence and increased sense of personal accomplishment in social work that can be influenced by the supervisor's supervision style. Wonnacott (2011) notes the importance of a supervisors' style in effective supervision. He suggests that the four parenting styles relate to four supervision styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful. Each style

promotes a particular type of reaction from the social worker and effective supervision is closely linked with the authoritative supervision style which promotes a sense of competence, confidence and adaptive coping.

The nature of the supervision style that participants received is detailed in table 5.4. Of the 12 participants only 25% received supervision that can be described as authoritative and in line with best practice supervisory guidelines as defined by Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun and Xie (2009) and Kadushin (1992). The remaining participant's narratives revealed elements of an authoritarian, permissive or neglectful supervision style.

Table 5.4 *Unpacking supervision styles (n=12)*

Style	Definition	Participants
Authoritative	Warm and responsive with clear boundaries. Highly assertive in interactions (Wonnacott, 2011).	P2; P11; P8
Authoritarian	Rule based, no regard for feelings, hostile at times towards supervisee (Wonnacott, 2011).	P6; P7; P4; P10
Permissive	Permissive supervision is defined as highly responsive, undemanding and non-confrontational (Wonnacott, 2011).	P9; P3; P1
Neglectful	Wonnacott (2011) defines neglectful supervision as lacking in warmth and consistency.	P5; P12

These supervision styles can be linked with participants' narratives that evidence a level of disengagement in reaction to the supervision that they received. This disengagement is contrasted with Schaufeli's (2013, p.1) argument that engagement refers to concepts such as: "involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, absorption, focused effort, zeal, dedication, and energy". A number of participants spoke organisational climate of

disengagement and within the child protection field. This disengagement can be related to supervision that is task focused, displays low levels of empathy, and an avoidance of complex issues well as a supervision style that is permissive, neglectful or authoritarian.

This theme is encapsulated in one participant's comments that:

"Yes, it's like a culture gets created, where I used to work. It's a culture where it's rushed and inconsistent and you do your thing call us when you are in trouble so no one ever, there was never you started from here and look where you are now. There was no growth in it. I feel like in the four years that I was there in year four I was still doing and still asking sort of the same questions that I did in my first year and I think that's from lack of supervision... I was gutted initially but like I said as I got into the culture I was like ok that's cool I will just do one report a week you know. You lose your mission in life as a social worker and that's the reason that I left because I realised that that's not the person that I wanted to be and that's not how I wanted to feel like 10 years later I was going to look back and think what I have achieved" (P5).

The disengagement noted in the participants' narratives was fostered by numerous conditions, many of which related to the nature of their role working with abused and neglected children. However, the organisational issues that served to create and re-enforce a participant's disengagement, included neglectful or permissive supervision, problems with trust in supervision, and a view of the professional as void of emotion. Of concern is the fact that this disengagement potentially constituted a parallel process between how social workers felt and how they treated clients. This disengagement, based on organisational issues, contributed towards the development of a neglectful organisation that influenced the participants' decision to resign, as can be seen in the participants' triggers for resignation that included monotony, frustration, growth and feeling emotionally overwhelmed (Howarth, 2015).

5.3.5. SUPPORTIVE SPACES

Whilst the picture that has emerged thus far is predominately critical of supervision participant's narratives also showed that they were able to find supportive spaces within the system in contrast to the lack of support received from the organisation. In some

instances participants noted the importance of support from the magistrate at Children`s Court, from an experienced social auxiliary worker or other social workers. This support is highlighted in the quotes from participants below:

“I made a lot of mistakes, ja but I think I got a lot of help from the magistrate...I would be in court and they would say ok, wait you said this but you meant this or you can’t use this or do this as its hearsay...so I have to say the magistrates were very supportive and understanding...if I didn’t know what to do or what was going on I would just phone them” (P10).

“I told her it’s good you grow there and learn how to deal with situations. Just like me she found files when she started but I think she now knows what a form 36 or form 38 is. She used to ask me a lot about what to do...she would what’s app me and know I know child welfare like the back of my hand because I dealt with so many cases in X” (P1).

All of the participants noted the importance of peer support on their ability to cope and work in the child protection field. The participants all said that they voiced their frustrations with their colleagues and got their colleagues’ opinions on problems. This teamwork was invaluable to many of the participants. Two participants found that the social work team at the organisation worked together to solve problems and make case decisions rather than approach the supervisor with whom they did not have a good relationship. Participants spoke of confiding in one another about difficult situations and one participant said that when she indicated that she was nervous about a particular home visit, a colleague offered to accompany her. These supportive spaces that participants found within the child protection system were necessary for their emotional health however they were often not sufficient to overcome the deficiencies in the supervision they received or the organisational climate.

5.3.6. LEAVING

The third research objective is to develop an understanding of the push and pull factors that lead to social workers leaving their positions in child protection organisations. The above discussion spotlights the different ways in which participants in the study reacted to the supervision that they experienced; however, their reactions are also strongly linked with the triggers they cited for leaving their organisations and the decision making pathway they adopted when deciding to resign.

5.3.6.1.Triggers

Four key themes emerged in relation to participants primary reasons for leaving the child protection organisation that was the focus of the research discussion. These themes include the push factors of financial, growth and development, hindrance stressors and feeling emotionally overwhelmed. There was a strong link exists between the determinants of turnover identified in Price and Mueller`s (1986) comprehensive structural model, namely routinisation, autonomy, job stress, transferability of skills and promotion and these themes. The themes are all underpinned by the influence of new managerialism, which it is argued, focuses on quantity vs quality. Various authors (Bradley, Engelbrecht & Hojer, 2010; Ferguson, 2009) note the significance of managerialism`s influence on the practice of social work. While causation cannot be determined in this study, there is also an underlying theme of disengagement that is proposed as participants` key reaction to the ineffective supervision they received.

The identified themes will be discussed in the order of the intensity of the influence of the theme on the participants` decision to resign as represented in the table below. Often the narratives referred to more than one theme as a reason for leaving an organisation. A high level of interrelation is found between the theme of growth and development and the theme of monotony. These themes also suggest that participants` decisions to leave their organisation can predominately be categorized as avoidable turnover. The turnover was also predominately dysfunctional as it had no functional benefit to the organisation.

Table 5.5 *Reasons for exiting the organisation (n=12)*

Theme:	Number of times cited by participants:	Categorization
Growth and development	6	Avoidable/Unavoidable
Monotony	5	Avoidable
Frustration	4	Avoidable
Feeling emotionally overwhelmed	4	Avoidable

In table 5.5 it can be seen that growth and development are categorized as both avoidable and unavoidable turnover. This is due to the fact that in two cases structural realities prevented the participants from moving to more senior roles within their organisation. However in the other cases turnover was avoidable and dysfunctional as the trigger for resignation related to participants need for growth and development to avoid the monotony created by a lack of depth in their roles.

Theme 1: Growth and Development

The need for growth and development was cited by six participants (n=12). The participants indicated that social work was a diverse field and they wanted to explore other areas within the profession. In some instances this was linked with monotony, with participants saying that they felt that they had reached the limit of what they could learn in their child protection roles. This theme represents both functional and dysfunctional turnover as one participant indicated that she had been in her role for a number of years and stated the following:

“I wanted to grow, I wanted to see what else there is out there and when I came here [new organisation] it was exactly that” (P2).

While another participant, whose decision to leave represented dysfunctional turnover, indicated that:

“There was no growth in it. I feel like in the four years that I was there in year four I was still doing and still asking the same sort of questions that I did in my first year and I think that’s from a lack of supervision” (P5).

Here it can be seen that the dysfunctional turnover resulted from a lack of focus on professional education within an organisation and the supervision space. This served to discourage reflexive practice and the deepening of the participants’ social work skills resulting in monotony.

Growth and development as a trigger for the decision to leave is also closely linked with the turnover construct of ease of movement identified by March and Simon

(1958). March and Simon (1958) highlight the importance of perceived job alternatives to an employee's cost benefit analysis when deciding to leave. Participants indicated that they had not found it difficult to find alternative positions in a variety of different fields in social work. The participants also noted that their skills were highly transferable to a range of different social work fields such as the substance abuse field or the employee wellness field. Thus the risks of leaving the roles discussed in the study were negligible.

Theme 2: Monotony

The second most frequently cited reason for leaving by the participants was the feeling of monotony. Participants said that they found the work largely administrative, with at least 60% to 80% of their time spent on paperwork. A number of participants also noted that working in foster care meant that the work was repetitive. This is exemplified by the following excerpt for a participant:

"All your reports are the same, it got to a point where you could cut and paste your report and just change the names. That's the routine as there is nothing more that you can do or add to that report. You have that one report that got accepted at court and you kind of change the names and cut and paste and you know for as long as you use that method everything will be fine." (P5).

The theme of monotony was echoed more generally by participants in the following statements:

"You tend to see the conditions and the monotony that arises and it turns out boring I might say. If you are energetic and ambitious it might not be the best place to stay for long" (P1).

"For the first time leaving I wanted to grow, you know, I thought it was becoming more not tedious, more predictable, my work was becoming more predictable...I wanted a new set of challenges..." (P3).

"Yes that was when I realised I can't stay because then, you start to realise that you are thinking mediocre you know. You are not excelling, you are not pushing yourself anymore....that's not how I wanted to behave so I needed a different challenge." (P5).

This finding is consistent with research done locally and internationally. Internationally, Ferguson (2009), and Cahalane and Sites (2008) highlight the detrimental effect of bureaucracy on the retention of child protection social workers. Locally, Sebopela's (2011) findings in her study on quality reports in the South African child protection field are consistent with this theme. Her research reveals that the monotony led to demotivation of social workers. This in turn led to a failure to undertake in-depth investigations and a lack of willingness to make complex decisions, which creates a vicious cycle re-enforcing the monotony of the work (Sebopela, 2011).

Monotony is related to the social realities of social work in South Africa where social workers are overwhelmed by: "children who are in need of cash and not much in need of care" (Lombard & Sibanda, 2015, p.338). Bourne & Brown (1996) argue that the second stage of burnout is premature routinisation. Participants with high caseloads were expressing their experiences as monotonous, but in fact describing a level of burnout even if they were not able to identify their feelings as burnout. The Department of Social Development is proposing new legislation that will allow work systems to be adjusted and tasks delegated to allow social workers time to utilise their skills effectively. The fact that such legislation has not yet been implemented can be linked with disengagement far beyond the level of the supervisor/supervisee relationship.

Theme 3: Frustration

Closely associated with the theme of monotony, is the theme of frustration, which is also related to hindrance stressors (Podsakoff, 2007). A number of the structures and systems in the child protection field make it difficult for social workers to achieve positive outcomes for children. Participants indicated that a lack of resources such as funding, vehicles or private offices combined with high caseloads creates stress. Frustration is illustrated in the following quote from a participant who discussed, in general, why social workers leave statutory organisations:

"Burnout, frustrations with the system, frustrations with the workloads, frustrations with dealing with clients because you could not meet deadlines for clients. Those are the top reasons why other colleagues left" (P1).

Other participants emphasized the structural element of the hindrance stressors specifically referring to legislation and government departments:

“Yes that was, you know when you work in Government there is a lot of laws and rules, you can do this and you can’t do that. There are lots that you feel you can do but because of legislation issues you just can’t do those things...”
(P6).

“Frustrations, so that was my main drive and it was something that I was feeling for a while... I am not sure if it’s something I would want to go back to. Doing statutory work in particular with the frustrations that there are in doing that and the lack of support that there is from government institutions”
(P4).

The moral distress caused by frustration with difficult and obstructive systems prompted an emotional reaction from the participants. These participants noted that they had at times questioned the legitimacy of the child protection system or started to become more cynical of what could be achieved for vulnerable children. An effective supervision model addresses these stressors and the emotional reaction to them. In addition, supervisors can challenge supervisees to think critically about the macro environment and the positive results of prompt social action. The majority of the participants noted that their supervision did not incorporate these elements and they were left with unresolved emotions that ultimately led to job dissatisfaction.

Theme 4: Feeling emotionally overwhelmed

Four of the participants (n=12) said that they left their organisations as they felt that the emotional burden of the work was too high. All of the social workers in the current study mentioned that they took their role in child protection seriously and at times were personally impacted positively or negatively by their experiences. Some of the participants reported deciding to leave following a realisation that they spent days crying over clients, had difficulties sleeping, or were constantly alert and could not disengage from their work. Extensive research has been done on burnout in social work, specifically in the child protection field, noting that professionals operating in this field are at high risk for burnout (Horwitz, 2006). Only three of the participants acknowledged experiencing some level of burnout during their time working in the child protection field.

Participants, who reported leaving because they were emotionally overwhelmed, said that it was the ambiguity of their work that upset them the most. This finding is consistent with Furnham's (2005) research that states that role stresses lead to lower satisfaction, decreased self-confidence, low motivation to work and higher intentions to leave amongst social workers. Some participants noted that they were not confident that they were making the right decisions for clients. Frustration is demonstrated by the following quotes on feeling overwhelmed by being a statutory child protection social worker:

"It was a growing feeling. It was literally I want to help people to make a different and all of that but I also need to keep myself together and it was starting to affect me because I didn't feel there was someone to speak to about my cases and umm, give me guidance and reassurance that you are doing the right thing" (P7).

The same participants also reported traumatic incidents at work, threats of violence from clients and complaints being filed against them for their professional conduct at the SACSSP. These events served to overwhelm their coping skills and many felt the need to put a "social work face on". In each of these instances, the participants said that they felt that the supervision they received was inadequate in helping them deal with the job stressors.

"I think at that time I expected a little bit more support from her and from the organisation although they had provided me with therapy and things like that um but they were very quick for me to come back to work and then um on the finalising of that case which I agreed to do but umm it was sort of like you know you can go handle it yourself sort of thing and I think at that time I was still very sensitive umm through the trauma and all of that umm I would have wanted more support during that time" (P8).

One participant who left the social work field following working in a statutory child protection role, noted that her decision was a "life choice" as she realised that because of her personality style and being a mother that social work was not for her as the emotionally impact was too severe. The participant said that:

“I wasn’t coping and it was a decision I made, that it [child protection social work] was a life job [a calling]. I don’t want to do this anymore. It wasn’t a decision about the specific post” (P9).

In this theme the link between turnover and supervision is clear as the participants observed that they felt there was no hope of mitigating their feelings and that their only chance at coping was to leave their roles as the roles were the source of their stress.

5.3.6.2. Secondary reasons for resignations

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews indicates that the participants rarely resigned for just one reason. Rather, there was often one trigger for their eventual decision to resign, but a range of contributing or secondary influences led to their decision to exit an organisation. This research outcome matches Lee and Mitchell’s (1994) model of the decision making process involved in turnover. The participants identified the following factors as contributing towards dissatisfaction in their positions:

Table 5.6 *Secondary reasons for exiting the organisation (n=12)*

Contributing trigger	Excerpt	Participant
Studies	“Also I had to go to be near to my supervisor and my school...”	P1
Money	“So like I was saying money is secondary. Its low and yes its other things that cause you to move... but why stay for a lower amount” (P1) “I left there because there was a better offer...” (P11)	P1 P11
Moral – questioning the system	“...social work also raised a very big moral question in my heart about is the system working” (P7)	P7
Live outside area of operation	“...because I stayed there, that is my home, it was challenging because some people you knew, although I was at varsity most of the time but some people could remember that I used to stay there for	P3 P11

	<p>about six odd years.. working in the community where you grew up was a challenge” (P3)</p> <p>“I don’t stay too far from the area ...they think because you are from the area that they can speak to you any time about their troubles...I don’t know how but a client actually got hold of my cell phone number and she would phone me at like ridiculous times...” (P11)</p>	
Pay stability	<p>“our salaries were going to be cut by 10% and they would save money on all kinds of stuff especially our community projects” (P10)</p>	P10
Danger	<p>“I had clients threaten my life and I wasn’t safe at the office...” (P8)</p>	P8
Adversarial nature of work (lawyers)	<p>“...you walk in there and you have a panel of lawyers sitting in front of you and they are all out to get social workers. So you really need a specific type of personality to cope” (P9)</p> <p>“you could see when they scrutinize my report before doing research about every single thing that I wrote in there to nail me, so I remember our first day in court I sat in that box from 8am until 4pm in the afternoon...they cross questioned me, that was the worst experience for me. I never felt so little or unworthy of being called a social worker because that’s how they make you feel.” (P2)</p>	P2 P9
First job – fell into it	<p>“So by the time I got the job it was like just let me go. So it was a given [getting the current job] and I wanted to apply for something that was more [next job]”</p>	P4 P3

5.3.6.3. Decision making process and retention

Drawing more deeply on Lee and Mitchell's (1994) model, it can be seen that the majority of the participants followed the fourth decision pathway where a position had gradually become dissatisfying. Dissatisfaction has a cumulative effect, prompting the initiation of a search for alternative positions. A number of participants said that they had initiated a search for a new job on and off for the duration of their employment. Other participants stated that they had looked for about two to three months for the right job before leaving. Only two participants followed the second decision pathway. For both of them, the negative job event/shock was related to a particular event that exceeded their coping mechanisms. Their decision to resign can also be viewed as an emotional decision.

The participants' decision making pathways in relation to their resignation show that there were a number of opportunities for their organisations to intervene to retain them. A few participants pointed out that their supervisors had offered to increase their salaries if they stayed, but the majority said that their supervisors took no action to retain them. Participants noted that high levels of turnover were expected in the child protection field and that their supervisors appeared more concerned with who would manage their caseload than with their welfare. This again speaks to a climate of disengagement within child protection where no effort is made on the micro level to understand social workers' intention to leave or stay in organisations or retain social workers who are thinking of leaving.

One participant noted that the supervisor was angry about her resignation as her resignation came at a time when many of the social workers at the organisation were leaving. The supervisor threatened to make sure that those leaving did not get other work. This contributed towards the participant's decision to leave the social work profession altogether. Of the participants who reported that they felt they benefited from the supervision they received, a number left following their supervisor's exit from the organisation. This suggests a strong level of attachment to the supervisor and illustrates the role supervision plays in creating a particular climate within an organisation.

5.4. EXPLORE SOCIAL WORKERS PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION AS A RETENTION FACTOR IN THE CHILD PROTECTION FIELD

This study proposed that effective social work supervision could act as a mediator in relation to job dissatisfaction and intention to leave. The researcher argues that the golden thread in the participants' decision to exit an organisation is a climate of disengagement that includes a disengagement from supervision. This climate promotes insecurity or avoidant attachment to the child protection field.

A number of the participants were unsure of the role that supervision could play in the retention of social workers in the child protection field. One participant commented on the reasons social workers at the organisation left:

"I don't think that, umm, mostly our people didn't leave because of supervision. If I can remember all the stuff that people left, mostly it was because of the money. Most of them found another job that paid better and usually stuff out of social work. There was one that left because of the overseer [supervisor]; she couldn't handle the stuff that people were putting on her..." (P9).

The participants' discussion of supervision in relation to retention indicated that not many of them had thought about the relationship. Some of the participants said that reflecting on the relationship during the research discussion caused them to consider that perhaps effective supervision could have helped with some of the challenges they experienced in child protection. Participants also distinguished between retention in the child protection field and retention in the organisation that was the focus of the discussion. Participants mentioned that they felt that effective supervision could have lengthened their stay at their organisation, but not ultimately kept them in the organisation. Effective supervision can be a retention factor in retaining social workers in the child protection field in general by keeping them engaged in their work:.

"I think that it makes or breaks a person as you find your identity in the type of supervision that you get because that is what motivates you to carry on and if that link in that chain is broken the whole chain does work. So as a young social worker who went into the profession driven to make a change because that link was broken my drive got lost and I think the most

important thing is that that link needs to be joined again because it really does make or break future social workers. If they don't feel pride in what they are doing regardless of salary, regardless of workload but it's that sense of pride that gets lost and if that gets regained I think we will have better work and better output in our services....So it really does boil down to supervision, if this person knows what they are talking about, knows what is happening, reads up on current affairs that's enough you can shape a child, you can shape a professional. So it really goes back to if we supervise consistently and accurately then I think we will build better social workers because it's a bit more than just getting a degree" (P5).

The results discussed above support the development of a model of turnover in the child protection field. This model incorporates both an understanding of the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction and of the process whereby participants decide to exit an organisation. Small dissatisfactions accumulate to create larger triggers such as monotony, burnout, growth and development, and frustration. The realisation of these acted as a shock that caused participants to review their priorities. This study argues that effective supervision can lead to a professional who is secure and confident, whereas, poor supervision encourages disengagement and insecurity or avoidance attachments to child protection. Ultimately, supervision or the lack thereof can lead to social workers remaining in the child protection field or moving to another field of social work or leaving the profession altogether.

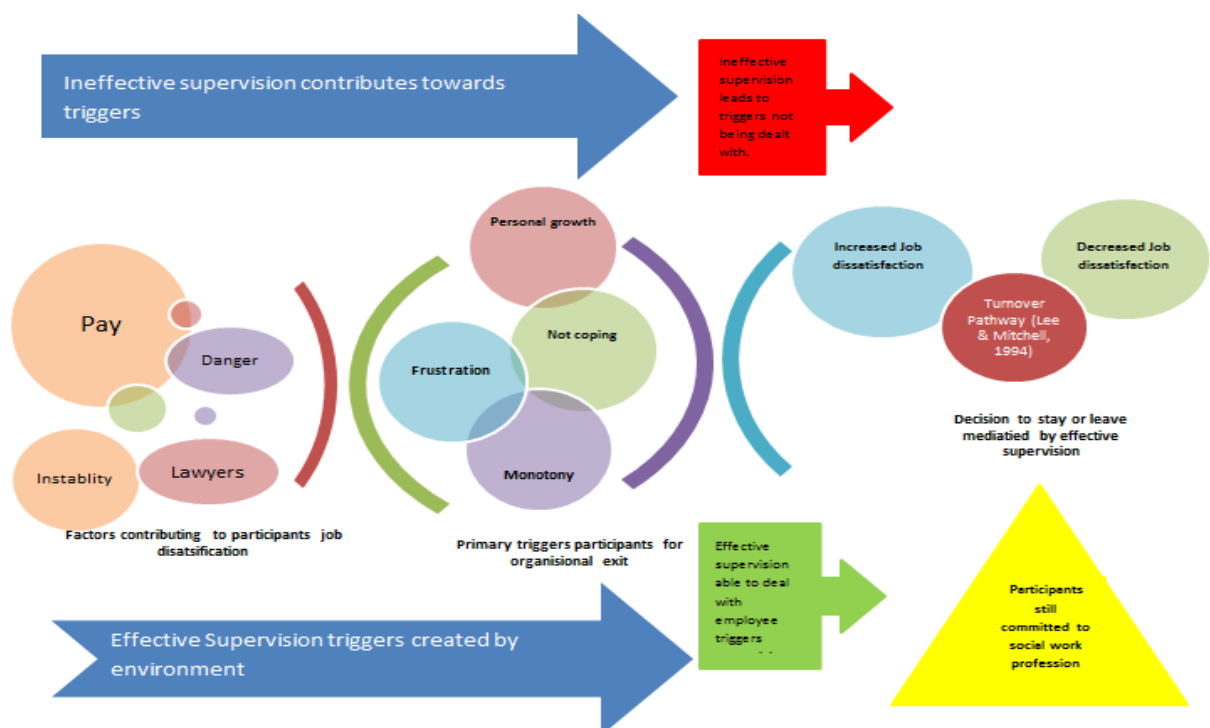


Figure 5.5 *Turnover model*

The importance of the mediation of employee's levels of dissatisfaction is evidenced by the fact that, at the time of the interviews for the current study, none of the participants were still employed in the statutory child protection field. The sampling criteria asked that the participants had previously resigned from a child protection role, but not that they were currently not employed in child protection. The participants' current fields are shown in figure 5.6.

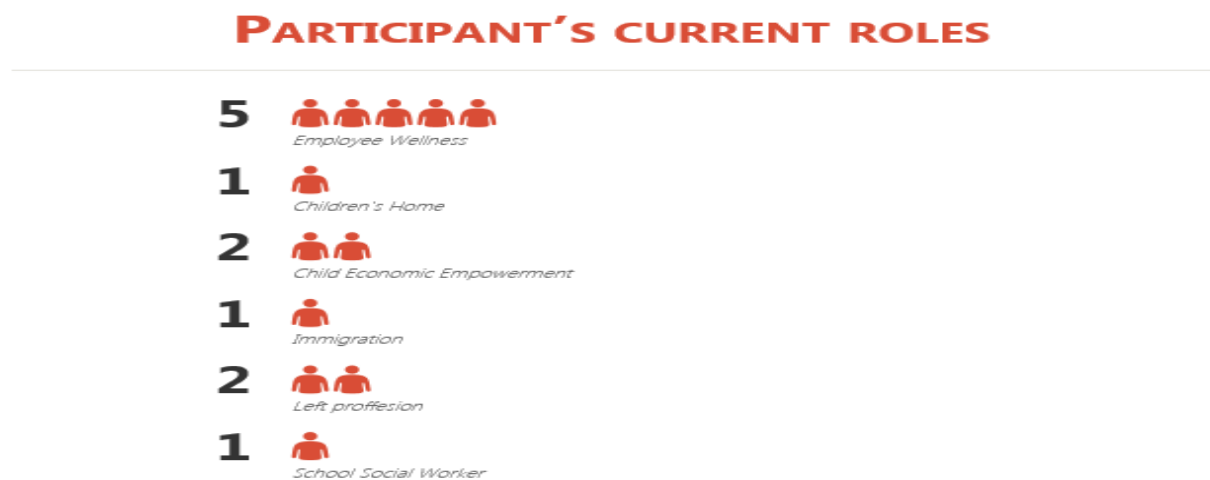


Figure 5.6 *Participants' current roles (n=12)*

These statistics show that following resignation, a significant number of participants (41.6%) joined the private sector working in employee wellness programmes whilst others moved into positions that allowed them to work with children in a less regulated and bureaucratic environment. An unexpected finding was the recognition of job embeddedness and professional commitment as a moderating factor for the majority of the participants in their decision to leave their organisation. This was evident in a number of the participants' narratives where they indicated that they had felt guilty leaving the children in their caseloads with either no services or a change of social worker. Guilt sometimes acted to retain participants in their roles at the organisation for a while longer.

5.5. CONCLUSION

This study examines participants' experiences of supervision in the child protection field and the potential role that effective supervision could play in retention. The data is presented in a timeline format starting with participants' initial motivations and ending with their decision to leave the child protection organisation. During the presentation of the findings, the themes of disengagement, supervision styles, decision making and supportive spaces are discussed. The study notes that the supervisory practice of an "open door policy" served not as a consultative approach but rather as ineffective supervision. The participants' narratives include their perceptions that effective supervision was not valued within the organisation. It was also noted that supervision is predominately viewed as providing oversight and ensuring efficiency rather than as a vehicle to provide support to social workers. This led to the proposal that ineffective supervision promotes disengagement that in turn leads to a climate of disengagement within the child protection field, which negatively affected the participants' engagement and commitment to statutory child protection work. The researcher concludes that supervision plays an indirect role in participants' decisions to leave an organisation through mediating the stressors inherent in the role and addressing job dissatisfaction.

CHAPTER SIX

MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This section summarizes the results of the research project. It addresses the main findings as discussed in the previous chapters. The findings are supported by practical recommendations that emerged from the research on retaining social workers in the child protection field. Finally, this chapter makes some suggestions for further research in this field.

6.2. SUMMARY OF STUDY

This study has used a qualitative case study design to explore the phenomenon of voluntary staff turnover in the statutory child protection field in Gauteng and the role of effective supervision as a mediator of turnover. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 registered social workers who had resigned from a child protection organisation in the last five years. The interviews explored motivation for joining social work and the child protection field, the nature of supervision received, the participants' general experiences of supervision and participants' views on supervision as a retention tool. Thematic analysis was used to generate codes and themes for the key research aims.

6.3. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS:

This section is organised according to the main objectives of the current study and based on the data analysis presented in chapter five.

6.3.1 Objective One: to provide a descriptive account of supervision provided to social workers in the child protection field

- Five participants received structured and regular supervision while seven participants reported that supervision focused on crisis management and was mainly absent.
- The majority of the participants indicated that their supervision was predominately administrative and considered it “supervision via statistics”.

6.3.2 Objective Two: to determine if social work supervision in their previous child protection organisations met their needs as social work professionals

- Nine of the participants reported that they did not receive supervision that focused on developing their skills as professionals.
- The lack of structured supervision significantly impacted on the ability to provide educational or instrumental task assistance as no context had been established.
- If emotional support is the cornerstone of effective supervision, then the majority of the participants in this study (75%) felt that they did not receive effective supervision.
- A small number of participants (two) reported supportive supervision that focused beyond the superficial and encouraged reflexivity.
- Where participants reported that they received emotional support, their narratives indicated high levels of professional engagement and professional confidence.
- The nature of the supervision received impacted significantly on the way participants engaged with social work with three patterns emerging: on-going commitment to the profession; culture of avoidance of complexity; and anxious engagement with the profession.
- A strong link between the supervision style and the participants’ reactions was noted. The participants whose supervision was permissive, authoritarian or neglectful responded by having dysfunctional coping strategies including

avoidance, excessive autonomy and escapism resulting in the premature routinisation of child protection tasks.

6.3.3 Objective Three: to explore the reasons social workers decided to leave their previous child protection organisations

- Four themes emerged around the primary reasons for resigning: growth and development; frustration; monotony; and feeling overwhelmed emotionally.
- The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews reveals that the participants rarely resigned for just one reason. The secondary reasons for turnover included moral questioning of the system, salary, studies, stress owing to living in the area of operations, danger, aggressive interactions with lawyers and a desire to make a more considered decision around their career.
- These resignations were all considered to be avoidable and could have been mitigated by the child protection organisation.
- The majority of the participants followed a dissatisfaction turnover pathway as identified by Lee & Mitchell (1994), while a small number of participants reported making an emotional decision and followed Lee and Mitchell's second turnover decision making pathway.
- The participants' decision making pathways around leaving shows that there were a number of opportunities for their organisations to intervene to retain their services.
- High levels of job engagement and commitment to the profession were noted despite participants' decision to resign.
- This suggests a strong level of attachment to a supervisor and illustrates the role supervision plays in establishing a particular climate within the organisation.

6.3.4 Objective Four: to elucidate social workers' views on if supervision played a role in their decision to leave a child protection organisation

- Participants were unreflexive about the potential impact that supervision might have had on their turnover decision.

- The majority of the participants did not feel that supervision played a role in their decision to leave.
- Participants noted that supervision could only have prolonged their stay in the role, but not contributed towards their long-term stay.
- Only four of the participants left their position for another role in child protection. The remaining eight participants moved directly out of child protection into related fields of social work.
- Two participants left the social work profession altogether noting that they did not feel that there was a good fit between their personalities and the profession owing to the inherent emotional component of, and ambiguity in social work.
- Supervision may play a role in enhancing professional rather than organisational commitment.

6.4. CONCLUSIONS

This study contributes towards the growing literature on retention in the child protection field in South Africa through the use of an exploratory-descriptive instrumental case study research design within a qualitative paradigm. The current research used a descriptive study to delineate social workers' experiences of supervision. The exploratory aspect of the study identified the key determinants of voluntary staff turnover and the role of effective social work supervision as a moderating variable.

The current study notes that the provision of formal supervision is erratic, with the majority of the participants experiencing inconsistent, superficial and problem focused supervision. The supervision was usually referred to as a supervisor having an "open door policy". The perceptions that supervision is devalued as a supportive and educational structure influences the way in which participants engaged with supervision, their expectations around supervision and their subsequent provision of services to clients. Poor supervision contributes towards a climate of disengagement which leads to participants noting that the triggers for their resignation were monotony, a lack of growth, and moral distress largely caused by frustration. A small number of participants reported that they left their previous organisations as they felt overwhelmed and burnt out.

This was contrasted with participants who received structured, holistic supervision and were encouraged to see the uniqueness of each case. These participants were more likely to leave because of a desire to grow as social workers in the child protection field or in other related fields. While participants had mixed views on whether or not effective supervision retains social workers in the child protection field, the researcher concludes that effective supervision promotes professional commitment, job engagement and a sense of pride in social workers. This did not necessarily contribute towards the retention of social workers in the child protection field in the long term, but towards the length of their stay in the child protection field in the short term. Those participants who received effective supervision were more likely to leave their organisation for positions in other child protection organisations.

However, the ease of movement in the social work field and perhaps a search for a context that meets the participants' initial expectations of joining social work, could lead to the majority of the participants in this study eventually joining the field of employee wellness.

6.5. RECOMMENDATIONS EMINATING FROM THE STUDY

6.5.1. For organisations

- Child protection organisations are advised to develop an in-depth understanding of new employees' motivations for entering the child protection field and their expectations of the field.
- Socialization through a structured induction programme could increase the level of organisational commitment for social workers.
- Socialization could be enhanced through a formal mentorship programme that is external to formal supervision.
- Organisations should develop structures and policies around supervision and working in the child protection field that provide a safe haven for employees from the chaotic interactions with clients.
- Organisations should promote the mediative function of supervision to address hindrance stressors, such as interdepartmental conflicts, bureaucracy, and role conflicts.

- Supervision should also focus on achievements to mediate moral distress amongst social workers and increase feelings of accomplishment.
- Regular discussions on intention to leave or remain within an organisation and the child protection field should take place with all employees.

6.5.2. For government

- The Department of Social Development should act decisively to enact legalisation such as the kinship grant to reduce the workload of child protection social workers.

6.5.3. For occupational social work

- At a macro level occupational social workers can play a pivotal role in retaining child protection social workers in South Africa through advocacy and conscientising key decision makers in the child protection field.
- At the meso and micro level occupational social workers should be encouraged to design and implement strategies to promote a positive organisational climate. This could include induction programmes, burnout surveys, and leadership training.
- Occupational social workers are also encouraged to act as a “supportive space” for child protection social workers by offering debriefing services on a regular and mandatory basis.

6.5.4. For further research

- A large-scale quantitative study into the conditions in social work, levels of job satisfaction and movements between different fields. Only superficial research into these aspects has been done and it is mainly located in a specific field such as Vermuelen’s (2008) study on substance abuse.
- A number of international studies have examined reasons for child protection social workers remaining in the field. No comprehensive studies have been done

South African. Examining stay factors rather than exit factors would provide a holistic account of what is wrong and what is right in the child protection field.

- Finally, a meta-analysis of all the small-scale research projects into retention and voluntary staff turnover in South Africa would be beneficial to enhancing understanding of the phenomenon.

6.6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Department of Social Development sets the tone for the way in which child protection social work is practiced in South Africa within both its own purview and in the non-governmental organisations it funds. Therefore, it is important that the Department of Social Development moves away from contributing towards the climate of disengagement and instead transparently and proactively deals with the complexities of child protection and social work. In acknowledging the difficulties in the field, but failing to implement any strategies to deal with these, the Department of Social Development can be likened to a neglectful parent. A child's response to a neglectful parent is often anger, avoidance, withdrawal and poor behaviour. The same can be said of social workers' reactions to neglectful organisations.

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Appendix A

Research title: Supervision – the power to save? An exploration of the role supervision can play in social workers' decisions to leave child protection organisations.

DEGREE: Masters in Occupational Social Work

UNIVERSITY: University of the Witwatersrand.

SUPERVISOR: Francine.Masson@wits.ac.za

Participant Information sheet

My name is Kirsty Hunter and I am registered for a Masters in Occupational Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for the degree, I am conducting research into the factors that contribute towards voluntary staff turnover in child protection organisations focusing on the role of supervision in particular.

Voluntary participation and right to withdraw from the study

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and refusal to participate will not be held against you in any way. If you agree to take part, I shall arrange to interview you at a time and place that is suitable for you. The interview should take approximately one to one and a half hours to complete and a follow-up interview may be necessary; however, this will be discussed if required. You may withdraw from the study at any time and you may also refuse to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering.

Coercion and perverse incentives

There will be no payment for participation in this study.

Avoidance of harm or non-maleficence

The interview should not raise any sensitive issues, but should you feel the need for supportive counselling following the completion of the interview, you may contact the researcher on the numbers below for details about services in your area.

Violation of privacy/anonymity/confidentiality

With your permission, the interview will be recorded. No one other than my supervisor will have access to the recordings. Please be assured that your name and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report.

Publication of findings and feedback given to the participants

The interview transcripts and tapes will be stored in a safe and secure location for two years following any publications and for six years if no publications emanate from the study.

Please feel free to ask any questions that you have regarding the study. I shall answer them to the best of my ability. I may be contacted on 073 946 6671 or hunterkirsty@gmail.com. Should you wish to receive a summary of the results from the study; an abstract will be made available on request.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in the study.

Kirsty Hunter

Appendix B

Research title: Supervision – the power to save? An exploration of the role supervision can play in social workers' decisions to leave child protection organisations.

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

I hereby consent to participate in the research project. The purpose and procedures of the study have been explained to me. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to answer any particular questions or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. I understand that my responses will be kept confidential.

Name of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Name of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix C

Research title: Supervision – the power to save? An exploration of the role supervision can play in social workers' decisions to leave child protection organisations.

CONSENT FORM FOR RECORDING OF THE INTERVIEW

I hereby consent to the recording of the interview. I understand that my confidentiality will be maintained at all times and that the recording will be destroyed two years after any publication arising from the study or six years after completion of the study if there are no publications.

Name of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Name of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Research title: Supervision – the power to save? An exploration of the role supervision can play in social workers' decisions to leave child protection organisations.

1. Identifying details

- 1.1. Name:
- 1.2. Age:
- 1.3. Race:
- 1.4. Gender:

2. Career history and decision to leave

- 2.1. What motivated you to become a social worker?
- 2.2. Can you tell me a bit about your career history? Qualified in? Different agencies worked at?
- 2.3. Why did you start working in the child protection field?
- 2.4. What lead to you joining the agency that is the focus of this discussion?

3. Last child welfare organisation

- 3.1. Can you tell me about the last child welfare agency you worked at?
- 3.2. Can you tell me about your roles and responsibilities in your last child protection organisation?
- 3.3. What did you enjoy about working in the child protection field?
- 3.4. What challenges did you experience while working in the child protection field?

4. Supervision in the child protection field

- 4.1. If you had to use four or five descriptive words to capture your experiences of supervision what would they be?
- 4.2. Can you tell me about the nature and extent of the supervision you had at your last job?
- 4.3. How did your supervisor orientate you to supervision in this agency?
- 4.4. Were there any policies regarding supervision?

- 4.5. In child welfare a lot of focus is often put on case management, was this your experience and how did you find this focus?
- 4.6. Please describe the ways in which your supervisor focused on education in the supervision sessions and outside them?
- 4.7. How often were you able to talk to your supervisor in-depth about the emotional impact of an event or task?
- 4.8. How did you feel about raising difficulties you had with clients or with completing tasks with your supervisor?

5. Professional development/role of social worker/location

- 5.1. How do you think your supervisor accounted for your professional development as a child protection social worker in the type of supervision she/he provided you with?
- 5.2. What role do you think you played in the supervision relationship?
- 5.3. Do you think the resources and structure of your agency as well as its geographical location played any role in the type of supervision you received?

6. Child protection vs other fields/message to supervisor

- 6.1. How would you describe supervision in the child protection field as opposed to other fields in social work?
- 6.2. If you were able to give your previous supervisor a message, what would it be?

7. Decision to leave – how important was supervision?

- 7.1. What did you think was the main reason you decided to leave the last child protection organisation you worked for?
- 7.2. Do you think the supervision you received was a factor that contributed towards your decision to leave your organisation?
- 7.3. How did your supervisor respond to your decision to leave?

8. Pathway to turnover – what did the process look like?

- 8.1. Did you vacillate between going and staying – if so, what changed your mind each time?
- 8.2. Describe your search for an alternative job
- 8.3. How easy is it to find a suitable, alternative job?
- 8.4. What eventually made you decide on that particular job?
- 8.5. Did you consider the economic consequences in making the decision to leave?

9. Any other Comments?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix E

ETHIC CLEARANCE



Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Hunter

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER H13/05/13

PROJECT TITLE

The challenge of turnover: reflecting on the factors which result in voluntary staff turnover in the child protection field in Johannesburg, SA

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Ms K Hunter

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT

Human & Community Development/Social Work

DATE CONSIDERED

17/05/2013

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

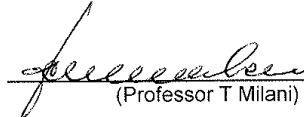
Approved Unconditionally

EXPIRY DATE

11/08/2015

DATE 12/08/2013

CHAIRPERSON


(Professor T Milani)

cc: Supervisor : Dr C Tabane

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10003, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES