

The experiences of newly qualified social workers' readiness in providing services to families and children in Gauteng province

By

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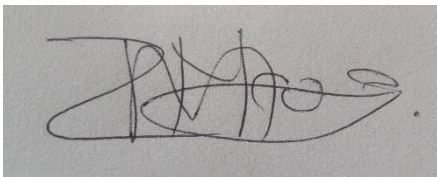
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ABSTRACT

The experiences of newly qualified social workers' readiness in providing services to families and children in Gauteng province

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Social work is a practice-based profession, which aims to provide various social work services to vulnerable groups who experience social ills. As Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) enter the profession, they are exposed to various experiences regarding their readiness to render social work services to families and children. This study aims to address the lack of information regarding the work readiness of NQSWs in providing services to families and children from their experiential perspective. In addition, the literature review provides evidence that there are limited African research studies in this field, making this study even more relevant.

The goal of the study was to describe and explore NQSWs' experiences regarding their work readiness to provide social work services to families and children in the Gauteng province. The research followed a qualitative research approach, with interpretivism as a research paradigm that was underpinned by applied research. The research had a dual purpose, as it focused on exploring and describing the experiences of NQSWs readiness to provide services to children and families. An instrumental case study design was employed as it was informed by the case study design. The study population involved NQSW who provide services to children and families. Non-probability sampling was used, specifically purposive sampling, where 9 participants for the study were recruited, as this number of participants was found sufficient to reach data saturation. Semi structured interviews were used and guided by the interview schedule, as a data collection method. Thematic analysis was used

for data analysis, using an inductive and latent approach for coding. To verify data, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the study was used. The ethical considerations of the study included observing the ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria, as well as the avoidance of harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, no deception of participants, and confidentiality and anonymity.

The key findings were based on the following research question: “What are the experiences of NQSW providing social work services to families and children in Gauteng regarding their work readiness to provide these services?” Participants alluded to their roles and responsibilities; the challenges that they experience through service delivery to children and families and the nature of support structures that they themselves follow and those that the employer implements for them. In addition, participants shared their experiences of work readiness and perceived omissions in knowledge that are expected and/or required by the employer.

Recommendations for social workers, Higher Education Institutions (HEI), and related organisations to maintain or improve NQSWs’ readiness for providing services to families and children in Gauteng, include more exposure to different social work fields and the practical implementation of theory-based lectures. Recommendations for future research include placing an emphasis on the African perspective pertaining to competencies required by NQSWs for ensuring work readiness, exploring the factors that hinder work readiness and to consider the transition process after graduating and then entering the workforce.

KEY WORDS:

Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW)

Social work service experience

Work readiness

Field of children and families

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CHAPTER 1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Research related to the work readiness of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) for employment seems to be increasing, although, there is limited attention paid to the perspectives and experiences about NQSWs readiness to provide services to families and children in the South African setting. The transition from being a student to being a qualified social worker is sometimes difficult, and it is widely acknowledged that the first year after qualifying is crucial for social workers (Grant, Sheridan & Webb, 2014:9). With new graduates entering the field of professional practice every year, it is fundamentally important to assess their reflections and experiences to further strengthen the academic programmes that produced them as well as the workplace systems that transform them from graduates to social workers. The integration of the NQSWs into the workplace is crucial for the development of practitioner competence and experience within the workplace. In the context of this study and deriving from Hunt, Tregurtha, Kuruvila, Lowe and Smith (2017:140), NQSWs need effective induction, supervision, and workload management techniques for them to seamlessly integrate and be work-ready. Undertaking a study to explore the reflections of NQSWs in Sweden, Tham and Lynch (2019:401-408) highlight the need for workplace induction and support systems for these new professionals so that they are inclusively integrated into the workflow mechanisms and are therefore seen as work-ready. Therefore, the research study focused on a specific area of readiness, where the researcher sought to examine the experiences of NQSWs readiness in providing social work services to families and children.

Researchers have argued that newly qualified professionals cannot completely understand their professions without being fully engaged in a workplace environment. Yet, the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Levels 7 and 8 (South African Qualifications Association) and South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) provide that once one graduates with a Bachelor and/or Honours Degree in social work, the graduate is work-ready. Social work students, during their

studies in their respective HEI, over the four years of study, are required to complete and provide evidence of at least 700 hours of practical placement in social work field, rendering social work services (South African Council for Social Service Professions, 2020:21). It is in this continuum that the intended study is located. By examining NQSWs readiness to provide social work services within the framework of the workplace, the research study built on Jansen (2017:1532-1536) observation that it is impossible to fully understand the capabilities of being work-ready as a professional unless one is fully engaged in the qualified conduct with all the responsibilities it requires.

1.2 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

The key concepts adopted for the research study were the following:

1.2.1 Social Work

According to the International Federation of Social Workers and International Associations of Schools of Social Work (2014), social work is a profession that is built on practice as well as a scientific theoretical field that promotes social progress, social cohesion, and individual freedom and empowerment. Human rights, shared accountability, social justice, and respect for diversity are among the fundamental values that underpin social work practice (The International Federation of Social Workers and International Associations of Schools of Social Work, 2014). In this study, the term "social work" refers to a practice-based employment and academic field that addresses life's issues and enhances the wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities through the application of theories from the humanities, social sciences, and indigenous knowledge.

1.2.2 Newly Qualified Social Worker

While NQSWs who have worked for two years or less are frequently mentioned in literature, for the purpose of this research study, NQSWs who have worked in social work and providing social work services to children and families for no more than three years are included. (Pretorius, 2020; Janse van Rensburg, 2009; Cloete, 2012). In other words, NQSWs refers to newly hired graduates who grow into competent, confident, and skilled

social workers through internal and external transition processes (Hunt et al., 2017: 150). In this study, NQSWs specifically refers to NQSWs providing services to families and children.

1.2.3 Social work service experience

A variety of services provided by public and commercial entities to people, families, groups, and communities in need of particular social welfare support is known as social work service experience (Rankin & Engelbrecht, 2019). The University of Calgary's Faculty of Social Work (2018) defines social services experience as either paid employment or volunteer work, organised activities, interventions, or other actions that reflect policies and programs responding to recognised social problems/needs or improving the well-being of those at risk. Therefore, the term "social work service experiences" is used in this study to refer to professional work demands, the events and situations that the NQSWs go through, come across, or experience in their transition from graduation to practice in social services organisations (The United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2017).

1.2.4 Work Readiness

Readiness is defined as an evaluation of NQSWs' capacity for professional practice (Nathaniel, 2018:7). According to Nathaniel (2018:7), it is essential to keep in mind that the concept of "readiness" is based on the expectations of both NQSWs and supervisors and is therefore subject to interpretation. In the context of this study, readiness denotes an assessment of the NQSWs amplitude and aptitude in providing services to families and children. According to Parker (2017:235), readiness is examined and clarified as a blend of covert and overt competencies, which are referred to as foundational and functional competencies.

1.2.5 Children and Families as a field of social work

In this study, the word "family" is used to refer to all the people living together in the same house. The operational definition is derived from Cliquet (2003:14) who observes that

families are thought to be important social institutions and centers of social interaction for individuals. Historically, the nature of the family has changed over the years. However, in traditional South African society, the family was never regarded as man, woman, and child; rather, the Revised White Paper on Families (2021:10) define family as a social shared group that is related by kinship, foster care, adoption, or bonds of marriage such as cohabitation, customary marriage and legal marriage (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Ministry for Welfare and Population Development, 2021:10). These groupings usually depend on the needs of society at any given time.

1.2.6 Child

Every person under the age of eighteen is considered a child (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990). Furthermore, as defined under South African law, "children" refers to any individual under the age of eighteen as per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1990). The South African Children's Act 38 of 2005 (updated 2020) and Louw and Louw (2014) both describe a child in South Africa as a person under the age of 18. Therefore, this definition of a kid is still applicable today.

1.3 RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

For many years, researchers of the field of social work debated regarding work readiness for NQSWs to render services to children and families in social service organisations, both public and private sectors (Grant et al., 2014; Howard & Agllias 2015:17; Young, Lerpiniere, & Welch 2014:33). Despite the proliferation of graduate social workers entering the social work field per annum, South Africa also has high rates of NQSWs experiencing burnout, challenges securing employment in the social work field and job loss (Engelbrecht, 2006:129; Kheswa, 2019:6; Ntsoane, 2017:71). The research study is anchored on dual assumptions. On one hand, once a student social worker exits tertiary education level, either at NQF Level 7 or 8, it is assumed that they are work-ready. On the other hand, supervisors of NQSWs argue that they are not work-ready and therefore need practical experience, additional professional training as well as regular and intense

supervision (Mokoka, 2016:19; Pretorius 2020:18; Wolfaardt, 2022:2). Examining and assessing NQSWs work readiness from their experiential perspective within their first three years of work after attaining their qualification, granted this study the opportunity to focus on the missing link to better understand the challenges they face or faced.

This research study aimed to collate, collect, and analyse the experiences of NQSWs related to their work readiness to provide social work services to families and children. The purpose of the study was to collect information regarding the experiences of NQSW readiness to render social work services to children and families. The descriptions of these experiences were analysed and consolidated.

The gap to which the study attended relates to the lack of information regarding work readiness of NQSWs to provide services to families and children from their experiential perspective in South Africa. Based on research findings, the research study offered recommendations to NQSW, social workers, supervisors, hiring organisations and the SACSSP related to maintaining or improving the work readiness of NQSWs in providing services to families and children. The research study provided data and the much-needed synthesised information, from the research findings, NQSWs experiences of their work readiness to provide services to families and children, competencies to be regarded as work ready, and the needed support systems within South African social work employers. Finally, the availability of data and synthesise information from the research study raised awareness among the key stakeholders of the work readiness and competency challenges faced by NQSWs offering services to families and children during their initial years at work.

The overarching question for this research study was:

“What are the experiences of newly qualified social workers providing social work services to families and children in Gauteng regarding their work readiness to provide these services?”

1.4 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The goal of the study was to explore and describe NQSWs experiences regarding their work readiness to provide social work services to families and children in Gauteng.

Below are the objectives that were stipulated to meet the goal of the study:

- To explore and describe NQSWs understanding of “work readiness” regarding competencies required for service provision to families and children.
- To explore and describe challenges faced by NQS while providing services to families and children.
- To explore measures implemented to support NQSWs while providing services to families and children.
- Based on research findings, to formulate recommendations for social workers, institutions, and organisations to maintain or improve NQSWs readiness to provide services to families and children.

1.5 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach informed the research paradigm and subsequently highlighted the research purpose. This research study used the interpretivism research paradigm as interpretivism requires that the researcher enters the world of the NQSWs to better understand how they construct meaning of their readiness experiences to provide services to families and children, and to observe them within their working environment (Nieuwenhuis, 2020a:67). The researcher entered the world of the participants and made observations from within their working environment to gain understanding of how they constructed their meaning. The researcher used interpretivism research paradigm to explore and describe the experiences of NQSWs providing social work services to children and families.

The study's qualitative research approach proved to be the most successful. It provided guidance for the research study's dual purposes, which were to explore and describe

NQSWs preparation experiences to offer services to children and families (Nieuwenhuis, 2020a:67). The implementation of the research study used applied research. Applied research uses information gathered to expand on what is already known about the phenomenon and help practitioners and policymakers to use this knowledge to make decisions and provide services more successfully (Hilton, Fawson, Sullivan & DeJong, 2019:8). This research study gave recommendations to institutions and organisations to create appropriate programmes that will adequately equip NQSWs in better being prepared and ready to render social work services to families and children (Adler & Clark, 2015:360).

Case study research design was used as a research design of the study, specifically an instrumental case study design which is generally used in qualitative research with descriptive and exploratory research purposes (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:90). The purpose of the instrumental case study is to comprehend a specific situation and it offers understanding of a problem (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:90). Since the research study explored and described NQSW work readiness in assisting families and children, a case study research design was used since it is a contemporary investigation of a phenomenon inside a real-work setting (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:89). An instrumental case study was used to explore and to describe experiences of one study population that is within Gauteng Province, and it provided an understanding of the issue which is of primary focus (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:90). The research design gave an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in its context and thus the reason that it is the most appropriate for this research study (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:91). It was an advantage of this research study design that the researcher and the NQSWs collaborated, sharing experiences together which helped the researcher gain in-depth understanding of the experiences of NQSWs readiness to provide services to families and children (Crabtree & Miller, 1999 in Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:90). This is related to the practice-based theory of collaborative advantage, which is found on collaboration management (Vangen & Huxham, 2013:1). It emphasises that visions and goals are better achieved as the collaborations makes resources available as well as expertise from other people which is not limited (Huxham

& Vangen, 2013:3). However, since the planned research only included nine participants due to data saturation and the researcher conducting the interviews in person, there was little likelihood that these cases would be diluted.

Non-probability sampling was used in the research study because it is a sampling technique that does not include participant selection at random (Maree & Pietersen, 2021:219). It is mostly used in a qualitative research approach where specific features of individuals are relevant to select them as part of the research study sample (Flicks, 2018:174). The research study population for this research study was the NQSWs who are employees at Childline Gauteng, Gauteng Department of Social Development and Tutela Family Care (permission to name these organisations is granted). Using purposeful sampling was thought to be the best approach to use because it made it possible for the researcher to make sure that the sample was drawn from participants who possessed the characteristics needed for the research study (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:34). Therefore, the sample that was selected were participants who were available and willing to participate in the research study through voluntary participant, had been employed as a social worker with a maximum of three years' experience in rendering social work services to children and families, were able to provide social work services to children and families in Gauteng province, registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP), and were able to converse in English.

Semi-structured Interviews were used to gather information for this research study. The purpose of the qualitative research approach interview was to gather information and produce rich descriptive data that would aid the researcher in comprehending how NQSWs construct their social reality and knowledge (Adams, 2015:43; Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:108). As the research study was case study design, semi structured interviews were utilised for NQSWs who are rendering social work services to families and children. Semi structured interviews consisted of an interview schedule that consisted of a short open-ended question guide that were used to motivate the NQSWs to share more information about their experiences in readiness to provide social work services to families and children (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019:6; Yates & Leggett, 2016:226). To

guarantee accurate transcriptions of the interviews and informed consent from each participant, audio recordings of the study interviews were made using an audio recording device.

Thematic analysis procedure that was proposed by Braun and Clarke (2013) in inductive and latent approach for coding was used for data analysis, as the researcher interpreted, explored, and described the experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services to families and children (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017:2). In verifying the data quality in qualitative research study, the researcher focused on developing thick descriptions and interpretations about the NQSWs readiness to provide services to families and children, through the application of trustworthiness (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:121; Sousa, 2014:211). The researcher used Guba and Lincoln (1982) propose four criteria and its strategies that they believe should be considered by qualitative researchers in pursuit of a trustworthiness of a research study namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Anney, 2014:7-15; Nieuwenhuis, 2020c:144-146; Nowell et al., 2017:3).

Prior to the research study being conducted, its viability was verified by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Humanities (with reference number HUM013/0523) (see Addendum A). Additionally, consent was obtained from Childline Gauteng, the Gauteng Department of Social Development, and Tutela Family Care to interview NQSWs employees for the research study.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was accomplished through a qualitative approach, which encountered the following limitations:

- The study was facilitated with nine NQSWs, who were rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng province during data collection, therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalised to the wider population.

As a result, the responses of the participants do not illustrate the views of all NQSWs offering services to children and families in the Gauteng province

- Many Non-Government Organisations (NGO) were closed because the social workers were on strike when the South African government retracted funding from the NGOs. Therefore, there was no service delivery as the NQSWs were on strike. As a result, the research data gathering process took too long, and the NQSWs stopped going to their place of employment.
- Due to the nature of the data collection method of semi structured interviews with an interview schedule and following the thematic analysis process, the interpretation of the data was the primary responsibility of the researcher. The researcher could therefore construct meaning to the data that was not the original meaning of the participants.
- The inclusion criteria required participants who could communicate in English. Although the participants were able to communicate in English, it should be noted that they were not all necessarily fluent in English and they sometimes had to use their mother tongue first before convening in English. Again, information could have been altered in the process of interpretation.

1.7 CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The remainder of this report comprises of the following chapters:

Chapter 2: Literature review on the experiences of newly qualified social workers' readiness to render social work services to children and families

The chapter provides a comprehensive review on the literature pertaining to the entrance of NQSW into the field of social work. Focus will include the work expectations and readiness levels required for working with children and families, as well as related policies.

Chapter 3: Research methods, empirical findings, and interpretation

The chapter outlines the research methodology and the empirical findings of the research study.

Chapter 4: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 4 is the concluding chapter of the study, the goal and research objectives that were attained of the study will be discussed, as well as the presentation of key findings. Conclusions and practical recommendations are presented based on key findings of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE EXPERIENCES OF NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS' READINESS TO RENDER SOCIAL WORK SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is imperative that all academic reports exhibit a thorough comprehension and expertise of the subject matter. The goal of this chapter is to provide an assessment of the literature regarding NQSWs readiness to provide social work services to families and children. Social work components will be highlighted and a synopsis of the field's history in South Africa will be provided. Using a funnel approach to examine the perspectives of NQSWs readiness to provide social work services to families and children, the experiences of NQSWs as they transition from being student social workers to qualified social workers will be explored and described, including the support that is available as they transition.

2.2 SOCIAL WORK

Understanding the positioning of social work is essential to being aware of NQSWs in the field. An overview of the field of social work, its many jobs, and social work education and training will be given in this section of the chapter. The pre-colonial, colonial-apartheid, and post-apartheid eras will be discussed briefly together with the background and history of social work in South Africa. The professional identity of social work and the services that social workers offer to families and children will be examined in this section of the chapter.

2.2.1 DEFINING SOCIAL WORK

The recognised definition of social work has evolved over the past 100 years to take the shifting demands of society, social concerns, and the professional activities associated with the practice of social work into account (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:5). The practice of social work involves using scientific information and techniques to address problems related to social connections and to disseminate benefits (Rautenbach &

Nadesan, 2022:3). The foundational ideas of social work include respect for diversity, social justice, human rights, and collective responsibility. These ideas are bolstered by theories drawn from the social sciences, humanities, and indigenous knowledge. Furthermore, social work employs individuals and institutions to tackle life's obstacles and improve overall welfare (International Federation of Social Workers & International Association of Schools of Social Work, 2014; Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:5; Wolfaard, 2020:7; De Jager, 2013:477). This is the worldwide community's definition of social work' "Reducing poverty, releasing the oppressed and disadvantaged, and promoting social inclusion and cohesiveness are the goals of the social work profession. Its primary goals are the advancement of social development, cohesiveness, and empowerment of individuals as well as the cohesion and solidarity with those who are marginalised, vulnerable, and disadvantaged" (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:7).

A certified social worker and a student pursuing a 4-year recognised degree from a Higher Education Institution (HEI) must register with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). The goal of social work is to support the gradual social revolution that affects human behaviour patterns and interactions, cultural norms and values, social organisations, and social order, in addition to advancements in the social and physical environments. One may argue that social work is the application of social work principles, beliefs, and techniques in a real-world setting. A formal, accredited degree and intensive training are prerequisites for the field of social work, which frequently calls professional registration with a regulatory or statutory agency. People might, for instance, start growing food for their families and sell it. The social work profession works to foster social cohesion by encouraging individuals to feel more connected, united, and part of a community or group that fosters trust and provides opportunities for upward mobility. It also works to inspire individuals to become more independent, autonomous, self-reliant, confident, and empowered by encouraging a sense of cooperative and shared commitment to the wellbeing of every member of the group or community (International Federation of Social Workers & International Association of Schools of Social Work, 2014;

Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:5; Wolfaard, 2020:7; De Jager, 2013:477; Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:7).

To address social challenges that people encounter and to help them become more resilient, social workers use a variety of theoretical frameworks, values, and skills. Social workers are professionals who have received training and are expected to register with a professional body that oversees the profession of social work.

2.2.2 ROLES OF A SOCIAL WORKER

Roles in social work are the expected behaviours and activities that guide how social workers should conduct themselves in performing the designed functions (Rossouw, 2022:18). Social workers play an important role in an individual, group, and communities within societies globally and in South Africa, some of these roles includes counsellor, organiser, consultant, facilitator, coordinator, broker, mobiliser, case manager, manager, advocate, as well as being a mediator, negotiator, integrator, initiator, and spokesperson (Rossouw, 2022:13-14). A social worker provides advice, suggestions, ideas and/or guidance to children and families and supports them through individual sessions and/or group sessions (family conference), in a planned change and problem-solving process to promote their physical, emotional, and social well-being and to develop a maintenance of a stable supportive system for both children and families (Rossouw, 2022:13-14). It is the social workers' role to facilitate and provide information to children and families through an awareness campaign and to make them aware of and link them, through a referral process, to their community resources and stakeholders to implement positive change through achieving mutual goals in the community (Rossouw, 2022:13-14). Social workers take on a role of being a case manager, and they coordinate, take on administrative responsibilities, manage or/and direct the crucial services provided to children and families, from intake level to assessment and intervention including stepping forward and speaking out on behalf of children and vulnerable members of the family to encourage just and equal treatment or get necessary resources (Rosicky & Northcott, 2016:111) and to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention (Rossouw, 2022:13-14). For example, a

social worker may receive a case of a pregnant teenager, render intake interview, provide assessment by gathering information from the child's family system, provide intervention, such as to refer the child to a nearby clinic to attend prenatal care, invite the child's parents so that they would support the child throughout the pregnancy and refer them also should they need therapeutic counselling for themselves.

Rosicky and Northcott (2016:103) identified other social work positions for children and families in addition to the ones already stated, such as social activist, social catalyst, and social analyst. Social workers who evaluate circumstances and assist children and families in comprehending their possibilities are known as social analysts (Rosicky & Northcott, 2016:103). Social workers who provide services that will effect change for the child (individual), family, or community are known as social catalysts (Rosicky & Northcott, 2016:103). In addition to providing direct services (such as advocacy, transportation, counselling, court preparation, high-quality assessments for both children and families, child welfare checks, background checks, and searches for relatives), social workers also facilitate intra- and inter-system coordination by coordinating services in one domain, such as health, with services in another department. Social workers use the data from an initial evaluation to link children and families to the resources they need, including mediation, counselling, medical care, education, and legal assistance. Social workers who strive to maintain change at all scales are known as social activists (Rosicky & Northcott, 2016:103). To guarantee that the placement of children and families is sustainable for the children, these social workers offer reintegration services, and these services include child-friendly counselling, connecting the child with community resources, and managing the child's educational, vocational, and other needs or employment resources or developing an anti-gangsterism program (Rosicky & Northcott, 2016:103).

Aspects of social work practice include laws, regulations, practice policy frameworks, the "how to do" of social work, and the current social settings that affect social work education and curricula (Alpaslan, 2019:342). One of the laws that currently regulates social work operations is the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1997, which gives people who are

unable to support themselves and their dependents the right to seek adequate social assistance (Engelbrecht & Strydom, 2023:230). The South African Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005) governs social work practice in terms of legally protecting children (Engelbrecht & Strydom, 2023:230). Other laws, acts, and policies that regulate social work practice include the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act of Sexual Offences and Regulation Act 32 of 2007, the Child Justice and Regulations Act 75 of 2008, the Domestic Violence and Regulations Act 116 of 1998, the White Paper on Families, the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990, and the Green Paper on Families 2011.

2.2.3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hunt, Tregurtha, Kuruvila, Lowe, and Smith (2017) state that social work education offers a broad knowledge base that recognises professional skills like critical thinking backed by ethical and legal principles; social science theories that serve as the foundation for evidence-based social work practice; and social work skills like communication, assessment, and intervention. Social workers and NQSW may also engage in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) through various programmes that do not generally require a formal academic qualification. The University of Cape Town (2023) highlights that CPD programmes, takes place outside the BSW studies, offers short courses, trainings, workshops and conferences, as an ongoing education for professionals.

Social work grew from its earliest expression in the traditional care and nurturing for the poor, the orphaned and the widowed in villages, and later in religious charities, and welfare organisations, and it was eventually formalised around overlapping practice activities and values (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:3). This made it necessary to specify the parameters of social work practice and provide social workers with official training (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:3). The first social work course was offered at Columbia University in America in 1898 and this is often recognised as the start of formal social work training and professionalism (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:3). In South Africa, formal social work training started only in 1924, in Cape Town, University of

Witwatersrand in 1931 and at the University of Pretoria (Noyoo, Seepamore, Ncube & Sobantu, 2021:199; Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:3). Before South Africa could have social workers, infrastructure and expertise for their training had to be put in place (Noyoo, Seepamore, Ncube & Sobantu, 2021:199).

A student studying social work is referred to as a student social worker, and a person who is appropriately certified and registered to perform social work is called a social worker (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:4). Laws protect student social workers, and before beginning student social work practice training, all second-year students must register with the SACSSP as student social workers (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:4). After completing the four-year professional Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program, graduates can register as social workers (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:4). In South Africa one may call themselves as a social worker only if they have completed four years of professional social work training at a university and if you are registered with the SACSSP (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:4).

There are currently more than 3 500 social work training institutions in the HEIs, in 159 countries (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:4). In South Africa, a three-year degree was the prerequisite for becoming a social worker until 1987, at which point a four-year degree was needed (De Jager, 2013:469). This modification was made to guarantee that social workers have the abilities and information required to handle clients' complex requirements. A fourth year was added as a separate honours degree qualification at some HEIs, while it was added as part of the undergraduate program at others (De Jager, 2013:469). Social professionals with various bachelor's degrees in social science, the arts, and social work departments could register under this system in South Africa (De Jager, 2013:469).

The path taken by social workers to enter the field varies by gender; among those who are now in the field includes women as being more likely and to attend in HEI to obtain BSW (YouGov, 2020:8). Compared to male social professionals, women make up most qualified social workers. Thus, social work is seen as a career dominated by women.

Social work began when people, especially women, used to care and nurture for the vulnerable in their communities through donations and charity give outs. Prior to its recognition as an official professional body requiring prior education from HEIs.

2.3 HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF SOCIAL WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

The reader will get insight into the origins of social work in South Africa and its current practices by reading this brief historical account of the field. It is important for this study to get a glimpse of how the profession of social work started in South Africa. It is significant to remember that South Africa's history of colonial conquest, occupation, and apartheid are intimately connected to social welfare and social work (Noyoo et al., 2021:195). The initiation of social welfare and social work may be traced back to the European settlers who first settled in Cape Town, the Cape Peninsula. These settlers eventually disposed of most of the land owned by several African indigenous politicians (Noyoo et al., 2021:195).

2.3.1 PRE-COLONIAL ERA

Before colonial rule, different indigenous societies in South Africa had created various coping mechanisms ways of meeting the needs of people and to safeguard their wellbeing (Noyoo et al., 2021:196; Harms-Smith, 2022:144). During the pre-colonial era in South Africa, individuals' needs were met through the extended family systems and by family systems (Noyoo et al., 2021:196; Harms-Smith, 2022:144). Prior to colonisation, there had been poverty and inequality, but these were lessened by kinship, mutuality, and welfare programs (Harms-Smith, 2022:145). People engaged in social welfare service delivery during the pre-colonial era through indigenous care and protection of vulnerable citizens. For example, people used to assist each other through nurturing their children, taking care of the disabled and elderly, as well as living through fostering the orphaned.

2.3.2 COLONIAL-APARTHEID

The Dutch settlers Jan Van Riebeeck founded at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 signaled the beginning of South Africa's colonial history (Noyoo et al., 2021:196). The growth of

the harsh living conditions of poor White people was mainly the result of religious organisations like the Dutch Reformed Church and civil society organisations like the Afrikaans Christian Women's Association, which is an Afrikaans women's group (Noyoo et al., 2021:197). Racist values of white sovereignty informed the remaining social welfare in South African apartheid (Noyoo et al., 2021:199). When the traditional supply structures, like the family and the economic system, collapsed, the social welfare services, which had a corrective focus and supported the development of human capacities in all South Africans, only concentrated on the European and white populations (Noyoo et al., 2021:199). Four guiding principles underpinned the colonial apartheid social welfare system: (1) racial division in welfare services delivery; (2) rejection of socialism; (3) state-community (white community) partnership; and (4) shift from residential and therapeutic services to community-based and preventative facilities (Noyoo et al., 2021:199-200). But when political parties like the African National Congress (ANC) were outlawed in 1960, regular people—the native South Africans—began to participate in social service projects as well (Engelbrecht & Strydom, 2023:227). This led to a widespread outcry against apartheid-era programs (Engelbrecht & Strydom, 2023:227). Three acts were introduced in 1979 that changed the welfare landscape of the country and made it inclusive of both white people and indigenous people: the National Welfare Act 100 of 1978, the Fund-raising Act 107 of 1978, and the Social and Associated Workers Act 110 of 1978 (Engelbrecht & Strydom, 2023:227). This was because the majority of South Africans, who are indigenous, were not able to receive welfare benefits on par with those received by white people (Engelbrecht & Strydom, 2023:227).

2.3.3 POST-APARTHEID

In the 1990s, all political parties and organisations were freed from their prohibitions, and South Africa held its first democratic election in 1994, which signaled the ascent to power of the African National Congress (ANC) government of national unity (Engelbrecht & Strydom, 2023:227). The African National Congress (ANC), according to Engelbrecht and Strydom (2023:224), has been in power since 1994. Its objective has been to confront

past injustices left over from the apartheid era committed by the National Party, as well as the deliberate and ongoing exclusion of most of the populace from political decision-making processes. The new government was able to contest the political process of the past by introducing several government-led policies, such as the White Paper for Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa, 1997), the GEAR (Growth, Empowerment and Redistribution Strategy, 1996), and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (Reconstruction and Development Plan, 1994) (Engelbrecht & Strydom, 2023:228). The post-apartheid era of social work was greatly impacted by these policies (Engelbrecht & Strydom, 2023:228).

Prior to the colonisation period in South Africa, the indigenous citizens created their own system to support each other through various acts such as caring for the orphaned as a society. During the colonisation era, the State, including social workers who were only White, focused on caring for the vulnerable White citizens. These, however, changed when the African National Congress (ANC) took power and indigenous South Africans started studying social work and helping their own people with social work in order to make up for previous colonial injustices (Engelbrecht & Strydom, 2023:228).

2.4 PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF SOCIAL WORKERS

The concept of self, which is the foundation of identity, requires consciousness and reflexivity to conceptualise and comprehend who we are (Moorhead, Bell, Jones-Mutton, Boetto & Bailey, 2019:984). Both an internal subjective sense of self-concept and an external (social) sense of self are predicated on traits and interactions with other individuals. The self is comprised of both personal and social parts of personality and value systems (Moorhead et al., 2019:984). Identity building is a sophisticated and logical process since the external social sense of self depends on social categories, such as career goals (Moorhead et al., 2019:984). As personal and professional facets of self are embodied and evolved throughout time, professional identity is transformative in the social work field (Moorhead et al., 2019:985). Professional identity in social work is defined by Moorhead et al. (2019:985) as a multifaceted, relational experience that

involves the embodiment of one's personal and professional selves, with the former encompassing shared and collective social dimensions of knowing, doing, and being. An individual's respectable disposition, for instance, could impact how much they respect their clientele and their line of work. One could argue that a professional identity serves as a representation of the fundamental principles, characteristics, and standards of social work profession, including ethics, values, knowledge-base, motivations, and purpose (Moorhead, 2018:207; Moorhead et al., 2019:983; Moorhead, Bell & Bowles, 2016:457). Organisational, sectoral, and personal factors, among others that impact professional identity, can have an impact on the relational and contextual development of these key characteristics of collective identity (Moorhead et al., 2016:458; Moorhead, 2018:207).

HEI enables NQSWs graduates' attributes that become an expression of their identity, as well as the rational cognitive processes of individual morals and immorality (Moorhead, 2018:207). If HEIs promoted that social work professional identity, then NQSWs are anticipated to emerge from HEI study embodying a cohesive social work identity (Moorhead et al., 2016:457).

NQSWs encounter difficulties in developing their professional identities and solidifying their knowledge and abilities for professional practice throughout the first 12 months of social work practice (Moorhead et al., 2016:). Values-drivenness is required of social workers, among other professional identities, as it continues to be a crucial component of identity creation in the social work field (Moorhead et al., 2016:458). It is expected of NQSWs to use resilience and strengths to build a positive professional identity (Moorhead, 2018:207). In the development of their professional identities, social work practitioners ought to be dedicated to social justice, human rights, freedom, and social transformation, as stated by Moorhead et al. (2019:983).

2.5 SERVICES OFFERED BY SOCIAL WORKERS

When it is thought that the current circumstances or conditions on the levels of the child/individual, family, community, or society require change and development, social work interventions are provided to children and families. (Rautenbach & Nadesan,

2022:7). Social work services in practice are mostly categorised under three broad services, namely, casework (individual level), group work and community work (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:12). Micro-level practice service delivery in social work is known as casework; it forms the basis of the majority of social work interventions and concentrates on children, people, and families (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:12). Case work services use specific theories to engage with, assess and plan specific intervention programmes, and render appropriate services to children and families (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:12). Group work is referred to as a mezzo-level practice, it is a goal-directed activity with small groups of children and families through the use of specific methods to work with children and families in groups (two or more people), where the social worker purposefully guides and facilitates group members to offer each other support, assistance and experiences to resolve their existing issues or problems (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:13). Community work is viewed on a macro-level practice, where the community is the client and the needs are important, considering the availability (or lack) of community resources; the principles of advocacy and social action are key to facilitating social work within communities (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:13).

Engelbrecht and Strydom (2023:233–234) identify five broad categories in which essential services provided by social workers to children and families fall: promotion and prevention (linked to community development services); protection (offered within the framework of legislation and/or policy, including statutory services); rehabilitation (tailored for children and families whose socioemotional functioning is impaired); continuing care (the objective is to progress independently with an effective and efficient quality of life); and mental health addiction services (supporting and helping children and families to live a balanced lives by protecting and restoring their mental well-being). In response to the psychosocial issues that families and children encounter daily, social workers are widely hired (Rautenbach & Nadesan, 2022:4).

In the South African context of social development, the Department of Social Development created a field of social service delivery as outlined in an Integrated Service Delivery Model for Social Service Delivery (ISDMSSD) to attain the intended outcomes

for social service children and families (Engelbrecht & Strydom, 2013:233). According to Engelbrecht and Strydom (2023:233) and Rosicky and Northcott (2016:10), the model's main features suggest certain levels of intervention when working with children and families. These levels include alternative and residential care, which supports children and families receiving services who are no longer functioning appropriately in the community, statutory intervention, early prevention, which offers assistance and support before statutory services and concentrated intervention are required, and rebuilding and aftercare, which makes it possible for the children and families receiving services to return and reintegrate with the family and/or community as soon as possible.

Social workers use case, group, and community work to provide services to children and families. These services are meant to promote prevention of social adversities to children and families such as bullying, suicide and teenage pregnancy, protect children and families through early intervention and statutory services, and to render rehabilitation, family reunification and aftercare services to children and families.

2.6 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE EXPERIENCES OF NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS

As was already established, social work is a global profession that is practiced almost anywhere in the world. Nevertheless, minimal information exists regarding NQSWs experiences with training, work, and education in Scotland (Grant, Sheridan & Webb, 2014:1). The research will briefly highlight the available research regarding the experiences of NQSW readiness to render social work services, by looking at the funnel approach by starting with the international research, then the African perspective, and conclude with the South African research study on the field. According to a research study by Grant, Shariden, and Webb (2014) in Scotland, most NQSWs felt that their social work education adequately prepared them, but that their employers had not provided them with as much support when it came to opportunities for ongoing professional development. This conclusion is further corroborated by a YouGov research study (2020:15) carried out in London, which shows that 56% of NQSWs felt well-prepared for their job, whereas 42% felt unprepared and 17% felt very prepared. and on the other hand, 12% did not feel

prepared for post-qualification and work realities. According to Grant et al. (2014:1-2), the results of their research study differ from the concerns expressed by contemporary commentators in the United Kingdom, which are that HEIs are not adequately preparing NQSWs regarding the requirements of social work in childcare and the practicalities of social work practice. Grant et al. (2014:8) found that while half of the participants felt that HEIs had provided them with good preparation, and 30% of participants felt that HEIs had not adequately prepared them for the realities of practice (same as the UK commentators). According to Grant et al.'s research study (2014:53), the NQSWs evaluated positive supervision that satisfies their demands as well as exceptional, very good, and satisfactory induction.

In contrast, Battaglia and Flynn (2020:848) report that their research study's findings show that the body of literature currently in publication is insufficient to both inform and capture the potentially diverse experiences that current international students may have as they enter the field of social work. According to the literature, there are five main areas of research that are not core areas of inquiry: preparation for practice, early practice experiences, supporting and developing early practice, career patterns and employment outcomes, professional identity development, exploring diversity within research samples, and its impact on the findings of international social work study (Battaglia & Flynn, 2020:482). The literature normalises the notion that newly licensed social workers who reside near the research site typically complete their schooling and enter the workforce there (Battaglia & Flynn, 2020:852). This is due to the possibility that host country acceptance of international social work graduates would differ and that there will be doubts about whether education adequately prepares students for practice in a range of cultural and geographic situations (Battaglia & Flynn, 2020:852).

On a practical level, although NQSWs entered the workplace with enthusiasm and confidence, the realities of the work and the organisational circumstances in which it was performed eventually caused levels of frustration and discontent to rise which was evident from a study in Scotland regarding NQSWs readiness for practice (Hunt et al., 2017:154). The workplace these NQSWs enter has shown to have a direct link to their experiences in terms of employer support, supervision, and ongoing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities (Hunt et al., 2017:154). This steep decline in NQSWs well-being looked to be the result of their employers' failure to adequately acknowledge the individual within the emerging profession. As a result of this, NQSWs were found to be poorly equipped to provide services to families and children (Grant et al., 2014: 56).

There was minimal consensus among the respondents in a research study by Hunt et al. (2017:144) in New Zealand when it came to the quality of induction and orientation during their first year of social work practice. The responses were weighed from poor, fair, good, and very good (Hunt et al., 2017:146). Few respondents stated that they received supervision on an irregular basis, while most respondents said they received supervision. (Hunt et al., 2017:146). According to Hunt et al. (2017:146), a minority of the participants reported that their experiences with supervision were ineffective. Additionally, several respondents mentioned that they had a mentor who functioned as both a supervisor and a source of supervision for them and other individuals. In contrast to the first year of practice, when half of the respondents received formal and/or informal caseload protection at least for the first six months in their role, by the end of their second year of social work practice following qualification, none of the respondents had workload protection (Hunt et al., 2017:146). This can be attributed to several factors, such as a lack of resources, inadequate supervision, and the belief that social workers, including NQSWs, can handle an excessive workload in the face of concerns about unsafe practices. It is generally accepted that competence is attained after two years (Hunt et al., 2017:146).

2.7 AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES' OF THE ASSESSMENT ON THE EXPERIENCES OF NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS READINESS TO RENDER SOCIAL WORK SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

When the researcher was compiling the African perspectives' assessment on the experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services, it was difficult to find any research articles on the topic. It then became evident that there is little knowledge and research interest of the experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services. However, the researcher was able to find a research article of the Arab NQSWs challenge in wrestling racism. This article has a strong connection to the South African setting because it draws attention to the parallels between the circumstances of the two nations, which face the same problems with racial discrimination.

Research on the issue of eradicating racism for NQSWs was conducted at Arab, Cane, and Tadam (2022) under the heading "We didn't learn enough about racism and antiracist practice". The research study documented significant findings, including the range of obstacles that kept Native Americans from openly discussing race or confronting racism, as well as the layers of barriers that added to their lack of confidence in addressing race or combating racism (Cane & Tadam, 2022:7). It was clear when the participants said that it is critical to recognise that racism permeates every facet of social work practice because they had personally experienced racism, racial discrimination, and a lack of support to confront oppressive practices in the workplace. They had also heard of instances in which colleagues, families, or children had been the victims of racism (Cane & Tadam, 2022:7). The members of the racialised groups stated that they were not interested in talking about racism in teams or training sessions because they had not received enough training on how to confront racism directed at them by families and children or what to do if their social work supervisors were unwilling to support them in addressing racism (Cane & Tadam, 2022:9). They expressed frustration and anger at supervisors who disregarded the racism experienced by their colleagues from racially marginalised backgrounds. They also expressed anger at microaggressions linked to stereotypes of black Asian women who have previously challenged racism or oppression,

as well as difficulty in doing so due to a fear of being branded as resilient (Cane & Tendam, 2022:9). Participants in Cane and Tendam (2022:10) revealed that they are afraid to come out with information about racialised groups because they believe there is a good chance they will lose their jobs or become unemployed as a result, leaving them defenseless.

The findings of the research study by Cane and Tendam (2022) mainly highlight that the NQSWs experience racism from both children and families that they offer services to and from their fellows' colleges, and they have not been supported by their supervisors and managers and that even then, they do not have the necessary skills to address racism in the workplace and during service delivery. This is merely one aspect of reflection that NQSWs' needs to highlight to be able to wrestle racism from and towards children and families as they are the most vulnerable who need social work services and from colleagues to be able to build a cohesive working relationship.

2.8 SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE EXPERIENCES OF NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS' READINESS TO RENDER SOCIAL WORK SERVICES TO FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

In the context of South Africa, Wolfaardt (2022:i) claims that little is known about the phenomenon of NQSWs. It is also difficult to understand how NQSWs could be better equipped to help them transition from being students to professionals and enhance their practice preparedness. Wolfaardt (2022), De Jager (2013), and Alpaslan (2019:350-3520) have conducted recent research studies that provide similar findings to the experiences of NQSWs. These findings include a lack of passion for the social work profession, limited exposure to statutory and court work, insufficient job knowledge and skills, and a lack of practical work experience during undergraduate training in HEIs.

The experiences of supervisors in social service organisations in the Western Cape, South Africa, was examined in a qualitative study by Wolfaardt (2022) on the readiness of practice for NQSW. The study's findings show that the participants mentioned that preparedness would be seen as the ability of NQSWs to be open to learning by demonstrating self-awareness in acknowledging where they need to learn and enhance

their knowledge, skills, and abilities further as NQSWs and to be conscious that they do not have all the information when entering the field (Wolfaardt, 2022:). Participants determined that NQSWs who attended their respective High Education Institutions (HEI) with little practice experience were not prepared for practice and were not ready for practice (Wolfaardt, 2022). Seven participants said that HEIs are not adequately preparing NQSWs, while the other participants said that HEIs are adequately preparing for NQSWs (Wolfaardt, 2022). The participants elaborated on how their preparation for the NQSWs depended on whether they attended HEIs, where they had to prepare 50% of their work, or whether they were on a practice placement, where they had to gain experience, which also contributed 50% of their work (Wolfaardt, 2022). NQSWs acquire fundamental skills by participating in practice placements and theoretical courses at HEIs (Wolfaardt, 2022). When asked if regular supervision benefits NQSWs and might improve their preparedness, participants nodded in agreement and discussed the importance of specialised supervision, the irregularity of supervision, and the nature of supervision for NQSWs (Wolfaardt, 2022). The participants stated that NQSWs should possess good work ethic, administrative skills, theoretical knowledge, a valid driver's license, and the ability to show a willingness to learn during social work job interviews. NQSWs are competent when it comes to their theoretical knowledge and client-facing skills, but they fall short when it comes to Acts, policies, and legislation, the ability to put theory into practice, familiarity with statutory work and related forms of reports, professionalism, and conduct (Wolfaardt, 2022).

According to survey participants, NQSWs lack the necessary training to implement various laws and policies in social work settings and practices (Wolfaardt, 2022:485). These research results are similar to those of the study carried out in Cape Town, South Africa, by De Jager (2013). The research study's findings also show that the NQSWs training was insufficient in preparing them for statutory social work, child and family-centered employment opportunities, and the practical application of legislation. This is particularly true regarding the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and how to conduct oneself with confidence in the application of the law (De Jager, 2013:475–482). In essence, this

means that NQSWs ought to be able to support and empower children, adults, families, and communities while improving their capacity for social interaction and problem-solving through the application of these theories and various skills at their disposal (De Jager, 2013:480). Participants described challenges regarding the implementation of their knowledge, theory, and skills in practice. Because they had to demonstrate that they had met the requirements for these result levels as part of their HEI training, NQSWs also reported feeling anxious and stressed out when putting these theories into practice became difficult or unfeasible (De Jager, 2013:480). In their varied practice contexts, participants also discussed and reflected on the difficulties they had putting the theory, and knowledge, Attitude and Skills (KAS), and abilities they had learned throughout their undergraduate studies into practice (De Jager, 2013:480).

According to participants, their HEI training did not sufficiently prepare them for opportunities in the job (De Jager, 2013:482). According to De Jager's research findings (2013:484), participants also mentioned that there was a lack of synchronisation between the needs of training institutions (HEIs) and practice settings. The participants brought up the important distinctions between training institutions and practice contexts, particularly regarding statutory social work services and terminology (De Jager, 2013:484). The lack of knowledge regarding practice environments among educators at training institutions was another issue raised by the participants (De Jager, 2013:484). However, social work students should engage in practice placements that are structured to cover all areas of social work service delivery learning experiences in a variety of practice environments, with multiple opportunities to practice each of the micro, meso and macro levels (SACSSP, 2020:21-23).

2.9 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS DURING SERVICES DELIVERY

Working in demanding and stressful work conditions is where NQSWs have the greatest challenges while beginning their professional careers (Wolfaardt, 2022:23). Large workloads, uncomfortable pay, as well as the range of problems and difficulties pertaining

to clients, such as other parents who are uncooperative during foster care services and children who display challenging behaviours, are some examples of work-related stressors for NQSWs (Wolfaardt, 2022:23). Social workers within the Child Protection field are also reported to often be faced with hostility and resistance from children and families they work with as they view these social workers as a threat due to not being able to ensure safety and protection to their children, even themselves as a family system. Preparing court reports for children and families, standing up for themselves, and acting confidently inside the actual legal systems are among the difficulties faced by NQSWs (De Jager, 2013:476).

According to research, families, and children of NQSWs migrants may additionally marginalise and discriminate against them because of their race and ethnicity (Battaglia & Flynn, 2020:838). While some NQSWs experienced racial harassment and aggressiveness from children and families, others may have faced discrimination when defending their employment and being excluded from co-workers (Battaglia & Flynn, 2020:838).

The lack of readily available and sufficient resources, such as desks, chairs, stationery, computers, and laptops, as well as other resources needed for daily service delivery to children and families, such as vehicles, gives the impression that the working environment of social work organisations, particularly NGOs, is unsatisfactory (Wolfaardt, 2022:23). Lack of resources has a detrimental influence on how well services are provided to children and families, makes NQSWs anxious and may even cause them to feel dissatisfied with their line of work (Wolfaardt, 2022:23).

Another concern is that NQSWs may feel exposed to physical abuse by families and children when providing services, which could make them feel insecure and exposed during practice (Wolfaardt, 2022:23). In addition to other difficulties, NQSWs face difficulties adjusting to unsanitary or unhealthy working conditions when providing services to families and children in informal settlements; has a personal health concern

(Wolfaardt, 2022:23). It should be emphasised, according to Goliath, Vetfuti, and Perumal (2019:2), that providing services to families and children carries a risk for NQSWs.

NQSWs face various challenges while rendering services to children and families. These challenges may include amongst others, negative and harmful treatment from children and families and thus resulting in them feeling unsafe to render services to these children and families (Rossouw, 2022:26). NQSW in South Africa and globally, face the lack of safety in their work environment due to lack of law enforcement, treatment from children and families, which increases the treats of safety (Rossouw, 2022:27-28).

2.10 TRANSITION FROM STUDENT SOCIAL WORKER TO QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER

Wolfaardt (2022:i) states that if NQSWs have limited understanding of the phenomenon of NQSWs readiness to provide social work services to children and families within the South African context, it is difficult to understand how NQSWs can be better prepared and supported in making the transition from student to professional and improving their readiness for practice. Prior to graduation, students undergo professional training that improves their ability to critically engage with theory and practice (Hunt et al., 2017:139). Recently graduated social workers are more likely to enter the field in an unfamiliar environment, whether as domestic students, student-migrants, returnees to their home countries, or graduates continuing their profession overseas (Battaglia & Flynn, 2020:835). For social workers, the first year of practice is crucial because it allows them to integrate their degree coursework with new knowledge and abilities they would be acquiring in their first workplace (Grant et al., 2014:2).

The literature on the transition from student to professional, according to Glassburn (2020:143–144), focuses on four main areas: variables influencing the shift, job satisfaction, the usefulness of orientation/induction to the workplace, and readiness for the working environment. In general, undergraduates at HEIs felt well-prepared, but some did not feel so; despite their preparation, they felt unsupported, and their practice field experience did not adequately prepare them for the ethical dilemmas that arise in the

workplace. These students wished they had received more exposure to and shadowing of practical training and experience while in HEIs (Glassburn, 2020:143). Participants in research studies by Glassburn (2020:143) and Sullivan and Ariss (2021:7) stated that their orientation or induction to the workplace was insufficient and did not provide them with enough support during the transition to work. The process was also frequently described as being highly irregular and lacking a defined structure. Regarding job satisfaction, NQSWs reported a real surprise when they encountered the real world of service delivery to working with children and families. As they advanced through their first year of work experience, they experienced a loss of interest and job satisfaction (Glassburn, 2020:143-144; Sullivan & Ariss, 2021:7). A number of factors influence the transition to work for the NQSWs, such as personal and academic attributes, the importance of the preparatory education, and the capacity of the new workplace to offer the NQSWs the ongoing support, training, and supervision that they need (Glassburn, 2020:143–144; Sullivan & Ariss, 2021:11).

The 12- to 18 and 24-month interval between graduating and entering practice is referred to as the NQSWs transitional period. A NQSWs is defined as a new graduate entering the workforce who is undergoing a transitional internal and external process to become a competent, confident, and expert social worker (Tham & Lynch, 2014:706). It is thought that workplace culture, knowledge, and skills become increasingly embedded through ongoing processes of repetition, reflection, and shadowing long after an individual becomes qualified (Grant et al., 2014:2). The transition from higher education to professional employment itself represents a critical breach of threshold from practice simulation to practice reality, even though there is a lack of reliable research data on what happens to NQSWs when they enter professional employment for the first time during this transitional period (Grant et al., 2014:2).

Research by Tham and Lynch (2019:401-408) reflected that transitioning from university to the workplace is often a challenging process as it entails both organisational and individual components. NQSWs in the study often felt isolated and had to manage their work on their own. NQSWs mentioned a lack of practical skills such as handling

aggressive or difficult clients which had a direct link to their feelings of “readiness for practice”. Those who had the opportunity to “shadow” experienced colleagues felt better equipped to do their job placing an emphasis on the need of NQSWs to pay close attention to the practice of colleagues; however, this in turn poses difficulties for organisations with high case caseloads. Supervision was also an important factor influencing the transition of NQSWs, as well as unorganised organisations. It is thus evident that NQSWs are faced with complex challenges within their transitional phase within the workplace.

Wolfaardt (2022:20) emphasises the difficulty of transitioning from university into the workplace as NQSWs are quickly exposed to demands such as high caseloads, the question of whether to implement procedures, steps and theories learnt during their studies, or delivering time-efficient services to one client to move on to helping the next. Specialised supervision for NQSWs can improve their preparedness for practice and facilitate a smoother transition into the profession, according to Wolfaardt (2022:ii). This study will investigate whether the challenges as discussed above influence NQSWs perception of their readiness for practice or not, with a specific focus on working with families and children.

According to Battaglia and Flynn (2020:838), the emerging literature on NQSWs migrants highlights the social work profession's fundamental relationship to the cultural and political environment in which it is learned and practiced, as well as the challenges that can arise when entering a foreign practice setting. But when comparing social work migrants with international social work graduates, the question of whether transitional outcomes for graduates of international social work education are more challenging arises (Battaglia & Flynn, 2020:838). Similar to social work migrants, international social work graduates are diverse and occasionally unaccustomed to the practice context they enter (Battaglia & Flynn, 2020:838). Due to their limited practice experience, overseas social work graduates, unlike social work migrants, would require extra guidance and assistance to facilitate their transfer into the field (Battaglia & Flynn, 2020:838). This is particularly true considering that the process of transitioning to practice is often characterised as

challenging, even for domestic students who are familiar with the practice context (Battaglia & Flynn, 2020:838).

The primary points that are emphasised during the NQSWs transition from student to qualified professional social worker are that they are considered prepared for professional practice as various HEIs provide them with theoretical frameworks and practice. As they enter the world of employment to render social work services to children and families, employers are expected to continue to support NQSWs to adequately render effective and efficient services to children and families through proper work induction, supervision, and continual development through short course training and to continue to render appropriate and revised services to children and families.

2.11 READINESS FOR WORK

The term "readiness" in this study refers to the NQSWs assessment of their level of readiness to enter their line of work or profession. Studies found that NQSWs opinion on whether they are competent to work in a specific field was influenced by their placement experience while studying for their degree and their interactions during this period with qualified social workers (McSweeney & Williams, 2019:360-361). It can thus be asserted that support and supervision are essential in assisting NQSWs feeling equipped for their new role in the workplace.

In a study by Grant et al., (2014:9), one of the key findings suggests that focusing only on the content of a degree programme to improve NQSWs readiness to render social work services is simplistic. Thus, it was observed that factors of the setting in which the NQSWs will be working as well as other professional development pathways should be considered when evaluating preparation for work.

2.12 KNOWLEDGE GAP WITHIN SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

While a great deal of research has been done on the challenges that NQSWs experience in various fields in South Africa, little research has been done on the challenges that NQSWs face when they are trying to help families and children in African perspective. A

study with social workers within the field of families and children found that these social workers felt ill equipped when providing services to families and children, with one participant reporting that they felt “confused” when working in family preservation (Nhedzi & Makofane, 2015:368). Social workers also reported struggling to manage high caseloads, and that the focus of their services was mostly on crisis management. Another challenge reported was a lack of supportive services and inter-organisational cooperation, and that social workers within the field felt that they had burn-out (Nhedzi & Makofane, 2015:368; Dlangamandla, 2010:90; Strydom, 2010:196,199). When interrogating literature and previous studies it became clear that social workers providing services to families and children are faced with various challenges, however, these studies provided, do not specifically focus on NQSWs.

2.13 SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS

Hunt et al. (2017:140) note that while social work graduates are entirely prepared for the workforce upon qualification, research indicates that the process of transforming from a novice licensed social worker (NQSWs) into a capable practitioner necessitates intricate and all-encompassing assistance. Some examples of support for NQSWs are the efficiency of induction processes, reliable supervision, continuing professional development (CPD), protection of workload in terms of volume and complexity, support from peers and organisations, and an environment that promotes reflective practice.

2.13.1 INDUCTION

The next step after graduation is employment. To facilitate transition from student social worker to qualified social worker during job assignment, NQSWs need quality induction, supervision, and other workload management measures (Hunt et al., 2017:139). A widely acknowledged crucial first stage in each newly trained professional's orientation within their chosen field is induction (Grant et al., 2014:11). According to Hunt et al. (2017:141), it is critical that NQSWs get comprehensive, structured, and well-organised assistance and induction. According to Hunt et al. (2017:141), induction is thought to be a beneficial practice that can prevent overload and burnout as well as eventually improve staff

retention. According to Hunt et al. (2017:141), the reality of hectic workload pressures may make it difficult for managers or social work supervisors to conduct an all-inclusive, planned introduction.

2.13.2 SUPERVISION

To ensure a seamless transition period for NQSWs entering the field for the first time, it is crucial that they get relevant supervision from a helpful and trained supervisor (Wolfaardt, 2022:24). For many NQSWs, nevertheless, this isn't necessarily the case given their South African history. According to De Jager (2013), NQSWs have stated that they feel more anxious and unprepared to provide services to children and families because they don't have frequent monitoring sessions. Naturally, supervision takes place in a private setting including the social work supervisee and the supervisor (Grant et al., 2017). A designated authoritative and trained social work supervisor is responsible for carrying out the supportive, educational, and administrative functions of supervision on behalf of social workers. In addition to allowing the supervisee (NQSWs) to assess and think through their work, this arrangement aims to give children and families the best care possible (Wolfaardt, 2022:7; The Department of Social Development (DSD) & The South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP), 2012:18). According to a number of theories, models, and viewpoints on the subject, social work supervision is an interactive activity that occurs in the framework of a constructive, inclusive partnership. To support the competent and effective provision of social work services, it entails a social work supervisor with the requisite training, credentials, and authority supervising a social worker (NQSWs), student social worker, social auxiliary worker, and student social worker by performing administrative, supportive, and instructional tasks (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:18).

The document on the supervision framework for the social work profession in South Africa aims to provide a framework for effective supervision of social workers, student social workers, social auxiliary workers, learner social auxiliary workers, social work specialists, and private practitioners in order to ensure competent professional social work practices

that serve the best interests of service users in the country (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:14). NQSWs should have monthly supervision for a minimum of three years prior to proceeding to a consultative level (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:32). DSD and SACSSP (2012:14) provide that the social work supervisor must submit a report with recommendations if the NQSWs is ready to go on to the consultation level. Every three months, performance reviews should be conducted in compliance with the personal development plan. Ultimately, a final assessment should be conducted to determine the terms of the supervision contract, including the frequency and type of ongoing supervision, following the completion of the three years of structured supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:32–33).

According to Wolfaardt (2020:i), specialised supervision could help NQSWs become more practice-ready and facilitate a smoother transition into the field. Due to their own workloads, social work supervisors aren't always able to offer NQSWs this more thorough and encouraging kind of supervision (Wolfaardt, 2020:i). A variety of supervisory techniques, such as group, peer, and individual supervision, should be made available in order to meet the various demands of social workers and social auxiliary workers. These approaches should also be compliant with the social worker Code of Ethics (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:28).

2.13.3 CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is an imperative element in safeguarding professional standards and promoting career development (September, 2010:314). NQSWs learned during the first year after their qualification that CPD, or ongoing professional development, helps bridge the knowledge gap between their original credentials and more specialised practice (Hunt et al., 2017:141). For the NQSWs to advance their skills and serve clients with effective and efficient service, it is imperative that they and their employer pursue professional development. Social service professionals, including NQSW, are required by the SACSSP to obtain a specified number of points yearly in order to maintain ethical and high-quality service by attending

or participating in activities of a professional nature in order to remain registered with the SACSSP (September, 2010:312). These includes attending programmes that are CPD points accredited.

2.14 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The theoretical framework of collaborative advantage was adopted for this research study. The theoretical framework focuses on collaboration between organisations that work as a team to get a full understanding of a problem than any of them could do alone (Gray & Purdy, 2018:2). For this research study, the theoretical framework was contextualised and integrated to fit the research study.

To share knowledge and take coordinated action, collaboration is a procedure that involves a collection of independent stakeholders interested in a topic or issue in an interactive discourse (Wood & Gray, 1991:11). A common set of norms and procedures that will govern their future interactions and be open to amendment as they renegotiate their ties over time may be negotiated during this process, which may simply include stakeholders informing each other about the topic of interest (Gray & Purdy, 2018:1). By examining it from the perspectives of all the stakeholders, teamwork aims to develop a richer, more complete understanding of the issue/problem than any of them could do alone (Gray & Purdy, 2018:2). Nonetheless, a number of authors contend that collaboration is the process through which independent individuals and organisations combine their resources to achieve goals beyond their capacity (Kanter 1994; Lasker, Weiss & Miller, 1997; Mayo 1997; Wandersman, Goodman, and Butterfoss 1997; Zuckerman, Kaluzny, and Ricketts 1995 in Lasker, Weiss & Miller, 2001:183). Collaboration makes it possible for one to achieve visions as there is a wide range of available resources and expertise from other people and not limited to only one's own resources and expertise (Huxham & Vangen, 2013:3). When partnership takes place between public organisations and between non-profit organisations, this is when collaborative advantage is achieved (Huxham & Vangen, 2013:3). This leads us to the Theory of Collaborative Advantage (TCA) which is derived from practitioner's research

on issues that are of concern to them, in which action is needed. This theory is based on management of collaboration, and it is a practice-based theory (Vangen & Huxham, 2013:1). TCA, a work-in-progress that was introduced in 1989, was developed because of a study that included a range of collaborations which ranged from dyads to international networks that addressed numerous areas such as health, education, drug abuse, economic growth, community planning, poverty alleviation and many other topics (Vangen & Huxham, 2013:1). According to the concept of collaborative advantage, synergy can be attained through combining the resources and skills of many organisations. This combination of resources of various organisations, enables organisations to do things that none of them could do independently. Therefore, in theory, collaboration offers organisations the chance to continuously vary and develop their portfolio and thus realise whatever goals they may have (Vangen & Huxham, 2006:3). The significant interest and investment in collaboration assumes that collaboration increases people's and organisations' capability to meet health and systematic goals (Lasker et al., 2001:183).

Access to resources, shared risk, efficiency, and learning are a few common bases for collaborative advantage (Huxham & Vangen, 2013:5-7). When it comes to resources, organisations frequently work together if they cannot accomplish their goals using only their own resources. This necessitates combining various resources, such as expertise (Huxham & Vangen, 2013:5). It is commonly anticipated that cooperation between companies in the public and nonprofit sectors will necessitate the exchange of assets, expertise, contacts, and data. For instance, to address youth criminal justice issues, cooperation between the police, legal professionals, probation services, schools, and neighborhood and youth groups is the norm (Huxham & Vangen, 2013:5).

Condensing and linking this theory to the context of the research study, the collaboration required would be between NQSWs with supervisors and other social work colleagues who have gone ahead of them and have more experience in the field. Moreover, these partnerships go beyond supervisors and experienced social workers and extend to other professionals who provide services to families and children, such as services within the

court and related legal professionals, police, and schools. NQSWs are better suited to complete their tasks when using a collaborative approach, according to the theory that defines collaborative advantage as a process that enables independent people and organisations to pool their human and material resources to achieve goals that they are unable to achieve on their own (Kanter 1994; Lasker et al. 1997; Mayo 1997; Wandersman, Goodman, and Butterfoss 1997; Zuckerman, Kaluzny, and Ricketts 1995 in Lasker et al., 2001:183).

The collaboration between NQSWs, supervisors and experienced social workers will help the team to achieve the organisation's goals and therefore fulfilling the developmental needs of NQSWs who are required to provide services to families and children.

2.15 SUMMARY

Before the African continent's colonisers introduced formal social work that required training from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), indigenous South Africans provided care and support for one another through traditional support networks. This is where the social work profession as a formal professional body got its start. To provide services to children and families, social workers must accomplish a variety of tasks that were presented to them throughout their formal social work training. They must also follow a range of theoretical frameworks and policies to do so effectively and efficiently. But as they advance from being student social workers to certified professional social workers, NQSWs face several difficulties in providing services to families and children. For NQSWs to move smoothly and to be in the greatest possible professional position to assist families and children, they require the right kind of assistance.

In chapter 3, the focus was on research methods that were adopted for research study. The research findings and the interpretation will follow thereof in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS, EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to explore and describe NQSWs experiences regarding their work readiness to provide social work services to families and children in Gauteng. This chapter's main emphasis is on the research goals that the objectives were designed to achieve. These research objectives are to explore and describe the NQSWs understanding of “work readiness” regarding competencies required for service provision to families and children in Gauteng, to explore and describe challenges faced by NQSWs in providing services to families and children in Gauteng, to explore and describe measures implemented to support NQSWs in providing services to families and children in Gauteng, and based on the research findings, to formulate recommendations to social workers, institutions and organisations to maintain or improve NQSWs readiness to provide services to families and children in Gauteng Province.

A summary of the research techniques utilised to conduct this empirical research study will be provided in this chapter, with a focus on Section A. The research question, research approach, kind of research, research design, data collection, analysis, and quality procedures, as well as ethical considerations, are the main topics of section A. This chapter's Section B will highlight the research findings and provide an interpretation.

3.2 SECTION A: RESEARCH METHODS

3.2.1 Research question

The overarching question for this study is:

“What are the experiences of newly qualified social workers providing social work services to families and children in Gauteng regarding their work readiness to provide these services?”

3.2.2 Research approach

Qualitative research approach was most appropriate for this research study because the aim of the study was to understand the experiences of NQSWs readiness in providing social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province (Fouché, 2021:42). The research study's purpose was dual as it aimed to explore and describe the experiences of NQSWs in providing social work services to families and children in Gauteng and explore and describe their readiness to provide these services and support systems. An initial investigation into a relatively unknown topic is the goal of exploratory investigations, which also produce new data (Mouton, 2001:103 in de Jager, 2013:472) and descriptive studies aim to accurately describe a phenomenon (Durrheim, 2006:44 in de Jager, 2013:472). By exploring the experiences and readiness of NQSWs, the researcher gains an insight into how the NQSWs think that they are ready to provide social work services to families and children and what can be done to prepare them to be more prepared to provide these services. By sharing these experiences, the profession and other NQSWs were better able to comprehend the needs of NQSWs in providing social work services to families and children. They also learned about the recommendations made by the participants regarding the support that NQSWs require in order to be better equipped to deliver these services.

3.2.3 Type of research

The research study was applied research in nature. This type of research uses information gathered to expand on what is known about a phenomenon and to help practitioners and policymakers use this knowledge to make decisions and provide services more successfully (Hilton, Fawson, Sullivan & DeJong, 2019:8). The research study gave effective recommendations to institutions and organisations to create appropriate programmes that will adequately equip NQSWs in being better prepared and ready to provide social work services to families and children in Gauteng province (Adler & Clark, 2015:360).

3.2.4 Research design

This study employed the case study research design, more precisely the instrumental case study approach, which is typically employed in exploratory and descriptive investigations (Yin, 1994 in Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:90). Since the research study was exploring and describing NQSW's job readiness in the context of helping families and children, a case study research method was used since it is a contemporary investigation of a phenomenon that occurs in the real world (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:89). The research study explored and described the experiences of a single study population within the province of Gauteng, using an instrumental case study to help comprehend the concerns that were the main focus (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:90). Providing social work services to families and children in Gauteng, the research design allowed for a comprehensive knowledge of the experiences of NQSWs preparedness (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:91).

3.2.5 Study population, sample procedures

The study population for this research study was the NQSWs who were employees of Childline Gauteng, Gauteng Department of Social Development and Tutela Family Care at Gauteng province. The South African Council for Social Services Professions (SACSSP), at the time of the research study process, reported that the Council had registered 60 000 social service professionals in South Africa (Skhosana, 2020:109). There were 48 000 fully qualified social service professionals, about 31 000 social workers, and about 10 000 child and youth care workers (Skhosana, 2020:109). Based on the above-mentioned statistic, it was assumed that it also included the number of NQSWs in Gauteng Province. The researcher focused on the total number of NQSWs in the Gauteng Province to participate in the research study of the experiences of NQSWs readiness in rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province. The research study used a non-probability sampling, which can be described as a sampling method that does not use random selection of the participants (Maree & Pietersen, 2012:219). It is mostly used in the qualitative approach where the specific features of individuals are relevant to select them as part of the sample (Flick, 2018:174). Purposive sampling technique was selected to choose NQSWs who were rendering

social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Maree & Pietersen, 2021:220; Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:34). The researcher used purposive sampling because there was a specific purpose of the research study, which is to gain insight into the experiences of NQSWs readiness in providing social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Maree & Pietersen, 2021:220; Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:34).

The researcher provided specific inclusion criteria to identify suitable participants forming part of the sample (Koch, Niesz, McCarthy, 2014:136). In terms of the criteria for inclusion in the sample, the participants were able to:

- Be available and willing to participate in the research study through voluntary participation.
- Have been employed as a social worker with a maximum of three years' experience in rendering social work services to children and families.
- Provide social work services to families and children in Gauteng.
- Be registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions.
- Participants must be able to converse in English.

3.2.6 Data collection method

Data collection is described as a process of gathering information with the purpose of answering the research question of the study (Wagner et al. 2012:269). Interviews were used to gather data for this research study. The aim of using interviews to collect data was to obtain rich descriptive data that helped the researcher to understand the participants' construction of knowledge and social reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:108; Adams, 2015:493). The researcher approached the Childline Gauteng, Gauteng Department of Social Development and Tutela Family Care gatekeepers who are the managers and social work supervisors, to obtain permission to conduct the research at their organisation and to obtain assistance with the selection of NQSWs who are providing services to families and children in Gauteng, to constitute the research study sample. This

is because the approached organisations render social work services to children and families in Gauteng province and amongst the organisation that I have approached, they had NQSW as employees. The gatekeepers were provided with an informative letter stating the nature and intention of the research study. Gatekeepers are referred to in the literature as being important contacts that have the authority to grant access into an organisation (Tracy 2013:72). Data was collected from the volunteers, willing and consenting NQSWs who are providing services to families and children in Gauteng. The NQSWs were informed about the nature, aims and procedures of the research study. The researcher arranged with the NQSWs, through the provided contact details (telephonic or email) to meet and inform them about the nature and purpose of the study and facilitate a formal research data collection through interviews. They were given copies of the infographic that gave them background information on the research questions that were asked and the specifics of the study, along with consent forms that they had to fill out and sign.

Nieuwenhuis (2020b:108) and Adams (2015:492) mention that in qualitative research, researchers differentiate between open-ended (sometimes referred to as unstructured), semi-structured and structured interviews. The researcher utilised semi-structured interviews in the research study, as they are commonly used in research projects to corroborate data emerging from other data sources (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:108). The researcher aimed to use open-ended questions followed by further probing and clarification during interviews (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:108). Data was collected through one single interview with the NQSWs who are rendering social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:38). Semi-structured interviews using a brief set of open-ended questions were used to gather data (Addendum B) that are used to motivate the participants to share more information about their experience in readiness to render social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province (Yates & Leggett 2016:226; DeJonckheere & Vaughn 2019:6). The researcher used the following effective communication skills, which are active listening, asking follow-up questions through probing, and summarising and paraphrasing to ensure clarification of

the participants' expressions (Kabir, 2017:96-110; Tracy, 2013:151-152; Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:109;).

All research interviews were audio recorded through the use of an audio recording device, then the researcher transcribed the research interviews to ensure that transcripts are accurately transcribed and that they are a true reflection of the interviews, by including the non-verbal information obtained during the interviews (Korstjens & Moser 2018:15).

3.2.7 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves a process of organising the collected data, reading all interview transcripts, identifying, and developing the patterns, themes and categories (Yates & Leggett 2016:227; Korstjens & Moser 2018:15). Since the research study was an interpretivism paradigm, it planned an inductive data analysis which involves words and themes that were allowed to emerge from that data itself, and the use of criteria from the literature to assist with the planning of the data analysis, since the data generation or construction instruments should be constructed accordingly (Maree, 2020:42-43). The method of data analysis that was used is thematic analysis at the inductive and latent approach for coding because the researcher interpreted, explored, and described the experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017:2).

The researcher underwent the following thematic analysis steps of analyse data (Nowell et al., 2017:4-11; Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017:13-25):

Step 1: Familiarising yourself with your data

The researcher familiarised herself with the recorded data and the notes she wrote during the data collection process, through semi-structured interviews (Norwell et al., 2017:5). The researcher transcribed the research interviews and kept on re-reading and repeatedly relistening to the recorded interviews to allow her to gain in-depth understanding of the experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province (Terry et al., 2017:13). Through understanding

the dataset, the researcher was able to develop potential codes for generating themes and linked the dataset with the above-mentioned literature review on the experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province (Terry et al., 2017:13). The research data collected through interviews that were recorded, was archived with dates to provide an audit trail and confirmation of data analysis and interpretation for validity and adequacy (Norwell et al., 2017:5).

Step 2: Generating initial codes

Once the researcher familiarised with the dataset, she was able to generate potential initial codes from the dataset and a theorising activity that required the researcher to triangulate and refine, revise codes throughout the process of revising dataset of the experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province, for code consistency (Terry at al., 2017:17; Norwell et al., 2017:5). The researcher produced a list of initial codes that adequately identified the experiences of NQSQ readiness to render social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province, where after, she formulated appropriate themes to answer the research question (Terry at al., 2017:18).

Step 3: Searching for themes

This phase is characterised by sorting the code list into relevant themes and clustering and combining these codes into meaningful patterns of themes (Norwell et al., 2017:8; Terry at al., 2017:18). The researcher formulated possible themes by identifying similar features and relationships across the dataset from the generated codes (Terry at al., 2017:18). Themes were identified by bringing together all the experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province (Norwell et al., 2017:8).

Step 4: Reviewing themes

During this phase, the researcher refined and reviewed the generated code dataset extracts for each theme to consider whether they appeared to form a coherent

comprehensive pattern (Norwell et al., 2017:9). The validity of each theme was considered to determine whether the themes reflected the experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services to families and children and in Gauteng Province, through triangulation from the dataset recorded interviews (Norwell et al., 2017:9).

Step 5: Defining and naming themes

Once the researcher formulated appropriate themes that answered the research question, she began to interpret aspects that represented the experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province (Norwell et al., 2017:10; Terry at al., 2017:22). Short descriptions of each theme assisted the researcher to determine whether each theme answers the research question and whether there were enough details for each theme (Terry at al., 2017:22). The researcher engaged in peer debriefing with her fellow research colleagues and the research methodology practice supervisor and co-supervisor (Norwell et al., 2017:10).

Step 6: Producing the report

The final stage involves the comprehensive establishment of appropriate themes and subthemes, thus equipping the researcher for writing a research report (Norwell et al., 2017:10). Short direct quotes from the raw data collection method were included to foster an understanding of specific experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province (Norwell, 2017:11). The researcher built a valid argument for choosing a certain theme by referring back to the literature review and theoretical framework and consequently added value to the social work profession and to the NQSWs who are rendering services to families and children in Gauteng Province (Norwell et al., 2017:11; Terry at al., 2017:25).

3.2.8 Data quality

Data quality ensures the validity and trustworthiness of the dataset received from the NQSWs. Data verification is a procedure that involves evaluating whether the research's findings obtained are accurate (Creswell, 2014:251). In verifying the data quality of

qualitative research, the researcher focused on developing thick descriptions and interpretations about the NQSWs readiness in rendering social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province, applying the concept of trustworthiness or rigour (Korstjens & Moser 2018:121; Sousa 2014:211). Guba and Lincoln (1982) propose four criteria that they believe should be considered by qualitative researchers in pursuit of a trustworthiness of a research study namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Anney, 2014:7-15; Nieuwenhuis, 2020c:144-146; Nowell et al., 2017:3).

3.2.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is defined by Korstjens and Moser (2018:121) as a degree of assurance regarding the veracity of the research findings. According to Korstjens & Moser (2018:121), credibility determines if the study's conclusions accurately reflect the participants' initial opinions and are based on credible information obtained from their original data. The researcher ensured credibility of the study through various debriefing sessions with the research supervisor and co-supervisor, and linking the research findings with literature on the experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services to children and families.

3.2.8.2 Transferability

The term "transferability" describes the degree to which the findings of qualitative research may be applied and generalized to different contexts or settings involving different participants (Anney, 2014:12; Korstjens & Moser, 2018:122; Nowell et al., 2017:3). Bitsch (2005) states that researchers employ extensive description and purposive sampling to help future users rate a product's transferability (Anney, 2014:12). In order to allow the reader to determine whether the research findings were applicable to their own situation, the researcher included a detailed account of the research procedure and the purposeful sampling of the participants along with the inclusion criteria of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:122).

3.2.8.3 Dependability

Consistency is a component of reliability, where the researcher must verify that the analytic procedure complies with recognized study design guidelines (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:122). According to Nowell et al. (2017:3), researchers can guarantee that the study process is rational, traceable, and well recorded in order to achieve dependability. By using an audit trail, the researcher proved their dependability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:122). Throughout the research project, audit trails give readers proof of the decisions and choices the researcher took on theoretical and methodological issues, and these decisions must have a clear justification (Nowell et al., 2017:3). In order to systematize, relate, and cross-reference data and facilitate the reporting of the research process, the researcher employed audit trails, which involve maintaining records of the raw data, field notes, transcripts, and a reflective journal. These methods all contribute to the creation of a clear audit trail (Nowell et al., 2017:3).

3.2.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the process of proving that the researcher's conclusions and interpretations are impartial and clearly derived from the data (Korstjens & Moser 2018:122; Nowell et al., 2017:3). To achieve this, the researcher must show how conclusions and interpretations were reached and that the information is presented in a way that is both well-balanced and consistent with their preferences and points of view (Korstjens & Moser 2018:122; Nowell et al., 2017:3). The professional and personal experiences of the researcher may have influenced decisions in selecting the specific research methods and entire research process (Trainor & Graue, 2014:271). To ensure confirmability of the research study, the researcher's views was supported by the relevant theoretical framework and literature from previous research studies on the experiences of NQSWs readiness to render social work services to families and children in Gauteng Province and was further be aligned with this research study question, goal, design, and data analysis (Trainor & Graue 2014:271).

3.2.9 Pilot study

Before the main study was conducted, a small number of test participants participate in pilot testing, which is essentially a rehearsal of the interview process and the interview guide. Through a pilot study, the researcher can ascertain whether the interview guide has to be modified in any way (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:41; Strydom, 2021a:387). One recruited NQSWs who matched the inclusion criteria for the research study was interviewed by the researcher as a pilot test before the main research data collection process got underway. The researcher saw that the interview schedule's follow-up research questions needed to be rearranged in light of the pilot study. The pilot study's data was rich and pertinent, requiring little in the way of extra effort; the results of the larger research study are incorporated in this data.

3.2.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical values including mutual respect and accountability promoting cooperation and coordination between stakeholders, are essential in collaborative work and are therefore essential to this intended research (Resnik 2020). Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Pretoria Faculty of Humanities and the University of Pretoria Postgraduate Ethics Committee (HUM013/0523). Permission from Childline Gauteng, Gauteng Department of Social Development and Tutela Family Care was requested to access the NQSWs and the latter were requested to sign an informed consent. The other ethical considerations that were adhered to include avoidance of harm, informed consent, voluntary participation, no deception of participants, and anonymity and confidentiality.

3.2.10.1 Avoidance of harm

The avoidance of harm principle consists of the researcher's moral intention to prevent and avoid or minimise all forms of accidental or intentional harm, risk of harm, or inconvenience to participants (Motloba, 2019:40; Sobočan, Bertotti & Strom-Gottfried, 2019:5). Researchers actively seek to follow the principles of harmlessness throughout the research project, including minimising unnecessary stress on participants (Creswell, 2009:94; Neuman, 2014:147-148). At the beginning of the research study, the researcher

debriefed the participants to make sure they were fully aware of the research goal, objectives and the potential impact it might have on their sense of self. The researcher informed the participants that during the completion of the research study, or during the interview or after an interview, if they feel that they have experienced emotional discomfort, there was a qualified registered social worker who volunteered to offer them with counselling/debriefing (Strydom & Roestenburg 2021: 283). However, none of the participants required the debriefing services.

3.2.10.2 Informed consent

All participation must be voluntary, so participants are not compelled to participate in the research study. Research data is stored in the University of Pretoria online database for five/ten years. All relevant information regarding the research process will be included in an informed consent form. During the data collection process, informed consent forms were signed prior to commencement of the research study by the participants. The researcher ensured that participants knew the purpose and goal of the research study before obtaining their permission, for data collection processes and clarified their rights throughout the completion of a statement providing informed consent (Neuman, 2014:151; Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:296). It is important for the researcher to ensure that all participants understand the implications of consent and that they have the right to withdraw and /or withdraw their consent at any time (Sobočan et al., 2019:5).

3.2.10.3 Voluntary participation

Participation was completely voluntary, and the participants fully understood what they were volunteering to participate in the research study (Babbie, 2017:64). The participants were given the option to participate or not which means that they were not coerced into participating in the study. None of the recruited participants withdrew from being part of the research data collection process.

3.2.10.4 No deception of participants

Closely related to informed consent is the concept of deception in research study. If participants agree to participate in research, they must be informed of all aspects related to the study (Neuman, 2014:151). The semi-structured interviews were audio recorded using an audio recording device, through the permission of the participants. They were informed that the recordings and the necessary documents such as their signed informed consent will be achieved at the University of Pretoria online database. The researcher ensured transparency to participants regarding their role as researcher, the purpose of the research, and sharing of findings (Babbie, 2017:70).

3.2.10.5 Anonymity and confidentiality

The participants' identity was protected by ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity refers to sharing information, but not exposing or sharing names in the public domain (Neuman, 2014:154-155). Anonymity means not using participants' names, while confidentiality refers to sharing information, but not exposing or sharing names in the public domain (Neuman, 2014:154-155). The Childline Gauteng, Gauteng Department of Social Development and Tutela Family Care gatekeepers sent the invitation to the NQSWs to ensure their anonymity as they participate in the research study. Privacy in research remains paramount, and the researcher protects the public disclosure of participant information. The identity of participants was protected by ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher collected data and will therefore know the names of the participants, which influences anonymity, yet the researcher will not attach names to information in the final report but rather use pseudo names (Babbie, 2017:67). The researcher ensured that the research Interviews took place within a setting that ensured privacy and confidentiality of the information being discussed, where participants and the researcher agreed to conduct the interviews in their workspace.

3.3 SECTION B: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

To ascertain the core of the research study, it is critical to compare the results of the empirical research with the evaluated literature (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:289). This

section will discuss the findings from the data collected. The demographic details of the participants will be presented, followed by a brief discussion of the themes that emerged from the data analysis.

3.3.1 DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Table 3.1 below provides a brief description of the biographical profiles of the participants. The participants' demographic information included information about their gender, age, years of experience providing social work services to children and families, as well as the organisation of their employment. Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants to preserve their privacy and uphold the research ethical standards.

Table 3.1: Demographic profile of the participants

Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	Years of Experience: Social Work Services	Employer	Social Work Field
Participant 1	Female	27	2	NGO	Statutory: Field and intake in foster care services
Participant 2	Female	32	3	NGO	Statutory: Field and intake in foster care services
Participant 3	Male	30	3	Government Organisation	Statutory: Field and intake in crisis intervention
Participant 4	Female	55	2	NGO	Statutory: Field and intake in foster care and mediation services
Participant 5	Male	31	2	Government Organisation	Statutory: Field and intake in foster care and mediation services
Participant 6	Female	31	1	NGO	Statutory: Field and intake in foster care and mediation services
Participant 7	Female	28	3	Government Organisation	Statutory: Field and intake in foster care services
Participant 8	Female	32	2	Government Organisation	School social work

Participant 9	Female	38	2	Government Organisation	School social work
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3.3.1.1 Gender

The gender of the participants included seven females and two males, as stipulated below in Figure 3.1.

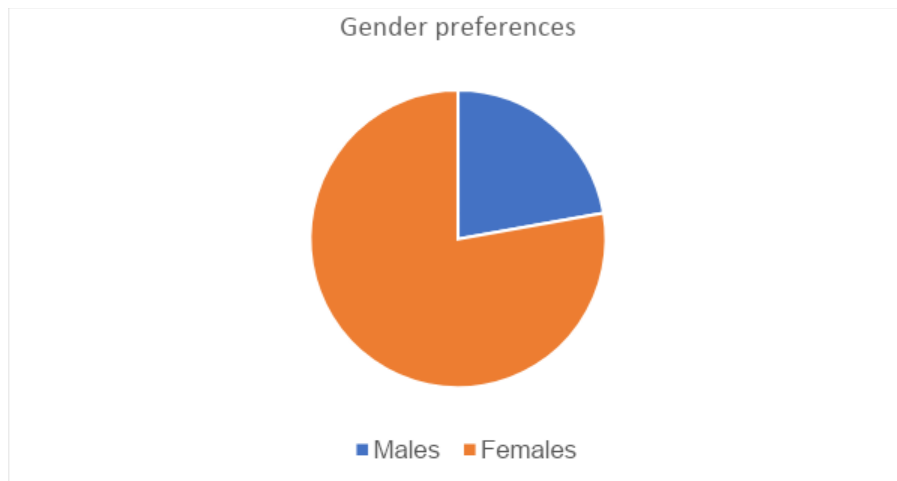


Figure 3.1: Gender of participants

Due to the perception that there are more women than males working in the field of social work, it is thus possible to identify the profession as a female dominated field while encouraging the crucial role that the minority male social workers play in the field (Hicks, 2015:471-473). This correlates well with the participants as it was evident that females dominated as compared to males, however, this holds no concern for the research findings that are presented by the NQSWs regarding their experiences of readiness to render social work interventions to children and families.

3.3.1.2 Age

The early adulthood developmental stage happens between the years of 20 and 39, while the middle adulthood developmental stage happens between the ages of 40 and 59, according to Louw & Louw (2014:4). As a result, according to Figure 3.2 below for each

age group, eight individuals are in the early adult developmental phase because they are between the ages of 20 and 39, and one person is in the middle adult developmental phase because she is between the ages of 40 and 59

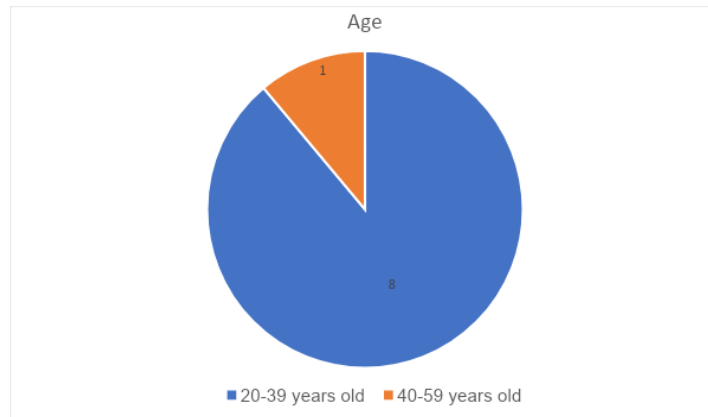


Figure 3.2: Ages of the participants per age category

3.3.1.3 Years of experience in rendering social work services to children and families

Participants stated that they have all worked with children and families for fewer than three years. Five participants have two years of experience providing social work services to children and families, three participants have three years of experience providing social work services to children and families, while one participant stated that she has only one year of work experience in this area, as shown in Figure 3.3 below.

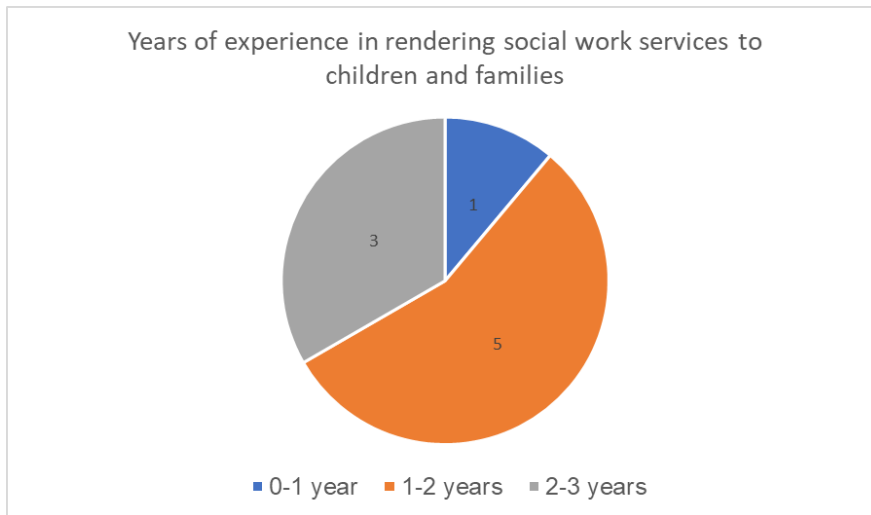


Figure 3.3: Years of experience in rendering social work services to children and families

3.3.1.4 Employer

Four participants work for various non-governmental organisations, and five participants work for government departments, as shown in figure 3.4 below. Therefore, it appears that there is even distribution of social workers employed by NGOs and government departments and this is supported by Rautenbach and Nadesan (2022:4).

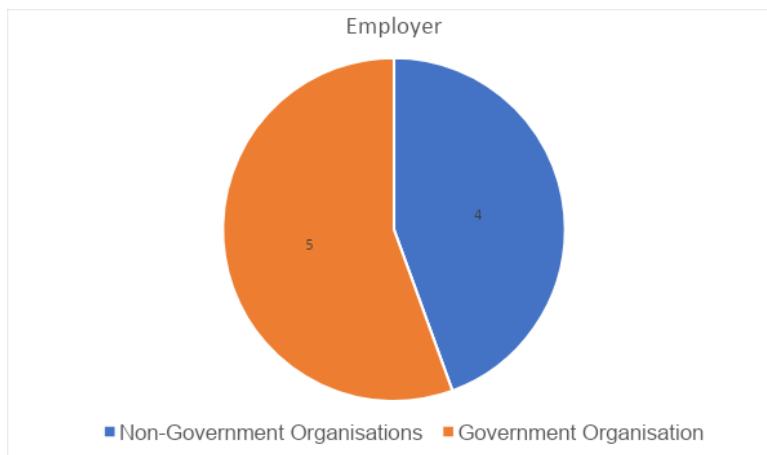


Figure 3.4: Employer

3.3.1.5 Social work field

All participants stipulated working under child welfare services, which are statutory services focusing on foster care services, crisis intervention services, field and intake services, and school social work intervention services. Tham, McFadden, Russ, Baldschun, Blakeman, and Griffiths (2021:495) mention that they have noted that most NQSWs start their careers within child protection and welfare social work. This appears to be in line with the participants' experiences.

The following section will discuss the empirical findings as originated during the research data collection process.

3.3.2 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher investigated NQSWs' experiences with being prepared to provide social work services to children and families during the research study's data collection. Eight (8) primary themes, together with sub-themes and categories, were produced during the data analysis. These are indicated below in Table 3.2. This will be followed by the analyses of the research findings and relevant quotations will be presented with expression from the participants linked with relevant literature control.

Table 3.2: Themes, sub themes and categories of the research findings

THEMES	SUB THEMES	CATEGORIES
1. Roles and responsibilities of a NQSWs	1.1. Counsellor	1.1.1 Counselling/ Therapeutic services 1.1.2 Psychosocial support services
	1.2 Facilitator and educator	1.2.1 Group work 1.2.2 parenting skills education and training
	1.3 Broker	1.3.1 Referrals 1.3.2 Working in/with multidisciplinary teams 1.3.3 Crisis intervention model and containment services

	<p>1.4 Case management</p> <p>1.5 Mediator</p> <p>1.6 Administration</p> <p>1.7 Advocate</p>	
2. NQSWs service delivery to children and families	<p>2.1 Positive experiences</p> <p>2.2 Negative experiences</p>	<p>2.1.1 Positive response to social work interventions</p> <p>2.1.2 Personal growth</p> <p>2.1.3 Professional growth</p> <p>2.1.4 Support from other stakeholders</p>
3. Challenges experienced by NQSWs through service delivery to families and children	<p>3.1 Organisational challenges</p> <p>3.2 Engagement with other stakeholders</p> <p>3.3 Challenges from families</p> <p>3.4 Challenges from children</p> <p>3.5 Discrepancies between the South African Legislation</p> <p>3.6 Inadequate training of NQSWs</p>	<p>3.1.1 Lack of resources</p> <p>3.1.2 High caseload and shortage of stuff</p> <p>3.1.3 Inexperienced social work supervisors</p> <p>3.1.4 Lack of support</p> <p>3.1.5 Lack of placement options for children</p> <p>3.3.1 Non-compliance</p> <p>3.4.1 Negative reactions towards social work interventions</p>
4. Nature of support structures for NQSWs	4.1 Support structures being implemented by NQSWs	<p>4.1.1 Address challenges</p> <p>4.1.2 Self-care</p> <p>4.1.3 Prioritise cases</p> <p>4.1.4 Supervision</p>

	<p>4.2 Support structures initiated from the organisation /employer</p> <p>4.3 Recommendations to enhance support structures for and by NQSWs</p>	<p>4.1.5 Willingness to learn through training</p> <p>4.1.6 Networking with other stakeholders</p> <p>4.1.7 Utilising personal resources</p> <p>4.2.1 Trainings and programmes</p> <p>4.2.2 Supervision</p> <p>4.2.3 Introduce child protection/statutory services from tertiary level</p> <p>4.2.4 Resources</p> <p>4.2.5 Employee Awareness Programme</p> <p>4.3.1 Supervision</p>
<p>5. NQSWs work readiness</p>	<p>5.1 Perceptions and experiences of NQSWs regarding their readiness for practice/work</p> <p>5.2 Organisational views VS NQSWs views regarding their readiness for practice/work</p> <p>5.3 Competencies to be considered work ready</p> <p>5.4 Recommendations to enhance NQSWs readiness for practice/work</p>	<p>5.3.1 Administration</p> <p>5.3.2 Social work values</p> <p>5.3.3 BSW degree</p> <p>5.3.4 Knowledge on legislation</p> <p>5.4.1 Research</p> <p>5.4.2 More practicals and exposure to social work services</p> <p>5.4.3 Training offered by the employer</p> <p>5.4.4 Case allocation</p>

3.3.2.1 Theme 1: Roles and responsibilities of a NQSWs

Social workers play an important role in the individual, group, and communities within their societies, such as empowering and supporting vulnerable groups (Kodom, 2023:1567; Rossouw, 2022:13). This is done through various roles performed by social workers. The following social work roles have been identified by the participants as part of their roles as a NQSWs in their place of employment.

1.1 Counsellor

Social work counsellors guide families and children and assist them in deliberate change or problem-solving processes, through individual counselling, therapeutic services and psychosocial support (Rossouw, 2022:13). Participants mentioned that they provide counselling services to children and families.

1.1.1 Counselling/Therapeutic services

Social workers engage with children and families to provide guidance on how to live within their current situation or how they may best change their behaviours (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:18; Mosala, 2022:19). Participants highlighted that they provide individual counselling to children and families, including children who recently found out that they are placed in foster care. They indicated that children act rebellious and disrespectful towards their foster parents because they are angry that they were not informed while growing up that they are foster children. Participants would then render counselling services to these children so that they may learn to accept their situation and think of appropriate ways for managing their future. It is important for them to consider their futures as they will not be in the foster care system forever as they are required to be self-sustaining once they reach maturity. In addition, foster children need to consider what to do if the foster parents decide to leave them, as stated by the participants.

1.1.2 Psycho-social support services

Participants mentioned that they provide psycho-social support to children and families to meet their basic needs such as the provision of food parcels, foster care grants and

top-up grant applications. Psycho-social support is based on the combination of factors that are responsible for the psychological and social well-being of people (Mosala, 2022:19) and include services to access resources for meeting basic needs such as food, shelter, finances, healthcare, educational services for client systems (Mosala, 2022:19).

1.2 Facilitator and Educator

Social workers provide counselling to children and families in a group work process and function as an facilitator through their educator role (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:18). Participants highlighted that they facilitate group work sessions with children and with parents.

1.2.1 Group work

Group work members support each other in several ways which includes the expression of their thoughts, emotions and perceptions leading to honest interactions and receiving positive feedback (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:585). Group members assist each other to find solutions to their situations, through the facilitation and guidance of a social worker. Social workers are responsible for the provision of services that will bring about sustainable change for children and families and within communities (Rosicky & Northcott, 2016:103). Participants highlighted that they recruit group members who share the same problem and facilitate group work sessions with children and parents (separate groups), who share the same circumstances. Some participants specified that they facilitate behaviour modification group work with children who are disrespectful and exhibit delinquent behaviours such as stealing money from their families. These behaviour modification groups equip children with appropriate skills which are sustainable.

1.2.2 Parenting skills education and training

Vseteckova, Boyle and Higgins (2022:992) suggest that social workers play a crucial role in the provision of support and guidance to parents and families. A social workers' role is to provide information, teach skills to individuals and educate people regarding various

social issues (Rossouw, 2022:13). Participants highlighted that they educate the community regarding the services that they render in their different places of employment. They mentioned that they conduct presentations in schools for children and within the communities regarding relevant community related social issues and educate them on possible strategies for resolutions and reporting protocol of social problems. For example, participants indicated that they conduct early prevention awareness programmes in schools regarding bullying among the children and the reporting protocol that children may follow to report bullying in schools or/and in their communities.

Mosala (2022:60–61) notes that in order to ensure effective parenting, parents require ongoing training and assistance. This includes providing foster parents with the tools they need to handle problems pertaining to their particular circumstances throughout placements. Participants highlighted that they provide sustainable parenting skills training to parents so that they are better equipped on how to nurture foster children. Other participants demonstrated that to run a parenting skills training that enforces foster parents should raise the foster children as if they are raising their biological children and discipline them appropriately. Participant 2 indicated the following:

“training... how to discipline kids from foster parents or from the home”

Participants outlined that they render parenting skills training to families to better nurture their children, as expressed by participant 5 in verbatim below:

“Yeah so like, in most cases, when you work with clients, you will realise that there’s a trend. Yeah, it’s like there’s a trend like, you will find, okay, there’s a problem that the clients are experiencing. Problem. But separately, so. Yeah. So that’s where you will come up with a group. So you’ll see a need for, for a group so that we can facilitate and they can support each other because they are experiencing the same problem or issue.”

The above discussion is in line with a study by Daftary, Sugrue, Gustman, and Lechuga-Pena (2021:75–76), which shows that NQSWs educate parents about mental health

issues, routines and limits, and what to look out for in order to support their child and stay connected in a world where they are unable to connect physically. They also train parents in related digital literacy and social-emotional interventions for their kids as well as for themselves as parents (Daftary et al., 2021:76).

According to Vseteckova et al. (2022:993), social workers in the UK have a duty to work with parents and families by providing parenting skills training, keeping children safe and shielding them from abuse, preventing harm to children's health and development, making sure that children are raised in a setting that is consistent with the provision of effective and safe care, and to guarantee that every child has the best possible outcomes. Participants expressed that they educate parents through parenting skills training regarding how to effectively raise and communicate with their children and educate them that even fathers have a right to access their children even though the Inhlawulo (damages) has not been paid. Participant 5 indicated the following:

“As a social worker, I educate... to develop... skills such as parenting skills, how to... raise their children, discipline structures and effective communication.”

1.3 Broker

Social workers have a role of linking children and families to the required resources that are not being rendered to children and families (Rossouw, 2022:13). Social workers act as brokers where they work with other stakeholders to meet the comprehensive needs of children and families for effective and efficient functioning. There are certain requirements that stakeholders need to ensure that children and families have been indeed referred to them by the social workers, which includes paper-trail audit evidence where social workers are required to formally refer children and families using appropriate referring tools to the other organisations, through a referral form.

1.3.1 Referrals

Participants expressed that they refer children and families to other stakeholders who have the knowledge and expertise in that specific field of the profession. They expressed

that should their counselling services show no or limited progress for children and families, they would refer them to other social workers and/or to the clinical and educational psychologist for further assessment and intervention. The Department of Home Affairs, the South African Social Security Agency, and the Department of Health are merely a few examples of the relevant resources and services that participants mentioned connecting families to. In line with NASW (2023), social workers are obligated to refer families and children to other professionals when they feel that they are not being effective or making any discernible, reasonable progress with them, and that additional service providers are needed.

1.3.2 Working in/with multidisciplinary team

In order to support children and families with mental health issues and to facilitate critical contributions to the assessment, treatment, and rehabilitation of children, individuals, and families within their context-specific life situations, social workers have been extremely active over the years and have become an increasingly important part of a multidisciplinary team (Forbes & Francis, 2021). Participants highlighted that they work with multidisciplinary professionals for the fulfilment of effective functioning of children and families within their respective societies. Networking with other professionals is viewed as a supportive structure for NQSWs as they are working in a multidisciplinary team. It is emphasised that it is crucial to build and maintain working relationships with other professionals as it aims to deliver the collaborative knowledge, skills and impacts that are in the best interest of the children and families (Gxotelwa, 2021:112). This notion is supported by the theoretical framework of collaborative advantage that was used in this study.

1.3.3 Crisis intervention model and Containment services

Crisis intervention aims to assist in handling emergency issues, and support children, individuals and families to stabilise or restore the evenness to normal functioning (Ahmad, 2018:304; Daftary et al., 2021:76; Morrison, Cree, Ruch, Hadfield, Winter & Hallett, 2019:100). Crisis intervention allows social workers to contain the situation by facilitating

a preliminary assessment, possible emergency intervention and to refer to the case where possible (Ahmad, 2018:305). Participants highlighted that they respond to crisis cases that are reported either by the schools, Children's Court magistrates or from their supervisors through case allocation. They indicated that in most cases they provide containment services and sometimes run with the case, or they refer to other social workers. They highlighted that when there are cases of possible child abuse or child neglect they will contain the situation by securing the safety of the children and thereafter either refer the case to another social worker who will provide comprehensive assessment and provide relevant social work intervention. Other participants highlighted that they render emotional and psychosocial containment services to children and families, whose loved ones have either committed or attempted suicide. They outlined that families visit their organisations to request food parcels because they would have run out of food at home and need immediate emergency food assistance.

1.4 Case management

Social workers take on the role of case manager, and they coordinate, take on administrative responsibilities, manage or/and direct the crucial services provided to children and families, from intake level to assessment and including the intervention phase, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention (Rossouw, 2022:13-14; Rosicky & Northcott, 2016:111; Green & Ellis, 2017:10). Participants highlighted that their role within their organisations is to facilitate an intake interview with children, parents, individuals, and families to determine required social assistance as per needed social welfare services. Should the child or the family require their organisational services, the participants indicated that they would facilitate a comprehensive assessment of the issue being brought to them by the individual, child or the family. Participants specified that they engage with the schools to assess the child's functioning, facilitate home visits to gather information from the child's parents and immediate family members, and they engage with parents to assess their reasons that would make them not be able to comply with their social work intervention services.

Participants highlighted that they remove children from their primary residence to a temporary place of safety, should the child experience abuse, neglect or abandonment from their caregivers or parents, as guided by the South African Children's Act 38 of 2005, section 150. Children who are found to be, according to the act, in need of care and protection, are placed either in a foster care system or in a temporary place of safety.

- Foster care placement

Foster care placement emphasises the rigorous screening of foster parents to improve the likelihood that children in foster care are placed with appropriate foster parents (Mosala, 2022:58). This guided the participants as they specified that when placing children in the care of a family member or any other individual (not family related), they are required to complete a section 182 in the Children's Act 38 of 2005, screening report that should be submitted to the Children's court. Participants expressed that the documents that are required at the Children's court include a medical assessment report that they request from the Department of Health, where a medical doctor is required to assess the health of the child. A report, completed by a social worker stating the reason/s for removal of the child/ren is required. Participants alluded that the court requires a form 39 that they get from the canalisation unit at the Department of Social Development as a form requesting the children's court magistrate to issue an order in agreement to place the child/ren under the care of the foster parent/s.

The court-based system and the social worker determines whether to extend foster care placement of the vulnerable children (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015:335). Participants highlighted that they have to compile a final report with a court order stating that the court order needs to be extended in terms of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 section 159, section 176 and section 186, and section 23 requesting a top-up grant for foster care without the foster care grant. Participants highlighted that they monitor and supervise these foster care placements to check the functioning of the child and should the child require their services, they will intervene.

- Temporarily safe care place

Participants expressed that the process of placing a child/ren in a temporary safe care place includes securing a placement, facilitating a medical assessment report which will be completed by a medical doctor in the department of health, and completing a social work background report and form 39 from the canalisation unit. According to Jamieson (2013:9), the Children's court magistrate will issue a court order, valid for 90 days allowing the social worker to conduct further assessment and assist parents where possible, where after a final report is compiled for the court.

Social workers must evaluate the family's needs and strengths, the child's safety, and the family's ability to provide a safe environment for the child before deciding whether to reunite children with their birth parents. This is the most important decision they have to make (Jedwab, Chatterjee & Shaw, 2018:56). Participants highlighted that they provide family reunification services and that before the reunification may take place, they work with the family where services include, they referring parents for parenting skills training, providing counselling for any mental health issues parents are experiencing, providing counselling to children and preparing both the family and the child for an effective family reunification. They expressed that family reunification is important to them because a child belongs in a systematic family.

1.5 Mediator

Social workers act as mediators to resolve arguments or disagreements amongst different role players in the child's or children's lives and find solutions in the best interest of the child, and individuals are involved in the family system (Rossouw, 2022:14). Participants outlined that they receive most of their mediation cases from the Children's Court, requesting them to intervene to resolve disputes and to then compile a report for the court including their social work expertise and recommendations regarding the case. This was expressed by Participant 6 in the following verbatim:

“Okay usually the court refer parents or families that have disputes especially regarding children, the referral is to ask us to do mediation between the two parties and we would then write a report for court regarding our findings regarding that

assessment then make recommendations on how can best assist the two parties to assist the child but the court will make the final ruling.”

1.6 Administration

The social work administrative role is crucial because it ensures a paper trail of interventions that have been facilitated by the social worker. In order to preserve quality and promote cooperative working relationships, Angy (2023) emphasizes the significance of writing case notes and recording information on a regular basis for those in the social work industry. Participants highlighted that adherence to the administrative functions of writing reports for courts and families includes providing feedback on services and possible recommendations. Reports include process notes, background and progress reports, which the participants indicated they write to provide an audit of the work done.

1.7 Advocate

Social workers advocate for children and families by speaking out on their behalf to promote fair and equitable treatment or gain needed resources and they advocate for a systematic change (Rosicky & Northcott, 2016:103; Rossouw, 2022:14). Participants highlighted that they advocate for children and families to have access to services and to receive the needed resources. They expressed that they advocated for the children to be placed in school through an engagement with the Department of Basic Education so that children may have access to education, and they advocated for children to receive legal documents at the department of home affairs, so that the child and the family may access government funded services at no cost.

3.3.2.2 Theme 2: NQSWs service delivery to children and families

Participants were asked to share their positive and negative experiences encountered while rendering social work services to children and families. The responses are discussed below.

2.1 Positive experiences

Participants indicated that they experience positive responses to social work interventions, personal and professional growth from the various interactions with children, families and with stakeholders, as well as the support from other professionals.

2.1.1 Positive response to social work interventions

Children in need of care have to adapt to being separated from their biological parents, adjusting to a new lifestyle with their potential foster parents, and possibly getting used to a new school setting, new foster family, new neighbours, and new friends (Mosala, 2022:19). As children are being placed in alternative care places, they need to effectively adjust to their environment for a positive transition. Participants expressed that seeing those foster children and children being placed in institutions, where they adapt well to their environment, is a positive experience. They highlighted that seeing foster children progress positively in their lives such as matriculating and progressing with their studies to a tertiary level is considered success stories. Participants illustrated that they experience it positively when their cases are successfully managed, such as children receiving their legal documents to reside in South Africa and being able to attend school. Another positive experience is when participants facilitate engaging interaction with parents and other professionals and when working together results in a successful development in the child's or family's life. Participants testified through the interview in this following verbatim expression:

Participant 4: “Yeah, the positive experience is to see, so let's say we have removed a child who was being neglected and maybe getting the foster parents, and then is to see that that child adapting to a new family, a new environment. And maybe after some months, seeing that child growing so healthy the child becoming so healthy and you can see that child is happy to be there”.

Participant 1: “Okay as for me, what is most important is seeing your cases being successful, that is the most important part, because we are here for these people. ... So what I liked is that the other one, she matriculated last year of which I feel its an

achievement for me... now she is busy studying at Afrika Tikkun in Orange Farm, so she is busy with one of the courses...'

2.1.2 Personal growth

"...you grow as a social worker, it moulds you as a parent and as am the parent of two daughters, So I feel personally I grow, and then it's helped me to interact with other parents in a good way. Because apparently I experienced with the challenges that learners come across, so which means even me personally, it helped me just because of, I can understand my child's behaviour through the experience from work yes from work, that's what I can say it built me as a human being as a community member as a mother..." - Participant 8

Social work practice contributes to self-awareness, personal growth and the ability to work cooperatively with others (Ferreira & Ferreira, 2019:120). Social work service delivery to children and families tends to positively contribute to the social workers' self-identity exploration and awareness and they are able to identify their strengths and weaknesses. This notion is supported by the participants in stating that through their social work service delivery to children and families, they realise their interest and desires and as parents receive parenting skills, they are growing personally on how to use such skills to be better parents themselves.

2.1.3 Professional growth

Leong and Crossman (2015:1104-1105) mention that NQSWs expressed that learning to adapt to the working environment required that they asked experienced colleagues how to do the work because they did not receive work induction and orientation. They highlighted that in some cases they had to learn work through a trial-and-error social work intervention skill (Leong & Crossman, 2015:1105). Participants shared the same opinion, stating that they had to learn their work duties by executing different roles and pinpoint the best one that provides effective services to children and families and that they had to ask for help from the experienced social workers and work shadow them.

2.1.4 Support from other stakeholders

Participants indicated that they receive support from stakeholders including the presiding officers and the police officers, when rendering social work services to children and families. The support from the police officers that the participants expressed, is being highlighted by Sibanda and Lombard (2015:337) in stating that some social workers from the Pretoria East Department of Social Development were escorted by the police to evict youngsters from others who were utilizing them as pawns in order to win sympathy from onlookers. As Participant 5 expressed the support from stakeholders as follows:

Participant 5: “ ...the presiding officers, the magistrates of the court , the children’s court, they are also supportive, because sometimes you have a matter where you... don’t even know what to do.... you can schedule a meeting and go and consult... the magistrate... guide you.... even better because he is the one who is going to do the court order...”

2.2 Negative experiences

Participants were asked by the researcher to share their negative experiences while rendering social work services to children and families. Most of the negative experiences that they expressed is related to the negative treatment that they receive from parents and families.

The best interest of the child is a principle that is not always respected by service users as some foster parents merely want to foster the child for their own benefit, and when the foster care grant is stopped or expires, they are more likely to lose interest in caring for the children (Mosala, 2022:56). Additionally, it is reported by Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:173) and Mosala (2022:57) that foster parents frequently neglect their foster children because they are unable to uphold the foster children's permanent plan and instead concentrate more on their biological children. The participants shared that foster parents lack passion as parents yet enjoy the financial benefits. They highlighted that foster parents argue with the social workers if foster care grant payments are delayed. Further to this, foster children are mistreated and sometimes moved to a different

residence with or without the foster children or foster parents would not inform them of the move and the new residency.

Participants highlighted that during the process of removing a child from care, families and parents do not comply and when they disagree with the removal process of their children, their behaviour escalates to the point of threatening social workers safety. The involved families are inclined to have a negative view regarding the social work profession and its services. As expressed by Participant 7 in the following verbatim expression:

“The attitude of people towards social workers. Yes, the general attitude of people towards social workers because there's this stereotypic mentality about social workers that this is what we do we just remove children from their families without actually understanding. So you will find that sometimes maybe there's a certain client that has been disappointed before by certain social workers. And now when they see you, they already made up their mind that oh, okay, this is what they do best.”

3.3.2.3 Theme 3: Challenges experienced by NQSWs through service delivery to families and children

Due to staff shortages, inadequate training, and heavy caseloads, South African social workers are facing human resource constraints in the execution of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Govender, 2015:17). Participants experienced challenges at various levels including: organisational, engagement with stakeholders, families, children, the South African legislation and inadequate training.

3.1 Organisational challenges

Amongst the organisational challenges that the participants indicated they experience, they highlighted a lack of resources, high caseload, shortage of staff, lack of funds, inexperienced social work supervisors, lack of support and the lack of placement options for children during service delivery to children and families.

3.1.1 Lack of resources

The consequence of poor funding is that it negatively impacts the work transition of NQSWs and places limitations on the use and availability of resources as well as limiting the provision of services (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015:343; Jeffery, Rogers, Redley & Searby, 2023:5717). Participants expressed that they observed employers experiencing a lack of funds which has a subsequent impact on increased caseload, as the employer cannot secure employment for other social workers to ease these high caseloads. Their opinion is supported by Hanson (2015:11) when underlining the research findings of the study conducted revealed that participants experience organisational stress because of lack of funds and resources to provide to the employees to complete their required work duties.

Participant 3 expressed that *“Lack of resources. For example,.. we render our services within the communities. So for you to... be able to render the services to your clients, there are certain resources that you need, like being able to contact the client when you're in their area. So we don't have cell phones to do that. And we also don't have, ...cell phones data to navigate around the places that we work around.”*

When implementing the Children's Act 38 of 2005, social workers face a number of infrastructure-related challenges. These challenges are a result of the child protection section's inadequate budget, which leaves resources unavailable (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015:343). Mosala (2022:48) mentions that participants identified the lack of resources as a challenge to the effective work services. The participants of this study indicated that they lack resources for facilitating their effective service delivery to children and families and also for successfully implementing the Children's Act 38 of 2005. They highlighted that social work supervisors expect them to submit reports to court while they do not have computers to be able to adhere to their administrative roles. Participants add that they lack the required resources for conducting home visits for facilitating the assessment of cases.

3.1.2 High caseload and shortage of staff

A consequence of the shortage of social workers in South Africa, is that available social workers have to handle the large number of social problems experienced by children and families (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:471). Participants stated that they experience high caseloads because of the shortage of employed social workers. They alluded that their caseload is too much, it is a lot of work, and that they even think about their cases after hours. Participants highlighted that they experience burnout due to high caseloads. This is supported by Mosala (2021:17-49) when highlighting that the number of social workers hired by the DSD is entirely insufficient to meet the constantly increasing demands for social workers and their services, and that the shortage of social workers both leads to backlogs of cases and high caseloads, and a subsequent hindrance on effective service delivery.

3.1.3 Inexperienced social work supervisors

“Yeah, talking to supervisors and different supervisors, because not every supervisor is quite familiar with the field either. That's another challenge, because you'll find that there's also a supervisor that comes from school section, or from probation, and then they come to statutory for the first time, maybe they did statutory when they were like, ...four years into the department. Now they are 15 years into the department, they are coming to statutory again. So, you'll find that their knowledge is kind of lacking.” - Participant 7

Participants shared that their social work supervisors lack working or practice related experience within the field that they are employed to supervise. Govender (2015:103) mentions that NQSWs often did not receive adequate supervision and that the knowledge supervisors had was disorganised and fragmented regarding their field of work.

3.1.4 Lack of support

Govender (2015:105) mentions that the lack of or inadequate supervision has been highlighted by both senior social workers and those with only a few years' experience.

Participants of this study mentioned that they experience lack of proper structured supervision from their delegated social work supervisors.

Apart from the lack of supportive supervision that NQSWs experience, Tham et al. (2021:494) mention that NQSWs often enter into practice situations that may have limited opportunities for a proper induction. Participants state that they were never inducted and orientated regarding the organisation and their job description. Some participants expressed that they were only inducted regarding the organisation and not about the roles that are expected of them to perform in the organisation.

3.1.5 Lack of placement options for children

Participants expressed that placing children in both government and non-government places of safety is a challenge because in most cases the placement institution does not have space to accommodate child/ren. They highlighted that the lack of placement options for children to be found in need of care and protection, would negatively impact on their adherence to keep children safe from any forms of abuse, abandonment and neglect. For the implementation of the Children's Act to be effective, efficient and successful, suitable infrastructure needs to be put in place, such as having enough children's placement options, which are called temporary places of safety (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015:350). Participants shared the same view when they highlighted that there should be enough placement facilities for children and their families. This was expressed by Participant 5 when he expressed in the following verbatims:

"I think some of the challenges its we are struggling, especially to find a placement and if... a crisis is reported to you right, you have to react as quickly as you can. But... sometimes you find.. ourselves in a situation where we have gone maybe for four days and five days. And you don't have a placement, you haven't secured any placement... So we always talk about this issue to say but why the... doesn't have... a specific place where there's always space for children and you know you won't struggle, like you don't have to struggle, you just have to call them and to say that

okay, I have a child, it's a boy, is two years old or is three years old, I'm bringing the child tomorrow, that's it..."

3.2 Engagement with other stakeholders

Participants highlighted the challenges that they experience when working with other professionals. They expressed that working with the Department of Health may be a challenge because when they refer children for a medical assessment, they (participants) will be informed that no medical doctor is available to assist in the assessments of children. They highlighted that when receiving cases from school, a school visit, with the purpose of facilitating an interview with the child would need to be done. However, they are likely to be informed that they first need to speak to the teacher, who is still busy in class and they should come after school or during lunch time when the teachers are available. Participants highlighted that when the DSD delays in paying the foster parents their grants, they became verbally abusive towards the social workers, as they do not understand that the problem is systemic and not due to fault of the participants.

3.3 Challenges from families

Participants highlighted that in their pursuit to render social work services to families and parents and in the provision of their services to children, they encounter various challenges from families related mostly to non-compliance to the social work service delivery and interventions processes.

3.3.1 Non-compliance

According to Mosala (2022:61), foster parents do not sufficiently cooperate within the system. This is a significant problem because the majority of foster parents are either unemployed or receive social subsidies, which puts them in the lower income poverty index (Mosala, 2022:61). Foster parents are often provided with financial management skills by social workers, however some do not follow through, and financial decisions do not always serve the child's best interests. For instance, it would be cost-effective to utilize the foster care award to pay for the child's necessities and purchase school uniforms;

nonetheless, families use it as a way to reduce poverty (Mash & Botha, 2021:504; Mosala, 2022:50). Furthermore, Hendricks (2021:111) emphasizes how important it is for foster parents to think about their foster children's future and invest in their academic performance. However, the findings of the study reveal that families and foster parents do not cooperate, because, amongst other discrepancies, they make their own arrangements with regards to the changes of the child/ren's residency without informing the social workers. Participants highlighted that parents do not cooperate during the mediation process as they do not attend the scheduled meetings of the mediation for the purposes of drafting parenting plans between the child/ren's parents. Parents do not cooperate during the removal of their children to the temporary place of safety, as they become resistant, verbally threatening and arguing with the social worker who is conducting the removals.

Jedwab et al. (2018:56) highlight some barriers experienced by social workers related to substance abuse and mental health in families. Participants mentioned that most of their removal cases are because parents are either abusing substances and or they neglect or physically abuse their children. In addition, when foster parents are referred to other stakeholders for parenting skills training, they not only do not attend their scheduled appointments, but they demand that they be reunified with their children.

3.4 Challenges from children

Social service professionals face various challenges when rendering social work services to children, such as children who display behaviours that require discipline which includes physical and verbal violence and aggressive behaviours, children's truancy, swearing and stealing, sexual development needs, lack of training to facilitate service delivery to children with special needs, and challenges of power struggles with children who do not comply with the rules (Thesen, 2014:87-94). Participants expressed that as their working relationship with foster parents is negatively affected, their relationship with children will be negatively affected too, because foster parents negatively influence children's responses to social workers and to their interventions. Therefore, NQSWs encounter

challenges from the children during the process of rendering social work services, including a negative attitude to services being rendered.

3.4.1 Negative reactions towards social work interventions

Studies reveal that some foster parents' emotionally abuse their foster children, including calling them "government children" and other derogatory terms, which leaves foster children with the impression that they are outsiders in their new homes (Mosala, 2022:52–53). Foster children may exhibit uncontrollable behaviours or become antisocial as a result of their experiences, which may involve trauma, aggression, or problems with their physical or mental health (Mosala, 2022:20). Participants expressed the opinion that some foster parents appear to be abusing their foster children when they disclose to their neighbours that the children are in foster care system. Such behaviour impacts on the already traumatic experience of foster children to such an extent that they can become engaged in substance use or other forms of abuse as a coping mechanism, develop anger towards their foster parents and become disrespectful towards them, as well as misbehaving at school or at home, as expressed by the participants. The participants highlighted that they would provide individual counselling to the children or even engage with them in a group work setting of effective behaviour modification. However, despite services rendered, children would not change their behaviour, leaving participants feeling that their interventions are futile.

3.5 Discrepancies between the South African Legislation

Participants stated they observed that most families and parents are applying cultural beliefs derived from customary law. Indigenous African law is a recognised legal system in South Africa and therefore forms part of the legislation framework such domestic laws (Nkosi, 2012:362). Unmarried biological father's have parental rights and responsibilities towards their children as stipulated in Section 21 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Himonga, 2018:62; Matthias, 2015:96-99). According to customary law, unmarried men obtain parental rights and obligations upon paying "damages" (a phrase that encompasses many forms of damages in native African law, such as *inhlawulo*) for their

children. The father is entitled to visitation, custody, and/or guardianship of his child after the "damages" have been paid (Nkosi, 2012:365). This discrepancy is observed by the participants when they provide mediation services to parents, where fathers are denied access to their children by the mothers until the so-called "damages are paid. Fathers subsequently approach the Children's Court for assistance, which poses a challenge for the participants as the Children's Act 38 of 2005 suggests that fathers must be given access to the children, which contradicts the indigenous law that supports payment prior to access. Ultimately, participants state that they assist fathers to gain access to their children as this is considered in the best interest of the child.

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 includes the provision of services to non-South African children whose place of residence is South Africa (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015:334). However, the participants mentioned that they are sometimes faced with challenges when they have to place children in temporary places of safety or work through the foster care system, for the placement of non-South African children. They expressed that despite the government owning temporary places of safety, the foster care system only covers children with legal documents. Children who do not have the required legal documentation are currently not being assisted.

3.6 Inadequate training of NQSWs

Participants from the different Universities stated that they were never effectively and adequately trained on the implementation of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. However, once participants were employed, it was expected of them to possess knowledge of the act, despite no provision of relevant training on the implementation of the act from the employers. These findings are supported by Mosala (2022:17) and Sibanda and Lombard (2015:344) when they allude that NQSWs felt that social workers were not adequately trained on the Children's Act 38 of 2005, including the lack of knowledge about the entire foster care process.

3.3.2.4 Theme 4: Nature of support structures for NQSWs

Participants expressed different kinds of support structures that they receive as NQSWs within their organisations. The different support structures that they indicated vary from the support structures that are being implemented by themselves as NQSWs, to support structures that are initiated by their employers. Participants expressed some of the recommendations that would enhance their support structures for and by NQSWs.

4.1 Support structures being implemented by NQSWs

Participants were asked during the interview to share some of their coping strategies when faced with challenges at work, and they highlighted the following support structures.

4.1.1 Address challenges

Participants suggested that when faced with challenges with regards to service delivery to parents, they implement their communication skills to attempt to gain an understanding of the reasons that parents are non-compliant. Social workers experience an increased need to enhance communication with parents, families, and children (Daftary et al., 2021:76). Immediacy is used to understand and enhance the working relationship between the social worker and the client, and deal with any possible challenges that might damage their relationship (Grobler et al., 2013:100). Participant 1 expressed it as follows:

“...parents who are not cooperative, first thing that I do I call them to say that guys, this is the challenges that I see that am experiencing and for me its affects me in this way and not only me but if affects even the child. What are you guys doing for us to you know, win this. Maybe I try to get from them that why are they not cooperative, is it because they also feel helpless, is it because they feel that they... important thing to me..., is communication... I learnt that I need to be firm...”

From this expression, it is evident that participants use congruent communication skills.

4.1.2 Self-care

Grise-Owens and Miller (2021:638) describe self-care as a practice of attending to all aspects of one's own well-being, such as the physical, social, emotional, cultural, and spiritual well-being, which must be individualised to fit the person's values, interests, and life circumstances. Participants stated they engage in various supportive- and self-care activities like hiking, shopping, and spending more time with their family.

4.1.3 Prioritise cases

Participants indicated that due to high caseloads, they have learnt to prioritise their cases, as a form of a coping mechanism. This is supported by Sibanda and Lombard (2015:344) who state that NQSWs often only respond to crises and neglect prevention and early intervention services. However, they provide services in an educative and helpful manner as opposed to the comprehensive developmental services that are legislated for in the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015:344). Participants shared the same sentiments, stating that when cases are reported and referred to them, they tend to pay more attention to crisis cases. The participants pinpointed that they neglect other roles such as community education.

4.1.4 Supervision

Participants shared that their ability to transition into the workplace improved when they engaged with more experienced social workers to mentor them in their work duties. Frequency of interaction with mentors or experienced employees positively affected the transition of NQSWs and job satisfaction (Jeffery et al., 2023:5716). Participants highlighted that experienced social work colleagues are approachable, and very supportive towards their work transition as they allow them to not only shadow them when they are rendering social work services to children and families, but they also educate them regarding the appropriate use of administration forms and tools.

4.1.5 Willingness to learn through training

Participants expressed that it is important to continuously train and develop oneself because as social workers it is crucial to be willing to learn and develop skills for effective service delivery. They indicated that social workers need to be informed of any legislation that is being revised and updated for the effectiveness of the implementation of such legislation. Participants expressed that they did not receive training regarding the implementation of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 during the education in HEI and post-employment. They highlighted that they were not inducted and orientated regarding their specific work duties. Govender (2015:109) states that NQSWs are mostly required to train themselves and that requests are made for peer training and support; which was also the case of the participants in this study. No participants received formal training related to the implementation of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, but some participants stated they received general support and training from more experienced social workers. Participant 7 expressed as follows:

“Okay, so I think, with..., the one of the lack of orientation, and also with... just start getting to learn about your job and everything, I had to take it every case, as it comes, you learn with the case, if it's a different situation..., there are also social workers that have been here for longer. So interacting with them, going for peer supervisions..”

4.1.6 Networking with other stakeholders

Social workers in the DSD reported to work directly with, and receive guidance from, their regional office coordinator, as a central stakeholder (Govender, 2015:109). Participants highlighted that they network with various stakeholders to build relationships with organisations. Some participants outlined that they receive support from different professionals regarding their roles and services delivery to children and families. Such support is emphasised by Participant 5 when he revealed that *“And then in terms of the presiding officers, the magistrates of the court, the children's court, they are also supportive, because sometimes you have a matter were you... don't even know what to*

do now, yeah, so you can just schedule a meeting and go and consult the magistrate and the she guides you as to, okay, I think this is what you can do from here...” .

4.1.7 Utilising personal resources

Participants highlighted that they experience a lack of resources within their organisations. Support systems and resources allow employees to render effective and efficient services to children and families (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:470). However, the lack of resources and support systems in the workplace result in employees feeling dissatisfied with their work, and less productive and subsequently emotionally negatively affected, which hinders their transition into the workplace (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:470). Participants stated that work is allocated to them but there are no resources for ensuring effective service delivery, and as such, they become frustrated. They state that self-support during their transitional period, which includes using personal resources, enhances effective service delivery to children and families.

4.2 Support structures initiated from the organisation/employer

Participants state that there are measures the employer has initiated to support their work transition. They mention various training courses that are initiated by their employer, supervision structures, provision of resources, including the administrative and planning tools, and the initiation of an Employee Awareness Programme as types of support structures initiated by the employer for successful work transitioning of NQSWs.

4.2.1 Trainings and programmes

Participants highlighted that the employer had initiated training courses for them to attend, to empower them educationally and to impact their positive service delivery. Some participants highlighted that the employer initiated a training programme on the implementation and application of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 which positively impacted their transition into the workplace and their readiness to implement the act.

4.2.2 Supervision

Different supervision methods may be utilised, such as individual, group and peer supervision and they should be in adherence with the Code of Ethics for social workers (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:20-28). Research findings support this notion as participants state that there are social worker supervisors that are specifically employed to support them as they transition from being a student social worker to qualified social workers.

4.2.3 Introduce child protection/statutory services from the tertiary level

The study highlights that NQSWs felt it would be advantageous to introduce child protection and statutory services to social work students whilst they are performing their required student social work practice in different organisations. It will effectively prepare them for work and once they reach the employment stage, it will lead to their successful transition as NQSWs. Sobeck, Boraggina-Ballard, Nojar-Durack, Lashore and Olivera (2022:165) indicate that structures or components of training programs largely include curriculum courses and field experiences in child welfare. The purpose is to integrate university resources and the organisational assets to produce and support students and NQSWs as they transition to child welfare organisations (Sobeck et al., 2022:165-166).

4.2.4 Resources

The research findings highlight that as much as there are limitations regarding resources within the organisations, there are sufficient resources to assist NQSWs as they transition into the workplace. Participants expressed that there is access, for example, to organisational vehicles for facilitating their required services, which include school and home visits for assessment and for conducting early prevention awareness campaigns to the communities.

The study highlights that participants are provided with work computers and laptops by the organisation, and they engage in different software applications to arrange their cases, put reminders of their cases that are due instead of cases lapsing, and through

the use of calendars, they can plan their activities and be reminded before their scheduled appointments. Digital electronic services serve different purposes, concerning innovative social work practice, information management, communication, and education, and innovation in digital social work services, such as FaceTime, Skype, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and WhatsApp, is especially important for tackling the challenges social workers face (Tsang, Mo, Cheung & Wong, 2022:634). This is supported by the research findings when Participant 7 stated that the use of Microsoft Teams assists with case management and planning, in the following words:

“... technology is also advancing, one of the ways to help you manage your caseload better is actually being in-touch with your technology, meaning using..., your Microsoft and your Microsoft teams to set up your appointments to put in your caseloads accordingly and then the Microsoft will keep on reminding you what needs to be done, when is it due, yeah in that way you won't have to deal with cases that are lapsing and all of that, missing court dates ...”

4.2.5 Employee Awareness Programme

Self-care means that professional and personal self-care are interrelated and integrated holistically, and that self-care is not to do just something done after work; it is integral and work (Grise-Owens & Miller, 2021:368). It is the responsibility of organisations to provide healthy working environments (Grise-Owens & Miller. 2021:368). Therefore, self-care and organisational wellness are complementary efforts toward the shared aims of the NQSWs well-being and have positive consequences on the organisational effectiveness, and professional mission efficacy (Grise-Owens & Miller. 2021:369). This notion is supported by the participants when they outlined that their employers had initiated Employee Awareness Programme, free of charge for them and their families, which aims to address their emotional well-being, however, they have not made use of this service.

Participant 7: ...kind of support you emotionally and mentally is indirectly. So she will provide you with pamphlets of the department's employee assistance programme services that are in the department for our emotional wellbeing, so she will send you

all those emails and print out some copies and yeah. So those kind of support that I receive from the...

Participant 3: *“Nature of support, well I think they have put, ahmm, the the the well some wellness services, I’ve never used it before, but I think there are wellness services to support us when it comes to stresses, burnouts.”*

4.3 Recommendations to enhance support structures for and by NQSWs

Participants were required to share their experiences and opinions on recommendations that they might have had to enhance support structured for and by the NQSWs. The following categories are some of the strategies that the participants have highlighted.

4.3.1 Supervision

Social work supervision is a complex continuous interactional 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 for professional development, supportive and administrative case management functions to promote efficient and professional rendering of social work services (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:10; Marc, Makai-Dimeny & Osvat, 2014:221). It was recommended by participants that social work supervisors should start to take their responsibilities seriously and effectively supervise NQSWs as stipulated in the supervision framework for social work profession in South Africa, as it aims to assist NQSWs to effectively transition in the work environment.

3.3.2.5 Theme 5: NQSWs work readiness

Jeffery et al. (2023:5713) note that work readiness encompasses the desirable generic professional attributes and skills that extend beyond academic ability in the workplace for NQSWs. This section aims to discuss the explored perceptions and experiences of participants regarding their readiness for work, highlight the organisational views against the NQSWs views regarding their readiness for work, competencies to be considered

work ready will be highlighted, as well as the recommendations to enhance NQSWs readiness for work will be discussed.

5.1 Perceptions and experiences of NQSWs regarding their readiness for practice/work

Participants were asked to share their experiences regarding work readiness and to share their perceptions regarding their own work readiness. The acquisition of some work experience while still in university provides students with the advantage of securing an entry level graduate position given that it equips them with skills necessary for work in full-time employment (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:467). Six participants expressed that they felt work ready because they volunteered prior to employment to social work service delivery organisations, while others indicated that they were ready for work because they were working as social work auxiliary workers and those experiences prepared them for work. Huni and Chikadza (2014:466) state that young people continue to be unemployed for long periods before finding their first job making them vulnerable to an unsuccessful transition to work. This is supported by three participants who felt that they were not ready for work because they were unemployed or employed but not working in any social work-related field, which negatively impacted their work readiness and effective work transition. NQSWs entering an unfamiliar work setting are confronted with a reality shock, when expectations and actual experience of the new job do not match (Huni & Chikadza, 2014:467). However, participants expressed that as much as they were ready for work, they were never ready for the statutory social work field because from their different universities, they were trained and prepared to render counselling, therapeutic services and group work.

5.2 Organisational views vs. NQSWs views regarding their readiness for practice/work

Problems often derive from the organisational need for newly qualified and appointed social workers to practise and perform tasks effectively directly as they enter the workforce (Carpenter, Shardlow, Patsios & Wood, 2015:154). Participants indicated that managers in their workplace expect them to function effectively as a social worker,

irrespective of their work readiness and experience; and that case allocation is high and work intense. Participants reflect a need for a transitional period of case allocation aligned to the competency levels, as supported by Huni and Chikadzi (2014:467) and Jeffery et al. (2023:5729).

5.3 Competencies to be considered work ready

Participants were requested to share competencies that they deem necessary for a NQSWs to be regarded as work ready. The success of the NQSWs readiness and effective transitioning is facilitated through the attainment of social work competence in essential elements of role performance, combined with a sense of confidence in their own abilities (Carpenter et al., 2015:154). Predictable knowledge and skills competencies were identified to support, develop and evaluate the success of NQSWs transition and work readiness (Sobeck et al., 2022:165). Some of these competencies as identified by the participants, include administration, willingness to learn, social work values, BSW degree, and knowledge, application and implementation of legislation especially the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

5.3.1 Administration

Participants were requested to share their roles in providing social work services to children and families and they expressed that they adhere to the administrative roles of social work where they have to prepare reports for court, type process notes and referral letters to different organisations, as well as background reports of their cases. Sobeck et al. (2022:166) support the participants' views when indicating that social work exposure to more practicals or practice work both during their studies and in the post graduate period, contributes to the support and competence around the technical skills essential for successful career readiness. As social work students expose themselves to different social work organisations, they will be aware of the different reports that will be required from them post-employment. For example, Participant 4 expressed the important of administrative skills as follows:

“...you have to know how to use a computer, yeah because we type report for our files and for court. Drivers licence to drive to your home visits and to court.”

5.3.2 Social work values

Social work is a values-based occupation with inherent attitudes and beliefs that a social worker adopts to treat and work with children and families and to create a safe space for children and families to self-explore (Grobler et al., 2013:39; Patel, 2015:147). Participants highlighted that it is important that NQSWs have the ability to respect every child and family and to individualise their cases. They mentioned the importance of confidentiality towards their service users and that they should be able to behave with integrity. These social work values were expressed in the following verbatims by Participant 1:

“You can’t treat the Mazibukos and the Radebes the same, even if this one is abounded and this one is abounded, but you can’t treat the situation the same.”

5.3.3 BSW degree

Social work programmes in HEI have as primary function to prepare competent social work practitioners, who can navigate demands and difficulties with efficacy, while sustaining themselves (Grise-Owens & Miller, 2021:636). Tham et al. (2021:497) highlight that the social work degree qualifies students to practice social work. Participants indicated that their employers assume that they are work ready because they have a qualification that grants them suitable to render social work services to children and families.

5.3.4 Knowledge on legislation

Sibanda and Lombard (2015:348) described that the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 cannot effectively be implemented if social workers themselves receive inadequate training regarding the act. Participants expressed that NQSWs need to possess abilities or have background knowledge regarding the importance and the effective implementation of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005. This knowledge and experience guide them in most of their

work regarding statutory services such as the mediation process, foster care processes, and more especially the removal of children to a temporary place of safety.

5.4 Recommendations to enhance NQSWs readiness for practice/work

To enhance work readiness for NQSWs, it is essential to address areas of poor work performance which may negatively influence service delivery to children and families. Sobeck et al., (2022:164) mentions that certain attempts to improve the work readiness of NQSWs are needed to better prepare them for their work. Tham et al. (2021:503-504) indicate that NQSWs may be better prepared for social work services delivery to children and families if emphasis is placed on the development of their professional identity during the HEI preparatory practices. Additional skills development can include courses that focus on strategies to manage non-compliance from children and families, stress management through resilience, and effective engagement with stakeholders, which can be considered as mandatory in social work education from the HEI (Tham et al., 2021:503-504). It was noted that it is important to potentially use simulations during HEI practice modules to create an experiential atmosphere where social work students may explore possible challenges they may encounter post-employment, before they are given responsibility and accountability for making decisions in a professional capacity (Tham et al., 2021:503). Participants express the need for more practice related exposures including therapy, social law (statutory services) and other related social work fields. This aligns well with the recommendations that the participants expressed, including that HEIs need to expose social work students to more practice work, also in different social work fields. This section will highlight the recommendations identified by the participants to enhance NQSWs readiness for work.

5.4.1 Research

Participants expressed that as much as applying for employment is essential, it is also important to use the acquired research skills from their BSW undergraduate training, to facilitate comprehensive research regarding the work duties that are being advertised in posts they are applying for. They highlighted that before employment, it is important to

research the different social work fields, to understand and have a basic idea of the various fields of service delivery before embarking on their employment journey.

5.4.2 More practical's and exposure to social work services

Sobeck et al. (2022:165) state that HEIs and organisational partnership programs may positively increase the self-confidence of child welfare NQSWs and students with regards to their skills and overall capability to competently perform their work duties. High Impact Practices are those activities that require a significant amount of student time, expose students to different ideas of social work fields, require communication between students and their lectures about significant and relevant topics, provide regular feedback to students about their work, and generate opportunities for students to apply their skills inside and outside of the classroom such as in real life situations (Sobeck et al., 2022:166). Bakuwa, Pilusa and Saloojee (2020:1) indicate that short postgraduate practical training courses could potentially help bridge this readiness gap. Participants recommended the same idea, stating that social work students need to expose themselves through their HEI practice classes to different social work fields. Furthermore, they suggest that while graduates are searching for employment, they should complete post graduate qualifications and volunteer in different social welfare services organisations, to increase exposure to work for enhancing work readiness and facilitating the transition into the workplace. This need is supported by Tham et al. (2021:502) as the duration of field practice in the social work education systems in England and Northern Ireland, is larger than the exposure to theory; and also in Sweden, the student social workers' field placement occurs across different practice fields such field placements that focuses on children's services and adult social work services.

5.4.3 Training offered by the employer

Tham et al. (2021:503) mention that it is recommended that the employers of NQSWs offer them proper orientation and induction, including regular supervision and support. This notion is supported by the participants as they stated they do engage in various training and development opportunities offered by the employer. For example, they

highlighted that they were sent by the organisation to attend training focusing on strategies for effectively implementing the Children’s Act 38 of 2005, as well as training provided for enhancing skills for working individually and in groups with children and families who experience various adversities.

5.4.4 Case allocation

NQSWs reported that they are allocated responsibilities that are disproportionate to their level of competence (Willman et al., 2021:56). Huni and Chikadzi (2014:471) state that the transition from the university to work is regarded as an unsettling experience, because in most cases NQSWs are not given breathing space to find their feet. Gregg et al. (2013) recommended setting realistic expectations, accepting NQSWs’ low level of practice skills and work experience, and not setting overly high goals for facilitating a smooth transition into the workplace. The majority of the participants share the same view as they highlighted that soon after employment, they are allocated cases as a “full” social worker, irrespective of their work experiences and the intensity of the case issues. However, only one participant highlighted that when she started work, she informed her supervisor that she had zero work experience. However, only one participant highlighted that when he started work, he informed his supervisor that he had zero work experience related to the specific social work service delivery expected. The supervisor responded by offering additional support, allocating entry-level cases, encouraging shadowing of colleagues and systematically providing more complicated cases, as the NQSWs’ confidence increased.

3.4 SUMMARY

The researcher's focus in this chapter was to provide a thorough methodological review of the research methods utilised and implemented in the study. Using a thematic analysis, the researcher offered a thorough explanation and presentation of the data collected and its interpretation. In an effort to answer the study’s research question and accomplish the objectives, themes were generated and explored. These themes ranged from the roles and responsibilities of NQSWs, the experiences of NQSWs’ services delivery to children

and families, challenges experienced by NQSWs through service delivery to children and families and the nature of support structures for NQSWs as they transition, to the work readiness of NQSWs. Specific sub themes and categories were identified to support the identified themes. Chapter 4, the concluding chapter, will provide key findings of the study and present recommendations, thereof.

CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the researcher offered empirical research findings of the research study. Therefore, this chapter of the study aims to provide conclusions and recommendations.

The goal of the research study was to describe and explore NQSWs' experiences regarding their work readiness to provide social work services to families and children in Gauteng.

This research goal was achieved through the following research objectives:

- To explore and describe NQSWs' understanding of "work readiness" regarding competencies required for services provision to families and children in Gauteng
- To explore and describe challenges faced by NQSWs in providing services to families and children
- To explore measures implemented to support NQSWs in providing services to families and children in Gauteng
- Based on the research findings, to formulate recommendations to social workers, institutions, and organisations to maintain or improve NQSWs' readiness to provide services to families and children in Gauteng

Based on the definition of readiness in Chapter 1, and the literature review in Chapter 2 regarding the readiness of NQSWs for work, the research was able to explore work readiness and competencies required for service provision to families and children. Through this study, the research was able to explore and describe the NQSWs' understanding of work readiness and the competencies required to be considered work-ready to provide social work services to children and families, as illustrated in Chapter 3, section B in the research findings in theme 5. Therefore, the research was able to

ascertain that NQSWs' understanding of work readiness was based on their perceptions and experiences of their work readiness and various competencies to be considered work ready. As such, this objective was achieved.

Through the literature review study in Chapter 2, the researcher was able to determine the challenges faced by NQSWs in their attempt to provide social work services to children and families. In chapter 3, section B in theme 3, the research explored and described challenges experienced by NQSWs through service delivery to children and families. This objective was attained with empirical findings through theme 3.

With the limited research available on the support structures for NQSWs', chapter 2 outlines a literature review on the support that is available for NQSWs. Through this conducted study, the research was able to explore measures that are being implemented by the NQSWs and by the employer to support NQSWs in providing services to children and families. This objective was met through theme 4 and sub themes 4.1 and sub theme 4.2.

In achieving the role of formulating recommendations for social workers, institutions, and organisations to maintain or improve NQSWs' readiness in service provision to families and children in Gauteng, research findings in chapter 3 were essential, as illustrated in sub theme 4.3 and sub theme 5.4. However, Chapter 4 aims to outline recommendations for social workers, institutions and organisations to maintain and or improve NQSWs' readiness to provide services to children and families in Gauteng.

The overarching research question for this study was:

“What are the experiences of newly qualified social workers providing social work services to families and children in Gauteng regarding their work readiness to provide these services?”

The research was answered during the research process, especially during the data collection phase, and has been identified and presented in Chapter 3, Section B of this study. The research question was answered by various themes, sub-themes, and

categories as presented in Chapter 3 (Section B), which focused on the experiences of NQSWs while rendering services to children and families, and their work readiness. The collected data highlighted the roles and challenges that NQSWs encountered while rendering services to children and families. The experiences of NQSWs while rendering services to children and families include positive experiences and negative experiences. Data collected also revealed various support structures that NQSWs implement to enhance their work readiness and support measures that their employer initiated to support the work transition of NQSWs. Collected data showed that social work practice work and more exposure to social work-related fields post-employment, prepare NQSWs for employment service delivery.

In achieving the goal and objectives of the research study, certain key findings are formulated, and conclusions extrapolated. These findings and conclusions are presented in the next section.

4.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The key findings will be discussed separately for each of the objectives that were achieved throughout the research process.

4.2.1 Key findings in terms of NQSWs' understanding of "work readiness" regarding competencies required for services provision to families and children in Gauteng

Work readiness has both to do with having done sufficient research regarding the expected work duties of your position and the willingness and ability to provide services to children and families with compassion. Work readiness is related to being prepared and ready to provide competent, professional services to children and families. Work readiness is the ability to render services in a well-trained manner. Volunteering and offering related social work services to children and families provides an opportunity for increased work readiness, post-employment. The BSW qualification qualifies NQSWs to be partially work ready for providing social work services to children and families.

Administrative abilities and social work values and skills qualify NQSWs to be deemed as work-ready to provide services to children and families. The HEI and the practical classes moderately prepared NQSWs to be work ready and provided NQSWs with work-related competencies. Work induction and orientation provide NQSWs with work readiness.

4.2.2 Key findings in terms of challenges faced by NQSWs in providing services to families and children

The key findings related to the challenges faced by NQSWs in their provision of social work services to children and families are multiple and include organizational challenges, with a specific focus on the lack of resources, shortages of staff that ultimately lead to high caseloads, lack of funds, inexperienced social work supervisors, lack of support from the employers and lack of facilities. Additional challenges are related to the effective, or often ineffective engagement with other stakeholders /professionals. Furthermore, NQSWs experience challenges when applying the specialised skills required to work with children. NQSWs also encounter challenges when rendering services to families, which includes a hostile working environment. NQSWs observed some discrepancies between the South African legislations, especially between the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and the African Indigenous Customary law, which causes challenges for them when they are providing social work services to children and families. NQSWs noted that they receive inadequate training both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, especially with regards to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, and thus experience challenges with the implementation of the Act.

4.2.3 Key findings in terms of measures implemented to support NQSWs in providing services to families and children in Gauteng

Various measures are being implemented to offer support for NQSWs in their provision of services to families and children in Gauteng. Amongst the support structures that are being implemented by the NQSWs, include self-care, utilising personal resources,

training, and networking with other stakeholders. In addition, an important source of support is that NQSWs receive supervision from their designated social work supervisors at work. The employers of NQSWs also provide NQSWs with continuous development through the provision of work-related training. Additional support of NQSWs is found in the provision of necessary resources for effective service delivery to children and families. A further source of support is the Employee Awareness Programme that is made available to support and offer guidance to NQSWs. Senior social workers support NQSWs through their transition phase by allowing them to shadow them and providing necessary guidance through their service delivery to children and families.

4.2.4 Key findings in terms of the recommendations to social workers, institutions, and organisations to maintain or improve NQSWs' readiness to provide services to families and children in Gauteng

The NQSWs provided some noteworthy recommendations to NQSWs, social workers, HEI, and welfare organisations. It is recommended that NQSWs conduct thorough research on all areas of statutory social work, before being employed as a statutory social worker. NQSWs and senior social workers need to stay abreast of current research, so as to be aware of development in all social work fields. NQSWs should engage in more practical and social work-related volunteer-work (both during their studies and while seeking employment), to prepare themselves for employment. Also, employers must provide NQSWs with effective and adequate work induction- and orientation programmes to prepare them for their tasks related to service delivery. Employers are required to offer continuing training to NQSWs on mandatory legislation, such as the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and other related training courses for effective service delivery to children and families. NQSWs noted that social work supervisors need to allocate cases to NQSWs based on their capabilities and should protect caseloads. NQSWs must also take responsibility for their successful transitioning into the workplace and recognise the importance of self-care services to not only avoid work burnout, but also to ensure they are prepared to offer social work services to children and families.

4.3 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information obtained from the NQSWs' experiences regarding their work readiness to provide social work services to families and children in Gauteng, the following conclusions were reached:

- **Conclusions on key findings in terms of NQSWs' understanding of "work readiness" regarding competencies required for services provision to families and children in Gauteng**

The work competencies that deem NQSWs as work-ready include the BSW qualification as well as the social work values and skills that NQSWs acquire through their training in HEI. The administrative qualities that are acquired in HEI are crucial to enhancing work readiness. Work readiness relates to being prepared and being able to render social work services to children and families. Volunteer work in social work-related fields and more exposure to social work practicals enhance NQSW's work readiness and renders them more prepared for offering social work services to children and families.

- **Conclusions on key findings in terms of the challenges faced by NQSWs in providing services to families and children**

The challenges that NQSWs experience from their employer, involve lack of resources for effective service delivery, shortage of staff due to lack of funds which ultimately leads to high caseloads, insufficient supervision being provided by social worker supervisors with limited experience in the various social work fields, lack of support-, and access to facilities. NQSWs experience various challenges in their engagement with other stakeholders, families, and children. The discrepancies between the South African legislation negatively affect the services delivery for NQSWs, and the implementation of this legislation is challenging for NQSWs because they received inadequate training for implementation of the legislation.

- **Conclusions on key findings in terms of measures implemented to support NQSWs in providing services to families and children in Gauteng**

NQSWs are implementing various measures to support themselves as they transition into the workplace. Some of these challenges include addressing their concerns in a professional manner with children and families, in self-care activities, prioritising cases to better handle high caseloads, and with senior social workers for guidance. In addition, NQSWs are encouraged to work with other professionals and effectively utilise their resources for effective service delivery. The employer of the NQSWs provides some measures to support the transitioning of NQSWs through the provision of training for effective service delivery and implementing supervision for the NQSWs. Furthermore, the employer also provides resources for the NQSWs to render their services effectively. NQSWs are encouraged to attend the Employee Awareness Programme that the employer initiated to assist its employees in receiving emotional support, should they require such services.

- **Conclusions on key findings in terms of recommendations to social workers, institutions, and organisations to maintain or improve NQSWs' readiness to provide services to families and children in Gauteng**

HEIs should expose social work students to all fields of social work during their practical classes such as statutory social work and child protection, and social work students and NQSWs should continue to expose themselves to more practice work in social work-related fields. Organisations should allow social work students and NQSWs to focus on increased social work-related work exposure during their work in their institutions. Employers should offer NQSWs with more training on work-related support, such as the implementation of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and the application of organisational administrative tools, to effectively render social work services. Social work supervisors are advised to allocate NQSW cases based on their capabilities and gradually advance as they are more exposed to social work experiences and training.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings and conclusions above, the following recommendations are offered for enhancing the NQSWs' experiences regarding their work readiness to provide social work services to families and children in Gauteng.

4.4.1 Recommendations for NQSWs and social workers to enhance their work readiness to provide social work services to children and families in Gauteng

- NQSWs need to continue to render social work services to children and families through volunteer work, should they not secure employment directly after graduation.
- Senior social workers rendering social work services to children and families should allow NQSWs to shadow them when they are rendering services to children and families.
- Peer supervision should be encouraged to facilitate employees learning from each other through case conferences in a collegial consultation. Peer supervision should also take place to allow colleagues to provide emotional support through debriefing.
- Social workers need to engage in research regarding the social work post that they are applying for so that they will be more aware of their expected roles once they enter the social work field.
- Social workers and NQSWs need to engage in self-care activities to avoid burnout and being overwhelmed due to high and demanding caseloads.
- Social work training assists social workers and NQSWs to continuously develop themselves for effective service delivery. Social workers and NQSWs should take responsibility for their own development by personally arranging and engaging in training for their professional development. Social workers should be willing to

learn, also from their service users, including the children and families and not be the all-knowing authority.

- Social workers should be willing to use their personal resources for effective service delivery to children and families.
- It is important to network with other professionals for effective and positive stakeholder support. Social workers and NQSWs should encourage networking with other stakeholders to build positive working relationships for support.

4.4.2 Recommendations for institutions, HEI, to maintain or improve NQSWs' readiness to provide services to families and children in Gauteng

- HEIs should expose social work students to all social work fields during their practice placements during the undergraduate studies and HEIs should make a clear distinction between the different fields of social work practice by specifying their different roles and responsibilities within the theory and practice curriculum. Additionally, Organisations and HEIs need to add more practice hours for social work students so that they can receive additional exposure and experience to social work service delivery.
- Social work students should be provided with an additional year of training, where they focus primarily on gaining practice experience before qualifying as social workers (in a possible internship).
- HEIs should formally introduce the implementation of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 in their theory and practice curriculum, with a specific focus on basic knowledge and skills, to ensure that NQSWs are able to render social workers services to children and their families. Organisations and HEIs should allow social work students, under guidance and supervision, to present cases in the Children's Court to gain experience and exposure in statutory services.

- Social work students should be trained regarding the use of safety and risk assessment tools to ensure a comprehensive assessment of children who need care and protection. Theory and practice from the HEIs curriculum should include well-informed and relevant awareness programs for the community, as well as parenting skills training, to assist in the prevention of social issues that are experienced within the community. Social work students need to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge related to providing services to children and families requiring crisis interventions, and also for managing different social problems that require specific intervention approaches.
- HEIs need to establish rapport with relevant organisations and senior professionals, in a collaborative approach to preparing NQSWs for practice. The roles of this proposed collaboration would include establishing which competencies are considered essential for NQSWs and also to expose and better prepare them for the realities of the work expectations of social workers delivering services to families and children.

4.4.3 Recommendations for organisations; and employers of NQSWs, to maintain or improve NQSWs' readiness to provide services to families and children in Gauteng

- Employers need to contract the services of experienced social workers to provide supervision to NQSWs based on their experience in specific social work fields.
- Sufficient and effective supervision should be provided as required and guided by the Supervision Framework, to effectively assist NQSWs through their work transition. Organisations should encourage peer supervision and in-service training for the professional development of their employees, including NQSWs. Work orientation- and induction programmes should be implemented to introduce NQSWs to the policies of the organisation, the requirements of their social work post, the mission and vision of the organisation, and skills for achieving the tasks and roles in the organisations.

- Organisations should provide NQSWs with adequate resources for efficient service delivery to children and families.
- Continuous professional development allows social workers and NQSWs to develop themselves through the improvement of their knowledge to be more skilled and competent. Employers need to provide their employees with continuous professional development training to improve their knowledge, skills, and competence for service delivery.
- Employers should provide NQSWs with a protected caseload linked to their capabilities, in an attempt to support their transitioning. Organisations need to introduce Employee Wellness Programmes to offer emotional support and assist in preventing burnout during the transitional process of entering the workplace for its employees.
- Social work students should be allowed to conduct their required student practice work hours within organisations where they intend to be employed. This links to the recommendation of organisations offering internships, after students have graduated. Organisations need to allow NQSWs who have not yet entered the workplace, to volunteer in their organisations so as to enhance their experience in rendering social work services to children and families.

4.4.4 Recommendations for future research

- There is a need for research on the experiences of NQSWs' readiness to provide social work services to children and families, with a specific focus on the factors that hinder their work readiness and transitioning from an African perspective.
- Future research is recommended to explore the elements required to facilitate and enhance the adjustment of NQSWs within the formal work environment. Competencies deemed essential for advancing the work readiness of NQSWs need to be identified and explored and developed, to ensure a successful transition into the workplace.

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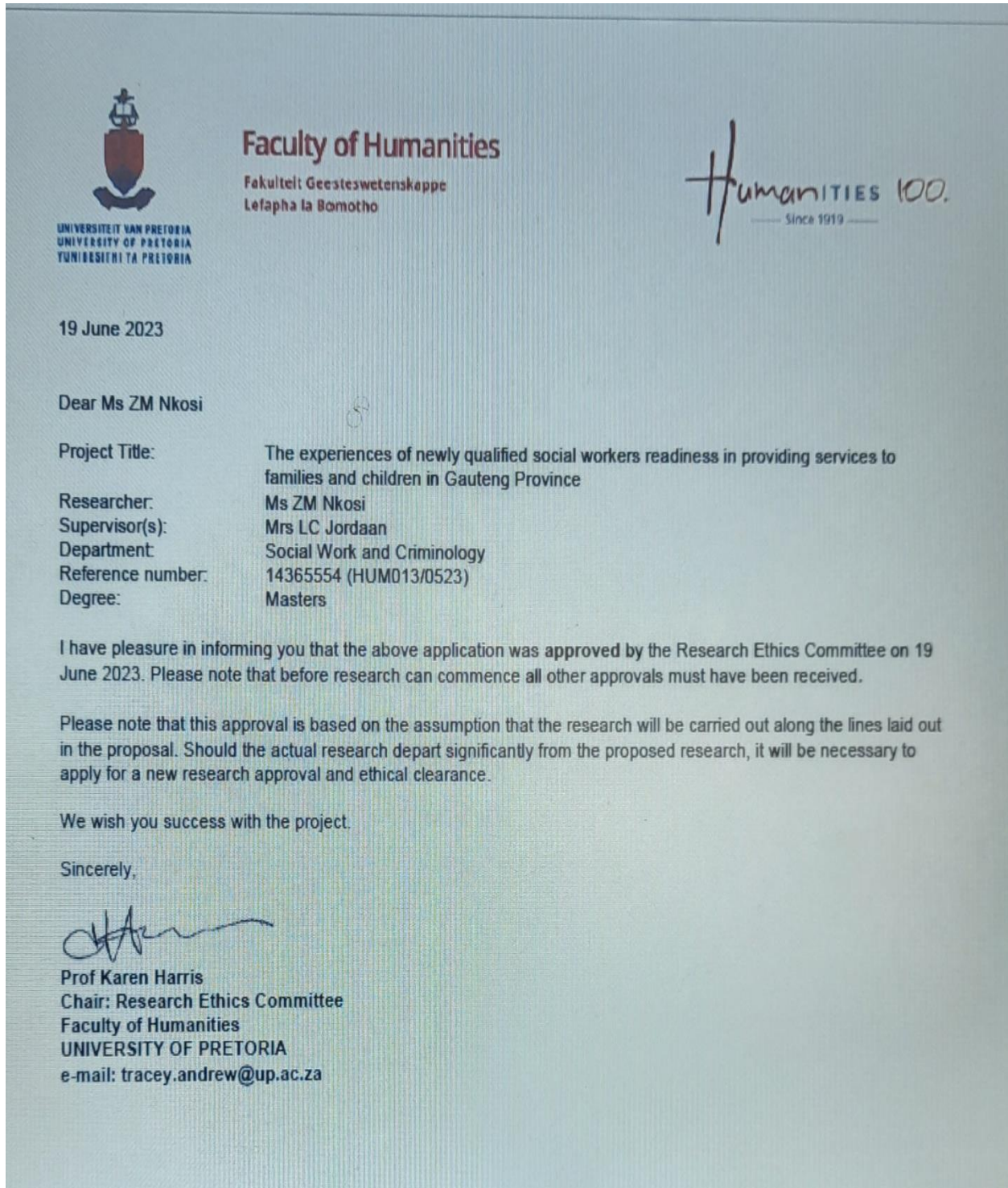
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6 ADDENDA

6.1 ADDENDUM A: RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



6.2 ADDENDUM B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS

Title of this research: The experiences of Newly qualified social workers' readiness to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province.

Researcher: Z. M. Nkosi

Semi-structured Interview

The following information is relevant to the facilitation of the Semi-structured Interview:

- The research participants (newly qualified social workers) will receive an informed consent form to complete prior to the research process, which will contain all relevant information regarding the process;
- The duration of the semi-structured interview is scheduled to be 45 minutes;
- The interviews are to be scheduled on the availability of both the participant and the researcher.

Interview questions

All the recruited participants will be asked the following questions in the beginning of the interview, to attain their biographical information and to build rapport with them:

- What is your name? False names or code numbers will be used in the research report writing in order to maintain confidentiality.
- How old are you?
- Where are you working? Name of the organisation will not be revealed due to confidentiality.
 - How long have you been rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province?
- How would you prefer to be addressed in terms of Gender?

The following questions will be asked to focus on the research topic:

1. When did you qualify as a social worker?

2. When did you start working at the current organisation?
3. Please describe your role as a social worker in the organisation (may use the name of the organisation).
4. Please share with me your positive experiences when rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province
5. What are your negative experiences when rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province
6. What are the challenges you are experiencing or have experienced while rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province?
7. How do you cope with your day-to-day challenges in rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province?
 8. Do you feel/think you were/are ready to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province?
 1. What do you consider as 'readiness'?
 2. What does readiness mean to you?
 3. Discuss the general perception of the readiness for work of NQSWs in the organisation.
 4. Do organisational views differ from views of the NQSWs?
 5. What are your experiences regarding your readiness to offer social work services to families and children in Gauteng?
 6. What competencies do you deem necessary for you to be considered work ready?
 7. What would you recommend to enhance your readiness for practice?
9. Based on your experiences of rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province, what suggestions do you have in addressing some of the challenges that you have/are experiencing in rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province?
 10. Please share with me the nature of the support you are getting in your workplace regarding service delivery
 1. Are NQSWs provided with entry-level work-related support (including additional supervision and protected caseloads)? Consider activities or structures that could enhance general support in the workplace with a focus on the transition from graduate to social worker.
 2. Is sufficient supervision provided on a regular basis?

3. Should supervision for NQSWs be specifically customised for the specific needs of this group? And if so, what are essential elements required for supervision with NQSWs?

Discuss omissions or gaps in knowledge of the NQSWs that are either expected and or required by the employer.

ADDENDUM C: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE ORGANISATION





Enquiries: Dr. Sello Mokoena
Tel: 082 331 0786
File no.: 04/03/23

Dear Z. Nkosi

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Thank you for your application to conduct research within the Gauteng Department of Social Development.


Your application on the research on *"The Experiences of Newly Qualified Social Workers' readiness in providing services to families and children in Gauteng."* as approved by *University of Pretoria* been considered and approved for support by the Department as it was found to be beneficial to the Department's vision and mission. The approval is subject to the Department's terms and conditions as endorsed on the 13th November 2019.

You have permission to interview departmental officials and beneficiaries, conduct observations and access relevant documents where necessary.

May I take this opportunity to wish you well on the journey you are about to embark on.

We look forward to a value adding research and a fruitful co-operation.

With thanks


Dr Sello Mokoena
Director: Research and Policy Coordination
Date: 12/04/2023



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56 Gladiator Street, Rhodesfield, Kempton Park, P.O. Box 10444, Aston Manor, 1630

Dear Ms Nkosi

23 March 2023

RE: PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCHPROJECT

I have consulted with the social workers at Tutela Family Care Brakpan regarding their willingness to participate in your research project. Since they are eager to assist you I hereby give consent that Ms Fikile Maseko and Zamalunga Maqula may participate in your research project.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicolene." followed by a period.

Nicolene van der Merwe.
Assistant Director –TUTELA