THE EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS AS FIRST-LINE MANAGERS IN A WELFARE ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

THE EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS AS FIRST-LINE MANAGERS IN A WELFARE ORGANIZATION

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Supervision is an important aspect in the practice of social work. It enhances the service delivery of social workers to clients. Supervision also gives direction to functional workers. A supervisory position in any welfare organization is a managerial position and supervisors are thus managers. It is therefore important to understand the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers in a welfare organization.

In light of the above, the goal of this study was to explore the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers in a welfare organization during and after transition from supervisee to supervisor.

The research question arising from the goal of the study was: "What are the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers in a welfare organization during and after transition from supervisee to supervisor?"

A qualitative, explorative study was conducted, with the following objectives:

- To conceptualize social work supervision theoretically, based on available literature.
- To explore empirically the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers, during and after role transition from supervisee to supervisor.
• To make recommendations regarding the situation of social work supervisors, in order to improve their service rendering.

Nine social work supervisors from the North-Rand Region Service Offices and Institutions of the Department of Social Development formed the sample for the study. After the conclusion of a literature study and pilot study, data collection was based on semi-structured interviews with selected supervisors.

The main conclusions drawn from the research findings were that social work supervisors go through some difficult experiences when they move from the position of social worker to that of a supervisor. This requires support from their superiors which, according to the study, is currently lacking.

The study indicated a need for the generation of more in-depth literature on social work supervision in general. The study was concluded by relevant recommendations to the Department of Social Development in the Gauteng Province.

Key Words:
Social work supervision
Supervisor
Supervisee
Manager
Experience
OPSOMMING

THE EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS AS
FIRST-LINE MANAGERS IN A WELFARE ORGANIZATION

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Supervisie is ’n belangrike aspek in die praktiek van maatskaplike werk. Dit bevorder maatskaplike werkers se dienslewing aan klîente. Supervisie rig ook funksionele werkers. ’n Posisie as supervisor in enige welsynsorganisasie is ’n bestuurspos en supervisors is dus bestuurders. Dit is dus belangrik om die ondervinding van maatskaplikewerksupervisors as eerstevlak-bestuurders in ’n welsynsorganisasie te verstaan.

In die lig van bogenoemde het hierdie studie ten doel om die ervaring van maatskaplikewerksupervisors as eerstevlak-bestuurders in ’n welsynsorganisasie tydens en ná die oorgang vanaf ’n maatskaplike werker na ’n supervisor te ondersoek.

Die navorsingsvraag wat hieruit voortspruit, is: “Wat is die ervaring van maatskaplikewerksupervisors as eerstevlak-bestuurders in ’n welsynsorganisasie tydens en ná die oorgang van ’n maatskaplike werker na ’n supervisor?”
'n Kwalitatiewe, verkennende studie is gedoen met die volgende doelstellings:

- Om 'n teoretiese ondersoek, gebaseer op beskikbare literatuur van maatskaplikewerksupervisie, te onderneem.
- Om die ondervinding van maatskaplikewerksupervisors empiries te ondersoek as eerstevlak-bestuurders in 'n welsynsorganisasie tydens en ná die oorgang van 'n maatskaplike werker na 'n supervisor.
- Om aanbevelings te maak aangaande die situasie van maatskaplikewerksupervisors ter verbetering van hulle dienslewering.

Nege maatskaplikewerksupervisors van die Departement Maatskaplike Ontwikkeling, Noord-Rand Streek in Gauteng se Dienskantore en inrigtings het as steekproef vir die studie gedien. Ná die voltooiing van 'n literatuurondersoek en loodsondersoek is die data versamel, deur semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met die geselekteerde supervisors te voer.

Die vernaamste gevolgtrekking uit die navorsingsbevindinge is dat maatskaplikewerksupervisors etlike uitdagende belewenisse ervaar wanneer hulle die rang van maatskaplike werker vir dié van supervisor verruil. Dit vereis dat hulle deur meer senior personeellede ondersteun en begelei moet word, wat volgens hierdie studie nie tans die geval is nie.

Die studie dui daarop dat 'n behoefte bestaan vir die ontwikkeling van meer indringende literatuur aangaande maatskaplikewerksupervisie in die algemeen. Die studie is voltrek met relevante aanbevelings vir die Departement van Maatskaplike Ontwikkeling in Gauteng.

Sleutelwoorde:

Maatskaplikewerksupervisie
Supervisor
Maatskaplike Werker
Bestuurder
Ervaring
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1-GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION 1
1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION 3
1.3 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY 6
  1.3.1 Goal 6
  1.3.2 Objectives 6
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 7
1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH 7
1.6 TYPE OF RESEARCH 8
1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 8
  1.7.1 Research Design 8
  1.7.2 Data collection method 9
  1.7.3 Data analysis 10
1.8 PILOT STUDY 12
  1.8.1 Testing the interview schedule 12
  1.8.2 Feasibility of the study 12
1.9 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD 14
  1.9.1 Population 14
  1.9.2 Sample and sampling method 14
1.10 ETHICAL ASPECTS 15
  1.10.1 Avoidance of harm 15
  1.10.2 Informed consent 16
  1.10.3 Deception of subjects and/or respondents 16
  1.10.4 Violation of privacy/anonymity/confidentiality 16
  1.10.5 Actions and competence of the researcher 17
  1.10.6 Release or publication of the findings 17
  1.10.7 Debriefing of respondents 18
1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 18
1.12 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS
1.12.1 Supervisor 18
1.12.2 Supervision 19
1.12.3 Manager 19
1.13 CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH REPORT 20

CHAPTER 2-SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION IN A WELFARE ORGANIZATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION 21
2.2 DEFINITIONS OF THE CONCEPTS SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION, SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR AND SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISEE 22
2.2.1 Social work supervision 22
2.2.2 Social work supervisor 23
2.2.3 Social work supervisee 24
2.3 THE PLACE OF A SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR IN THE STRUCTURE OF A WELFARE ORGANIZATION 25
2.4 THE MANAGERIAL FUNCTIONS OF A SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR 28
2.4.1 Planning 29
2.4.2 Control 30
2.4.3 Organizing 31
2.4.4 Leading 31
2.4.5 Coordinating 33
2.4.6 Directing 33
2.4.7 Motivating 34
2.5 ROLES OF A SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR 34
2.5.1 Informational roles 35
2.5.2 Interpersonal roles 35
2.5.3 Decisional roles 36
2.6 EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS 36
2.6.1 Expectations of and responsibilities towards subordinates/supervisees 37
2.6.2 Responsibilities towards peers 38
2.6.3 Expectations of and responsibilities towards higher management/ Superiors 38
CHAPTER 4- CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION 97
4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS 98
4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS 102
4.4 ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY 103
4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS 104
LIST OF REFERENCES 105
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: The differences between staff (social workers) and operational managers (social work supervisors) 26
Table 2: Gender of respondents 65
Table 3: Race of respondents 65
Table 4: Marital status of the respondents 66
Table 5: Home language of the respondents 66
Table 6: Age range of the respondents 67
Table 7: Respondents’ academic qualifications 68
Table 8: Respondents’ years of experience as social workers 68
Table 9: Respondents’ years of experience as social work supervisors 69
Table 10: A summary of identified themes and sub-themes 70
Table 11: Accomplishment of the study objectives 104

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Biographical details
Appendix B: Semi-structured interview schedule
Appendix C: Letter of ethical clearance
Appendix D: Editorial letter
CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Before 1920 very little was written about social work supervision. During those years supervision did not carry the same connotation it has today. According to Kadushin and Harkness (2002:1), the term supervision applies to the inspection and review of programs and institutions rather than to the supervision of individual workers within the program.

The shift in focus of social work supervision began in 1920, when it started to focus on the individual social worker. This focus originated in the Charity Organizations Society Movement in the nineteenth century. To focus on individuals, supervision was implemented on “visitors” or volunteers who were rendering a direct service by giving support to families. There was a need for these “visitors” to be supervised and those who supervised them were then called “paid agents”. The paid agents were the predecessors of the modern supervisor. Each agent supervisor was responsible for a sizable number of visitors (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002:2).

With time, social work supervision developed into what it is today. In the beginning, the social work supervisor had a greater responsibility to tell the supervisee what needed to be done because it was assumed that a supervisor possesses more knowledge than the supervisee. Kadushin and Harkness (2002:12) note that the supervisor, knowing what was best, told the worker what needed to be done.

As it continued to change and improve, social work supervision adopted a participatory approach where social workers started to have a say in matters concerning them and their work. They started to be involved in matters such as planning. This is explained by Glendenning (in Kadushin & Harkness, 2002:12), who states that supervision moved from telling the supervisees what to do, to a greater encouragement of supervisee participation in planning and in increased mutuality in the supervisor-supervisee relationship. This also means that in social work supervision, a relationship between the supervisee and the supervisor is important. Munson (2002:11) confirms that a relationship has to exist between a supervisor and a supervisee when stating:
“Supervision should be a mutual sharing of questions, concerns, observations, and speculations to aid in selection of alternative techniques to apply in practice”. He goes on to say that practitioners should participate in supervision, rather than be the recipient of it.

An important question in the context of social work supervision is: Why should social workers be supervised? The researcher’s view is that supervision is important because it is through supervision that social workers, particularly the new graduates, receive guidance on their work from their supervisors. Munson (2002:23) adds to this by stating: “New graduates need assistance to integrate the many practice demands that are marginally covered in educational programs. It is a mistake to assume that the recent graduate is totally prepared to be a practitioner” (Munson, 2002:23).

This study focused on the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers during and after transition from social worker (supervisee) to supervisor. The researcher wanted to understand what social workers experienced when they became supervisors, and whether or not they anticipated these experiences before assuming the position of social work supervisor. Questions such as the social work supervisor being prepared for the task beforehand, the expectations around the position of supervisor, the training of social work supervisors, and responsibilities of a social work supervisor are some of the questions which the researcher wanted to get answers for.

This study also sought to:

- bring to light whether or not social work supervisors received the recognition and support they needed from senior managers and supervisees; and
- give the supervisors the opportunity to explain their situation, because it seemed as if social work supervisors did not have recognized platforms at their welfare organizations where they could make their situation known and in return receive the necessary support.

The researcher envisaged that the study would benefit welfare organizations, particularly the Department of Social Development where the study was undertaken, in the following manner:

- The plight of supervisors will be known.
- The study will help supervisees who aspire to become supervisors in the sense that they will become aware of what to expect when they become supervisors.
- Welfare organizations, particularly the Department of Social Development where the study was undertaken, will be able to improve the conditions of supervisors after learning of their plight through this study.
1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION

Sekaran (2003:69) defines a problem as: “Any situation where a gap exists between the actual and the desired ideal states”. However, Sekaran emphasises that a problem does not necessarily mean that something is seriously wrong with the current situation or that it needs to be rectified immediately.

Welman and Kruger (1999:12) define a research problem as: “Some difficulty, which the researcher experiences in the context of either a theoretical or practical situation and to which she wants to obtain a solution”.

The researcher viewed her study as worth exploring because of the professional observation made by the researcher that becoming a social work supervisor brought with it some challenges, which can also be described as problems. These challenges include the following:

- The perception of supervisors when accepting a supervisory position.
- The expectations around a supervisory position.
- Education and training of social work supervisors.
- Transition from supervisee to social work supervisor.

Regarding the perception of social work supervisors when accepting the position of supervisor, the question that came to the mind of the researcher was: “What did they think the position entail?” Perception can sometimes be distorted. Kadushin and Harkness (2002:285) state: “Because of a frequently distorted perception of the supervisor’s position new supervisors experience ‘reality shock’ as they encounter the reality of supervision.” The perception of social work supervisors when accepting a supervisory position evoked some curiosity in the researcher and therefore this needed to be explored.

What the supervisor expects from the position might be totally different from what the post itself offers. It is important for social work supervisors to know what they should expect from the position and what others expect from them while they are in this position. Salmon (1999:4-5) mentions some of the things that are expected of a supervisor:
• Supervisors are expected to communicate effectively, to build strong work relationships, to foster teamwork, and to demonstrate leadership ability in support of business goals.

• Supervisors are expected to recognize the talent of others and to assist their employees in developing skills and potential through active coaching, training, counselling and recognition of their accomplishments.

• Supervisors are expected to work effectively with their managers and their peers as members of a management team so that their collective efforts will set an example of excellence and demonstrate a commitment to quality that will be a standard to their employees, their company, and their industry.

The expectations around the position of supervisor are also linked to their position in the management hierarchy of an organization. It is generally understood that supervisors, including social work supervisors, are at the lowest level of the management hierarchy in an organization. Bernard, Rexworthy, Blackman, Rothwell & Weaver (1997:2) give a description of the position of supervisor as synonymous to first-line management when they state that: “At first-line or supervisory level, the responsibilities of managers are mostly for the running of day-to-day activities; they and their people are often the ones who are closest to the organization’s customers and clients and they must be constantly anticipating their needs and meeting their expectations”.

On the supervisor’s level of management in the hierarchical structure, Robbins and De Cenzo (1998:23) note: “First-line supervisors are the lowest level of management and are responsible for directing day-to-day activities.”

The education and training of social work supervisors are about being prepared in advance for the position of supervisor, whether supervisors were equipped beforehand with the knowledge and skills for supervision or if they only needed on-the-job training. Botha (2002:5) emphasizes the importance of supervisors receiving training and education for the job in order to equip them with the required skills by stating: “The education of supervisors shall teach them to think like supervisors and not like social workers. If this notion is not developed the supervisor merely continues to practice social work through the social workers and supervision is out of the question.” This means that supervision needs a shift of mindset and focus.

Formal training of supervisors is important. Lack of training leaves the supervisor with feelings of uncertainty and doubt. Kadushin and Harkness (2002:282), with regard to lack of training, state:
“Because few supervisors had formal training in supervision prior to the appointment, they felt considerable anxiety about whether they could do the job.” Botha (2002:5) notes that the fact that supervisors are normally selected from those that perform best as operative workers is counter-productive, as this does not guarantee that “the incumbent would be an efficient supervisor”. She further comments that “education for supervisors should be explicit, specific and direct, in order that their attitude towards supervision can be positively influenced” (Botha, 2002:5). However, supervisors also learnt what supervision was all about from their supervisors when they were still social workers. As Kadushin and Harkness (2002:282) note: “Some training in supervision is, of course, absorbed as a consequence of being a supervisee”.

Transition into a supervisory position could become a problem if the incumbent was not properly prepared for the job beforehand. There must be proper and enough preparation for the supervisor to move from the position of social worker to that of supervisor in order to reduce the stress of adjustment. Robbins and De Cenzo (1998:18) note: “The trauma is unique when one moves into first-line management and it is unlike anything managers will encounter later in their rise up the organizational level”. What Robbins and De Cenzo are saying is that because supervision is the first-line management, it requires more adjustment than in the other higher managerial positions that follow. Supervision is the ushering point to other higher management positions.

Botha (2002:5) notes the following about transition:

- A supervisor has to identify himself/herself with his/her role as supervisor, wherein attention is given to the values, norms and behaviour of supervisors.
- A supervisor has to withdraw from his/her role as direct service provider and invest in the emotions, knowledge and energy of his/her new role.

The challenges and problems that have been discussed so far may have a negative impact on the supervision process. These problems left the supervisor frustrated and confused. Many supervisors were not sure if they were doing the right thing, because they did not receive proper guidance and preparation before assuming the position. As a result, supervision did not achieve its desired result of developing the supervisees to professional maturity because supervisors themselves were not sure of what they are doing.
Based on the above-mentioned facts, the researcher is of the opinion that there was a need to explore and describe the current experiences of social work supervisors regarding these challenges and problems so that their work performance or service rendering could be improved. It seems as if supervisors were not adequately prepared for the role transition from social worker to supervisor, resulting in insufficient guidance to supervisees which impacted on social work clients.

1.3 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.3.1 Goal

According to Fouchè and De Vos (2005:104), the terms “goal”, “purpose” and “aim” are often used interchangeably, i.e. these words are synonyms for one another. Their meaning implies the broader, more abstract conception of “the end toward which effort or ambition is directed”. Fouchè and De Vos (2005:104) further state that: “The one (goal, purpose or aim) is the dream”. The researcher saw this dream as that which the research study wanted to achieve at the end.

The goal of this research study was to explore the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers during and after transition from supervisee to supervisor.

1.3.2 Objectives

Bless and Higson-Smith (in De Vos, 2005:106) state that the objective of exploratory research is “to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or individual”. They go on to say that the need for such a study could arise from a lack of basic information in a new area of interest, or in order to become more familiar with a situation so as to formulate a problem or develop a hypothesis.

The objectives of this research study were as follows:

- to conceptualize social work supervision theoretically, based on the available literature;
- to explore empirically the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers, during and after role transition from supervisee to supervisor; and
• to make recommendations regarding the situation of social work supervisors, in order to improve their work performance and service rendering.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the fact that the researcher did not have sufficient information on the current experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers and also given the exploratory nature of the study, a research question was formulated to guide the study. The choice of a research topic influenced the research question. According to Knight (2002:10), “the interest in a topic may be a starting point”. The researcher’s interest in the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers during and after transition led to the formulation of a research question which was: “What are the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers in a welfare organization during and after transition from supervisee to supervisor?”

1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach is linked to a research question. A qualitative approach was opted for due to the exploratory nature of the study. Denzin and Lincoln (2003:5) explain qualitative research as involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This, according to them, means that qualitative researchers study people in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand.

From the above quotations it becomes clear that qualitative research seeks to explore and understand people's feelings, experiences, lifestyles and perceptions.

The focus of the researcher’s study was on the experiences of social work supervisors in the context of a welfare organization as first-line managers. In order to understand these experiences, the researcher had to explore them, which implied a qualitative approach. The respondents described their experiences to the researcher. Interviews were used to conduct the study to get the required information from the respondents.
1.6 TYPE OF RESEARCH

In the context of this study, the researcher utilized applied research as the most appropriate type of research. According to Fouchè and De Vos (2005:105) “applied research … is aimed at solving specific policy problems or at helping practitioners accomplish tasks. It is focused on solving problems in practice”.

Welman and Kruger (1999:22) refer to applied research in the context of an industry, which can be likened to an organization in the study of the researcher. They explain that the need for research in industry develops because of organizational problems. Problems arise, for example, with excessive absenteeism, staff turnover and job dissatisfaction, and this could be the beginning of a study that is designed to reduce the seriousness of the problems. They go further by stating that: “The goal of applied research in industry is to improve the effectiveness of the organization” (Welman & Kruger, 1999:22).

Applied research was thus relevant to the researcher’s study, because the researcher observed that social work supervisors experience problems in practice with regard to:

- training for the position of supervisor;
- expectations;
- the actual performance of supervision tasks; and
- transition and adjustment.

The assumption was that social work supervisors went through certain experiences, which called for exploration. This study aimed to arrive at possible solutions and recommendations for the problems experienced by these supervisors.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Research Design

According to Mouton (2001:55), a research design is “a plan or blueprint of how one intends conducting the research”. According to this explanation, research design focuses on the end product and the logic of the research. Although the term "design" is mostly used for quantitative
research, it also fits in the qualitative paradigm. However, Fouchè (2005:269) differentiates qualitative research design from the quantitative research design by stating that: “Qualitative research design … does not usually provide the researcher with a step-by-step plan or a fixed recipe to follow”. As much as a design is a blueprint on how the research will be conducted, it should also be borne in mind that in qualitative research it can be an overall guide on how the study will be conducted.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher made use of the collective case study design. According to Mark (1996:219), the collective case study furthers the understanding of the researcher about a social issue or population to be studied. In the context of this study, the researcher wanted to further her understanding of social work supervisors’ experiences during and after transition from supervisee to supervisor, as a social issue.

1.7.2 Data collection method

According to Greeff (2005:292), qualitative studies typically employ unstructured or semi-structured interviews. The researcher used the semi-structured interview as a data collection method. The choice of this data collection method by the researcher is supported by Greeff (2005:296), when she states: “… researchers use semi-structured interviews in order to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of, a particular topic. This method gives the researcher and participant much more flexibility”. In the context of this study, the researcher wanted to gain a detailed picture of the experiences of social work supervisors during and after transition from supervisee to supervisor.

According to Greeff (2005:296), the researcher chose to use this method for the following reasons:

- The method gave the researcher and the participants much more flexibility.
- The researcher was able to follow up on particularly interesting avenues that emerged in interview, and the participants were able to give a fuller picture.
- Although the researcher had a set of predetermined questions on an interview schedule, the interview was guided by the schedule rather than dictated by it.
- Each participant was perceived as an expert on the subject.
With regard to the study, the researcher wanted to get as much information as possible from the respondents about their experiences as social work supervisors. In order to achieve this, flexibility was required. Interesting avenues that emerged in the interview were followed up. The researcher also gave the respondents freedom to express their experiences and perceptions about being social work supervisors.

1.7.3. Data analysis

De Vos (2005:333) states that data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. The information that has been collected by means of an interview was also analysed so as to bring order and meaning to it. Data were analyzed according to the following four steps, as suggested by Marshall and Rossman (1999:152-159). They have presented nine steps, out of which the researcher has chosen four which were regarded as the most relevant steps in the context of this study.

1.7.3.1 Data collection and recording

According to De Vos (2005:335): “A qualitative study involves inseparable relationship between data collection and data analysis”. To the researcher, this means that the two can be done simultaneously. De Vos (2005:335) continues to explain that data analysis in a qualitative inquiry necessitates a twofold approach: The first aspect involves data analysis at the research site during data collection, while the second aspect involves data analysis away from the site, following a period of data collection.

Limited analysis of data was done by the researcher on the site of data collection. Much of the researcher’s effort was devoted to gathering as much information as possible on the subject. The researcher can report that the analysis that was done on site was mostly to confirm the relevance of the respondents’ responses to the questions and themes at hand. Thorough analysis was done away from the site.

The researcher used a tape recorder to record data when interviewing. Extra batteries were carried and the researcher also took notes on key issues irrespective of the fact that the tape recorder was recording. At intervals during interviews the researcher would make sure if the tape
recorder was functioning well by rewinding and listening to a portion of the interview. This was done so that the researcher would not later discover that the tape recorder was not functioning properly, away from site. As a way of coding, the researcher labelled each cassette at the location, according to the number of each respondent respectively. For example, for respondent A the same label or numbering appeared on the cassette where he/she was recorded. This then made it easier for the researcher when transcribing information from the cassettes to files.

1.7.3.2 Managing (organizing) data

According to Creswell (1998:143), this is the first step in data analysis away from the site. Cresswell also states that at an early stage in the analysis process researchers organize their data into file folders, index, cards or computer folders. With regard to this study and as a way of managing data, the researcher’s starting point was to transcribe information gathered during interviews from the tape recorder (cassettes) to note books. These note books served as manual files or folders and they will be referred to as such. To further simplify the managing of data, each respondent’s information was transcribed in a separate book which was labelled according to the numbering of the respondent.

1.7.3.3 Reading and writing memos

Here the researcher read the data that have been collected and transcribed into files over and over again to be familiar with it. As Marshall and Rossman (1999:153) put it: “Reading, reading, and reading once more through the data forces the researcher to become familiar with the data in intimate ways”. With regard to the study, the researcher read the data that was collected to become familiar with it. It was during this stage of reading where ink highlighters or markers were used to indicate similar responses from the respondents on a particular subject. The similar responses which were highlighted were then identified as themes and sub-themes. Where a theme existed and was highlighted the researcher put a note on the margin of the file, indicating which theme or sub-theme it was.
1.7.3.4 Generating categories, themes and patterns

The previous discussion touched on the subject of themes and categories. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999:154), this is the most difficult, complex, ambiguous, creative and enjoyable phase. The researcher noted similarities in the responses given by respondents and thus similar responses for the same topic at hand was regarded as a theme or a sub-theme. The themes and sub-themes were supported by quotations from the respondents.

1.8. PILOT STUDY

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:155) define a pilot study as: “A small study conducted prior to a larger piece of research to determine whether the methodology, sampling, instruments and analysis are adequate and appropriate”. The researcher views pilot study as a preparatory study before the actual research can take place.

1.8.1 Testing the interview schedule

The researcher interviewed two social work supervisors who are employees of Jabulani Centre in Soshanguve to find out about their experiences as supervisors. These supervisors did not form part of the actual study. One respondent has been in the supervisory position for five years, whilst the other respondent has been in the position for ten years. They were interviewed face-to-face, with the researcher having prepared questions for the interview beforehand. A semi-structured interview schedule was used, as this was also used for the actual study as a method of data collection. Both respondents were satisfied with the way the questions were formulated and there was no need for the researcher to make changes.

1.8.2 Feasibility of the study

Strydom (2005:208) refers to the feasibility of the study by stating that: “Apart from the study of the relevant literature and interviews with experts, it is also necessary to obtain an overview of the actual, practical situation where the prospective investigation will be executed”. Feasibility has to do with whether the study can be undertaken or not.
The researcher was of the opinion that this study could be undertaken because of the following:

- The researcher intended to focus on the social work supervisors who are employed by the Gauteng’s Department of Social Development in the North Rand Region.

- The researcher intended to have a sample of 10 social work supervisors from the North Rand Region of the Gauteng’s Department of Social Development. This was regarded as a manageable group, which would also make it easy for the study to be undertaken.

- Written permission to undertake the research was obtained from the Research Unit of the Gauteng’s Department of Social Development and the researcher submitted it with the research proposal that was approved by the researcher’s supervisor.

- It is the responsibility of the Research Unit of the Department of Social Development to liaise with the offices concerned where a researcher intends to do a study to make the necessary arrangements. In the case of this research, the Research Unit arranged with the North Rand Region of the Gauteng’s Department of Social Development, where the study was undertaken.

- The Department of Social Development views research as part of service delivery and therefore accepts recommendations made in research studies to improve on service delivery. This research study is intended to help the department in reviewing the status of social work supervisors.

- The Research Unit of the Department of Social Development also acts as a support system to persons who are furthering their studies, which includes research. The researcher received support from this unit during the period of her studies.

- Respondents were from the Service Offices and Institutions of the Department of Social Development in the North Rand Region of the Gauteng Province. Arrangements were made by the researcher to meet with the respondents for interviews in their respective offices.
• The Researcher got time off from work to conduct the study. Time off and study leave are arranged for those who are furthering their studies as part of skills development and capacity building.

• The study was conducted at no cost to the Department of Social Development. The expenditure was those of the tape recorder, cassettes, batteries and stationary, as well as travelling costs.

These were the responsibility of the researcher. The researcher used her own transport to visit the respondents in their respective organizations.

1.9 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD

1.9.1 Population

Seaberg (in Strydom & Venter, 2005:193) refers to a population as “the total set from which the individuals or units of the study are chosen”. Sekaran (2003:265) on the other hand notes: “Population refers to the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that which the researcher wishes to investigate”. The population of this study was all 22 social work supervisors who are employed by Gauteng’s Department of Social Development in the North Rand Region. A sample of 10 social work supervisors for this study was selected out of this population of 22 social work supervisors and they all stood a chance of being sampled for the study.

1.9.2 Sample and sampling method

A probability sampling method was used for this research study and a sample of 10 social work supervisors were chosen out of a total of 22 supervisors in the North Rand Region of Gauteng’s Department of Social Development. Kirk and Seaberg (in Strydom, 2005:198) state: “A probability sample is one in which each person (or other sampling unit) in the population has the same known probability of being selected”. The researcher made use of simple random sampling in the context of this study. For the researcher to have the required number of 10 supervisors she wrote each
supervisor’s name on a piece of paper. These pieces of paper were put in a plastic bag and thereafter the 10 required names were randomly drawn from the plastic bag.

1.10 ETHICAL ASPECTS

According to Strydom (2005: 57), ethics is “a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students”. Ethical aspects can be viewed as guidelines of what to do and what not to do in a research study.

Ethical issues relevant to this research study are discussed hereunder.

1.10.1 Avoidance of harm

Regarding harm to respondents, Strydom (2005:58) postulates that subjects can be harmed in a physical and/or emotional manner. It is therefore the responsibility of the researcher to protect the respondents from any physical or emotional harm by informing them beforehand of any possibility of such harm.

It is the opinion of the researcher that failure to mention any possible harm in the study could be viewed as unethical. When the subjects are made aware of the potential harm, they are able to make informed decisions. Those who choose to continue with the study are at least aware of what to expect in the course of the research study. With regard to this study, the researcher did not foresee any possible physical harm.

Emotional harm could take place, although on a very low scale. Some issues could possibly stir an emotional response in the respondents, for example the lack of training and support by senior managers during the time of transition from direct worker to supervisor. The researcher planned to deal with any such emotions, should they arise. The study did not stir any emotions as such.
1.10.2 Informed consent

The researcher viewed informed consent as getting the respondents to participate after they had obtained the necessary information about the study at hand. In this regard Williams, Tutty and Grinnell (1995:30) state: “Obtaining informed consent implies that all possible or adequate information on the goal of the investigation, the procedures that will be followed during the investigation, the possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which respondents may be exposed, as well as the credibility of the researcher, be rendered to potential subjects or their legal representatives”.

With regard to this study, the researcher clearly explained to the respondents in the informed consent letter what the study was all about so that they could make a conscious decision to participate or not to participate. Informed consent was done in writing, because at this stage the respondents were committing themselves to working with the researcher. Informed consent must make it clear that participation in the study is not compulsory. Thomas and Smith (2003:21) refer to informed consent as “voluntary participation”.

1.10.3 Deception of subjects and/or respondents

Neuman (2000:229) explains that deception occurs when the researcher intentionally misleads subjects by way of written or verbal instructions, the actions of other people, or certain aspects of the setting. Corey, Corey, and Callanan (1993:230) define deception as “withholding information, or offering incorrect information in order to ensure participation of subjects when they would otherwise possibly have refused to it”. The researcher gave key points on what the study was all about in the consent letter which helped to reduce the chances of deceiving the subjects. The informed consent letter also stated that the results of the study will be made known to the respondents without divulging their names.

1.10.4 Violation of privacy / anonymity / confidentiality

Sieber (in Strydom, 2005:61) defines privacy as “that which normally is not intended for others to observe or analyze”. Sieber also defines confidentiality as: “Agreements between persons that limit
others’ access to private information”. Babbie (2001:472) states that confidentiality implies that “only the researcher and possibly a few members of his staff should be aware of the identity of participants, and that the latter should have made a commitment with regard to confidentiality”. He states that anonymity refers to not revealing the identity of the subjects afterwards.

The researcher focused on privacy and confidentiality as they were more applicable to this study. The respondents did have a right to confidentiality, privacy and anonymity.

It was important to give assurance to the respondents that the information they gave would be handled confidentially and that their right to privacy would be maintained. The researcher did not disclose the identity of the respondents. An alphabet system to identify the respondents (e.g. Respondent A, etc.) was made use of in order to protect the respondents’ identities. Privacy was ensured by conducting the interviews in neutral venues. Interviews were held in the boardrooms of the respective offices where respondents work. The researcher thought that by using their boardrooms, the respondents would not feel intimidated by the process as they would be in an environment they were familiar with.

1.10.5 Actions and competence of the researcher

Strydom (2005:63) states that researchers are ethically obliged to ensure that they are competent and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed investigation. The competence of the researcher ensured valid results of the study. The researcher has deemed herself competent to conduct the study based on the professional experience she has and the fact that she has passed a course in research methodology.

1.10.6 Release or publication of the findings

The release of the findings is basically about writing a research report. According to Strydom (2005:65): “Researchers should compile the report as accurately and objectively as possible…” The researcher will make her findings available to the public. The researcher has compiled the report as accurately and objectively as possible. Findings of this study will be made available to Gauteng’s Department of Social Development and the University of Pretoria.
1.10.7. Debriefing of respondents

According to Babbie (2001:475), debriefing entails interviews to discover any problems generated by the research experience so that those problems can be corrected. Regarding this study, there were no issues that emotionally disturbed the respondents and therefore debriefing was not necessary. However, the researcher enquired from the respondents if there were matters that disturbed their emotions so that debriefing could be done, but the response from the respondents was that there were none. Respondents were grateful that this study will expose their challenges as social work supervisors and that they were given an opportunity to explain their experiences.

1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the study are as follows:

- Literature on social work supervision is scarce, especially recent literature. The researcher tried to make use of recent literature as much as possible, but still used some old literature where information was absolutely necessary and relevant to the study.

- Not all social work supervisors sampled for the study were available to take part in the study. One respondent was sick for a long time and the researcher could not wait indefinitely as this was delaying the study. The researcher finally interviewed 9 respondents instead of 10.

1.12 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.12.1 Supervisor

Kadushin and Harkness (2002:18-19) define a supervisor as “an overseer, one who watches over the work of another with responsibility for its quality”. In the same manner, the New Dictionary of Social Work (1995:64) defines a supervisor as “a social worker to whom authority has been delegated to coordinate, promote and evaluate the professional service rendering of social workers through the process of supervision”.

18
These definitions bring to light the authority and responsibility vested upon a supervisor as a manager in an organization. In the context of this study a social work supervisor is a social worker who has a senior position in a welfare organization and has been vested with the authority to manage and oversee the work of other junior social workers in the same organization.

1.12.2 Supervision

Bernard and Goodyear (1998:6) define supervision as:

“An intervention provided by more senior member or members of that same profession. This relationship is evaluative, extends overtime and has the simultaneous purpose of enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person(s), monitoring the quality of professional service offered to the client(s) s/he or they see(s) and serving as gatekeeper of those who are to enter the particular profession”.

According to Davies (2000:340), social work supervision is “a relationship based activity which enables practitioners to reflect upon the connection between tasks and processes within their work”.

Supervision in the context of this study is both a process and a tool, which is used to monitor the activities of social workers. Monitoring the activities meets the needs of the clients.

1.12.3 Manager

Daft (2000:17) defines a manager according to his/her level in the hierarchical structure of an organization when he states that a first-line manager is a manager who is at the first or second management level and is directly responsible for the production of goods and services.
The researcher views a manager as an officer who occupies a senior position in an organization and has a span of control (team of supervisees) under him/her to which he/she gives leadership and guidance to make sure that quality services take place in that same organization.

1.13 CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

Chapter 1
Chapter 1 discusses the motivation for the choice of subject, problem formulation, goal and objectives of the study, research question, research approach used, type of research, research design used, research procedures and strategies used, pilot study, population of the study, ethical issues and the definition of concepts.

Chapter 2
Chapter 2 will give a theoretical overview regarding social work supervision in a welfare organization.

Chapter 3
Empirical data and the main findings will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4
Chapter 4 will give an overview regarding conclusions and recommendations based on the research findings.
CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION IN A WELFARE ORGANIZATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As the goal of this study is to empirically explore the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers, during and after the transition from supervisee to supervisor, it is important to have an in-depth discussion on the nature of social work supervision in the context of a welfare organization. The researcher is of the opinion that supervision in social work is important because this is where the supervisor gives guidance to the supervisee on what services to render to clients and how to go about doing it. This guidance in turn benefits the clients and the agency when the social worker, through the guidance of the supervisor, renders effective and quality service. Social work supervision therefore aims to render quality service to clients. The researcher’s opinion is confirmed by Mbau (2005:20) when he says: “The main reason behind social work supervision is directed towards benefiting the social worker, the agency clients and the agency in which the particular social worker is employed”.

Social work supervision is important as it helps the supervisee to integrate theory and practice. The integration of theory and practice is needed by those social workers who are still new in the field of social work. Munson (2002:23) agrees with this when he states that new graduates need assistance to integrate the many practice demands that are marginally covered in educational programs. It is a mistake to assume that the recent graduate is totally prepared to be a practitioner. In other words, supervision helps the social worker to understand the dynamics and challenges in the field of practice and this subsequently helps the social worker to properly adjust in the work situation.

Another reason why social work supervision is important is because it helps the social worker to deal with stress and burnout. Because a social worker works with disadvantaged people, there is a chance that the social worker will experience stress and burnout. Munson (2002:28) acknowledges that stress does occur in the lives of social workers when he says: “When practitioners cannot cope with the practice demands, they need to turn for help to a trustworthy source. The supervisor should be, and is, the most appropriate resource for dealing with such difficulties…” The researcher is of the opinion that by allowing the social worker to communicate his/her frustrations in a supervised
environment when dealing with the challenges, the supervisor is actually supporting the social worker.

This chapter will focus on the following important aspects regarding social work supervision in a welfare organization:

- Definition of relevant concepts, namely supervision, supervisor and supervisee.
- The place of a social work supervisor in a hierarchical structure of a welfare organization.
- The managerial functions of a social work supervisor.
- Roles of a social work supervisor.
- Expectations and responsibilities of social work supervisors.
- Education and training of social work supervisors.
- Transition and adjustment of social work supervisors.

To understand the practice of social work supervision in a welfare organization the relevant concepts which are central to supervision need to be defined. These concepts are supervision, supervisor and supervisee, which will be defined in the next section.

2.2 DEFINITIONS OF THE CONCEPTS SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION, SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR AND SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISEE

“The need for the definition of basic concepts is a prerequisite for any disciplined scientific endeavour” (De Vos, 1998:19). Its rationale lies in the powerful role that the clear definition of basic concepts plays in the need to come to grips with any particular field of study, in this case the social work supervision field. Keeping this in mind, the researcher will focus on the definitions of supervision, supervisor and supervisee.

2.2.1 Social work supervision

Botha (2002:10) defines social work supervision as “a process whereby the supervisor performs educational, supportive and administrative functions in order to promote efficient and professional rendering of service”. Bernard and Goodyear (1998:6) define supervision as:
“An intervention provided by more senior member or members of that same profession. This relationship is evaluative, extends overtime and has the simultaneous purpose of enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person(s), monitoring the quality of professional service offered to the client(s) s/he or they see(s) and serving as gatekeeper of those who are to enter the particular profession”.

Munson (2002:10) defines social work supervision from a clinical point of view when he notes: “Clinical supervision is an interactional process in which a supervisor has been assigned or designated to assist in and direct practice of supervisees in the areas of teaching, administration and helping”.

Based on the above, it seems as if supervision in the context of social work is both a process and a tool which is used to monitor the activities of social workers, which in turn are meant to meet the needs of the clients. By implementing supervision, the supervisor continuously seeks to educate and support the supervisees to grow to a level where they are confident and independent in their service rendering.

These definitions thus indicate the functions of supervision, which means that there is no way that social work supervision can be implemented if its functions are not included in the process. It has also emerged from these definitions that social work supervision is an indirect service to a social worker, which aims to render quality and efficient service to the consumers, who are the clients.

2.2.2 Social work supervisor

According to Kadushin and Harkness (2002:23), a social work supervisor is “an agency administrative-staff member to whom authority is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance and evaluate the on-the-job performance of the supervisees for whose work he is held accountable. The supervisor’s ultimate objective is to deliver to agency clients the best possible service…” From this definition it is clear that a supervisor is not part of the functional level, as it is said he/she is an administrative staff member.
Botha (2002:10) extracts a definition of a social work supervisor from the New Dictionary of Social Work, defining a social work supervisor as “a social worker to whom authority has been delegated to coordinate, promote and evaluate the professional service rendering of social workers through the process of supervision”. In both these definitions, the fact that a social work supervisor has been vested with authority comes out very clearly.

The definition of a supervisor by Robbins and De Cenzo (1998:4) is based on the level they occupy on the hierarchical structure. They state that “first-line managers are usually called supervisors”.

In the context of this study, a social work supervisor is a social worker who occupies a senior position in a welfare organization and who has been vested with authority to manage and oversee the professional work of other junior employees/social workers in the same organization.

### 2.2.3. Social work supervisee

A social work supervisee will be defined according to the operational position he/she occupies. A supervisee can also be referred to as the employee. Munson (2002:10) defines supervisees as: “Graduates of accredited school of social work who are engaged in practice that assists people to overcome physical, financial, social, psychological disruptions in functioning through individual, group, or family interventions”.

From the researcher’s point of view, a social work supervisee is an employee of a welfare organization and a graduate of a school of social work, who has the responsibility to render social work services to the clients by applying the methods of social work, and who is accountable to a social work supervisor.

The above-mentioned definitions of a supervisee indicate that a supervisee is not a manager and that he/she functions as an operational employee. It has also brought to light the place of a social work supervisor in the hierarchical structure of a welfare organization, which will be addressed in our next discussion.
2.3 THE PLACE OF A SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR IN THE HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE OF A WELFARE ORGANIZATION

Based on the definition of a social work supervisor, it is clear that he/she forms part of the management hierarchy of a welfare organization. In broad terms, the management hierarchy in an organization can be divided into three levels, namely strategic, tactical and operational level. This is confirmed by De Beer and Rossouw (2005:7) who list these levels as follows:

- Strategic level (top management).
- Tactical/functional level (senior/middle management).
- Operational level (first-line/supervisory management).

These authors describe the functions of these three different levels of management as follows:

Top management.
- Responsible for the general strategic planning and management of the organization.

Senior/middle management.
- Responsible for implementing policy, plans and strategies and for the allocation of resources.

First-line /supervisory management.
- The job of operational-level managers is concerned with the day-to-day tasks in a particular department. The first-line manager/supervisor is involved in short-term planning and is particularly involved in implementing the plans and objectives of senior/middle management. A first-line manager/supervisor allocates duties on a daily basis. The operational objectives are formulated by the first-line managers/supervisors (De Beer & Rossouw, 2005:7).
The position of social work supervisor is situated between the senior managers and the operational workers. Kadushin and Harkness (2002:21) also acknowledge the place of a social work supervisor in a hierarchical structure of a welfare organization when they state that a social work supervisor is the “highest level employee and the lowest manager”. They go on to state that a social work supervisor is responsible for the performance of the direct service workers and is accountable to administrative directors. From the above discussion, it can be deduced that:

- social work supervisors occupy the lowest level of management;
- they are the only managers who are in direct contact with the supervisees;
- their responsibility is to manage the day-to-day activities of supervisees; and
- they can only allocate and manage short-term tasks.

The researcher’s opinion is that the supervisor has to understand his/her position well and must clearly understand the difference between what he/she used to do as a functional worker and what his/her position as a social work supervisor entails. Although the managerial responsibilities of a supervisor are limited, it is important for a supervisor to understand that he/she is a manager and also to know the differences between the responsibilities of a supervisor and those of a supervisee.

In Table 1 De Beer and Rossouw (2005:23-24) outline the differences between a supervisor and a supervisee. These differences are seen as applicable to a social work supervisor and a social work supervisee.
**TABLE 1: The differences between staff (social workers) and operational managers (social work supervisors)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAFF (SOCIAL WORKERS)</th>
<th>OPERATIONAL MANAGERS (SUPERVISORS)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete all tasks themselves.</td>
<td>Complete tasks through staff in their sections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get guidance and support from operational managers.</td>
<td>Direct section’s staff by listening, planning together, controlling, organizing and leading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrate on own tasks and the performance of these tasks.</td>
<td>Concentrate on the coordination of staff’s tasks and on liaison cooperation with other operational managers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus all time, information and knowledge on own tasks.</td>
<td>Focus time, information and knowledge on the coordination and best possible use of resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are not formally exposed to the wider functioning of organizations.</td>
<td>Are members of management teams that attend meetings, receive letters, and are consulted and informed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are not responsible for the completion of other staff’s tasks, but only for their task.</td>
<td>Have a direct responsibility for the section’s staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be friends with any staff member; are not responsible for decisions that affect other staff.</td>
<td>Cannot supervise and also be everyone’s friend—must often take unpopular decisions affecting staff in a particular section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are exposed only to own comfort zones (the environment in which they work and which they know well). Are therefore not exposed to what occurs in the rest of the organization.</td>
<td>Are responsible for the interests of the section and must always convey an aura of security and personal attention towards staff in the section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are not responsible for the tasks of the section for the section’s performance, but only for their own tasks.</td>
<td>Are responsible for the performance of the section and must always develop new techniques and procedures to improve functioning in the section.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: De Beer and Rossouw (2005:23-24)
These differences clearly indicate that a supervisor executes managerial functions and is no longer at a functional level. The differences can also be interpreted as expectations attached to a supervisory position. For the supervisor to function well, he/she must thus understand the functions of management, which will broadly be discussed in the next section.

2.4 THE MANAGERIAL FUNCTIONS OF A SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR

At a supervisory level, a supervisor has to carry out managerial duties, even if only on a limited scale. A supervisor who has knowledge about these functions will have an advantage over a supervisor who has no knowledge at all. According to different authors e.g. Plunkett and Greer (2000), De Beer and Rossouw (2005), Botha (2002) and Daft (2000), the following managerial functions are relevant:

- Planning
- Control
- Organizing
- Leading
- Coordination
- Directing
- Motivating

Each function will broadly be discussed.
2.4.1 Planning

Planning is the process through which operational managers determine what objectives their sections need to attain over a certain period and what action is necessary to achieve them. Plunkett and Greer (2000:103) see planning as "the management function through which managers decide how they proceed toward future goal accomplishment". The researcher sees a social work supervisor as involved in the planning mentioned above, although on a small scale. A social work supervisor would be more involved in planning the day-to-day activities of integrated social work services.

Daft (2000:206), in defining the function of planning, also includes the word “plan” by stating that a "plan is a blueprint for goal achievement and specifies the necessary allocations, schedules, tasks and other actions". Planning, according to Daft (2000:206), means: "Determining the organization's goals and defining the means to achieve them".

Botha (2002:38) explains that planning consists principally of the setting of objectives and the calculations of methods to attain them. Botha goes on to say that the social work supervisor should not only know and implement planning, but should also train or teach his/her supervisees to plan their daily activities. The researcher is of the view that whatever is planned with regard to social work services, it must be based on the objectives of that particular organization and these objectives must be attainable.

The researcher views planning as a roadmap which gives clear directions on how to move from one point to the other in order to attain specific goals. A social work supervisor plans the activities of his/her supervisees with them to meet the needs of the organization’s clients and the needs of the social workers, decides which methods of social work are to be implemented for the clients of the organization and also sets the time frames within which to accomplish the set goals. The researcher also wishes to state that time frames should not be achieved at the expense of quality service.
2.4.2 Control

According De Beer and Rossouw (2005:25), control is “the process through which operational managers ensure that the plans and objectives drawn up for their sections are achieved”. Plunkett and Greer (2000:129) state that “control is the management function that sets standards for performance and attempts to prevent, identify and correct deviations from standards”.

Botha (2002:56) explains that control is applied to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the organization’s programmes, as well as to apply it to direct service rendering by social workers. She goes on to state that the control function encompasses the evaluation of organizational projects, and the general performance and growth in professionalism. Menefee and Thompson (in Botha, 2002:56) describe the control function as: “Collecting/analyzing of information as to how total operation or major segments are doing. Studying records, reports and accounts; inventorying, measuring output, preparing summary reports, inspecting operations”.

In social work, a supervisor is expected to set standards for his/her supervisees, as this will help them to understand what is expected of them and this would therefore work in line with set standards. The control function operates well where a social work supervisor has set standards, because controlling is making sure that the set standards are met. For example, in a welfare organization, for social workers to understand that they have reached the set target with regard to the number of clients they have interviewed for the month, there must be targets set by the organization as to the required number of interviews to be conducted by each social worker on a monthly basis. Then each social worker in the organization is aware of the target to achieve and therefore works towards achieving it. Control function is applied to determine whether or not social workers and subsequently the organization are meeting the set standards and objectives. Control also helps the social work supervisor to observe the deviations from the set standards and to apply the necessary corrective measures.
2.4.3 Organising

According to De Beer and Rossouw (2005:25), organizing “deals with the allocation of resources (such as human resources and machinery) in the implementation of the proposed plans of sections”. Botha (2002:47) refers to organizing as “the structuring of the pre-determined tasks of the social work manager”. Weinbach (1998:209) adds to this by stating that organizing refers to: “The grouping of people and their activities along some basic pattern or model in order that their activities can be adequately supervised”.

Patty and Files (in Botha, 2002:47-48) explain that organizing involves the fact that social work managers are obliged to exchange information with individuals other than their subordinates; that other departments can also be counselled and advised; that the execution of work be accelerated; that negotiations with other officials be undertaken; that meetings be organized; that information be routed to superiors; and that cooperation with other organizations and/or departments be sought. Botha (2002:48) summarizes the organizing function by saying that: “It requires managers to logically sub-divide or organize all the many activities that have to be performed”.

The researcher views organizing as a function that goes beyond the section in which a social work supervisor is employed to work. This is so because a supervisor may be required to liaise with other departments, such as social security for the financial assistance of clients, the Department of Labour for skills development, and many other departments, for the benefit of the clients of the organization and social workers. This means that a social work supervisor has a responsibility to establish a relationship with other departments and network on behalf of the supervisees and clients. The researcher further wishes to state that in social work, organizing by a supervisor would include making sure that social workers do have resources, such as offices and transport for home visits, if efficient service is to be delivered.

2.4.4 Leading

De Beer and Rossouw (2005:25) view leading as aimed at “organizing the work performance of sectional staffing in such a way that they achieve the objectives set for their sections”. Botha (2002:24) notes that leading is not as direct and evident as
planning and control, and associates it with control. The words leading and leadership are sometimes used interchangeably. Botha (2002:24) states that: “Leading or leadership can be directly associated with influencing and that, as a leader, a social work supervisor has a duty to lead by defusing interpersonal conflict and by creating a more pleasant and comfortable working environment”. Daft (2000:502) confirms the fact that leading is coupled with influence by defining leadership as “the ability to influence people toward the attainment of goals”. From the above-mentioned definitions of the function of leading, it is clear that leading has an element of influence in it.

According to Botha (2002:25), social work supervisors as leaders should have the following characteristics:

- **Accountability**-meaning that a leader (supervisor) should account for his/her actions and those of the supervisees. In the context of a welfare organization, a social work supervisor would be required to be accountable with regard to the services rendered by the social workers to the clients. Accountability would also be about the social workers meeting the standards of the organization with regard to service delivery.

- **Innovation**-this refers to a social work supervisor’s ability to invent new ideas, develop new approaches, suggest new options or ideas and inspire other people. According to Botha, innovative leaders carry challenges and adventures into the workplace and are prepared to take risks, especially if opportunities present themselves and results are realizable.

- **Goal orientated and visionary**-this means that leaders generate missions, tolerate uncertainties, and are continuously involved with the future where all is not so clear and actions are unpredictable.

- **Increase social workers’ self-esteem and empower them**-managers/social work supervisors have to cultivate a positive approach among social workers towards their work relationship and maintain it. They should encourage social workers to uphold the organization’s objectives and goals.
2.4.5 Coordinating

According to Plunkett and Greer (2000:134), “coordination is a managerial task of making sure that the various parts of your organization all operate in harmony with one another”. Botha (2002:18) regards coordinating by a social work supervisor as: “The ability to integrate all sections and activities in the organization to effectively attain the major objectives of the organization”. Furthermore, regarding the function of coordination, Botha (2002:18) states that here the social work manager is to provide the necessary environment wherein each individual staff member is able to cultivate their own initiative and productivity. Coordination, in the context of a welfare organization, would mean that a social work supervisor interacts with the social workers to “oversee” their tasks and also to make sure that the different activities are streamlined to meet the needs of the clients.

2.4.6 Directing

The researcher draws a similarity between the function of directing and that of leading, because both put the supervisor in the forefront. Thus, a supervisor cannot lead without giving direction. Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich (1998:250) use the terms directing and direction interchangeably. They define direction as: “The acts of managers when they instruct subordinates in proper methods and procedures and oversee subordinates’ work to ensure that it is done properly”. They also concede that directing is the primary function of the first-line manager and that direction given to employees must be guided by stated goals and policies of the organization. Robbins and De Cenzo (1998:400-401) describe a “directive leader” as a leader who lets employees know what is expected of them, schedules work to be done, and gives specific guidance as to how to accomplish tasks. A supervisor, as a leader, is expected to also model this function of directing.
2.4.7 Motivating

Botha (2002:19) explains that it is the responsibility of a social work supervisor to motivate personnel to the required level of performance. Daft (2000:534) defines motivation as: "The forces either within or external to a person that arouses enthusiasm and persistence to pursue a certain course of action". From this definition it can be deduced that a supervisor’s role is to motivate his/her supervisees as an “external force”. This is most applicable when the supervisee’s inner self-motivation and drive has died down.

The researcher views motivating in the same light as giving support to the staff. When social workers feel supported, they are motivated in their service rendering. Feedback by the social work supervisor to the social worker is necessary so that the social worker is aware of his/her performance. Feedback should include the strengths of the social worker and not only weaknesses. Rewarding the supervisees is also a form of motivation. A supervisor must be fully aware of these general managerial functions for him/her to function effectively as this is how he/she is expected to function as a manager. These are the broad functions of management and social work supervisors are part of this team. However, there is also a need for social work supervisors to understand their role as supervisors in order to be able to perform the management functions satisfactorily. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.5 ROLES OF A SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR

The roles of a social work supervisor will be discussed as the roles of a manager, because a supervisor operates as a manager. The roles will be defined first and the discussion will then further identify these roles of a manager. Daft (2000:19) defines a role as a “set of expectations for a manager’s behaviour”. To Robbins and De Cenzo (2004:270) roles are “behavior patterns that correspond to the positions individuals occupy in an organization”. From Robbins and De Cenzo’s definition, it is clear that employees of all levels have certain roles to fulfil in an organization. This discussion thus focuses on the roles of a social work supervisor as a manager.
According to Daft (2000:19-22), there are three categories of managerial roles. They are:

- Informational roles.
- Interpersonal roles.
- Decisional roles.

These roles will be briefly discussed.

### 2.5.1 Informational Roles

Informational roles, according to Daft (2000:19), are roles that describe the activities used to maintain and develop an information network. Under this category, a supervisor fulfils the following roles:

**The monitor:** This involves seeking current information from many sources or other employees. It is important for a manager to stay informed about the activities of the organization.

**The disseminator:** Here the manager transmits information to others, both inside and outside the organization.

**The spokesperson:** Being a spokesperson means transmitting information to outsiders through speeches, reports and memos.

### 2.5.2 Interpersonal Roles

This category includes the following roles:

**The figurehead:** The figurehead role involves handling ceremonial and symbolic activities for the department or organization.

**The leader:** The leader role encompasses relationships with subordinates, including motivation, communication and influence.

**The liaison:** This pertains to the development of information sources both inside and outside the organization.
2.5.3 Decisional Roles

Decisional roles pertain to those events about which the manager must make a choice and take action. These roles include:

**The entrepreneur:** Involves the initiation of change.

**The disturbance handler:** Involves resolving conflicts among subordinates and other departments.

**The resource allocator:** Decisions about how to allocate people, time, equipment, budget and other resources to attain desired outcomes.

**The negotiator:** Involves formal negotiations and bargaining.

As these are managerial roles, a social work supervisor must understand that he/she will continuously have to implement them in his/her day-to-day work.

2.6 EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS

It is generally expected that supervisors should be more knowledgeable than the people they are supervising and that they must be skilled in their job. Expectations can also be interpreted as the responsibilities of a supervisor. However, some expectations can be unrealistic, whether they come from the supervisees or the supervisor himself/herself. Plunkett and Greer (2000:8) mention three primary groups to which a supervisor is responsible. In other words, these are the groups that have some expectations from a supervisor:

- Subordinates or supervisees
- Peers in management
- Superiors in management

Plunkett and Greer (2000:8) emphasize that: “Supervisors must work in harmony with all three groups if they are to be effective supervisors”. The expectations and responsibilities of social work supervisors towards each mentioned group will be briefly discussed.
2.6.1 Expectations of and responsibilities towards subordinates/supervisees

Plunkett and Greer (2000:8) state that the responsibilities supervisors have towards their subordinates are many and varied. The researcher is of the opinion that a supervisor has to make an effort to know what is expected of him/her to make his/her career as a supervisor more effective. Plunkett and Greer (2000:9-10) describe the following responsibilities of a supervisor towards subordinates/supervisees:

- Getting to know them as individuals.
- Giving them the respect and trust they deserve.
- Valuing their uniqueness and individuality.
- Assigning work to subordinates that fits their abilities.
- Listening to their concerns.
- Treating them as they want to be treated.
- Providing them with adequate instruction and training.
- Enabling them to do their best.
- Handling their complaints and problems in a fair and just way.
- Praising and providing constructive feedback.
- Providing examples of proper conduct at work.

Munson (2002:43) describes the expectations placed on the supervisors by their supervisees in terms of the Bill of Rights which he developed. From his supervisees’ Bill of Rights, he lists the following expectations by supervisees:

- A supervisor who supervises consistently and at regular intervals.
- Growth-oriented supervision that respects personal privacy.
- Supervision that is technically sound and theoretically grounded.
- Evaluation that is based on criteria that are made clear in advance and that are based on actual observation of performance.
- A supervisor who is adequately skilled in clinical practice and trained in supervision practice.
It is important that a supervisor should know about these expectations for him/her to function well in his/her position.

2.6.2 Responsibilities towards peers

A supervisor has responsibilities towards his/her peers as he/she will be working with them in an organization. It is important that a supervisor has a good relationship with them, as they are part of a management team to which he/she also belongs. Plunkett and Greer (2000:11) mention the following as the responsibilities of a supervisor towards peers:

- Getting to know them as individuals.
- Giving them the respect and trust they deserve.
- Fostering a spirit of cooperation and teamwork.

DuBrin (1997:12-13) warns that a supervisor must not act too independently from his/her peers, as teamwork will not be possible. He goes on to say that supervisors must communicate and give their co-workers support as members of the same management team.

2.6.3 Expectations of and responsibilities towards higher management/superiors

DuBrin (1997:10) states: “The expectations management has of the supervisor in turn become the functions to be performed by the supervisor.” According to DuBrin (1997:10), management expects the following from supervisors:

- Make production and service rendering decisions.
- Keep control of costs.
- Maintain high productivity and morale.

According to Plunkett and Greer (2000:12), the higher management of an organization expect of a supervisor to:

- operate within company values;
- promote company goals;
• strive for constant improvement;
• use the organization’s resources effectively; and
• keep them informed about the unit’s status.

It seems as if a social work supervisor’s main responsibility towards the higher management of a welfare organization is to see to the smooth running of the organization and to maintain a positive image of the organization. It is, however, important to remember that a supervisor also has expectations when taking up a supervisory position. Although he/she has expectations regarding all the above-mentioned groups, his/her main responsibility is towards the supervisees. Therefore the focus here will be on what supervisors expect from supervisees. According to Munson (2002: 45-46), supervisors expect supervisees to:

• manifest a willingness to work hard;
• freely talk about problems, cases and situations;
• be honest about how they feel;
• show respect for the supervisor;
• be willing to work with the supervisor;
• be motivated to learn; and
• be willing to discuss work and their thoughts about work.

These are the most important expectations of a supervisor from a supervisee. This indicates that a supervisor, like supervisees, does have needs which also have to be met.

A supervisor therefore has to be well-prepared and equipped for him/her to be able to meet these expectations efficiently. He/she needs training on social work supervision, which includes organizational policy, social work supervision skills, methods of supervision and the functions of supervision which are the focus of the next section.

### 2.7 EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS

Another aspect in the practice of social work supervision that must to be looked into is that of the training and education of supervisors. In reality supervisors do not seem to be
fully trained for the job, which in turn leaves them unsure of what they are supposed to
do. A survey conducted by Munson (2002:29) revealed that over 60% of the supervisors
had no formal academic training in supervision. This reflects that supervisors are not
necessarily adequately prepared for the task of becoming a supervisor.

The education and training of supervisors are overlooked because of the fact that in
many instances, supervisors are promoted to the job based on their good performance
as functional social workers. This kind of promotion is problematic, as being the best
functional worker does not give a guarantee that a person will be a good supervisor.
Robbins and De Cenzo (1998:17-18) state that the reasons for promoting people from
direct workers to supervisors are based on the following assumptions:

a. They know the operation functions.
b. They understand how things are done in the organization.
c. They typically know the people they will be supervising.
d. The organization knows a lot about the candidate.
e. Promoting from within acts as employee motivator and it provides
   an incentive for employees to work hard and excel.

Although the reasons for promoting workers to supervisors may be quite genuine, there
is no guarantee that the best social worker will be a successful supervisor. As Kadushin
and Harkness (2002:295) state: “The current promotional situation risks the possibility
that the agency may lose a competent worker to gain an incompetent supervisor.”
Adding to this statement, Austin and Hopkins (2004:6) note the following:

“Many current human service supervisors and managers began their
careers as direct service workers, and they have had little supervisory
training and mentoring. Although they are in a unique position to bring
the clinical practice perspective into their supervisory practice some
supervisors may feel ill prepared and experience difficulty in helping
staff understand the organizational context of service delivery”.

It is thus clear that social work supervisors need specific training. As Scott (in Botha,
2002:2) states: “It is imperative that supervisors should receive formal education,
providing them with the required knowledge, not only of supervision, but also of social
work theory and to develop the necessary skills in the process … to be able to put supervision into practice, training programmes have to include the theory and execution of the supervisory process”. In spite of the fact that supervisors are promoted from the position of functional workers to that of supervisors, there remains a great need for formal training in the supervision field to prepare workers for the position.

This is confirmed by Botha (2002:6-8) who reflects on the importance of teaching both the theoretical and practical part of supervision and notes that this will enable the social work supervisor to:

- create a model whereby the desired or required task execution of social workers can be established;
- set the tasks and activities required to obtain the required task execution;
- acquire the knowledge and skills to establish the correct and specific channel of communication to ensure that social workers receive feedback on their performances, in order to strengthen their assets and to work on their shortcomings; and
- acquire knowledge and understanding of the process so that he/she can apply and utilize the incentive measures to enhance the performance of social workers.

The researcher regards this discussion by Botha as formal training. It must be a well-structured training programme which is aimed at achieving a specific purpose. Botha (2002:7) also states that social work supervisors’ training curriculum must include consultation as a method of supervision, because consultation in social work instead of supervision is becoming a trend. In addition to teaching consultation as part of the social work supervision curriculum, the content of the social work supervision training curriculum must also include matters such as the roles of social work supervisors, the functions of supervision, the skills needed for social work supervision and the organizational policy. Educating a social work supervisor on these is empowering to them and would thus enable them to supervise effectively.

Botha (2002:7-8) recommends further that social work supervisors must not only be empowered with theoretical knowledge of social work supervision, but they must also be exposed to the practical side of it before getting into practice. She concludes by saying that social work supervision training must not only be offered at the college, but should
also continue throughout the social work supervisor’s practice of supervision (Botha, 2002:8).

It is the researcher’s opinion that training of supervisors will minimize the stress that goes along with supervision. This will also increase the confidence of the supervisors on the job they are faced with. Lack of training could thus lead to ineffective supervisors. In this regard Austin and Hopkins (2004:6) state: “If practitioners move into supervisory positions with an inadequate understanding of macro (organizational, political, and systems) practice skills and without opportunities for training, their supervisory effectiveness may be significantly reduced”.

The researcher has observed that formal training on social work supervision has as yet not been fully introduced as part of the curriculum by the schools of social work in South Africa, particularly at undergraduate levels. The current curriculum of social work concentrates primarily on educating the student social worker on the methods of social work, whilst neglecting the area of supervision. However, the researcher has further observed that in-depth social work supervision as a course is formally offered at postgraduate level by schools of social work in universities. The importance of training regarding social work supervision as a formal course at university level is emphasized by McKendrick (1993:222) when he states: “Just as the direct methods of social work practice are taught in formal courses at university level, and no beginning practitioner can register for practice without certification of this, an important long-range goal should be to include the indirect practice method of supervision in courses of social work education.” McKendrick (1993:222) specifically states that social work supervision must be part of the undergraduate curriculum at universities. He elaborates by stating that: “The curriculum should include introductory courses on supervision which would acquaint them with the theory of supervision and which would constitute a basis for study of the method at postgraduate level”.

The education and training of social work supervisors should focus on specific areas in the practice of social work supervision. These focus areas are the following:

- Functions of social work supervision.
- Methods of social work supervision.
- Supervision skills and knowledge.
Organizational policy on supervision.

Each focus area will be briefly discussed.

2.7.1 FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

Training of social work supervisors regarding the functions of social work supervision will empower the supervisor and make it easier for the supervisor to render supervision tasks effectively to the benefit of both the social workers and the clients. It is important for a social work supervisor to understand these functions.

Kadushin and Harkness (2002:2) refer to three major functions of social work supervision, which are the administrative function, educational function and supportive function. The purpose of these functions collectively is to help the social worker through social work supervision to render effective and efficient service to the clients. The contents of these three major supervision functions will briefly be discussed. Other functions of social work supervision will also be included in this discussion, namely motivation, personality enrichment and modelling.

2.7.1.1 Administrative function of social work supervision

Munson (2002:296) notes that an administrative function forms part of a supervisor’s duties. He explains that most supervisors in public or private practice do administration as part of their supervisory functioning. Kadushin and Harkness (2002:19) define the administrative function of social work supervision as “a process for getting the work done and maintaining organizational control and accountability”. Kadushin and Harkness (2002:46) further recognize a supervisor as an administrator when they state that: “In organizations with highly differentiated hierarchical structures there are first-line supervisors, administrative personnel directly responsible for and in contact with direct service workers”.

Kadushin and Harkness (2002:46) refer to the tasks of a social work supervisor under the administrative function as staff recruitment and selection; inducting and placing the
worker; work planning; work delegation; monitoring, reviewing and evaluating work; and coordinating work.

When social work supervisors engage in the above-mentioned tasks, they must understand that they are engaging in administrative tasks. The researcher sees the administrative function of social work supervision as carrying some important managerial functions in it and it is important that a social work supervisor is well-educated on this function.

2. 7.1.2 Educational function of social work supervision

In defining educational supervision, Kadushin and Harkness (2002:129) state: “Educational supervision is concerned with teaching the worker what he needs to know in order to do his job and helping him to learn it”. Botha (2002:81) describes the educational function of social work supervision as being directly concerned with the education of social workers regarding the knowledge, skills and attitude required for effective social service rendering. In the educational function the emphasis is on concepts, theories, research and competencies, as well as on practice strategies and techniques. Adding to this, Kadushin and Harkness (2002:129) note that educational supervision is concerned with teaching the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the performance of clinical social work tasks through the detailed analysis of the worker’s interaction with the client.

Botha (2002:81) goes on to explain the educational function of social work supervision as being directed at teaching them what they need to know to execute their duties and assisting them in this learning process. It also teaches social workers how to efficiently deliver services that comply with the needs of the client system, that are in keeping with organizational goals, that are reconcilable with professional values, and that reflect a responsibility towards society. Kadushin and Harkness (2002:130) argue that educational supervision differs from other training, such as in-service training, in that educational supervision is a more specific kind of staff development which focuses on the specific needs of a social worker. They further refer to the differences between the administrative and educational function by stating that the administrative function is involved in the structuring of the work environment and the provision of resources to enable the social worker to perform tasks efficiently. The educational function, on the other hand,
increases knowledge and skills which equip social workers to deliver effective practice services.

2. 7.1.3 Supportive function of social work supervision

A supervisor has a duty to support his/her subordinates, particularly in social work as the demands of the profession do sometimes lead to social workers experiencing stress and burn-out. A supervisor, according to Botha (2002:196), has a duty to create an environment conducive to working for the supervisees. Botha (2002:197) continues to say that if the supervisor can apply the supportive function efficiently, it can alleviate the tensions. According to Kadushin and Harkness (2002:227), supportive supervision provides the psychological and inter-personal context that enables the worker to mobilize the emotional energy needed for effective job performance. Mckendrick (1993:220) adds by stating: "The goal of supportive supervision is to promote the psychological well-being of the worker..." Botha (2002:196) states that both social workers and social work supervisors need to be supported in their work, because the nature of the work they do, is often stressful.

In the context of social work, a social work supervisor continuously supports social workers, for example with difficult cases and other issues that affect their professional functioning negatively.

2.7.1.4 Motivational function of social work supervision

Weiner (in Mbau, 2005:34) defines motivation as "an internal motivating force that lead a person to act in a certain way". According to Plunkett and Greer (2000:221), motivation is the drive within a person to achieve a desired goal. It is an internal process that takes place in all human beings, influenced by their perceptions and experiences as well as external variables like the supervisor’s actions during supervision sessions.

Botha (2002:19) refers to the function of motivation as a skill that is necessary in the functioning of a social work supervisor. She states that a social work supervisor has to motivate staff members individually, as well as in group context. It is therefore necessary
that the social work manager is able to motivate personnel to the point of the required level of performance. For a social work supervisor to be able to practice the motivation function well, Botha (2002:19) explains that there is a need for the supervisor to have knowledge on the theories of motivation. She refers to two theories of motivation as formulated by Cronje (1986:289). According to Cronje, the two groups of motivational theories are the classical theories and the modern theories.

The classical theories consist of the scientific management approach, the human relations approach and the classical administrative approach. The modern theories encompass Maslow’s theory of the hierarchy of needs, the X-Y theory of Douglas McGregor, Herzberg’s two-factor theory and the motivational theory of David McClelland, Victor Vroom and Rensis Likert. These theories will not be elaborated upon in this discussion.

With regard to the motivation function, the researcher wishes to state that there will always be a need for a social work supervisor to motivate his/her supervisees. It is the experience of the researcher that in a welfare organization there are two groups of social workers, namely those that are motivated from within, that is to say those that have a drive from within to achieve a desired goal, and those who need to be motivated from external sources. It therefore becomes necessary for the social work supervisor to be aware of these groups in order to be able to motivate them according to their circumstances.

2.7.1.5 Personality enrichment function of social work supervision

According to Mbau (2005:36), the personality enrichment function aims to improve a social worker’s self-image, professional and personal behaviour patterns, and psychological and emotional needs. Mbau further states that the personality enrichment function of supervision restores the social worker’s ego and strengthens their capacity to deal with stresses and tensions. This function of supervision enables the social worker to retain self-confidence, faith and perspective within difficult work and personal circumstances. He also indicates that this function is found in all the major functions of supervision.
The researcher views this function of supervision as focusing on the social worker in totality, that is to say both on a professional and personal level. This means that a social work supervisor should be prepared to intervene and help the social worker with professional challenges, for example he/she should give guidance to the social worker on how to handle certain difficult cases, as well as the challenges that affect the personal life of the social worker. This requires a degree of maturity on the part of the supervisor.

2.7.1.6 Modelling function of social work supervision

According to Bittel and Newstrom (in Mbau, 2005:37), the modelling function of social work is: “A process in which a skilled co-worker or supervisor demonstrates the performance of key job skills and simultaneously explains steps involved and the reasons for doing them”.

Harmse (1999:64) explains that modelling implies that the supervisor provides an example that is worth following by being a professional social worker and a professional person. Modelling professional social work behaviour provides the social worker with a model of desirable skills, techniques and attitudes for effective and efficient social work services. To add to what has been indicated above, Kadushin and Harkness (2002:151) note that some significant part of social work supervision content cannot be taught didactically, through discussion or experimentally. Such content can only be taught through modelling.

In short modelling demonstrates what needs to be done, without engaging the social worker verbally. The functions of social work supervision discussed in this section are of importance in the supervisor’s functioning. This requires that a social work supervisor be trained to fulfil the different functions. This training will however not be complete if it excludes the methods of social work which, to the researcher, is a related subject. The importance of training social work supervisors on the methods of social work supervision will be covered by the next discussion.
2.7.2 METHODS OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

It is important for the social work supervisor to be empowered with and have knowledge of the different methods of supervision, because these methods form an integral part of the practice of supervision. These methods are implemented in a supervision setting based on the needs of supervisees.

Hoffmann (in Mbau, 2005:28) identifies four methods of social work supervision, namely individual supervision, group supervision, peer supervision and live supervision. These methods will briefly be discussed.

2.7.2.1 Individual supervision

Individual supervision is characterized by a one-to-one relationship between the social work supervisor and the social worker, and the focus of the supervisor is on the supervisee and his/her practice needs. Kadushin and Harkness refer to individual and group supervision as conference. Regarding individual supervision, they acknowledge that it is the method that is mostly used in social work supervision by stating: “… the individual conference is still the principal focus of supervision” (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002:143). They go on to define individual supervision or conference as “a dyadic interview to fulfil administrative, educational and supportive functions of supervision” (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002:144). The advantage of this method, according to these authors, is that it promotes personal growth on the side of the supervisee because it gives an opportunity for addressing the individual needs of the social worker.

2.7.2.2 Group supervision

From the researcher’s point of view, social work group supervision is a supervision method where the supervisor engages in supervision involving more than one social worker. Kadushin and Harkness (2002:390) define group supervision as “the use of a
group setting to implement the responsibilities of supervision”. They also state that in group supervision the agency mandate to the supervisor is implemented in the group and through the group. In addition to this definition, Botha (2002:124) explains that group supervision is usually planned in terms of: “The congruent learning needs of a number of social workers”. She goes on to state that by means of group supervision members are afforded the opportunity to attain objectives that were difficult or even impossible to reach on their own. It also provides greater professional identity to social workers and it strengthens relationships that promote learning.

As the researcher has observed, this method of supervision has some advantages. It saves time because a number of supervisees are involved in the session at the same time and, as a result, the supervisor is able to interact and assist more than one employee at the same time, unlike in individual supervision where the whole session is devoted to one supervisee. Another advantage of this method is that social workers are able to support and learn from one another in group supervision sessions, unlike in individual supervision where it is the supervisor’s duty to offer support to the supervisee. However, the disadvantage is that supervisees who are withdrawn may leave the discussion in the hands of dominating supervisees, thus limiting their participation and withdrawing their inputs which may results in their challenges not being addressed.

2. 7.2. 3  Peer supervision

Hare and Frankena (in Kadushin & Harkness, 2002:454-455) define peer supervision as: “A process by which a group of professionals in the same agency meet regularly to review cases and treatment approaches without a leader, share expertise and take responsibility for their own and each other’s professional development and for maintaining standards of [agency] service.” Regarding peer supervision, Kadushin and Harkness (2002:454) state that this method of supervision invests the peer group with control of group meetings; the supervisor, if he or she sits in at all, is just another member of the group. In peer supervision all group members participate on an equal level. This method is similar to group supervision, except that here the supervisor is absent or if present has an equal status as the rest of the group. Greater participation is left to the social workers.
According to Botha (2002:125), the following are the advantages of peer supervision:

- The dependence on an expert supervisor is lessened.
- The responsibilities of members to evaluate their own skills and those of other members are increased.
- Members develop skills to determine and influence their own professional growth.
- Social workers develop more confidence and independence.
- Members accept the greater dependence on one another.
- Members’ own supervisory skills are developed.
- Colleagues are increasingly viewed as role models.

2.7.2.4 Live supervision

Live supervision differs from other types of supervision in that it is done ‘on the spot’, that is to say whilst work is being done or whilst a social worker is interviewing the client. Other supervisions take place after the work has been done. Kadushin and Harkness (2002:442-443) state that the main idea behind live supervision is to move supervisory interaction closer to where the action is taking place and to increase the immediacy and spontaneity of the supervisor’s teaching. Live supervision also permits the supervisee to immediately test his/her ability to implement the supervisor’s suggestions and to immediately ascertain the client’s response to suggest interventions.

Live supervision is a way of training social workers in activities such as interviewing and intervention in the situation of the client. Its advantage is that because of the tools used, for example a one-way mirror, a social worker is able to get immediate feedback on the session with the client. However, the knowledge of being observed while in a session with a client can be intimidating to the social worker.

The third focus area, namely supervision skills in social work, should also be part of the training of a social work supervisor. The importance of a supervisor acquiring knowledge on supervision skills will be discussed in the next section.
2.7.3 SUPERVISION SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

A person who is responsible for guiding junior employees needs more knowledge and skills. As most supervisors are promoted from direct service, it is naturally expected of them to know more than their supervisees. A supervisor is also described as a teacher and he/she has the duty to transfer knowledge to his/her supervisees. It has been indicated in the previous discussions that getting promoted from direct service to supervisor does not make a social worker the best supervisor at all. It is usually forgotten that at a supervisory level, a supervisor deals with people and not with machines or clients. The worker who has professional knowledge for the job still needs skills and knowledge to deal with people. Specific skills are needed and these become more visible throughout one’s practice of supervision.

Humphrey and Stokes (2000:12-16) deliberate on the following skills which are regarded as necessary for supervisors in general, but is also applicable for social work supervisors. A social work supervisor needs training and knowledge regarding the following skills:

- People skills
- Technical skills
- Administrative skills
- Conceptual skills
- Specialized skills
- Communication skills
- Decision making skills

Each of these skills will briefly be discussed:

2.7.3.1 People skills

Humphrey and Stokes (2000:12) link people skills with communication skills. Regarding communication, they say: “It is critical for you to be able to communicate effectively with your employees to motivate them, to work with them in problem solving, and to achieve greater overall performance results.” Humphrey and Stokes (2000:12) continue to say that people skills will enable the supervisor to:
• listen proactively to employees, managers and customers;
• communicate with others based on their communication styles;
• coach individuals and teams to attain better performance results;
• facilitate meetings and make presentations;
• teach classes for employees in need of skills development;
• recruit employees to share work responsibilities; and
• build teamwork and greater employee involvement.

Botha (2002:19) also refers to people skills as human relation skills and mentions that human relation skills are about knowing how to deal with people, especially the personnel in the organization. She goes on to say that there are other specific skills and knowledge under human relation skills a supervisor has to possess, namely:

• Individual and group dynamics.
• Organizational structures.
• Processes and dynamics.
• Communication theory and processes.

2.7.3.2 Technical skills

According to Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich (1998:47): “Technical skill is the ability to use specific knowledge, techniques and resources to effectively perform one’s duties”. Humphrey and Stokes (2000:14) explain that technical skills will enable the supervisor to:

• calculate the cost of quality in the organization;
• use computers and other work-related systems;
• document work flow processes;
• measure work flow variances;
• implement continuous improvement processes;
• use formal problem-solving processes;
• take advantage of the Internet as a resource; and
• stay on top of technological advances.
2.7.3.3 Administrative skills

Comstock (1994:31) defines administrative skills as “skills used to ensure the orderly flow of paperwork and the coordination of unit activities with those of the company”. Bittel and Newstrom (1990:16) add to this by describing administrative skills as: “Knowledge of the entire organization and how it is coordinated, knowledge of its information and records system, and an ability to plan and control”.

Humphrey and Stokes (2000:15) elaborate that administrative skills will enable the supervisor to:

- write effective memos, reports and letters;
- think strategically by developing vision and mission statements;
- develop realistic and achievable goals;
- make information-based decisions;
- complete projects on time and within a budget;
- develop department budgets, cost analyses and ROI (return on income);
- understand company documentation, including performance reports; and
- be a key resource for information, knowledge, parts, and so on.

2.7.3.4 Conceptual skills

Regarding conceptual skills, Botha (2002:17) notes: “Conceptual proficiency is the ability of the social work managers to perceive the total picture of the organization, which will enable them to identify themselves with the policy of the organization and to identify and control problems. In this manner they will be able to distinguish between important and unimportant aspects and to take decisions accordingly”.

The researcher understands conceptual skills as the supervisor’s ability to comprehend all processes taking place in his/her organization and thereby being able to make the right decision. Botha (2002:18) confirms this opinion by stating: “Under the term conceptual skills it can also be understood that the social work manager possesses the
required ability to co-ordinate and integrate all sections and activities in the organization to effectively attain the major objectives of the organization”.

2.7.3.5 Specialized skills

Botha (2002:22) refers to specialized skills as the element of authority. She admits that interpreting and exercising authority can be difficult for a supervisor. Regarding authority, Botha (2002:22) states: “Authority provides the social work manager with the privilege to initiate actions, take decisions, directing the actions of subordinates, control organizational resources and to allocate such resources, and to establish the results expected of subordinates”. Kadushin (in Botha, 2002:22) postulates: “In the most uncompromising sense, authority is the right to demand obedience; those subject to authority have the duty to obey.” Botha (2002:22) distinguishes between legal authority and expert authority. Legal authority is the power vested upon a supervisor by virtue of the position he/she occupies. Expert authority is the supervisor’s ability to influence supervisees. The supervisor should, however, have the knowledge about and the ability to apply both types of authority with the necessary discretion.

2.7.3.6 Communication skills

Communication forms an integral part of any organization. Botha (2002:28) mentions in this regard that: “The only way by which management and social workers can execute their duties and by which services can be rendered is by means of communication whether it is verbally or in writing. Communication does not only make sure that tasks commence, but also ensures the continuation thereof”. Communication also entails negotiation and in this regard the supervisor needs to posses the necessary negotiation skills. Regarding the skill of negotiation, Weinbach (1998:319) notes that: “The job of a manager may require a considerable amount of asking or persuading others to do things…” This is so because the supervisor will have to negotiate and advocate for the needs of the supervisees to senior managers time and again. Negotiation skills are also important when the supervisor has to engage with labour movements.
The researcher’s opinion is that communication in a welfare organization is continuous and that a supervisor has to practice and master it for the benefit of being understood by the social workers and for smooth service delivery.

### 2.7.3.7 Decision making skills

Abels and Murphy (in Botha, 2002:34) define decision making as “the choosing from alternatives in order to best attain the organization’s stated objectives”. Botha (2002:34) concedes that decision making is one of the most difficult tasks a supervisor is faced with, but says that it is part of the day-to-day functioning of a supervisor. A supervisor cannot run away from making decisions. Some of the decisions a supervisor will have to make are in relation to:

- a choice with regard to a variety of programmes;
- different ways of financing projects;
- utilization of personnel in specific tasks; and
- various personnel development programmes.

A supervisor must be skilful when it comes to making decisions. In some matters, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to make the decisions and not to pass them on to senior managers. In this regard Weinbach (1998:319) states: “Difficult decisions must be made; they cannot simply be turned over to a superior”. It can therefore be said that a social work supervisor who is able to make decisions does give direction to both the social workers and the organization.

In conclusion, Plunkett and Greer (2000:28) give a summary of the skills needed for supervision, some of which have already been deliberated upon:

- **Oral communication skills**: effective expression in individual or group situations (includes gestures and nonverbal communications).
- **Oral presentation skills**: effective expression when presenting ideas or tasks to an individual or to a group when given time for presentation (includes gestures and nonverbal communication).
- **Written communication skill**: clear expression of ideas in writing and in good grammatical form.
• **Job motivation:** the extent to which activities and responsibilities available in the job overlap with activities and responsibilities that result in personal satisfaction.

• **Initiative:** active attempts to influence events to achieve goals; self-starting rather than passive acceptance; taking action to achieve goals beyond those called for; originating action.

• **Leadership:** utilizing appropriate interpersonal styles and methods to guide individuals (subordinates, peers, superiors) or groups toward task accomplishment.

• **Planning and organization:** establishing a course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal; planning proper assignments of personnel and the appropriate allocation of resources.

• **Analysis:** relating and comparing data from different sources, identifying issues, securing relevant information, and identifying relationships.

• **Judgment:** developing an alternative course of action and making decisions that are based on logical assumptions and reflect factual information.

• **Management control:** establishing procedures to monitor and/or regulate processes, tasks, or the jobs and responsibilities of subordinates; taking action to monitor the results of delegated assignments or projects.

These are the skills that are necessary for a supervisor to conduct effective supervision. It is important that a supervisor must be trained in these skills and that he/she continuously improves his/her skills. Specific skills that are required by a particular organization will depend on what the job of a supervisor in that organization entails, as well as the functioning of the organization based on the organization’s policy. It implies that the supervisor must also have the necessary knowledge regarding an organization’s policy on supervision, as discussed in the next section.

### 2.7.4 ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY ON SUPERVISION

The fourth and last focus area of supervision training is knowledge regarding an organization’s policy on supervision. Organizations function differently according to their policies and therefore the employment and functioning of a supervisor will also be influenced by the policy of that particular organization. It is important that a social work
supervisor understands the policy of the organization which has employed him/her to avoid unnecessary problems and conflict with the management and other stakeholders in that particular organization. Knowledge on policy matters of an organization should be acquired through training.

It seems as if most welfare organizations do not have a formal supervision policy. To support this statement, Botha (2002:4) notes that: “One of the most significant deficiencies in supervision practice is that it is applied without the organization having established a specific policy on supervision and consultation”. Botha further emphasizes the fact that both supervision and consultation can only be effectively implemented in an organization if the latter has a definitive and written policy and all concerned act in accordance thereof. If organizations have policies on supervision it will help alleviate stress and will also give direction to the supervisors. However, in an organization where a policy on supervision does exist, the supervisor will have to align himself/herself with such a policy.

As discussed, it is clear that education and training of social work supervisors is important in order to empower them and develop confidence as a social work supervisor. This education and training should not only be offered at universities, but should continue to take place during their practice as supervisors. The training and education of social work supervisors will have to cover all the aspects as discussed. Proper training of a social work supervisor will enhance effectiveness and will reduce the possibility of stress during and after transition from a social worker to a social work supervisor, as will be seen in the next section.

2.8 TRANSITION AND ADJUSTMENT OF A SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR

Because of the change in the nature of the job when a direct social worker becomes a supervisor, the researcher is of the opinion that there is a lot of adjustment to be done by the supervisor in the new position. It is important to note that problems in supervision do not only occur during transition from a direct worker to a supervisor, but also after this period of adjustment. It is important that a good foundation be laid so that effective supervision can be enhanced. There is no doubt that transition from direct worker to supervisor can be traumatic.
Robbins and De Cenzo (1998:18) concede that the transition can be traumatic by explaining that this trauma cannot be compared to anything. They state: “The trauma is unique when one moves into first-line management and it is unlike anything managers will encounter later in their rise up the organizational ladder”.

Kadushin and Harkness (2002:281) confirm that there is stress resulting from the transition when a social worker becomes a supervisor and that this stress is associated with the fact that supervisors have very limited preparation for their position. Also, any lack of skills that are required for a supervisory position induces stress. As stated by Kadushin and Harkness (2002:283): “The transition requires the mobilization of skills that are not so directly required in direct service practice”. This means that supervision activities are different from those of a direct worker. These activities require that a supervisor should acquire certain skills in order to carry them out efficiently. A lack of these skills can therefore be a source of stress and as such impact negatively on the transition and adjustment of a supervisor.

Robbins and De Cenzo (1998:18) conducted a study on newly promoted supervisors to find out if they are adjusting well and if they were well-prepared for the job in advance. They discovered the following from supervisors:

- They were unprepared for the demands and ambiguities they would face.
- Technical expertise was no longer the primary determinant of success or failure. This means that skills other than operational ones, e.g. decision making and the ability to motivate workers, are now necessary.
- A supervisor’s job comes with administrative duties.
- Supervisors were not prepared for the “people challenges” of their new job.

Kadushin and Harkness (2002:283-291) maintain that the stress which is experienced by a supervisor due to the transition from social worker to supervisor can also be caused by the following:

- Changes in self-perception and identity.
- Changing from being a clinician to becoming a manager.
- Changes in peer relationships.
A change in identity can be disruptive, as Kadushin and Harkness (2002:283) point out: “As with other transitions, it may involve a period of disruption, of depression or defensive hyperactivity, of personal and professional growth”.

What is emphasized by the above-mentioned authors is that the transition from one professional position to another can be difficult and painful. Shulman (1993:46) states: “The point at which helping professional makes the role shift from direct practice to supervision is both exciting and a trying time. Even under the best circumstances the transition can be difficult”. He goes on to say that “new supervisors inevitably face doubts about competency as they try out a new role”.

It is generally understood that in supervision a supervisor no longer works with the clients of the organization directly, but works with them through the people he/she manages. Certain skills are required to manage people and a lack in these skills can create challenges for the supervisor. As Munson (2002:39) puts it: “The traditional supervisor must adjust to regulating the work rather than doing the work and must adapt to the authority that goes along with the new role. The most skilled worker can experience a high degree of difficulty in making the transition to supervisor and focusing on getting the job done through other people”.

A supervisor must have a way of adjusting to the new position. Chapman (1996:16-17) gives the following guidelines which, if adopted by a supervisor, will help him/her to adjust well in the position. They are the following:

**Be patient with yourself** - this is to say that during the time of learning the responsibilities of the new role, the supervisor must reduce anxiety by not rushing to learn everything at the same time.

**Decide to be professional** - this means that a supervisor must be satisfied with himself/herself and confident in what he/she is doing. A supervisor must feel comfortable in his/her new role.

**Stay in close contact with all employees** - a supervisor must be sensitive to the needs of employees and must also take time to make personal positive contacts with the employees.
Make changes gradually-get used to the way the department/organization operates before introducing major innovations.

Watch the up side – protect the down side—much as you want to please your superiors, keep a good working relationship with your subordinates, as you will always need their cooperation and support.

Save some planning time—take time to think and plan.

Redefine your working friendships—keep all relationships with your people fair and equal. Do not regard some employees higher than others.

Let your employees help you—do not be afraid to approach your subordinates to ask questions and help on matters that you do not understand.

Adopt a learning attitude—as a supervisor, increase your skills in the new role by engaging in continuous training and development.

The researcher wants to point out that some of the experiences a supervisor goes through during transition continue throughout the person’s practice of supervision. The discussion above points to the importance of preparing a person for the role of supervisor. The above discussion emphasizes the fact that a therapist/social worker, by accepting a supervisory position, gives up a position which he/she is familiar with; one where he/she is in contact with clients. It must also be noted that the supervisor gives up the relationship that he/she had previously established with colleagues, which can create a lot of discomfort in the life of a supervisor. The supervisor can at times experience resistance from colleagues who now see him/her as part of the management group they used to complain about. These colleagues will no longer feel free to complain about management in the presence of this supervisor.
It will also be misleading to imply that supervision is all bad and that no supervisor is enjoying his/her job. Why then do people accept the offer of a supervisory post? In this regard Kadushin and Harkness (2002:281) state a few reasons why people accept the position of supervisor, namely:

- Career advancement in pay, status and prestige, and continuing professional growth and challenge.
- The decision to opt for an opening as a supervisor may result from a feeling of being burned out as a direct service worker.
- Feeling able to do something to develop a better workforce by stimulating the professional development of some employees.
- Being involved in an administrative or system change that would benefit practitioners and clients.

The researcher also wants to add by stating that some workers aspire to become supervisors because they saw their supervisors positively displaying the duties of supervision. After the period of transition and adjustment, the supervisor will be confronted with real issues in the position of supervisor. These are issues such as authority and power, getting the work done, and his/her relationship with the supervisees.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has deliberated on what a social work supervisor needs to be equipped with for him/her to understand what is required of him/her, with regard to rendering effective supervision. With an understanding of what social work supervision entails as reflected in this chapter, it then becomes necessary to engage in the empirical study to obtain a practical view from social work supervisors on their experiences as first-line managers during and after the transition from supervisee to supervisor in a welfare organization.
CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Supervision is an important aspect of social work. It builds the social worker into maturity with regard to service rendering. Social workers who are well-supervised display maturity and confidence by rendering effective and efficient services. This results in satisfied clients and a good image of the organization. The researcher wanted to understand the experiences of the workforce (supervisors) which is responsible for the important task of supervising social workers. It becomes clear in the literature review that social work supervisors are an important element in the practice of social work and also that they have experiences and challenges which are usually overlooked and not always understood.

The main purpose of this chapter is to present, analyze and interpret the research findings, and to communicate the information that has been accumulated from the research findings. The study was conducted in the Gauteng Province’s Department of Social Development, North Rand Region, as an example of a welfare organization.

The goal of this study was:

To explore the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers, during and after transition from supervisee to supervisor in a welfare organization.

In order to obtain the goal of the study, the following objectives were formulated:

Objective 1:
To conceptualize social work supervision theoretically, based on the available literature.
Objective 2:
To explore empirically the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers, during and after role transition from supervisee to supervisor.

Objective 3:
To make recommendations regarding the situation of social work supervisors, in order to improve their service rendering.

From the above goal and objectives of the study, the following research question was formulated:

What are the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers in a welfare organization during and after transition from supervisee to supervisor?

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this research study a qualitative approach was used to collect information about the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers in a welfare organization, during and after transition from supervisee to supervisor. This undertaking was relevant to the study, as the researcher’s intention was to gain firsthand information about the perceptions, experiences and feelings of respondents on their experiences as first-line managers in a welfare organization. Denzin and Lincoln (2003:5) view qualitative research as involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study people in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Applied research was used for this study to explore a problem in practice. Exploratory design, and specifically the collective case study design, formed the basis of the study as it is qualitative in nature and this helped the researcher to gain insight into the phenomenon. Fouche and De Vos (2005:105) also note that applied research is aimed at solving specific policy problems or at helping practitioners accomplish tasks. It is focused on solving problems in practice. Applied research was thus chosen because of the assumption by the researcher that social work supervisors go through certain experiences which call for exploration and understanding. The researcher intended to get important information on the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers in a welfare organization.
The data collection method used in this study was one-to-one, semi-structured interviews with social work supervisors. The researcher used an interview schedule to collect qualitative data from the respondents (see Appendix B). Data was collected at the research site and refined away from the site.

The target population for this study was social work supervisors of the Gauteng’s Department of Social Development, North Rand Region’s offices and institutions. Of a total of 22 supervisors, a sample of 10 respondents was selected by using simple random sampling. As per research procedure, the researcher visited the respondents at their respective organizations by appointment. The researcher planned to collect information from the 10 social work supervisors in the different offices of the North Rand Region. The process did not go according to the researcher’s plan, as one of the respondents was not available due to illness. This left the researcher with a total of 9 respondents instead of the original number of 10.

3.3 EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The primary aim of this chapter is to present, analyze and interpret the qualitative data collected by using semi-structured interviews with 9 social work supervisors.

To analyze qualitative data in this study, the researcher utilized text analysis. All the interviews were first transcribed and then analyzed by carefully going through all the transcripts following a code system. Themes and sub-themes were then identified, interpreted and verified with literature.

The presentation of the findings of the study will be done according to the following outline:

- A biographical profile of the research participants.
- A presentation of the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the process of data analysis. Each theme and sub-theme will be discussed according to a summary of findings, quotations to verify the findings, and an integration of literature.
3.3.1 Biographical profile of respondents

The biographical profile of the respondents will be displayed hereunder. It portrays the current trends in the career of social work supervisors in the Department of Social Development, Gauteng Province. The profile of the respondents entails the following variables: gender, race, marital status, home language, age, academic qualifications, and years of experience as a social worker and social work supervisor.

3.3.1.1 Gender of respondents

The gender of respondents who participated in this study is reflected in Table 2.

Table 2: Gender of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 2 it is clear that the majority of respondents (89%) were female social work supervisors. Only one (11%) of the respondents was a male. This is not surprising as the social work profession is currently dominated by females.

3.3.1.2 Respondents’ race

The race of the respondents formed part of the autobiography and is portrayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Race of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 reflects that the majority of respondents (67%) were white, while 33% were black. A possible reason for this trend is that whites are the ones who entered the profession first, while blacks entered into the profession at a later stage. The current situation is however gradually changing.

3.3.1.3 Marital status of the respondents

Table 4 displays the marital status of the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 4 it is clear that the majority of the respondents (67%) were married while 33% were divorced. There were no unmarried (single) persons in this study, perhaps due to the fact that supervisors are normally older adults.

3.3.1.4 Home language of the respondents.

The home language of the respondents was also looked into as part of the autobiography. Table 5 displays the home language of the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ndebele</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and Afrikaans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zulu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xhosa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The different home languages displayed in Table 5 reflect the diverse language and cultural groups in South Africa. However, the majority of respondents (45%) were Afrikaans speaking.

3.3.1.5 Age range of the respondents

Table 6 reflects the age range of the respondents.

Table 6: Age range of the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older than 55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 6 it is clear that the ages of the respondents range from 35 to older than 55 years. It is interesting to note that there are no social work supervisors between the ages of 20 and 30 years in this study. The researcher views this as a result of the fact that a social work supervisor needs to gather experience as a social worker before being appointed to the position of social work supervisor.

3.3.1.6 Academic qualifications of the respondents

Table 7 highlights the academic qualifications of the respondents.
Table 7: Respondents’ academic qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate diploma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate diploma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents hold qualifications ranging from undergraduate diploma to postgraduate degree. Although some respondents have undergraduate diplomas that are no longer common in the social work profession, they however have been trained some time ago and have extensive work experience.

3.3.1.7 Respondents’ years of experience as social workers

Table 8 highlights the years of experience of the respondents as social workers.

Table 8: Respondents’ years of experience as social workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years and more</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 highlights that the majority of the respondents (67%) have 16 years experience or more as social workers. It is clear that all the respondents had substantial experience in the field of social work. The sample gave a balanced spread of the experiences of respondents as social workers.
3.3.1.8. Respondents’ years of experience as social work supervisors

The respondents’ years of experience as social work supervisors formed an important part of the autobiography. Table 9 reflects these years of experience.

Table 9: Respondents’ years of experience as social work supervisors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of experience as social work supervisor</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years and above.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 9, it is clear that the majority of the respondents (34%) have between 10 and 12 years of experience as social work supervisors. In general the years of experience of social work supervisors, as reflected in this table, range from 3 years and up. The researcher views this as a reasonable and balanced reflection of the years of experience and it implies that the respondents were in a position to give valuable information regarding their experiences as social work supervisors.
3.3.2 Qualitative information according to themes and sub-themes

Table 10 displays a summary of the identified themes and sub-themes in this study.

Table 10: A summary of identified themes and sub-themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>SUB-THEMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: The hierarchical position of the social work supervisor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Theme 2: The roles of a social work supervisor.  | 2.1  The role of trainer.  
2.2  The role of advisor.  
2.3  The role of facilitator.  
2.4  The role of instructor. |
| Theme 3: Managerial functions of a social work supervisor. | 3.1  Planning function.  
3.2  Controlling function.  
3.3  Organizing function.  
3.4  Leading function.  
3.5  Coordinating function.  
3.6  Directing function.  
3.7  Motivating function. |
| Theme 4: Transition and adjustment of a social work supervisor. | 4.1  The functional differences between a social worker and a social work supervisor.  
4.2  Transition from social worker to social work supervisor. |
| Theme 5: Training of a social work supervisor. |                                                                           |
| Theme 6: The expectations attached to a supervisory position. | 6.1  Expectations by supervisees.  
6.2  Expectations by senior managers.  
6.3  Expectations by colleagues. |
| Theme 7: The application of the methods of social work supervision. | 7.1  Individual supervision.  
7.2  Group supervision.  
7.3  Consultation. |
| Theme 8: Support from managers.                  |                                                                           |
Each theme will be described according to the following structure:

- Summary of findings.
- Quotations to verify findings.
- Integration of literature.

### 3.3.2.1 Theme 1: The hierarchical position of a social work supervisor

All the respondents (100%) acknowledged their position as being the lowest in the management hierarchy. They also explained that they rank between the social workers (functional workers) and senior managers. They explained that they experience the position as challenging because they must make sure that their supervisees deliver the expected services, whilst at the same time respond to the demands of senior managers. They stated that it is difficult and not always possible to satisfy these two groups. However, they stated that they saw their core function as that of overseeing the work of social workers and supervising them. The following quotations confirm these experiences:

- “It is one of those difficult positions … where you feel you carry the concerns and welfare and the interests of the people you are supervising as a priority. You also have to meet the management above you”.
- “For me to be on the lowest level of management is quite a challenge, because I’m in-between the people who are working functionally and also the management”.
- “…and sometimes meeting these two priorities creates a conflict in yourself and to be able to make decisions sometimes you have to prioritize the one above the other”.
- “I think that it is a very difficult position because at this level I have to make sure that everything the social worker does is in order”.
- “It can be very stressful because you have to be responsible for your supervisees”.

In relation to what the respondents stated, Kadushin and Harkness (2002:21) explain that the supervisor is responsible for the performance of the direct service workers. They go on to describe the position of the social work supervisor as “an in-between functionary”.
The respondents explained that they saw their responsibility as leaning more towards their supervisees.

3.3.2.2 Theme 2: The roles of a social work supervisor

This theme focuses on different roles of a social work supervisor and is divided into four sub-themes, namely:

- The role of trainer.
- The role of advisor.
- The role of facilitator.
- The role of instructor.

All respondents (100%) agreed that the roles of trainer, advisor, facilitator and instructor form part of their work as social work supervisors. The implementation of these roles by social work supervisors ensures that the service rendered by social workers is effective and efficient. They explained that the effective implementation of these roles required that they have some experience in the job they were doing. The different roles of a social work supervisor will be discussed in detail hereunder.

SUB-THEME 2.1: ROLE OF TRAINER

As supervisors, 89% of the respondents explained that they were always faced with the role of training their supervisees. They experienced training as passing on their knowledge of social work to their supervisees and giving guidance to them. The role of trainer was about educating the supervisees on what the job required. They also stated that the training of supervisees was done continuously. Their experience was that the training of social workers should be based on their needs. They reported that the training they give to social workers is primarily on the day-to-day work they do. The respondents also acknowledged the fact that some training went beyond their knowledge and functioning, in which case experts led the training sessions. It also came to light that most of the respondents experienced themselves as good trainers and enjoyed the role of trainer. Quotations confirming the experiences of social work supervisors on the role of trainer follow hereunder:
• “It’s like an educator and a coach”.
• “You are there to guide these people … developing them”.
• “I have the ability to bring theory and practice together”.
• “I enjoyed it and it’s just a wonderful experience to be able to share knowledge”.
• “So for me that role is something that I enjoy because I feel that as a supervisor I am equipped to help these people”.
• “You must first identify the needs of your supervisees … and train them with regard to their needs”.
• “… also if you feel that what they deserve (training) you cannot provide, it is important that you can refer a person to places like, in-service training and sometimes there are trainings that are organised by the Department”.
• “I don’t always have the knowledge and then I will try … to get someone who is an expert on a certain subject…and I will also arrange for them to go to training sessions that the Department might give”.

The role of trainer by social work supervisors is confirmed by different authors. This role is also explained as the educational function of social work supervision. Botha (2002:103) explained this role by stating that the purpose of the educational function in supervision is to assist social workers in providing better services by teaching them what they do not know. Christian and Hannah (in Harmse, 1999:18) also explained the role of trainer as educating social workers. They stated that a social work supervisor has the responsibility to educate social workers on what services they are to render in that particular organization, as well as to educate them about the programmes and policies. The respondents’ experiences thus correlate with what is specified in literature.

SUB-THEME 2.2: ROLE OF ADVISOR

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents explained that they advise their supervisees as part of their daily functioning. They reported that the role of advising included guiding the social workers on matters relating to their work. Eleven percent of the respondents explained that when they had given advice to the supervisee on cases they were handling and the advice proved successful, they experienced a feeling of fulfilment.
The following quotations verify the experiences of social work supervisors regarding their role of advisor:

- “I think that you are giving advice everyday … give advises on all the cases when they ask you”.
- “Throughout the process of handling the case, I’ll also have to keep on advising the social worker on what to do…”
- “I do a lot of guiding and advising my supervisees”.
- “Sometimes you find that a social worker or supervisee is having a challenging case, so you have that role of providing advisory, sort of information to this person…”
- “I am able to give advice pertaining to a particular case…”
- “You feel fulfilled because … throughout my advice to this person, the case has been solved. You feel a sense of worth…”

Regarding advice, a social worker can choose to either accept or reject the advice given to him/her by the supervisor. Although she describes it in the context of consultation, Botha (2002:287) also agrees that accepting advice remains the social worker’s choice when she states: “It remains the prerogative of the social worker to implement the advice”. She also warns that advice given to social workers by their supervisors must be practical if it is to be accepted. She explains: “If the advice or the proposals are of a pragmatic, practical and meaningful nature regarding the situations for which it was required there is a stronger chance that the social workers could take it into account” (Botha, 2002:287). It seems as if the respondents did not experience a rejection of their advice by their supervisees; on the contrary they experienced that the supervisees expressed a need for guidance and advice.

**SUB-THEME 2.3: ROLE OF FACILITATOR**

Fifty-six percent of the respondents explained that they have experienced that part of a facilitator’s role is making sure that social workers do their work. To 22% of the respondents the role of facilitating meant that the supervisor took the lead in tasks or activities that needed to be done by social workers. It was stated by 22% of the respondents that they also involved their social workers in facilitating certain tasks, such as facilitating meetings. They also admitted that they find the role of facilitating challenging. It is challenging when supervisees do not do the tasks that have been facilitated by the supervisor and allocated to them. However, the role of facilitating has
taught some supervisors (33%) to delegate tasks. The following quotations confirm the supervisors’ experiences:

- “I’m there to assist, to facilitate, to see that everything is done”.
- “So it is very important for you as a supervisor to facilitate the services that need to be rendered in order to see that everything is done accordingly”.
- “I will also help them to be facilitators. I will not always be a facilitator myself. I also ask them sometimes to facilitate if we have a meeting for instance, I will give them the opportunity to facilitate”.
- “But it is also a challenge if the social workers do not stick to return dates…”
- “…to be a facilitator is a positive thing to me because of the delegation of tasks, sharing of tasks…”

In literature, Botha (2002:54) refers to facilitation as activation. Botha agrees with the statements and the experiences of the respondents. Regarding the importance of facilitation as a role, Botha (2002: 54) states: “Activation is most demanding on supervisors since it determines the quality and quantity of work executed by staff.” She also agrees that activation or facilitation includes delegation when she states: “To activate successfully, the supervisor has to develop the ability to delegate, to communicate, to interpret and to encourage…” Botha (2002:54) also indicates that facilitation is part of leadership and that a manager has to be involved in facilitation. In a nutshell, it seems as if the respondents understood their role as facilitators, as indicated in literature.

SUB-THEME 2.4: ROLE OF INSTRUCTOR

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents experienced that being an instructor is one of their roles as social work supervisors and that these instructions are mainly aimed at allocating tasks to social workers. They also explained that although instructions can be given verbally, a social work supervisor also needs to give written instructions for them to remain recorded and for future references. They also stated that they experienced this role as challenging at times, because their supervisees sometimes refused to follow their instructions. However, 22% of the respondents stated that they had not experienced social workers refusing to take their instructions. Eleven percent of the respondents explained that social work supervisors need to give clear instructions to their supervisees
so that they know what is expected of them. They stated that the manner in which an instruction was given would determine the response that a supervisor receives from the supervisee. This also goes hand in hand with the type of relationship a social work supervisor has established with his/her supervisees. According to the respondents, instructing also included communicating to the supervisees what a supervisor’s expectations are. Hereunder follow the quotations to confirm the experiences of social work supervisors:

- “I think I’m clear as an instructor on things that I expect”.
- “Also in my files, when I do spell out what I expect, I do get feedback”.
- “… when you give them their files, you will instruct them to do that and that…”
- “I never had a problem with people blatantly refusing to take my instructions”.
- “I get what I want from social workers”.
- “It is not nice because social workers become angry with you”.
- “You are an instructor, but as a social work supervisor you need to have a way of instructing people. They must not see that you are bossing them and at least they must see you as someone who is trying to show them the way…”

The researcher sees similarities between the role of instructor and the role of a trainer. In both instances information is passed on to supervisees and the supervisees are expected to act or implement this information in order to improve their service delivery. Lussier (1997:14) classifies the role of instructor under the informational roles. These informational roles include monitor, disseminator and spokesperson. The researcher is of the opinion that, just as in the role of advising, the manner in which an instruction is given will determine if the supervisee will accept it or not. This has also been confirmed by the respondents.

From the above discussion it is clear that the roles of trainer, advisor, facilitator and instructor are indeed the major roles of social work supervisors and that they spend most of their time implementing them.
3.3.2.3 Theme 3: Managerial functions of a social work supervisor

The study also looked at the managerial functions of a social work supervisor. All respondents (100%) described their experiences of the functions of a social work supervisor as challenging and fulfilling. Managerial functions are composed of seven sub-themes, which are the following:

- The planning function
- The controlling function
- The organizing function
- The leading function
- The coordinating function
- The directing function
- The motivating function

These functions will be discussed hereunder as sub-themes:

**SUB-THEME 3.1: PLANNING FUNCTION**

All respondents (100%) experienced the function of planning as central to all managerial functions. They mentioned that although a social work supervisor could have his/her own plans, there is always a need to plan with supervisees too. They explained that no service delivery can take place without planning. It also came up that planning helped the social work supervisor and his/her team to achieve the laid down objectives.

It also emerged that plans differ from supervisor to supervisor and are also based on what the organization wanted to achieve. Their experience here was that their plans always got disrupted by the senior managers’ demands, which necessitated that they plan and re-plan. These senior managers called meetings at short notice or required tasks to be done and completed at short notice, which interfered with the supervisors’ plans. They put the blame on their immediate managers, whom they perceive as not assertive enough to refuse short-notice instructions from senior managers. This interference in plans by senior managers left the social work supervisors feeling frustrated and not in control of their work.
The following quotations confirm the supervisors’ experiences:

- “… planning is the heart of management”.
- “… I understand very well that planning is the key aspect in my role as a supervisor because in whatever you are doing, if you don’t plan, you will work haphazardly”.
- “You cannot do anything without planning”.
- “Planning is very important even though we plan and we don’t always get to our plans”.
- “Sometimes I don’t feel I’m in control of my own planning”.
- “Plans always coincide with my managers’ plans”.
- “I plan with the idea that someone can interfere with my work”.
- “People come and interfere with your programme and still expect you to deliver the goods”.
- “Planning … to me is the way of doing a professional job, and I often feel that people who interfere in other people’s planning are not doing a professional job and do not allow you to be professional”.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the respondents are of the opinion that they cannot work effectively without planning. Supporting what the respondents have said, Plunkett and Greer (2000:103) state that planning is “the management function through which managers decide how they proceed toward future goal accomplishment”. Weinbach (1998:77) adds by stating that planning is “taking action to influence the future”. Botha (2002:38) mentions that: “To the social work manager planning signifies activities such as the planning of strategy; setting policies; defining objectives, goals, tasks and work schedules; drawing up budgets; determining procedures and standards; preparations of agendas; and the planning of time”. The researcher did not come across literature that addresses the interference by senior managers in the plans of social work supervisors, a frustration which the respondents have emphasized strongly.

**SUB-THEME 3.2: CONTROLLING FUNCTION**

It was acknowledged by 89% of the respondents that controlling was necessary although they said that, in their experience, it was difficult to control people. The respondents explained that they experienced controlling as having to do with monitoring and
evaluating the services that were rendered by social workers in the organization, that is
to say seeing to it that all services were rendered according to plans. In essence
controlling has a “checking” element. Their experience was that controlling could be
perceived as negative by the supervisees, which leads to resistance. The supervisees at
times perceived controlling as being bullied or “bossed” by their supervisors. However,
they agreed that controlling needed to be done for effective service delivery to take place.
For them controlling also meant intervening when things went wrong in the work of a
supervisee.

The quotations that follow hereunder confirm the experiences of social work supervisors
regarding this function:

- “When you control, you check if everything that is being done, is according to how
  it is supposed to be done”.
- “The experience is that if at all you control, you end up having order. If you leave
  things uncontrolled, there will be no order and it reflects bad on you …”
- “I want to know what is happening”.
- “… is like you are the big boss”.
- “Some other people … tend to feel as if you are bossing them”.
- “You must be there for them to control otherwise nothing is going on”.
- “Sometimes, if I see things getting out of hand I step in and make decisions”.

Literature confirms that controlling is generally to make certain that work is by the
respondents when they describe that control is “the process through which operational
managers ensure that the plans and objectives drawn up for their sections are achieved”.
Botha (2002:56) confirms the same meaning when she defines control by stating that
control is applied to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the organization’s
programmes, as well as to apply it to direct service rendering by social workers. Botha
(2002:56) also agrees with the respondents’ view that control is about making sure that
services are rendered according to plan and expected standards when she states: “The
control function encompasses the evaluation of organizational effectiveness, the success
of organizational projects, and the general performance and growth in professionalism of
the social workers”.

79
Regarding the supervisors’ experience of the supervisees’ negativity towards the controlling function, Botha (2002:57) confirms: “Some social workers often regard control in an organization as superfluous and are often of the opinion that it disregards their freedom and assails their professionalism. It is often a result of wrongful implementation of control”. It seems thus as if the respondents’ experiences regarding the function of control correlate with the opinion of different authors.

**SUB-THEME 3.3: ORGANIZING FUNCTION**

All the respondents (100%) agreed that organizing was one of their main functions as social work supervisors. They experienced organizing as going hand in hand with planning. To 44% of the respondents planning is effective and produces more results when it is done with supervisees. Twenty-two percent of the respondents expressed that they find it difficult to organize. Because some of their supervisees possessed this skill, they delegated some of their organizing tasks to the social workers. It also emerged that the respondents experienced the same interference and disruptions in this function as in the planning function. The following quotations confirm the experiences of the respondents:

- “Organizing, I can put it as similar to planning … because when you organize, you try to put things in place…”
- “When I organize, I organize with them [the supervisees]”.
- “I will ask them [supervisees] … let us do it together”.
- “We will organize our working situation. How are we going to do this? Who is going to be responsible for that? Who will be doing this?”
- “You organize your work in a certain way and it becomes disorganized because of outside factors that you haven’t got much control over”.

Betts (1998:89) states: “Organizing means arranging for everything to be at the right place, at the right time, so that work may proceed according to plan”. Weinbach (1998:209) adds by stating that organizing refers to the “grouping of people and their activities along some basic pattern or model in order that their activities can be adequately supervised”. The importance of delegation as part of organizing is also
emphasized by Botha (2002:47) and she further explains the function of organizing by stating that: “Organizing is the act of the structuring of the pre-determined tasks of the social work manager. It is the synthesis of people and resources in an acceptable pattern to execute specific activities”. Botha (2002:48-51) explains further that organizing should include the following factors:

- The activities have to be planned and allocated.
- Tasks as well as authority should be delegated.
- The structure of the organization should be elucidated.
- Interdisciplinary teams have to be established.
- Effective communication networks have to be established and maintained.

The respondents' experiences are thus confirmed in literature.

**SUB-THEME 3.4: LEADING FUNCTION**

Eighty-nine percent of the respondents experienced the function of leading as giving direction to their supervisees. They also explained that in leading, you are like a mentor or a coach and you must be able to influence the people you are leading. A supervisor must lead by example. They felt strongly about the fact that a social work supervisor, as a leader, needed to be assertive. They also experienced good leadership as being able to advocate for your supervisees.

The quotations hereunder confirm the experiences of the respondents:

- “As a leader, you lead by example”.
- “I think to be a supervisor, I must be a leader”.
- “… for me it is like mentorship. It is like I am a mentor and a coach”.
- “When you lead, you need to influence”.
- “… I won’t abandon them. I will be there for them. That is why I think I am a good leader”.
- “I’d rather lead where I know everybody is behind me”.

Regarding the function of leading, Botha (2002:24) and Lussier (1997:11) are of the opinion that a leader must have an influence on the people he/she leads. Botha (2002:24) explains: “Leadership can to a great extent be directly associated with
influencing”. This was also confirmed by the respondents. Lussier (1997:11) defines the function of leading as “the process of influencing employees to work toward achieving objectives”. A leader, according to Botha (2002:25), must also have the ability to inspire his/her followers. She states: “They inspire others, endeavour to bring change as well encourage it”. The respondents’ responses echoed thus what is stated in literature.

**SUB-THEME 3.5: COORDINATING FUNCTION**

This function was linked to that of organizing and planning by 67% of the respondents. They explained that they experienced coordination as linking the tasks, that is to say putting together different activities in such a way that at the end you have an effective product. Just like in other functions, 33% of the respondents stated that they experienced the function of coordinating as challenging. The challenge is experienced when supervisees do not carry out the tasks allocated to them in the projects and programmes to be run by the particular organization they are working for. This leads to supervisors carrying out the tasks by themselves. The following quotations confirm the respondents’ experiences:

- “When you coordinate, you want to see things happening in a proper manner. You coordinate services”.
- “For me coordinating is connected to leading and organizing”.
- “Actually, I enjoy coordinating because in fact you are linking the tasks and at the end of the day you have the product that you want to sell to the client”.
- “It is quite a challenge for me to coordinate …”
- “So sometimes the challenge is, people don’t want to take part …”
- “… you end up doing everything …”

Botha (2002:18) explains the function of coordinating as a skill that a social work supervisor must have. She states: “Under the term conceptual skill it can also be understood that the social work manager possesses the required ability to co-ordinate and integrate all sections and activities in the organization to effectively attain the major objectives of the organization”. She also views coordinating as including participatory management when she states: “… the manager can introduce a method of participative management in the organization and in this manner co-ordinate and integrate different
staff members’ activities. Participative management provides the opportunity for personnel to control certain aspects of their work more effectively”.

From the respondents’ responses it is clear that although they have the correct perspective of coordination, they experienced this function as a challenge.

**SUB-THEME 3.6: DIRECTING FUNCTION**

The function of directing was described as similar to that of leading by 67% of the respondents. Their experience was that in order to give directions effectively, a supervisor must possess leadership qualities. They also explained that directing was a challenge, because everything social workers did depended on the manner in which a supervisor directed them. It is the experience of 11% of the respondents that when they direct, they must couple it with motivating the supervisee. They have experienced the function of directing as challenging in that if there are any failures in the organization, they reflect on the manner in which a supervisor directs and in this case the supervisor will be regarded as a failure. Eleven percent of the respondents indicated that when you direct supervisees, you also give them support. The following quotations confirm the experiences of the respondents:

- “I think I’d rather motivate them to a certain direction than just to direct them”.
- “To me directing is like leading”.
- “You know, if you are a director, it is a challenging task because now if the boat sinks, you are the person who is going to be seen as a person who is failing …”
- “… you give them the support they need”.

The researcher also agrees that there are similarities between leading and directing. The reader is referred to the function leading for the relevant literature.

**SUB-THEME 3.7: MOTIVATING FUNCTION**

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents agreed that motivating included acknowledging supervisees for the work they have done and that social work supervisors should not
always concentrate on the wrongs of their supervisees. Motivating, as experienced by the respondents, included identifying the strengths of the supervisees and giving them compliments on these. This helps when the supervisor begins to talk about weaknesses as the supervisees are now more receptive because they understand that, in spite of their weaknesses, they also do have strengths. The respondents also reported that they experienced that motivating staff is important, because there are times when they (staff) are de-motivated and one cannot work with de-motivated staff. It also came up in the study that motivation was done with individuals and groups. Eleven percent of the respondents explained that there were supervisees who remained unmotivated even when they were motivated by their supervisors. The following quotations confirm the experiences of the respondents:

- “What I have been doing is to complement the good work that has been done”.
- “Give credit for what they do”.
- “You have to have energy. If you want to motivate people to work as a team … you need to have energy”.
- “… we mustn’t focus on the mistakes of that person, so that we can build someone because if we are always criticizing, that person will be de-motivated”.
- “To be developmental is very important”.
- “I think I can motivate my people up to a certain point”.
- “I will motivate a person who I think is willing and you can see that there is development”.

Botha (2002:19) again classifies the motivating function as a skill. She classified the motivation function as a human relation skill and states that a supervisor is required to become skilled in dealing with people. She also states: “One of the most important skills in individual and group dynamics is motivation. The social work manager has to motivate staff members individually as well as in group context”. She further states: “It is therefore necessary that the social work manager is able to motivate personnel to a point of the required level of performance”. It can be said that the respondents’ experiences regarding motivation as a function are confirmed in literature.

The respondents explained that because of the experiences they have gathered in implementing the managerial functions, they are ready to face higher challenges, such as taking up higher posts.
3.3.2.4. Theme 4: Transition and adjustment of a social work supervisor

The researcher also explored the differences between a social worker and a social work supervisor. The respondents were led to discuss the differences between themselves and their supervisees with regard to their professional functioning, as well as their experiences during and after transition from social worker to supervisor.

This theme is divided into the following two sub-themes: The differences between social workers and social work supervisors, and transition from social worker to social work supervisor. The sub-themes will be discussed hereunder.

SUB-THEME 4.1: THE FUNCTIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A SOCIAL WORKER AND A SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR

All respondents (100%) agreed that there were differences in the functioning of a social work supervisor and a social worker. They mentioned and emphasized responsibilities and accountability as the outstanding differences between the tasks of a social worker and a social work supervisor, meaning a social work supervisor had more responsibilities and was more accountable than a social worker. The duties were experienced as different in that a social work supervisor did management tasks, whilst a social worker did functional work. The responsibilities of a supervisor included, among other things, decision-making. A supervisor has to make decisions on behalf of the social workers on the proper services to be rendered and also on what to be done with difficult cases. It was revealed by 33% of the respondents that they felt the burden of responsibilities more intensely, because a social work supervisor is more experienced than the social worker. Forty-four percent of the respondents explained that a social work supervisor owns the caseload of a social worker, which means that a social work supervisor has more responsibility and accountability than a social worker. Twenty-three percent of the respondents explained that a social work supervisor does administrative work and as such occupied an administrative position, while supervisees rendered social work services. They described themselves as more mature and were therefore of the opinion that maturity is one thing that differentiates a social work supervisor from a social worker.
The following are the quotations which confirm the experiences of the respondents:

- “The very first thing I think is about the experience … the supervisor has more experience”.
- “Being a supervisor … you become more accountable”.
- “The supervisor has the responsibility of his/her work as well as the caseload of the social workers”.
- “The other thing is that you must be able to do administration work as a supervisor”.
- “A supervisor is a person who is more matured and would look at a situation from a different viewpoint”.

The above discussion is also supported by literature. On the matter of a social work supervisor owning the caseload of social workers and getting the tasks done by supervisees, De Beer and Rossouw (2005:23) note that a supervisor completes tasks through staff in their sections. The functions of a social work supervisor, which the respondents put emphasis on as responsibilities, are indicative of the differences between a social worker and a social work supervisor. Botha (2002:34) describes decision making as a skill a supervisor must have. She states: “Irrespective of the position held by the supervisor … in the administrative hierarchy, they are obliged to take decisions”. She acknowledges that decision-making is one of the difficult daily tasks of social work managers.

**SUB-THEME 4.2: TRANSITION FROM SOCIAL WORKER TO SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR**

All respondents (100%) agreed that they experienced the transition from social worker to social work supervisor as challenging, difficult, scary and shocking. It came up in the study that the respondents were not at all prepared by their superiors for the position they were taking up and as such some were not sure if they were going to make it as social work supervisors. Training was not offered to them in preparation for the task of being social work supervisors. However, 23% of the respondents mentioned that the task became exciting as time went by.
Respondents emphasized the fact that transition also needed to take place in the mind of a social work supervisor, meaning that a social work supervisor must stop thinking like a social worker and begin to think like a manager. To 12% of the respondents the transition from social worker to social work supervisor was more difficult if the supervisor had befriended some social workers while he/she was still a social worker. It is difficult because the supervisor will now be implementing policies that will make him/her unpopular among the staff. The respondents explained that they felt confident in being nominated to a supervisory position and to them it meant that they were experienced enough to take up this higher level of responsibility. At the same time they acknowledged that being nominated to a supervisory post did not mean that they knew what supervision was all about and it also did not mean that they were going to perform well as supervisors. They were also not prepared for the task they were going to perform. The quotations hereunder confirm the experiences of the respondents:

- “At first it was scary. Am I going to make it?”
- “I was very scared. I was thinking, what if I am not a good supervisor?”
- “… it was like I was jumping into something that I had to learn to do in that moment”.
- “I was not prepared, I was not trained. When I was in it, I realized I knew little about supervision”.
- “It was like, you are a supervisor now, fine, do the job. I was not prepared. I was not guided into the situation”.
- “I still think like a social worker”.
- “My supervisor would say … you are no longer a social worker anymore, you are a manager of social workers”.
- “To become a supervisor long time ago, they would just say: ‘today you are a supervisor’”.
- “So the experience was terrifying because you don’t know what to do”.
- “Transition is difficult if one of the social workers was your personal friend”.
- “It was a total shock”.

There is a general consensus in the literature that transition from social worker to supervisor is difficult, just as the respondents have explained. Robbins and De Cenzo (2004:14) describe the transition as traumatic when they state: “The challenge is unique when one moves into first-line management; it is unlike anything managers will encounter
later in their rise up the organizational ladder”. Kadushin and Harkness (2002:282) explain that the trauma of the transition from social worker to supervisor is also associated with a lack of training for the job. They note: “Because few supervisors had formal training in supervision prior to the appointment, they felt considerable anxiety about whether they could do the job”. Some respondents also indicated that it is difficult to supervise people who were your colleagues and equals in terms of hierarchy, as some of them have become your friends. This is confirmed by De Beer and Rossouw (2005:24) when they mention: “A supervisor cannot supervise and also be everyone's friend – must often take unpopular decisions …” It emerged strongly from the study that the transition from the role of social worker to that of social work supervisor was one of the difficult aspects in the career of social work supervisors. The respondents’ responses thus echoed what is stated in literature.

3.3.2.5. Theme 5: Training of a social work supervisor

The data indicated that social work supervisors were appointed from within the ranks of practicing social workers and that they were not prepared by way of training for the position of social work supervisor. Training for the position of social work supervisor came up in the study as a need. Lack of training for the task also contributed to the social work supervisors’ difficulty in transition and subsequently affected their functioning as supervisors. All respondents (100%) explained that they received no training for the job and that there was a need for training prior to assuming the position. They also reported that training in supervision which they received at university was not enough to prepare them for this managerial task. The following quotations confirm the experiences of the respondents:

- “To become a supervisor long time ago, they would just say: “Today you are a supervisor. There was no training”.
- “I was told that as from the first of August you are going to be a supervisor … I never received any training on supervision”.
- “There was no training for supervisors at that stage … we had no formal training as supervisors”.

88
“I was not prepared, I was not trained. When I was in it, I realized I knew little about supervision”.

“It was like I was jumping into something that I had to learn to do at that moment”.

“And I had to go and study for myself what is the role of a supervisor”.

In literature, training for the position of social work supervisor has been emphasized, particularly by Botha (2002). She states that: “It is imperative that supervisors should receive formal education, providing them with the required knowledge … and to develop the necessary skills in the process” (Botha, 2002:5). She goes on to say: “To be able to put supervision into practice, training programmes have to include the theory and execution of the supervisory process” (Botha, 2002:6). Botha (2002) confirms that in many instances, social work supervisors were appointed from practicing social workers. She notes specifically: “Supervisors are normally selected, as the case is in South Africa, on their knowledge of, expertise in, and a number of years in direct social work practice”. She warns that this may not be the best practice when she states: “Although the aforementioned factors (knowledge, expertise and a number of years in direct practice) are of importance, they do not guarantee that the incumbent would be an efficient supervisor”. Kadushin and Harkness agree with Botha on the need for the training of social workers in preparation for a supervisory position, and the fact that promoting them from the position of social worker to that of supervisor may not be the best practice. They postulate: “The current promotional situation risks the possibility that the agency may loose a competent worker to gain an incompetent supervisor” (Kadushin and Harkness, 2002:281). Mordock, Schindler and Talen (in Botha, 2002:5) explain that training a social work supervisor before he/she assumes the position will help the supervisor in the following manner:

- It will help the supervisor to identify with his/her new role as a supervisor.
- It will help him/her to withdraw from his/her role as direct service provider and invest in the emotions, knowledge and energy of his/her new role.

Again it was clear that the respondents confirmed what is stated in the literature regarding the importance of training in social work supervision and the lack of supervisor training.
3.3.2.6. Theme 6: The expectations attached to a supervisory position

From the study it emerged that there are expectations attached to the position of social work supervisor. These expectations will be divided into three sub-themes namely:

- Sub-theme 6.1: Expectations by supervisees.
- Sub-theme 6.2: Expectations by senior managers.
- Sub-theme 6.3: Expectations by colleagues.

Each sub-theme will be discussed separately.

**SUB-THEME 6.1: EXPECTATIONS BY SUPERVISEES**

The majority of respondents (78%) explained that their supervisees generally expected them to supervise, support, train and guide them. The supervisees expect their supervisors to transfer knowledge to them about social work. They also expect the supervisors to handle difficult situations on their behalf. The respondents explained that they at times felt that their supervisees had unreasonable and unrealistic expectations, such as expecting the supervisor to know everything and to be able to change the supervisees' situation every time that they are faced with a problem.

The following quotations confirm the experiences of the respondents:

- “They expect me … to impart them with knowledge pertaining to social work”.
- “They look up to me to guide them”.
- “They expect me to give them their work, to be there for them when they need me”.
- “Expectations … differ from social worker to social worker”.
- “The younger ones (social workers) need more formal supervision”.
- “They expect the supervisors to be able to change things and make life easy for them and it is very difficult”.


The study has shown that it was common for a supervisee to have expectations of his/her supervisor. As it has already been pointed out, supervisees mostly expect support and training from their supervisors, amongst other things. Plunkett and Greer (2000:9) agree with the expectation of training by stating that a supervisor is expected to provide the supervisees with “adequate instruction and training”. Middleman and Rhodes (in Botha, 2002:197) also discussed the social workers’ expectation that a supervisor should play a supportive role and give reasons for this. They postulate: “The supportive function is a necessary essentiality and an organization is obligated through its supervisory services to provide support to its social workers through the organization’s supervisors”. They explain that support is needed by the social workers because of the nature of their work with clients, which is emotionally draining.

**SUB-THEME 6.2: EXPECTATIONS BY SENIOR MANAGERS**

All respondents (100%) described the expectations of their managers as highly unreasonable. Respondents experienced that the senior managers put demands on them without considering the supervisors’ workload and their responsibilities towards their supervisees. It seems as if these senior managers are put under pressure by their managers and they in turn apply pressure on the supervisors. Respondents expressed their frustration with being driven by senior managers to do tasks which are demanded by their managers and which are not in their plans and not necessarily in line with their supervisory tasks. The respondents regarded their core function as being directly responsible for the services rendered by social workers (supervision) and that any demand beyond that should be attended to by senior managers. They feel very strongly that the senior managers overloaded them with their (senior managers’) tasks.

Hereunder follow the quotations that confirm the experiences of the respondents regarding this sub-theme:

- “Whatever they want, they want it immediately. You ask yourself: ‘Are these people organized? Is there any planning?’”
- “They will tear you apart”.
- “They expect you to attend a meeting that is not really important to you, to your work or to your functions”.
- “I must do their job”.
• “The expectation is too much”.
• “But they do sometimes come with what you feel is impossible or close to impossible expectations”.
• “They expect me to do their job”.
• “There is lack of trust between myself and them”.

Literature describes the expectations of senior managers on supervisors in a “normal” way and does not come up with exaggerated demands as experienced by the respondents. The researcher relates this description by literature to the fact that organizations are different in the manner in which they operate. According to Botha (2002:103), it is generally expected of the supervisors by both senior managers and supervisees to:

• Educate by applying various methods, for example questioning, putting forward suggestions, explanations and the stating of facts.
• Share relevant perceptions and experiences with social workers.
• Always support social workers in a correct and professional manner.

Plunkett and Greer (2000:12) state that senior managers expect supervisors to:

• Operate within company values.
• Promote company goals.
• Strive for constant improvement.
• Use the organization’s resources effectively.
• Keep them informed about units’ status.

The above-mentioned expectations from senior managers were not mentioned by the respondents because their experiences of frustration were too overwhelming.

**SUB-THEME 6.3: EXPECTATIONS BY COLLEAGUES**

It appeared that there is not much expectation from colleagues, except for support and teamwork. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents experienced that their colleagues expect support and teamwork from them.

• “We gave each other support”.
Agreeing with the above discussion, Plunkett and Greer (2000:11) explain that one of the responsibilities of a supervisor towards his/her peers is to foster a spirit of cooperation and teamwork.

3.3.2.7. **Theme 7: The application of the methods of social work supervision**

The respondents reported that they commonly use three supervision methods which are: individual supervision, group supervision and consultation. The respondents did not give much information on these methods, as can be seen in the discussion. These methods will be discussed as sub-themes:

- Sub-theme 7.1: Individual supervision.
- Sub-theme 7.2: Group supervision.
- Sub-theme 7.3: Consultation.

**SUB-THEME 7.1: INDIVIDUAL SUPERVISION**

All respondents (100%) agreed that they applied the method of individual supervision more than the other methods. Regarding individual supervision, all respondents experienced that planning for individual supervision must be done with the supervisee(s) concerned and that there must be consensus on how often it is going to be done. All respondents experienced the individual supervision method as more helpful than the other methods, because this is where a social work supervisor comes face-to-face with his/her supervisee and the supervisee is therefore able to express himself/herself as much as possible. Although they plan for individual supervision, 56% of the respondents felt that it is sometimes difficult for them to stick to their schedules and in that instance they resort to consultation. The following quotations confirm the experiences of the respondents:

- “In individual supervision, you are able to know more about a person”.
- “In a one-to-one, there is no way you can run away”.

It seems as if there are advantages to using the individual supervision method and that is why it is used more often by supervisors. Regarding the application of individual supervision, Kadushin and Harkness (2002:144) explain that this method is used to fulfil various goals. In the instance where it is used to fulfil administrative, educational and supportive functions, it is used as a dyadic interview. For educational purposes, it is an individual tutorial.

**SUB-THEME 7.2: GROUP SUPERVISION**

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents mentioned that they did not apply group work supervision because they did not have time for it. For those who applied this method, they reported that they used it mostly for training and to give information to the supervisees. They also explained that in group supervision a supervisor must not play a dominant role as this can scare some of the supervisees. After all, the supervisor is more dominant in individual supervision. In group supervision, a supervisor is only expected to give guidance, with the supervisees playing a more active role. The respondents also experienced that although the supervisees are expected to participate freely in group supervision, some supervisees hide behind those who are more vocal and active. The following quotations confirm the experiences of respondents:

- “Allow supervisees to come up with their suggestions”.
- “The people resent to talk in group sessions. People hide behind others”.
- “The only time I conduct a group session is when I have meetings with them.”
- “It is a good platform for training”.

Kadushin and Harkness (2002:390) also agree that there is active participation in group supervision by group members by stating: “Participation in the group becomes the source of learning …” They go on to say that in group supervision the agency mandate to the supervisor is implemented in the group and through the group. Botha (2002:124) warns that group supervision should not be confused with a staff meeting or personnel development.
SUB-THEME 7.3: CONSULTATION

All respondents (100%) experienced that consultation takes place on a daily basis and that they operated on an “open door” policy. The respondents explained that consultation helped them to advise the social workers on what to do on a daily basis or on a particular case that seems challenging to the social worker while they (supervisors) got to know what the social workers were doing.

- “It happens on a daily basis”.
- “You have to be available for them always to discuss difficult cases”.
- “I apply an open door policy”.

Botha (2002:287) supports the respondents’ explanation which indicates that consultation has an advisory element in it by stating: “Consultation is always of an advisory nature”. She goes on to state that: “The consultation only provides advice in a variety of forms and proposes alternatives. It remains the prerogative of the social worker to implement the advice”.

3.3.2.8. Theme 8: Support from senior managers

The majority of the respondents (89%) experienced a total lack of support from their senior managers. They mentioned that senior managers were only interested in getting the job done through supervisors and that these senior managers were not interested in getting to know the social work supervisors’ circumstances. They also indicated that their experience was that the senior managers did not regard them as important. The respondents perceived the senior managers to be so scared of their managers that they do whatever their managers tell them to do unquestioningly. The respondents regarded their senior managers as unassertive. They also explained that they expected to be given the same support by their senior managers that they give to their supervisees, but their expectation was not being met. The following quotations confirm the experiences of the respondents:

- “From the experience that I have, I think there is no time that I have been supported in my work”.
- “The support is not always there. One feels you stand alone”.
- “When you need them to be there for you, that you don’t always get”.

95
• “They wouldn’t make time for us”.
• “We are really on our own”.
• “I don’t think they regard supervisors as really that important … except for the job that needs to be done, they don’t really worry about how you are going to do it, whether you are O.K. and whether you can do it, and whether you cope with the situation”.

The researcher identified that social work supervisors expected to be supported by their senior managers. According to this study, they were not getting the support they needed from their managers. They expected to be given the same support that they were giving to their social workers. The researcher did not come across much literature which addresses the issue of support of social work supervisors by their senior managers, except for Munson (2002:41) who notes that clinical supervisors need some form of support system as well as accountability. He goes on to say that when support is not provided from within the organization the supervisor will internalize problems, fail to acknowledge difficulty, or perhaps seek support through supervisees.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the presentation of the empirical findings of the study. The study was a qualitative research with semi-structured interview questions. Data was analyzed according to themes derived from semi-structured interview questions. The research findings gave information on the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers.

The next chapter will therefore focus on the overview of the main objectives of the whole study by making conclusions and recommendations. It should be noted that the provision of recommendations is one of the main objectives of the study. The recommendations regarding the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers in a welfare organization can be used as guidelines by Gauteng’s Department of Social Development and other related welfare organizations to improve their working conditions.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Social work supervision is an important aspect in the practice of social work. Social work supervisors build social workers who render quality service through supervision. This results in satisfied clients and a positive image of the welfare organization where this supervision is practiced. However, to achieve this it is important that social work supervisors’ needs be taken care of. Matters such as the supervisors’ day-to-day experiences must be looked into as this can have an impact on the quality of service delivery. In conducting the study, the researcher wanted to explore and understand the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers during and after transition from supervisee to supervisor. Therefore the study was guided by the following research question:

What are the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers in a welfare organization, during and after transition from supervisee to supervisor?

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To conceptualize social work supervision theoretically, based on available literature.
- To explore empirically the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers, during and after role transition from supervisee to supervisor.
- To make recommendations regarding the situation of social work supervisors, in order to improve their service rendering.

Chapter 1 provided a general orientation of the study, focusing on the motivation for the choice of the research topic, problem formulation, purpose, goal and objectives of the study, research question, research approach, type of research, research design and pilot study, research population, ethical issues and definition of key concepts.
In Chapter 2 the researcher looked at social work supervision in a welfare organization with special reference to the experiences of social work supervisors, based on an in-depth literature review.

Chapter 3 dealt with the empirical findings of the study aimed at exploring the experiences of social work supervisors in a welfare organization as first-line managers.

Chapter 4 reviewed the whole study, providing a synopsis of its main objectives by making relevant conclusions and recommendations.

### 4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 4.2.1. Objective 1: To conceptualize social work supervision theoretically based on available literature

The first objective of the study (literature review) revealed that:

- Social work supervisors are part of a management hierarchy in a welfare organization. They occupy the lowest level of this management hierarchy and are also referred to as operational managers.

- Social work supervisors are directly responsible for the services rendered by social workers.

- Social work supervisors rank between the operational social workers and senior managers and they are expected to meet the demands of both groups.

- Social work supervisors perform specific managerial roles and functions which are different from the roles of a social worker. These roles and functions performed by a social work supervisor are aimed at enhancing the performance of social workers.
• A social work supervisory position carries more responsibility and accountability than that of a social worker.

• Social work supervisors need to be prepared in advance for the position of supervisor by way of training, as this will help to ease the transition and adjustment to the position.

• There are very specific expectations attached to a supervisory position and it differs between supervisors, peers and superiors in managerial positions.

• Social work supervisors need specific skills to be able to function effectively in this position.

Social work supervision is an important aspect in the practice of social work. Objective 1 has revealed that it is important to empower social work supervisors with the necessary knowledge and skills in order to be able to practice social work supervision effectively and in an accountable way.

4.2.2. Objective 2: To explore empirically the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers, during and after role transition from supervisee to supervisor

Regarding this objective, the findings of the study revealed the following:

• All respondents (100%) experienced the social work supervisory position as the lowest management level in the hierarchical structure of a welfare organization.

• All respondents (100%) experienced that the roles of a social work supervisor enhances the functioning of social workers.

• 89% of the respondents experienced the training and education of supervisees as one of their most important roles, because they in turn have to impart their knowledge of social work to their supervisees.
• 67% of the respondents experienced that advising the supervisees is a role that takes place on a daily basis.

• 56% of the respondents experienced the role of facilitator as seeing to it that the social workers’ assigned tasks are completed.

• 67% of the respondents experienced the role of instructor as challenging, because their supervisees rejected some of their instructions.

• All respondents (100%) described their experiences of the managerial functions as challenging but fulfilling.

• All respondents (100%) experienced the function of planning as being central to the functioning of a social work supervisor.

• 89% of the respondents experienced the function of controlling as making sure that the right service is rendered by social workers to clients.

• 67% of the respondents experienced the function of organizing the same way as that of planning, in the sense that there are instances where a supervisor will plan and organize together with his/her supervisees.

• 56% of the respondents described the function of leading as giving direction to their supervisees, while 44% of the respondents added that a leader must have influence on the people he/she is leading.

• 67% of the respondents experienced the function of directing as similar to that of leading, because in both instances a supervisor assumes a front position.

• 67% of the respondents feel that the function of motivating includes acknowledging supervisees for the good work that they have done.
• All respondents (100%) experienced that the main difference between a social work supervisor and a social worker is that the supervisor has more responsibility and more accountability than the social worker.

• All respondents (100%) experienced the transition from the role of supervisee to that of supervisor as challenging and difficult. They also explained that what made the transition more difficult was that they were not prepared for the position beforehand by way of training.

• All respondents (100%) explained that they received training on supervision whilst they were still at University and that their experience was that the training given by the Universities was not enough to prepare them for the challenges of a supervisory position. There is a need for in-service training to prepare social workers for the position of supervisor.

• The majority of the respondents (78%) experienced that their supervisees expected support, training and professional guidance from them.

• All respondents (100%) felt strongly that they have experienced unreasonable expectations from their senior managers.

• All respondents (100%) experienced that their colleagues expected support from them.

• All respondents (100%) noted that they generally implement three methods of supervision, namely individual supervision, group supervision and consultation.

• The majority of the respondents (89%) reported that they experienced a lack of support from their senior managers. All the senior managers seem to be interested in service delivery without considering the circumstances of the social work supervisors.
The empirical study revealed that it is true that the social work supervisory position presents some challenges, during and after transition, and that there is a need for social work supervisors to be prepared in advance for the position of social work supervisor, by way of training.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the empirical findings, the following recommendations can be made:

- The position of social work supervisor must be recognized by way of the following:
  - The criteria used to select social workers for a supervisory position need to change. There needs to be a standardized set of requirements to be met by someone who aspires to become a social work supervisor.
  - Nominations for the position must be done away with.
  - Formal training on social work supervision must take place whether in academic institutions or in the agencies themselves. A person who has undergone this training must be awarded a certificate on social work supervision. People who aspire to become social work supervisors must be in possession of a specific qualification or certificate in social work supervision and not just a general qualification in social work.

- Training on social work supervision must be offered continuously for the supervisors to keep up with the upcoming trends. This will also help with the transition of a supervisor from the position of social worker to that of supervisor.

- Social work supervisors, with the help and support of their managers, must create platforms where supervisors will meet to discuss matters of common concern regarding their supervisory positions and empower each other to take on the challenges of the job.

- Debriefing sessions must be arranged periodically for supervisors so that they can offload the challenges they encounter in their job.

- Senior managers must show interest in the work of social work supervisors by showing empathy and support. They must rally around supervisors as this might dispel the
• assumption that senior managers do not care about what supervisors go through or experience in their job.

• Social work supervisors must be left to focus on supervision. Disruptions by senior managers must be kept to a minimum.

• Senior managers must learn to deal with their challenges and not regard supervisors as targets for their frustration and anger.

• Senior managers must work on improving their working relationship with the supervisors. They are currently seen as imposing and demanding, and are perceived not to have the interests of supervisors at heart.

• More research should be conducted in future to develop assessment instruments to evaluate:
  (i) the ability of social workers to become social work supervisors
  (ii) to evaluate supervisors’ competency in functioning as social work supervisors.

4.4 ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

**Goal of the study:** To explore the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers, during and after transition from supervisee to supervisor.

Table 11 focuses on how the above goal and objectives of the study were accomplished:
### Table 11: Accomplishment of the study objectives

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<th>Nr.</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Objective achievement</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>To conceptualize social work supervision theoretically based on available literature.</td>
<td>This objective was achieved as reflected in the discussion presented in Chapter 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To explore empirically the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers, during and after role transition from supervisee to supervisor.</td>
<td>This objective was accomplished successfully through a detailed discussion in Chapter 3 on the qualitative findings on the experiences of social work supervisors as first-line managers in a welfare organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To make recommendations regarding the situation of social work supervisors in order to improve their service rendering.</td>
<td>The objective was achieved through a summarized presentation of findings and recommendations in Chapter 4.</td>
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### 4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study was aimed at exploring the experiences of social supervisors as first-line managers in a welfare organization. The study has come up with a detailed description of the experiences of social work supervisors in their functioning, including the challenges they face. The study has revealed that there is a need to train social workers in preparation for the position of supervisor. This training should be continuous and help make their transition and adjustment to the position much easier.

The appointment of a social worker into a supervisory position must be formal, with requirements clearly stated and such a person must have a specific qualification in social work supervision.

Social work supervisors need to be supported in their supervisory task. This can be done by creating platforms where supervisors can meet and empower one another.
LIST OF REFERENCES


APPENDIX A:

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

1.1 GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

- Female
- Male

1.2 RACE OF RESPONDENTS

- Black
- White

1.3 MARITAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

- Married
- Divorced
- Single

1.4 HOME LANGUAGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

- Afrikaans
- English
- English and Afrikaans
- Ndebele
- Zulu
- Xhosa
### 1.5 Age Range of the Participants

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### 1.6 Respondents' Academic Qualifications

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<td>Post-graduate degree</td>
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### 1.7 Respondents' Years of Experience as Social Workers

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<td>16 years and above</td>
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### 1.8 Respondents' Years of Experience as Social Work Supervisors

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<tr>
<td>16 years and above</td>
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APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Social work supervisors are on the lowest level of management in an organization. How do you experience your position as a first-line manager in an organization?

2. How do you experience the following roles of a social work supervisor?
   - Trainer
   - Advisor
   - Facilitator
   - Instructor

3. How do you experience the implementation of the following managerial functions as a social work supervisor?
   - Planning
   - Controlling
   - Organizing
   - Leading
   - Coordinating
   - Directing
   - Leading

4. From your point of view, what are the differences between a social worker and a supervisor? How did you experience the period of transition from being a social worker to becoming a supervisor?

5. How did you experience the expectations attached to your supervisory positions from the following groups?
   - Supervisees
   - Senior managers
   - Peers/ colleagues

6. What was your experience regarding your own knowledge level and skills as a social work supervisor?

7. How have you experienced the application of the methods of social work supervision and how has this impacted on your functioning as a social work supervisor?

8. How have you experienced support from your superiors and what do you think your superiors can do to show more support?

9. What suggestions / recommendations do you have for your organization to improve social work supervision?
APPENDIX C

THEMES FOR THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

• Hierarchical position of the social work supervisor.
• Roles of a social work supervisor.
• Managerial functions of a social work supervisor.
• Transition and adjustment of a social work supervisor.
• Training of a social work supervisor.
• The expectations attached to a supervisory position.
• The application of the methods of supervision.
• Support from senior managers.
I hereby declare that I have edited this document by Joyce Ndzuta, entitled “The Experiences of Social Work Supervisors as First-Line Managers in a Welfare Organization”. The edit entailed correcting spelling and grammar where necessary, and checking for consistencies in style and reference method used. I have not helped to write this document or altered the student’s work in any significant way. I will not be held accountable for bad spelling or grammar, or any inconsistencies in the text where the student has rejected my editing.

It was not my responsibility to check for any instances of plagiarism and I will not be held accountable should the student commit plagiarism. I did not check the validity of the student’s statements/research/arguments. Editing does not improve the content of the document, only the spelling and grammar.

The translation of the abstract was done by Mr. Reinhardt Fourie and all queries regarding the translation should be directed to him.

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