

**THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME IN  
MANAGING THE MORALE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, GREATER TZANEEN  
OFFICE, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.**

**BY**

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**DECLARATION.**

I Mawisa Trezar Chauke declare that this dissertation for masters in EAP titled “**The role of EAP in managing the morale of social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province**”. This is my own original work and has not been previously presented by me or any other person for this institution or any other institution for any degree purposes. All sources of information contained therein have been duly acknowledged. I therefore, reserve copyright of this report in favor of the University of Pretoria.

**SIGNATURE**

\_\_\_\_\_

**DATE**

\_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION.**

This study is dedicated to all social workers around the country for every pain that you are facing because of the environment that you find yourself in, yet you still serve your clients with love and pure hearts. I believe that one day social work profession will rise and the dignity within this profession will be restored.

To all young people at Matiyani Village, let's make education fashionable and stop focusing irresponsible lifestyle.

## **ABSTRACT.**

This study entitled “**The role of EAP in managing the morale of social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province**” was conducted by Mawisa Trezar Chauke under the supervisor Prof. Terblanche and the MSW class of 2015. The goal of this study was to explore the role of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in managing the morale of social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province.

A qualitative research approach was applied in this study in order to obtain exploratory data and in-depth information about social work morale. The population of this study consisted of generic social workers’, focused/ social work coordinators and social work supervisors in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province. The researcher applied simple random sampling to select the sample.

A self-developed interview schedule was used as an instrument for collecting data in a focus group context (see annexure 3). A total of twenty one (21) participants formed part of this study. The strata consisted of seven (7) generic social workers, (8) focused/ social work coordinators and six (6) social work supervisors. Data was analysed qualitatively following the steps of data analysis as described by Shurink, Founche & De Vos.

It has been discovered through empirical study that social workers morale in Greater Tzaneen office is very low. Every participant in all three focus groups (generic social workers, programme coordinators and social work supervisors) was concerned about the lack of infrastructure within the department which hinders them from offering quality services to their clients.

They further alluded that the roles of supervision in Greater Tzaneen Office were not properly implemented due to lack of resources, inadequate supervisor to officer ratios, office space is not allowing for proper one-on-one supervision sessions and also low morale amongst supervisors themselves.

Participants in all three focus groups further alluded that they have lost the spirit of service delivery and it's hard to focus on clients' problems when they have their own problems. There is an impression in the communities that "anyone can be a social worker". The findings further reveal the loss of pride in being a social worker where participants are ashamed to be associated with the social work profession.

Participants from the group of focused and generic social workers believed that EAP practitioners could lessen the strain of dealing with sensitive cases. EAP services within the DSD Limpopo are not visible and accessible to employees since they are only based in the provincial level. The EAP has a major role in uplifting the social workers' morale by providing several services such as counselling and educating employees in several issues of concern.

Participants believe that SACSSP could uplift social work morale by engaging the DSD administration to address issues of concern. They can also uplift social workers morale by showing them concern and support instead of just regulating them. The findings further reveal that SACSSP needs to monitor the department more effectively and also to assist social workers to understand SACSSP's roles better.

For social workers to be productive and effective in the workplace the DSD should provide necessary resources such as vehicles (fast-tracking the processing of subsidized vehicle), computers or laptops, cellphones, access to internet, emails, photocopiers with printers and scanners. The more conducive the working environments are, the more employees are happy to render effective services without any frustration.

The DSD should improve social work salaries by considering SAQA NQF levels. This will motivate and improve their morale in rendering quality and effective services because they will be well paid. The DSD should erect their own structures which will be accessible to any client. They also need to improve the new one's they already have. This will dignify and restore the image of social workers within the community and also increase the respect they receive from other professionals.

## **LIST OF KEY WORDS.**

Social Work

Generic Social Workers

Focused/ Coordinating Social Workers

Social Work Supervisors

Morale

Employee morale

Employee Assistance Programme

Department of Social Development (DSD)

Mopani District

Greater Tzaneen Office (GTO)

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## **CHAPTER ONE.**

### **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY ON THE ROLE OF EAP IN MANAGING THE MORALE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, GREATER TZANEEN OFFICE.**

#### **1.1. INTRODUCTION.**

Ngambi (2011: 773) states that “employee morale is an important aspect in any organisation in that it can affect performance and productivity”. In addition, Lee, Scheumann, Hall and Payne (2012: 06) emphasize that a positive staff morale is an important factor in creating a healthy work environment. Furthermore, Mazin (2010) in Lee et al. (2012:06) discovered that agencies with higher positive staff morale have more staff members who arrive at work on time, communicate better, waste less time on gossip, have higher rates of recruitment and retention and they are more creative. However, ‘Low staff morale can be costly to organisations as they could stand to lose \$350 billion per year because of the loss of productivity caused by low morale’ (Lee et al., 2012: 06).

Nadiearni in Hardy (2015:01) states that ‘social work morale is a major issue which needs to be addressed by our social work organisations within countries and across the globe’. Furthermore, Schuller in Hardy (2015:01) alluded that there are many positive things happening that motivate social workers in South Africa, but poor working conditions and unmanageable caseloads have a negative impact on the morale of our social workers.

The morale of social workers in the DSD Greater Tzaneen office is regarded to be low compared to other sub-districts in Mopani where they display aggressive and fraudulent behaviour by stealing clients’ money such as foster care grants and then proceed to resigning from their duties. The researcher observed this during the districts’ social work dialogues which were held for the preparation of the National Social Work Indaba as called by the Minister of Social Development, Bathabile Dlamini in 2015.

There is a shortage of social workers in South Africa and the number of social workers will always decrease because 'there is a brain drain, whereby experienced social workers are migrating overseas and to other sectors due to highly competitive salary packages and better working conditions, and the public service is left with inexperienced social workers' (Mohlaka, 2013:01).

**Social work** is defined as 'the major profession that delivers social services in governmental and private organizations all over the world. Social work assists people in preventing or resolving their problems in psychosocial functioning and thereby achieve their life enhancing goals and create a just society' (Suppes & Wells, 2003:04). The definition provided above explains social work as a profession that delivers social services. The social workers in this study are qualified or trained personnel who deliver social services and assist people to prevent or resolve their problems.

Mcfadzean and Mcfadzean (2005:320) define employee **morale** as 'the degree to which an employee exhibits a positive or motivated psychological state. It can manifest itself as pride in the organization and its goals, faith in its leadership, a sense of shared purpose and loyalty to others in the organisation'.

According to the Standard Committee of EAPA-SA (2010:01) an **Employee assistance programme (EAP)** is 'the work organisation's resource, based on core technologies or functions to enhance employee and workplace effectiveness through prevention, identification and resolution of personal and productivity'.

The researcher's definition of EAP is a work-based programme that is funded by the employer with the interest of involving employees in the management of their personal conditions and circumstances through the use of professional services to create a healthy work-life balance among workers and to improve the organization's corporate goals.

The researcher considers staff morale as a sensitive issue which tends to be ignored in the workplace but affects employees' job performance in all working environments. Different authors were consulted and they define employee morale in different ways.

## 1.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

In the context of this study the researcher will employ a motivation-hygiene theory which was developed by Fredrick Irving Herzberg after he researched the sources of employee motivation during the 1950's and 1960's (Juhasz, 2003:87). The researcher will employ this motivational-hygiene theory because she believes that when employees are motivated, their performance will be enhanced. The intrinsic and extrinsic factors play an important role to determine the morale of employees. 'This theory is based upon the deceptively simple idea that motivation can be dichotomised into hygiene factors and motivation factors and is often referred to as a two need system' (Ball, 2003:1). Yusof, Kian and Idris (2013: 18) regard motivation as 'one of the most important factors in affecting human behaviour and performance'. However Hasty ([sa]: 10), refers to motivation as 'the act of getting a person or a group to work to achieve the organization's objectives, while also working to achieve an individual's objective'.

This theory emphasises certain factors which will encourage or inspire better social workers behaviour at the workplace. Swanepoel, Erasmus and Schenk (2008:328) and Hasty ([sa]: 6) agree that:

People are influenced by two factors: (1) satisfaction, which is the result of motivator factors (achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, promotion and growth); (2) dissatisfaction, which is the result of hygiene factors (pay the benefits, club policy and administration, relationship with co-workers, physical environment, supervision, status and job security).

Motivation factors are intrinsic factors that will increase employees' job satisfaction, while hygiene factors are extrinsic factors to prevent employees' dissatisfaction. The full supply of hygiene factors will not necessarily result in employees' job satisfaction. Motivation must also be addressed in order to increase employee productivity (Yusoff,et al., 2013:19).

However Yaxx (2011: 01) indicates that

'An intrinsic motivation relates to people who work more for the love of their job than for the money they receive, while a worker who is motivated by extrinsic factors may be there solely for the money and other benefits but this does not mean that people earning high salaries will lack intrinsic motivation'.

This theory implies that when employees are satisfied in the work environment they will be motivated to work well which will change their 'low morale' to 'high morale'. 'Motivation leads to satisfaction because of the need for growth and a sense of self-achievement. A lack of motivators leads to a high concentration of hygiene factors' (Ball, 2003: 02). This is supported by Yusoff et al. (2013:02) who highlights that 'if individuals place high reference on extrinsic factors such as working environment or supervision, then these factors will have a positive effect towards their job satisfaction'.

In this study the researcher applied Herzberg's theory to determine which factors motivate social workers to maintain high morale. This is supported by Yaxx (2011:01) who alludes that 'an understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation at the workplace helps employees to maintain high employee morale'.

### **1.3. RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:14) point out that a research problem refers to some difficulty that the researcher experiences in the context of either theoretical or practical situations and for which he or she wants to obtain a solution. The researcher focuses on the topic of exploring social workers' morale. The researcher believes that the problems that are faced by social workers within DSD have most likely not been effectively addressed, due to the role of the EAP being unclear.

This specific topic on the morale of social workers has not previously been researched in Tzaneen. Furthermore, this study will shed light on the state of the morale of social workers in the Greater Tzaneen Office and it will enlighten us as to whether the morale of social workers is high or low. This study will further benefit the social clients because they will receive proper services when social workers' morale is high and professional social workers and their images will benefit because when their morale is high they will be able to be more productive and improve their performance. The SACSSP will benefit because the rate of misconduct may be lower and social workers will also comply/ adhere to the professional ethics. Lastly, DSD

will benefit because it will be able to maintain happy, motivated and productive social workers by uplifting their morale through the EAP professional.

Due to this motivation, the research question for this study can be formulated as:  
**What is the role of the EAP in enhancing the morale of social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen, Limpopo?**

#### **1.4. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.**

The goal and objectives of the study are as follows:

##### **1.4.1. Goal of the study**

The goal of this study is to explore and describe the role of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in managing the morale of social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province.

##### **1.4.2. Objectives of the study.**

This study will be guided by the following objectives:

- To conceptualise 'morale' in the context of the workplace;
- To explore and describe the social workers' morale in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province;
- To explore the main factors impacting on the morale of social workers;
- To describe the role of the EAP in terms of appropriate interventions to address the morale of social workers in the DSD, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province, should that be indicated.

#### **1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.**

This is to provide a brief overview of the research methodology applied in this study. A detailed discussion of the research methodology will be available in chapter three. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research approach was used in order to

obtain exploratory data and in-depth information about the phenomenon of social worker morale (Fouché & Delport, 2011:64). In this study, a case study research design was used because the researcher intended to explore and describe the role of EAP in managing the morale of social workers in Greater Tzaneen Office.

The population of this study consisted of generic social workers, social work programme coordinators and social work supervisors in the DSD, GTO, Limpopo Province. In this study, probability sampling was used to select a sample. The researcher used simple random and stratified random to ensure that every social worker has an equal chance of being included in the sample (Neuman, 2011: 249).

The focus group interview was used to collect data because the researcher wanted to interact with participants while exchanging information with them (Greef, 2011: 342). For the purpose of this study, a self-developed interview schedule was used as an instrument for data collection because it allowed the researcher to get to know the participants and their backgrounds, and to understand their values and expectations (Wellman, Kruger & Mitchel, 2005: 166). Data was analysed adhering to the process of qualitative data analysis as described by Schurink, Fouche & De Vos (2011: 404-416).

## **1.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study was limited because some of the group members did not avail themselves for interviews. They were afraid because they thought the interviews were against departmental policies although they had been informed about the purpose of the study in the beginning of the research study.

The participants who formed part of the study were fewer than expected by the researcher. Some participants who were sampled to be part of the study were unable to make it due to transport challenges and monthly report submissions. The researcher also believes that if the study had been conducted on a larger scale i.e. the whole province instead of only on the one district, it could have had profound results or findings.

## 1.7. DIVISION OF THE STUDY

The chapters of this research report are arranged as follows:

**Table 1: Division of the study**

CHAPTER	CONTENT
1	The chapter consists of the Background of the study.
2	The chapter consists of literature reviews on the morale of social workers and the role of EAP in dealing with morale issues in the workplace together with the summary.
3	The chapter consists of the research methodology, empirical results and a summary.
4	The chapter consists of introduction, key findings, conclusions and recommendations and a final summary.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE MORALE OF EMPLOYEES**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

The review of literature is aimed at the nature and meaning of morale for social workers. The researcher notes that there have been studies conducted in relation to employee low morale and the findings indicate that low morale can be costly to an institution. However the researcher has identified gaps in relation to studies conducted on social workers, especially where the studies focused on (amongst others) burnout, working conditions and retention strategies and inadequate supervision (Ngambi, 2011: 764).

The researcher considers staff morale as a sensitive issue which tends to be ignored in the workplace and then affects employees' job performance in all working environments. Different authors had been consulted and they define employee morale in different ways. However, in this study the researcher finds it crucial to start the discussion by defining employee morale. This discussion will include the following: factors affecting employee morale, effects of employees on productivity and factors to uplift employee morale. Lastly, the researcher will discuss the role of an EAP in enhancing the morale of employees.

#### **2.2. Defining employee morale**

According to Vasantham (2014: 01) employee morale is defined as 'the total satisfaction that a person derives from his job, the prevailing atmosphere and the factors that appeal to his individual propensities'. Employee morale is also considered as 'a summary of attitudes and feelings that constitute a reserve of physical and mental strength including factors like self-confidence, optimism and a positive mental attitude'. Vitality (2012: 01) further states that 'an employee morale

can be the fuel that drives an organization forward or that fuel that fires absenteeism. Unifying teams by improving morale is an essential role for managers everywhere.'

According to Vasantham (2014: 01) an employee's morale is also considered as an invisible element which determines the failure and the success of an organization. Employee morale is directly associated with employee retention because employees who feel a high level of job satisfaction tend to remain working for the organization (Vasantham, 2014: 01). This is supported by Chipeta (2014: 231) who highlighted that 'staff morale has a direct impact on staff retention and performance'.

According to Gupta and Upadhyay (2012: 82) 'employee morale creates a positive working environment and also increases productivity per employee ratio, therefore it is evident that employee morale is very important in an organization and low morale leads to problems such as a decrease in productivity and low performance of the company'. Moreover, Powers (2011: 01) adds by stating that 'happy workers are 12 percent more productive and unhappy employees on the other hand can be detrimental to the business'.

Gupta and Upadhyay (2012: 80) emphasizes that employee morale is considered to be the main element in the mental phenomenon which drives an organization's performance. Moreover, Datta, Haradhan and Islam (2012: 154) indicate that 'morale of an employee reflects the overall attitude towards his/her work for example: how committed an employee is towards his organization and his job, as well as his willingness to achieve the goal of an organization and its stakeholders'.

Vasantham (2014: 01) further states that employee morale plays an important part in an organization's success, where high morale leads to success and low morale brings defeat. Moreover, Gupta and Upadhyay (2012: 81) support this by alluding that 'employee morale is a new buzzword in strategic human resource management where it is commonly believed that an employee with high morale is going to outperform when compared to others with low morale.'

According to Ngambi (2011: 764) 'high and low morale is not just made up of a single factor, but rather it is a combination of related factors such as changes in internal and external environments as well as the leadership approach taken into consideration in addressing those changes'. Lastly, 'a satisfied, happy, efficient,

dedicated and hard-working employee is the biggest asset to an organization” (Datta et al., 2012: 153).

The researcher concurs with the discussion by different authors who regard positive employee morale as a fuel which drives employees’ performance and productivity; whereas low employee morale increases absenteeism and job turnover. Employee morale is considered an emotional element which is not seen by anyone but it does have an impact in an organization and may determine the progress and/or failure of an organization. Employee morale is crucial in an organization since it creates a positive working environment because when employees are happy they are able to give back to an organization by good performance, presenteeism and low job turnover.

However, the researcher disagrees with (Datta, Islam & Mahojan, 2012: 1524) who indicate that ‘the morale of an employee reflects the overall attitude towards his/her work for example: how committed an employee is towards his organization and his job, as well as his willingness to achieve the goal of an organization and its stakeholders’. The researcher’s understanding is that even if an employee is committed towards his organization and its stakeholders, the organization will still need to provide necessary resources that will enable an employee to achieve the organization’s goal. The organization will have to meet an employee half way. Ngambi (2011: 764) indicates that a leadership approach needs to be taken into consideration when addressing an organization’s changes since it will affect employees if not approached in a positive way. Therefore, managers need to take employee morale into consideration to ensure that they enjoy what they are doing and to keep them in an organization when their morale is positive.

## **2.3. Factors contributing to employee morale**

### **2.3.1. The impact of working conditions on the morale of employees**

The physical workplace environment may also have a strong influence on a company’s ability to recruit and retain talented people as some factors in the workplace environment may be considered important keys affecting employees’ engagement, productivity, morale and comfort both positively and negatively, (Tiwari, 2014: 9).

According to Rane (2011: 15) a 'conducive work environment is one that gives a sense of pride in what they do. A pleasant work environment along with congenial working conditions keeps employees happy which in turn increases their productivity'. Agarwal, Sageer and Rafat (2012: 35) concur by indicating that 'employees are highly motivated by good working conditions as this provides a feeling of safety, comfort and motivation. On the contrary, poor working conditions bring out a fear of bad health in employees. The more comfortable the working environment is more productive the employees will be'.

#### **2.3.1.1. Ergonomics and its influence on the morale of employees.**

Sovella Human Workspace (2016: 01) states that ergonomics allows workers to do their jobs and they do it correctly in a safe environment where they can do their jobs with comfort and accuracy. Morabito (2017: 01) further states that providing employees with an ergonomic environment shows that you take their health and wellbeing seriously and this has been strongly linked to increased productivity. This is supported by Nazari (2013: 01) who alludes that: 'many companies have found that changing their office design can give employees a significant boost in productivity'.

The researcher's deduction to what has been discussed by the different authors is that working conditions have an influence in employees' productivity because a conducive environment gives them pride to excel in what they do. When employees are feeling safe and comfortable in their working environment they become highly motivated to produce outstanding performance and productivity in the workplace. However, poor working conditions demotivate employees and produce low performance since they feel unsafe and their health will be bad due to the poor working environment.

#### **2.3.2 The impact of working conditions on the morale of social workers**

According to The Department of Labour South Africa (2008:72) 'the working conditions of Social Workers in the welfare sector in South Africa and even in some other countries, regardless of whether they are based within the public or the private arenas, are generally very poor'.

Social workers are frustrated with the overwhelming needs of the community in relation to their limited or lack of access to resources such as adequate supervision, stationary, office space, furniture, information technology, administrative and language support, vehicles and supporting professional institutions such as places of safety, children's homes and rehabilitation centres. Because of the poor working conditions, the provision of quality and effective social work services has been negatively affected where some social workers do not go to the office or attend meetings which they know would benefit them. When there are too many challenges in the working environment, it certainly results in worker encapsulation (The Department of Labour South Africa, 2008:72; Chilasa, [sa]:03; Lowe, 2002:55; Marianne & McClam, 2009:235).

The researcher concurs with what different authors have discussed about working conditions of social workers which have a negative effect on the provision of quality social work services. They further discussed that serving communities with limited or lack of resources is frustrating social workers, which often results in social workers being absent from work or attending matters of lesser importance, i.e. meetings or workshops.

### **2.3.3. Low salaries.**

According to Vasantham (2014: 01) 'employees expect adequate compensation for the services they render to an organization and if the system for wages, salaries, and promotions are not good, employee morale will be low'. Furthermore, low salaries are regarded by Skweyiya (2007:01) as the reason the Department of Social Development in South Africa has a shortage of social workers. He also highlights that many social workers have been lured away to private sectors with high salaries. Research conducted by the Department of Labour South Africa (2008:70) elaborates further to say that 'Social Workers' salaries have traditionally been low, not only in South Africa but also internationally'.

The Department of Labour South Africa (2008:70) further alluded that 'one of the first priorities of the DSD as part of the implementation of Recruitment and Retention strategy of 2005 was re-grading of social worker's salaries within the recognition that social work is a four-year professional qualification'. Chilasa ([sa]:03) indicates that

even in Malawi, social work salaries are too low to motivate them. In his speech, Sithole concludes with these words 'pay our social workers well otherwise they will leave you' (National Social Work Indaba, 2015)

#### **2.3.4. Lack of Supervision.**

Vasantham (2014: 01) reveals that 'the nature of supervision can tell the attitudes of employees because a supervisor is in direct contact with the employees and can have better influence on the activities of the employees'. Furthermore, Godden (2012:3) states that 'Social work supervision is regarded as a process whereby an organization provides support and guidance to social workers'. However, Godden (2012:08) alludes that 'social workers express concerns about a lack of or insufficient supervision, poor quality supervision and in some cases experienced and qualified social workers who give no supervision'.

#### **2.3.5. Professional Development.**

Several authors like Dickens (2010:126) Holmes, Miscampbell and Robi (2013:48); Marianne and McClam (2013:243) agree that workshops and conferences should be made available to the organization and they must also direct issues of continuing professional development and a commitment to professional development as a means of being kept positively involved and well supported in service delivery. Lastly, developing social workers professionally will mean that they will not serve the clients the same way every year but they will utilize different skills.

#### **2.3.6. Information Technology.**

Social Workers often spend a lot of their time collecting information using paper and pen which ends up affecting their time which they should have spent resolving clients' matters. Marianne and McClam (2009:238) support the researcher's statement by indicating that 'there is no doubt that the paperwork takes valuable time that could be used with the client'.

### **2.3.7. Shortage of Working Tools.**

Social Workers in public service lack everyday working tools such as computers, laptops, and stationary. There is also a shortage of office accommodation, for example in some districts you find four social workers occupying one office space. Social workers also experience transport problems with the vehicles that they have to use, which are often not roadworthy (Mohlaka, 2013:01).

### **2.3.8. Occupational stress and anxiety.**

Stress is defined as 'an emotional and physiological reaction to stressors and a stressor is a demand, situation or circumstance that disrupts a person's equilibrium and initiates the stress response' (Zastrow, 2010: 420). Furthermore, Llyod, King & Chenoweth (2002: 259) highlights that social workers are reported to be poorer in mental well-being because of the stress they encounter from the workplace, more than any other occupational group.

### **2.3.9. High Caseloads.**

Holmes et al. (2013:27&47-48) states that social workers experience high caseloads which affect their productivity and they describe their caseloads as unmanageable. 'High caseloads and stress are combined with low levels of support and little potential or insufficient time for career development'. Marianne & McClam, (2009:240) and Thomson, (2005:22) concur that because workloads demand most of their time they often take their work and work stress home so that they can spend most of their time with clients the following day. However, this results in an emotional burden which affects their roles and responsibilities at home.

## **2.4. Effects on employee's morale in the workplace.**

### **2.4.1. Burnout.**

Zastrow (2010: 420) refers to burnout as a feeling of emotional exhaustion where professionals no longer have any positive feelings, sympathy, or respect for clients.

Furthermore, Lloyd et al. (2002: 255-256) allude that social workers have been previously identified as being at risk of experiencing burnout and they demonstrate depression, anxiety, irritability and lower marital satisfaction. Social workers who are the victims of burnout will be unable to be productive or to produce quality work for their employer.

#### **2.4.2. Job turnover.**

According to Beckles (2015: 01) 'employees who do not like their jobs will eventually seek employment elsewhere. This will lead to the business losing staff, which means the business will have to go through the entire process of hiring and training in order to obtain new employees'. Wermeling (2009:02) states that occupational behavioural researchers mostly conceptualize turnover as voluntarily leaving the job or the end of worker's withdrawal process. However, Kim and Stoner (2008: 06); Marianne and McClam (2009:240) agree that a decision for a social worker to leave the job may be the result of the pressure at work. Social worker turnover is a serious problem for social work administration because it negatively affects the level of productivity, quality, consistency and stability of client services.

Kim and Stoner (2008: 06) as well as Marianne and McClam (2009:240) further extend the discussion by indicating that social worker turnover does not only cause psychological distress in remaining staff members or in new inexperienced workers who fill vacated positions, but it also leads to client mistrust of the system and financial problems for the organizations.

#### **2.4.3. Excessive Absenteeism.**

Beckless (2015: 01) states that 'employees that are dispirited do not enjoy attending work and may start staying away which may result in the business under producing on a daily basis'. Mayhew (2017: 01) indicates that a company whose employees 'exhibit low morale will experience higher absenteeism rates and turnover. Simply attributing low morale to absenteeism is a tremendously ineffective way to deal with a costly problem'.

#### **2.4.4. Poor performance.**

Beckles (2015: 01) states that 'as employees become discouraged they begin to underperform resulting in the quality of work which they do becoming poor. This will also lead to the business standards decreasing'. Mayhew (2017: 01) further states that 'employees who are not motivated perform at a lower level than other workers. If there is no excitement for the mission of the company, it can be difficult to maintain the momentum needed to complete a project. Poorly performing employees can consume an inordinate amount of a small business owner's time, and dealing with late or unfinished projects can directly impact on the company's earnings'.

#### **2.4.5. Toxic work environment.**

Deep (2017: 01) states that 'unmotivated employees may not have the energy or patience to deal with customers. If employees are responsible for sales, order fulfillment, returns or handling complaints, they may not adequately represent a company to the public. Consequences of no motivation can include a lack of follow-through, not offering suitable explanations, no interest in satisfying requests or being rude when customers complain'. Beckles (2015: 01) states that employees who are demotivated tend to exude negative attitudes. These attitudes tend to impact their work ethic as well as their interactions. Therefore, they may start to be mean towards co-workers which may result in other employees feeling offended. As such, low morale may cause a lot of tension within the work environment and make it uncomfortable for others to complete tasks'.

### **2.5. Factors to uplift employee morale.**

#### **2.5.1. Getting to the root of the problem.**

According to Vitality (2012: 02) the first step in resolving an employee morale problem is to determine the causes of employee morale and this can be done by

getting to the bottom of the problem where employees as sources will be consulted. Furthermore, Ngambi (2011: 765) emphasizes that an employee survey tool is valuable for any organization because its purpose is 'to obtain reliable information from the employees in order to develop appropriate strategies to show care and concern for the staff's well-being and to create a positive, supportive, stimulating and productive workplace environment'. The researcher agrees with Vitality (2012: 02) and Ngambi (2011: 765) that employees feel positive, supported and well cared when consulted by getting to the root of the problem.

### **2.5.2. Recognition of performance by individual employees.**

Vitality (2012: 02) pinpoints that employees need to be aware that their contribution is appreciated and recognized by their employer. Powers (2011: 01) further states that an employer must tell his employees that they are doing a fabulous job and this can be done during staff meetings or by a hand-written note, it does not matter how they are informed but the most important thing is that employees are aware that their hard work is noticed and appreciated. Based on the information above, it is important for the employer to show appreciation and recognition towards employees' effort. Telling employees that they are doing a good job it gives them strength to do more because they are aware that they are recognised by the employer.

### **2.5.3. Be transparent.**

Powers (2011: 02) states that 'nobody likes to be the last one to know, so when employees do not know what is going on in their company or are given part of the story instead of the whole picture they are left to fill in the blanks with gossip, rumours and worry'. The researcher concurs with Powers (2011: 02) that employees need to be informed about what is going on in their workplace and whether there are changes in the organization in terms of management or policies. When an employer is not transparent, employees display negative attitudes towards their employer.

#### **2.5.4. Show concern.**

Vitality (2012: 02) alludes that 'if people believe that their employer doesn't care about their role, contribution or wellbeing, then they probably won't care about their employer. Begin by inviting opinions and ideas whenever an opportunity arises rather than simply assigning tasks'. Vasantham (2014: 02) on the other hand believes that if employees are asked for their opinion and are allowed to add their own creative thoughts to an organisation, this gives them a feeling of ownership. The researcher concurs with Vitality (2012:02) and Vasantham (2014: 02) that in order for employees to care for their employer by rendering effective services to their clients, the employer needs to show concern. The employer needs to engage with their employees to add their own opinions and contribution towards the organisation which makes them a feeling of ownership within an organisation.

#### **2.5.5. Effective communication.**

According to Vasantham (2014: 02) 'there should be a two-way communication between workers and management where workers should be informed about the organization's policies and programmes through conferences and informal discussions with workers'. Moreover, Vitality (2012: 02) indicates that 'a lack of open and honest communication is one of the major management missteps that can erode employee morale. Employee morale can be uplifted by sharing information and to let employees know the rationale behind the organizational decisions and their roles in achieving corporate goals'.

The researcher supports Vasantham (2014: 02) and Vitality (2012: 02) that in order to uplift employee morale, open and honest communication between management and employees should be considered. Employees need to be aware of the organisation's policies and developments and information that will inform them about the decisions and roles that need to be carried out in order to achieve the organisation's goals.

#### **2.5.6. Fun and flexibility.**

Powers (2011: 04) highlights that 'no employee who wants to leave a place where they are having fun; for little or no cost employers can implement programs to make

their employees smile'. Furthermore, Vitality (2012: 03) reveals that 'building some fun and whimsy into the work week can do wonders for bringing teams together and improving overall morale'. The researcher supports the statement by Powers (2011: 04) and Vitality (2012: 03) that employees enjoy working in a fun environment. The employer needs to ensure that there are programs in place to make employees to smile and enjoy in the workplace.

### **2.5.7. Offer training and development.**

Vasantham (2014: 02) states that 'there should be proper training of the employees so that they do their work efficiently and avoid frustrations. When the workers are given training they should get psychological satisfaction'. Furthermore, Powers (2011: 03) states that training 'begins with partnering new employees with more seasoned veterans, bringing in experts for training sessions, encouraging and paying for employees to attend local trade conferences'. Vitality (2012: 03) extends the discussion by alluding that an employer must 'create a performance development plan with each employee and support them in carrying out the plan through quarterly performance development meetings. Employee morale is heightened when training and development opportunity are available to all'.

The researcher agrees with Vasantham, (2014:02) by supporting that indeed employees get psychological satisfaction at work after receiving proper training which will enable them to perform their assigned duties without being frustrated about what they are supposed to do. However, the researcher differs slightly with Vitality (2010:03) who states that 'an employer must create a performance development plan with each employee and support them in carrying out the plan through quarterly performance development meetings'. The researcher believes that an employee is the one who should create or draw-up a performance development plan according to his/her duties, and further believes that it is the employer's responsibility to ensure that they support employees to carry out their plan by offering the necessary training and developmental workshops in order to uplift their working morale.

### **2.5.8. Lead by an example.**

'Managers need to be accountable for their actions. It is tough for employees to be negative and unmotivated when the boss is working hard, always positive, approachable, fair and supportive to staff. Leading by example is the best way to influence people's attitudes and actions'. (Vitality, 2012: 04). The researcher supports the above statement by Vitality (2012: 04) that managers need to lead by example. The way leaders portray themselves in the workplace it influences the employees' attitudes, for example: when the manager is always positive and hardworking, employees' are likely to copy that kind of a behavior and when they are not active and showing negative attitudes towards their work, employees are also likely to portray the same behavior.

## **2.6. THE ROLE OF AN EAP IN ENHANCING EMPLOYEE MORALE.**

The researcher will discuss the role of an EAP in enhancing the morale of employees. However, she finds it important to define and outline the historical background of EAP, the state of EAP and its role in workplace counselling.

### **2.6.1. Defining EAP.**

According to the Standard Committee of EAPA-SA (2010: 01) an Employee assistance programme (EAP) is 'the work organisation's resource, based on core technologies or functions to enhance employee and workplace effectiveness through prevention, identification and resolution of personal and productivity issues'

Berridge and Cooper (2016: 05) define an EAP as 'programmatic intervention at the workplace, usually at the level of the individual employee, using behavioural science knowledge and methods for the recognition and control of certain work and non-work-related problems (notably alcoholism, drug abuse and mental health) which adversely affect job performance, with the objective of enabling the individual to making her or his full work contribution and to attaining full functioning in personal life'.

The researcher's definition of EAP is a work-based programme that is funded by the employer with the interest of involving employees in the management of their personal conditions and circumstances through the use of professional services to create a healthy work-life balance among workers and to improve the organisation's corporate goals.

### **2.6.2. Historical Background of EAP.**

According to Masi (2005: 157) 'EAPs evolved from Occupational Alcoholism Programs (OAPs), which were developed in the 1940s through the efforts of recovering alcoholics. These programs dealt exclusively with alcoholic employees and OAP counselors were often recovering alcoholics themselves'. Kurzman (2013:382) alludes that 'a new concern about the need for workplace intervention programmes provides the ideological impetus for and subsequent funding of work-site programs to detect, confront, and refer alcoholic employees'.

Dickman and Challenger (2009: 29) elaborate that 'this enlarged scope of OAPs led to the modern employee assistance program (EAP) which is known as "broad brush" approach to human problems in industry. The broad brush approach basically increases the services of the assistance program to include marriage and family problems, emotional, financial, legal and other problems with drugs in addition to alcohol'. Dickman and Challenger (2009:29) concurs with Masi (2005: 157) by emphasizing that during the 1970s there was a transition in the OAP field, where it became increasingly difficult to justify only treating alcoholic employees. Consequently, the evolution of broader based programs called Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) began. Unlike OAPs, EAPs treated other maladies such as emotional, family and marital problems'.

EASNA (2009: 36) elaborated on the history of EAP by indicating that 'during the 1980s, EAPs became more popular in North America'. However, 'EAPs in South Africa only started to emerge in the 1980s, although the participation is also sometimes problematic because employees do not trust their confidentiality'. (Sieberhagen, Pienaar & Els, 2011: 02). Moreover, 'EAP professionals today are much more than the substance abuse counselors of the past. The role has evolved

to offer services to employees and employers, which address an array of personal and cooperate needs' (Dickman, 2009:54).

Masi (2005: 158), states that 'EAPs need to be sensitive to the needs of the entire workplace. Low morale and stress problems can be caused by systemic conditions, and EAPs have a role in solving these larger issues'. Sieberhagen et al. (2011: 06), allude that 'the main reason for introducing Employee Wellness Programmes (EWP) was high incidence of sick leave, high rates of absenteeism and social responsibility and furthermore to address stress and meet employees' needs for services'. Ersing (2009: 150), indicates that 'the EAP is responsible for several specialized tasks, including the ability to restore a sense of purpose to the organization'.

According to Otto and Petrila (2009: 254), 'problems and complications are most likely to be encountered when the EAP professional is not clear about his or her role, or takes on multiple roles with the parties'. Therefore, for the purpose of this study the roles of EAP in enhancing an employee's morale will be discussed as follows:

### **2.6.3 Roles of the EAP practitioner/professional.**

#### **2.6.3.1 An EAP as a needs assessor.**

The Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (2010:07) states that 'needs assessment is intended to help in determining methods and models of providing EAP services given the unique characteristics of the organization's structure and culture'. The researcher concurs with the authors consulted that it is crucial for an EAP practitioner to do a needs assessment in an organization in order to identify the problem and the treatment plan for the employees' morale.

The researcher is confident to emphasize the importance of conducting a needs assessment before offering organisational assistance to an organisation since it assists in identifying the necessary help to be provided to employees. This is supported by Ligon and Yegidings (2009:168) as they highlight that 'EAP planning and programme development should begin with a needs assessment in order to identify the requirements of the workforce'.

ACAS (2014: 23), alludes that 'consultation methods will vary from organisation to organisation and there is no single arrangement that will suit all working environments'. The researcher concurs with ACAS, (2014:23) that although organisations have the same concern of improving employee's performance their needs will not be the same.

ACAS (2014:23) emphasises that it is important for organisations to choose carefully the organisational procedure(s) which best suit their own structure and business culture. In order to do proper needs assessment in a certain organisation there are certain issues that an organisational consultant needs to take into consideration.

ACAS (2014: 23) and (Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 2010:07) stipulate on the following factors that need to be taken into account in organisational issues:

- Size, structure and demographic makeup of workforce, including racial, ethnic, gender and cultural diversity;
- Type of organization;
- Type of jobs/work products;
- Organizational mission;
- Degree of centralization;
- Employment Relations Climate;
- Management style;
- The issues to be discussed;
- Whether the trade unions are recognised and if so their structure/ collective bargaining agreements;
- Number and dispersion of work sites, including remote and teleworking employees.

The researcher strongly supports that an EAP must do a background check considering the factors discussed above to enable him/her in providing proper help according to the needs of that organisation. However, if an EAP does not obtain enough information regarding that certain organisation it will be difficult to provide necessary assistance according to their needs.

### **2.6.3.2. An EAP as the employee's therapist (counsellor).**

According to EAPA-UK (2012: 30) 'workplace counselling does focus on the impact of work on the employee but also encompasses their lifestyle, life issues and overall emotional health and well-being. Due to the contractual arrangements in place at the outset, workplace counselling tends to be time limited and practitioners focus on the deeper psychological issues based on an assessment of employee needs that impact on their emotional well-being, their capacity for maintaining effective relationships and their ability to fulfil employment expectations'.

Otto and Petrilu (2009: 254), clarify the role of an EAP as the employee's therapist by stating that 'in the majority of cases the EAP professional will provide therapeutic services to the employee, as a work related benefit. The EAP professional acts as the employee's therapist and all legal and ethical duties (informed consent and confidentiality) attached to traditional therapist-client relationship will apply, since the primary purpose of the EAP-based relationship is to bring about improvement in the employee's emotional, behavioural or physical health and adjustment, which may ultimately affect work adjustment and productivity'.

EAPA-UK (2012: 28), further elaborates that 'workplace counselling which is provided internally through staff support and externally through EAPs is a hybrid form of counselling yet sufficiently workplace focused to fit alongside the needs of the organisation'.

Furthermore, Berridge and Cooper (2016: 05) allude that 'the technique at the heart of the EAP is employee counselling, where the EAP intends to tackle the issues of stress in organisations in their widest sense, rather than the narrow sense of only job related stress'. EASNA (2009: 23) supports this by alluding that 'the most critical component of workplace counselling is for the EAP counsellor to assess how employee's problems are affecting his or her ability to function at work and the workplace performance. EAP counsellors are trained to assist employees to identify stressors that impact on work and determine how the person can better cope with the situation'.

EAPA-UK (2012:30) further indicates that 'workplace counselling is one aspect or variance of a range of counselling genres. The work may centre around the

emotional, psychological and relational issues that can impact on an employee's work performance, or ability to change at work, despite the variance of different therapeutic models of counselling. Workplace counselling is forward thinking and is concerned about moving on and breaking old, dysfunctional patterns and ways of behaving and thinking'.

### **2.6.3.3 An EAP as an Educator and Trainer.**

According to ACAS (2014: 31), 'it is important to provide training to employees and managers in required skills and techniques for consultation'. Whereas, according to Dickman (2009:57), EAP professionals are 'being asked to provide specific programmes to provide employees with information in areas of potential concern in order to preempt problems". Dickman (2009: 57) further states that: "These programmes provide employers the opportunity in dealing with a host of workplace issues before they can have an impact on employee job functioning". EASNA (2009:33) supports and comes up with another idea under the role of an EAP as an educator and a trainer where it was stipulated that 'the EAP can be integrated into management skills training and other staff development efforts. It further states that the EAP can be referred to as a management tool of solving problems because they help managers to improve their employee's performance issues'.

Mannion (2006:106) specifies that 'training produces supervisors who are knowledgeable and ready to use the EAP, it also gains their support, thus maximising the influence and importance of the EAP within the organization. Training can help employees better understand the information they are given and can also encourage them to play a larger part in a way that the organization conducts its affairs'.

The researcher is convinced that training is crucial in enhancing employee morale in an organization because it assists managers and supervisors to offer the job that they are designed to. Training and education also assist on spotting or recognizing the signs of employees who are deteriorating in their job performance. Although managers and supervisors are offered training and education, 'some EAPs occupy unique vantage points for observing organizational trouble spots through a mapping

of the sources of referrals and through employee interviews'. (Golembiewski, 2000:864).

#### **2.6.3.4 An EAP as a consultant.**

The Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (2010: 15), has outlined Organisational Consultation as a standard which emphasizes that the 'EAP professional provides advice and consultation to minimize risk and to promote organisational effectiveness'. This is supported by Labs (2015:01) who outlines that 'management consultants provide guidance and strategies in accordance with the organisations' policies and procedures regarding how to handle employee job performance, attendance and conduct problems'.

In addition, The State of California's Employee Assistance Programme (2008:4-5), indicates that the EAP Consultant helps in clarifying issues, coaches clients and makes referrals to appropriate internal and external resources. The EAP also provides support services to assist the organisation in approaching an employee in order to address performance issues.

Consultation is regarded as one of the most important functions of all EAP functions, and this is due to the reason that 'it provides the EAP Practitioner with the opportunity to know individual supervisors, their styles of supervision and the kinds of relationships they have with those they supervise' (Mannion, 2006:137).

It is important to have an EAP consultant in an organization because 'it deals with evidence of performance problems by offering experience and related training to enhance supervisory skills over a long period. The EAP consultant also directs supervisors towards a subordinate's deteriorating job performance and moves away from guessing about their symptoms. The EAP specialist urges performance diagnosis by cataloging and possibly eliminating job-based causes for employee's performance decline and such a diagnosis might lead to problem resolution'. (Golembiewski, 2000:875).

Broom, Seashore and Swell ([sa]:01), in their presentation, allude that 'consultation with organizational leadership (managers, supervisors and union representatives)

seek to manage troubled employees, to enhance the environment they are working in and to improve employees' job performance by outreach or educate employees about the availability of employee assistance services'.

## **2.7. SUMMARY.**

Employee morale is a major cause of problems in the workplace among others: absenteeism, lack of cooperation, high rate of sick leave and violence. Employees' low morale has a negative effect in the workplace where it can lead to low productivity, job turnover, burnout and many more. Research has proven that when an employee's morale is low, the employee's performance also goes down. However, when the employee's morale is uplifted the employer will benefit due to employee's productivity. It is important for every employer to have an EAP in his/her organization since the EAP may play a major role in enhancing the morale of employees, through addressing these factors negatively impacting the morale of employees.

## **CHAPTER THREE.**

### **EMPIRICAL STUDY AND RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE ROLE OF EAP IN MANAGING THE MORALE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, GREATER TZANEEN OFFICE.**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION.**

This main purpose with chapter 3 is to present, analysed data and the research findings. This chapter covers two sections, where the first one consists of the research methodology covering research approach, type of research, research design, pilot study, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The second section consists of the empirical findings of this study.

#### **3.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.**

The purpose of this section is to present research methods that were utilized in this study.

##### **3.2.1. RESEARCH APPROACH.**

The researcher applied the qualitative research approach. Fouché and Schurink (2011:320) stated that 'since qualitative researchers are primarily interested in the meaning subjects give to their life experiences, they have to use some form of case study in order to obtain an intimate familiarity with their social worlds and to look for patterns in participants' lives'.

In this study the researcher applied qualitative research because she intended to explore and obtain in-depth information about the role of the EAP in enhancing the morale of social workers in the Greater Tzaneen office.

### **3.3. TYPE OF RESEARCH.**

According to Fouché and De Vos (2011: 94) the goal of applied research 'is the scientific planning of induced change in the troublesome situation'. In this study applied research was used because the researcher wanted to address the immediate problem of the social workers' morale in the Greater Tzaneen Office. Social workers in this context represented generic social workers, focused/coordinating social workers and social work supervisors.

### **3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN.**

In this research a case study research design was used because the researcher intended to explore the level of the social workers' morale in the Greater Tzaneen office and managed to obtain relevant information about this phenomenon as a baseline for the exploration of the role of the EAP in enhancing employee morale. The researcher wanted to familiarize herself with reasons why social workers in Greater Tzaneen office are behaving the way they do. Fouché and Schurink (2011:320) stated that 'since qualitative researchers are primarily interested in the meaning subjects give to their life experiences, they have to use some form of case study in order to obtain an intimate familiarity with their social worlds and to look for patterns in participants lives'.

Furthermore, Nieuwenhuis (2007:27) elaborated on this by stating that the aim of case study is 'gaining greater insight and understanding of the dynamics of a specific situation'. For the context of this study, the researcher considered a collective case study because this is an 'instrumental case study extended to a number of cases'. (Fouché & Schurink, 2011: 322).

### **3.5. RESEARCH METHODS.**

For the context of this study, population, sample of the study, data collection and data analysis methods will be included. Furthermore, trustworthiness, pilot study, ethical consideration and limitation of the study will be outlined.

### **3.5.1. Study Population, sample and sampling procedure.**

In the context of this study, the population includes all social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province. Neuman (2011: 241) defines population as 'the abstract idea of a large group of many cases from which the researcher draws a sample and to which results from a sample are generalized'.

Sampling is defined as the technique by which a sample is drawn from the population. (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006: 185). In this study probability sampling was used to select a sample because each person in the sample had an equal chance of being selected. The researcher requested a list of all social workers in the Greater Tzaneen Office from the Human Resource Office and a social work manager. This is supported by Brink (2007: 126) who stated that 'probability sampling implies that all elements in the population have an equal chance of being included in the sample'.

To ensure that every social worker had an equal chance of being included in the sample the researcher used simple random sampling and stratified random sampling. According to Neuman (2011: 249) 'to select elements from a sampling frame, we will need a list of random numbers that will tell us which elements to select and we will need as many random numbers as there are elements to be sampled'.

The researcher divided a group of social workers according to their different categories/strata. For the purpose of this study the researcher covered three (3) areas of operation in Greater Tzaneen Office which is: Tzaneen Clinic, Ritavi and Mavele. These strata represented generic social workers, focused/coordinating social workers and social work supervisors.

In this study three (3) focus groups were interviewed because the researcher wanted to obtain different views or opinions of participants. The researcher was interested in using this method because it is often useful in allowing participants to share their thoughts with each other (Brink, 2007:152). Furthermore, Rubin and Babbie (2014:506) stated that 'typically 5 to 15 people are brought together in a private, comfortable environment to engage in a guided discussion of a specified topic'.

The targeted sample size of this study was thirty (30) participants comprising of ten (10) generic social workers, ten (10) focused social workers (programme coordinators) and ten (10) social work supervisors. However, in the context of this study, the strata consisted of seven (7) generic social workers, eight (8) focused social workers and six (6) social work supervisors in Greater Tzaneen Office. A total of twenty one (21) participants formed part of this study. Nine (9) participants did not show up and indicated having transport challenges which they had not discussed with the social work manager on time.

Focus group meetings took place during office hours within the facilities of the Department of Social Development, Mopani District office. The social work manager in Greater Tzaneen Office arranged the venues where the study was conducted.

### **3.5.2. Data Collection Method.**

For the purpose of this study, a self-developed interview schedule was used as an instrument for collecting data in focus group context, because it allowed the researcher to know the participants, their backgrounds, and understand their values and expectations. (Welman, Kruger & Mitchel, 2005: 166). According to Kumar (2011:125) an interview schedule is seen as 'a written list of questions, either open-ended or closed-ended prepared for use of an interviewer in a person interaction'. Furthermore, open-ended questions were used in this study because it allowed participants to express themselves freely and they were able to provide specific information required for the purpose of this study (Greef, 2011: 352).

### **3.5.3. Data Analysis.**

Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011: 399) define data analysis as 'a process of inductive reasoning, thinking, and theorising which certainly is far removed from structured, mechanical and technical procedures to make inferences from the empirical data of social life'.

In the context of this study data will be analysed qualitatively. The process of qualitative data analysis is as described by Shurink, Fouché & De Vos, (2011:404-416).

➤ **Planning for recording data.**

In the context of this study the researcher planned for the data recording in the systematic way that is appropriate to the participant's setting. The researcher ensured that she was in a possession of a notebook for note-taking. With the participant's permission the researcher used a digital recorder for recording data to avoid missing information obtained during the interviews. Furthermore, the researcher noted the dates of interviews in the notebook. Folders of digital records are named in this manner 'focus group 1, focus group 2 and focus group 3' to avoid mixing information and for the field notes to correspond with digital records.

➤ **Data collection and preliminary analyses: The twofold approach.**

The researcher analysed data during the process of data collection at the research site and interview room. The digital records together with field notes were analysed away from the interview room. The researcher selected a transcript on top of other transcripts and it was read over and over again until the meaning of information had been obtained. The researcher wrote down the thoughts and ideas as clarified from the data collected.

➤ **Managing or organizing data.**

The researcher managed/organized the data collected in a file which was labelled in terms of focus group numbers, this enabled the researcher to remember the transcripts of this study. Furthermore the researcher put together a list of similar topics in columns which were labelled according to the topics. The researcher identified patterns in all the collected data.

➤ **Reading and writing memos.**

The researcher read the memos over and over again to make sense of the data obtained from the participants during the interviews. In this study, memos were written in the margins of field notes in order to remember the transcript of the study. Furthermore, topics were abbreviated as codes were written next to the appropriate segments of the texts. The researcher also observed the organising of data to check if new categories and codes had emerged during data collection.

➤ **Generating Categories and coding the data.**

In the context of this study, data was arranged into categories, sub-categories and patterns to enable this study to be sensible and easier to interpret. The researcher found the most descriptive wording for the topic and divided them into categories. Total list of themes were reduced to topics that related to each other and the researcher drew lines between categories to show interrelations. Lastly, the researcher made a final decision on the abbreviation of each category and each was also arranged alphabetically.

➤ **Testing emergent understandings and searching for alternative explanations.**

The researcher then put data material into each category and performed a preliminary analysis. The researcher searched for negative instances of the patterns and then incorporated them into larger constructs when necessary and possible. However, part of this phase was to evaluate the usefulness and centrality of the data.

➤ **Interpreting and developing Typologies.**

The researcher was able to interpret and make sense of the collected data by combining personal views and social science construct. The researcher was able to provide explanations and meanings that existed in order to further demonstrate the explanations and the meanings as to which were the most relevant.

**Methods to ensure trustworthiness.**

The researcher ensured trustworthiness in this study by utilising the steps of Jason, (2013: 06-07) which are as follows:

**Member Checking.**

The researcher checked with the participants if the data collected had been interpreted in a correct manner by making a double checking about the collected data and also giving participants an opportunity to provide their context of the information. Member checking is very important in establishing trustworthiness as the views of those who are in the field allow a fuller understanding on what is

happening in the field and this also assisted the researcher to avoid being biased when interpreting data.

### **Peer Validation.**

The researcher sought common sense understanding by validating with two colleagues who were familiar with the interview themes and theories which had been applied in the interview process.

### **Audience Validation.**

The responses of participants together with those of peers were used to refine stories and interpretation of data collected.

### **Triangulation audit trial.**

The researcher increased the understanding of the collected data by engaging one person who was not part of the study to conduct a simple data analysis. The use of audit trial was relevant in this since activities were planned and any information obtained was diarised. The researcher ensured that all data such as digital records, transcripts and notes taken would be available for archiving at the completion of the study. Examiners are also entitled to gain access to any raw data, should the need arise.

## **3.6. PILOT STUDY.**

According to Bless et al. (2006:184) a pilot study is 'a trial of the research process on a small scale to the tools and techniques of the study'. In addition, Cluett and Bluff (2000:214) emphasize that a 'Pilot testing is a small study conducted prior to a large piece of research to determine whether the methodology, sampling instrument and analysis are adequate and appropriate'.

Greeff (2011:370) states that 'the true pilot test is with the first focus group with participants'. The researcher conducted pilot testing with the first focus group during the process of data collection, in order to test methods and instruments. Pilot testing was carried out with the first focus group of social work supervisors in Tzaneen Clinic

of which the outcome was be included in the findings. The data collection instrument was found to be clear, reliable and fit to be utilised in conducting the research.

### **3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.**

The ethical issues are the concerns, dilemmas, and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research (Neuman 2011:143). Since the study involved human beings the researcher ensured integrity, honesty and professionalism whilst collecting data. The researcher first received permission from the Department of Social Development, Mopani District. The Provincial office of the Department of Social Development Limpopo Province also granted the researcher permission to interview the participants. Thereafter the researcher was granted an ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pretoria to proceed in conducting the study. The researcher adhered to the following ethical issues in conducting the study:

#### **3.7.1. Informed consent.**

According to Neuman (2011:149) 'it is not enough to obtain permission, people need to know of what they are being asked to participate in. Only then can they make an informed decision'. This is also supported by Bless et al. (2006:142) in their description of informed consent that 'participants have the right to know what the research is about, how it will affect them, the risk and benefits of participation and the fact that they have the right to decline to participate if they choose to do so'.

In this study participants were equipped with full details of the study in order to make an informed decision whether to proceed by being part of the study or whether not to participate in the study. Participants were provided with consent forms which included all the information of the research project. Participants were asked to sign the informed consent forms which consisted of all the details of the study to show that they agreed to be part of this study.

### **3.7.2. Avoidance of harm.**

'Social research should never injure the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study or not' (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 522). The researcher ensured that participants were not harmed or exposed to any form of harm by explaining to them beforehand exactly what was going to happen throughout the data collection process. Although the researcher was not aware of any form of harm that could negatively affect the participants, the participants were informed to feel free to excuse themselves from the study if it made them uncomfortable. All participants, engaged well in the study and no one displayed any sign of being harmed by the study.

### **3.7.3. Voluntary participation.**

Strydom (2011: 117) alluded that 'even if participants are told that their participation is voluntary they might still think that they are obliged to participate'. The researcher informed participants to form part of this study voluntarily and to assure them that they should not feel forced to be part of the study.

### **3.7.4. Violation of privacy/anonymity/confidentiality.**

Neuman (2011:153) states that "because social researchers transgress the privacy of subjects in order to study human behaviour, they must take precautions to protect participants' privacy". The researcher strived to maintain privacy by conducting data collection in a closed office which had a 'please do not disturb' signage at the door. The researcher assured participants that information discussed in the research room would not be disclosed to anyone in terms of who said what and pleaded with them to do the same. The researcher also assured participants that they would be anonymous and that the voice notes would be protected and no one would have access to that information except the study supervisor of the University of Pretoria. Most aspects of this section had been stipulated in the informed consent form which also covered the term of research storage which is 15 years at the university for archival purposes and for possible future research.

### **3.7.5. Debriefing of participants.**

Strydom (2011: 122) outlines that 'after completion of the project, the researcher needs to rectify any misperceptions that may have arisen in the minds of participants'. The researcher had a debriefing session with participants immediately after conducting an interview to minimise any harm that may have occurred. Some participants were emotional when explaining about their morale and how they think they are being unfairly treated by the Department of Social Development. A debriefing session was done to ensure that the information they provided had been correctly interpreted. Although some participants were emotional they did not display serious emotions which needed them to attend counselling sessions.

### **3.7.6. Actions and competence of a researcher.**

Walliman (2006: 148) as cited by Strydom (2011:123) states that 'researchers are ethically obliged to ensure that they are competent, honest and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed investigation'. The researcher was competent to conduct this study because she had been exposed to conducting research during her fourth year studies and had completed her research module as a requirement for a master's degree in EAP in the University of Pretoria. The project took place under constant supervision of a competent and experienced supervisor from the side of the University of Pretoria.

### **3.7.7. Publication of findings.**

In the context of this study the researcher did not manipulate the data collected, the information displayed the true reflection and an honest version of what had been collected. The researcher compiled the report in an ethical manner which consisted of data collected from participants who had not been manipulated. 'Researchers should never manipulate results in order to confirm a point of view. The report should be compiled as accurately as possible' Strydom (2011:126).

### 3.8. RESEARCH FINDINGS.

In this study, the findings will be discussed and presented in two sections. The first section is about the demographic profile of participants. The second section will present the results that emerged from the study data.

#### 3.8.1. Demographic Information.

This is the profile of twenty one (21) participants who took part in the study in three (3) focus groups. The focus groups consisted of seven (7) generic social workers, eight (8) focus/coordinating social workers although one (1) supervisor was part of the eight(8) participants and six (6) social work supervisors.

##### 3.8.1.1. Generic Social Workers.

These are the findings of the demographic profiles of generic social workers who were part of the study.

**TABLE 2: Generic Social Workers.**

Gender	Age	Race	Job Position	Years of work experience	Area of Work	Year of study completion
Female	30	African	Generic Social worker	4	Mavele Office	2012
Male	28	African	Generic Social worker	5	Mavele Office	2011
Male	29	African	Generic Social worker	8	Mavele Office	2009
Female	25	African	Generic Social worker	1	Mavele Office	2016
Female	30	African	Generic Social worker	1	Mavele Office	2016
Female	31	African	Generic Social worker	5	Mavele Office	2012
Female	37	African	Generic Social worker	7	Mavele Office	2010

Although the majority of participants in this focus group were females, males also participated and were more actively involved than the females. Most participants in

this group were newly appointed social workers and they were relatively young adults between the late 20's and early 30's. All participants were Africans because Mopani District is predominantly populated by African people.

### 3.8.1.2. Focussed/Coordinating Social Workers.

These are the findings of the demographic profile of focus/coordinating social workers who were part of the study.

**TABLE 3: Focussed/ Coordinating Social Workers.**

Gender	Age	Race	Job Position	Years of work experience	Area of Work	Year of study completion
Female	29	African	Programme Coordinator	7	Mavele Office	2010
Female	30	African	Programme Coordinator	7	Ritavi Office	2010
Female	34	African	Programme Coordinator	10	Mavele Office	2005
Female	35	African	Programme Coordinator	8	Ritavi Office	2009
Female	27	African	Programme Coordinator	5	Ritavi Office	2012
Female	42	African	Programme Coordinator Supervisor	12	Mavele Office	1998
Male	29	African	Programme Coordinator	7	Ritavi Office	2010
Male	30	African	Programme Coordinator	6	Ritavi Office	2011

Majority of participants in this group were female and they were more actively participating than male counterparts. The available data reveals that social workers are overwhelmingly female (Department of Labour, 2008:23). Females were actively involved and assertive about their working environment, whilst males were more reserved in revealing their working environment. All participants were Africans because Mopani District is predominantly populated by African people.

### 3.8.1.3. Social Work Supervisors.

The findings of the demographic profile of social work supervisors who were part of the study are as follows:

**TABLE 4: Social Work Supervisors.**

Gender	Age	Race	Job Position	Years of work experience	Area of Work	Year of study completion
Female	39	African	Social Work Supervisor	12	Tzaneen Clinic	2004
Female	31	African	Social Work Supervisor	7	Tzaneen Clinic	2008
Female	32	African	Social Work Supervisor	6	Tzaneen Clinic	2007
Male	31	African	Social Work Supervisor	8	Tzaneen Clinic	2009
Female	31	African	Social Work Supervisor	8	Tzaneen Clinic	2009
Female	37	African	Social Work Supervisor	7	Tzaneen Clinic	2007

As expected by the researcher, the majority of participants in this group were female, statistics do indeed show that females outnumber males in the social work field of practice (Scarnato, 2018:01). This might have impacted on the morale, due to the fact that females are often more emotional as a result of their working conditions. Women are seen as speaking up in forceful and assertive manners which is likely to be seen as anger rather than strength (Maxfield, Grenny& McMillan, [sa]: 02). All participants were Africans; this is because Mopani District is predominantly populated by African people.

### 3.8.2. RESEARCH THEMES.

In this study, research themes will be presented guided by the interview schedule which was used with the three focus groups who were interviewed to gather research data. The researcher distinguished participants' discussions accordingly. Furthermore, direct quotes will be included in the findings to voice participants' discussions. Therefore the themes of this study are presented as follows:

## **THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE MORALE IN SOCIAL CONTEXT.**

Morale was defined variously by the study participants, with most of the descriptors tending to relate to attitudinal and emotive constructs which include state of the mind (Mind-set) and levels or demeanours in relation to interest, eagerness, happiness and enthusiasm.

### ***Participant from the group of social work supervisors.***

*“My understanding of morale is when we talk about the attitude of the workers, their enthusiasm, the strength, their confidence towards their work...The attitude we bring in our day to day work, the confidence we have in doing the work and how we put our best in servicing the communities that we’re working with”.*

### ***Participants from the group of generic social workers.***

*“According to my understanding, my morale in a social work context is my happiness while practising social work, my confidence, my attitude while practising social work on a daily basis”*

*“I think it has to do with the way I behave at the work place. The morale has to do with the way you address yourself towards the client or community”.*

### ***Participants from the group of focussed social workers.***

*“I think morale turns to a social worker’s eagerness in performing their job. How eager are they to do their job”*

*“In my understanding when we talk about morale I think its respect, working together as a group of people and treating each other fairly and understanding individuality”*

## **Discussion of Theme 1.**

Beyond the attitudinal factors that were stated by social workers, morale was also said to be demonstrated in observable behaviours which included the energy shown

in the discharge of duties, loyalty to the employer and/or the job, confidence in going about one's job, job satisfaction, level of teamwork and mutual respect. In support of these sentiments, Beckles (2015: 01) mentions that 'as employees become discouraged they begin to underperform resulting in the quality of work that they do becoming below par. This will lead to the business standards also decreasing'.

A strong correlation was identified between the views of these three target groups, regarding their understanding of the meaning of morale in social context.

## **THEME 2: DESCRIPTION OF EMPLOYEE MORALE IN GTO.**

Having outlined their understanding of morale, the study participants went on to discuss the state and levels of morale of social workers in Greater Tzaneen Office and the predominant view was that the morale was low. Several attitudinal, behavioural and other factors that demonstrated the existing low levels of morale were cited which included lack of a positive attitude towards social work, lack of interest in the day to day responsibilities, no show of positive energy and 'dragging of feet', display of demotivated demeanours, failure to meet promises made to clients, low confidence when dealing with clients, feelings of discouragement and lack of teamwork and camaraderie.

### **Sub-Theme 1: Negative Attitude.**

Most participants within all the three focus groups stated that they don't have a positive attitude towards their social work duties due to the environment they are working for.

#### ***Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.***

*"In Tzaneen Office we don't have positive attitude towards social work, day to day services. We just wake up, come to work, go home, there's nothing interesting there's nothing that encourages you or to have the energy to do your work in a positive way. In terms of the morale in Tzaneen there's nothing good about it"*

#### ***Respondent from the group of generic social workers.***

*"Our morale is too low ever since we don't have the tools of trade to assist our clients"*

## **Sub-Theme 2: Positive Morale.**

The few participants within a group of social work supervisors and a group of focussed social workers expressing the above viewpoint attributed their positive morale to pure dedication to the social work profession despite the prevailing demotivators in the workplace.

### ***Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.***

*“Other social workers’ morale is very positive. They do their job with thorough energy, positive and right mind-set...I come very happy, I come and do my job with a smile”*

### ***Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.***

*“In my understanding I will say that it is positive but we are sacrificing as social workers, because at the end of the day we want to report”*

*“Even though I cannot say Greater Tzaneen as a whole, I’ll also focus on the area that I am working. I like the morale...They are trying by all means to do their work, I love their attitude...Even though there are some other little issues that need to be fixed”.*

## **Sub-Theme 3: Causes of low morale.**

Notably, and as evidence of the high levels of discontent with their work conditions, the social workers spontaneously extended the discussion to factors that were causing the low morale even before the researcher opened the discussion to that aspect of the study. Among the factors that were immediately identified by the participants as causing low morale were: lack of recognition or acknowledgement for good performance, lack of performance rewards (PMDS), lack of material resources, inadequate remuneration and failure by the employer to honour promises. Further factors identified by participants as causing low morale in Greater Tzaneen Office were: inadequate job induction, poor teamwork, setting of high targets against inadequate resources and shortage of transport.

**Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.**

*“The issue of not having the resources to do your job, the issue of not being paid accordingly. The issues of not having all the benefits you were promised when you were being hired. Those are the general things which make people, in general to drag their feet”*

**Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.**

*“They will tell you that you don’t even deserve that performance management system (PMS) while they know that they didn’t even provide enough resources for me to do my job, I went extra mile to do the job and report but they don’t recognise that”*

**Respondent from the group of generic social workers.**

*“....The morale is too low in Greater Tzaneen. We have said a lot about the tools of trade that we don’t have. As colleagues we don’t have a good relationship to be honest because of lack of resources. The target is giving us a problem”*

**Discussion of Theme 2**

Although only an isolated sentiment expressed by a handful of the participants, there was a counter view that morale was actually high amongst the social workers, putting forward some evidence of existence of the right mind-set, coming to work happy, doing the job with a smile, being creative, ability to separate personal frustrations from the job, working even without adequate resources and use of personal resources to sacrifice for the Department of Social Development.

**THEME 3: WORKING CONDITIONS THAT MAY INFLUENCE SOCIAL WORKERS’ MORALE.**

As highlighted above, social workers started giving insights pertaining to this question even before the subject was introduced by the researcher, thus

demonstrating the existence of strong sentiment on the matter. Consequently, when the above question was put forward, the participants merely continued the discussion by expanding on the list of workplace factors that had an influence on morale. These included infrastructural, material, financial, interpersonal and other factors as listed below, in no particular order:

### **Sub-Theme 1: Infrastructure and Material Resources.**

Almost every participant in all three focus groups was concerned about the lack of infrastructure which is an obstacle to offer quality services to the clients within their communities. Participants alluded that infrastructure in Greater Tzaneen Office is failing to provide availability of working/office space, comfort of the office (e.g. air conditioning), safety and security of the working environment, cleanliness of the working/office space, client friendliness of working/office space, confidentiality safeguards within the office setting and availability and adequacy of material resources and equipment, which includes vehicles, computers, phones, stationery, internet and email connectivity.

#### ***Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.***

*“The department knows that we are using our own resources because it doesn’t even have enough cars for all of us as the employees. It does not even have enough computers, it does not supply enough paper and stationery”*

#### ***Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.***

*“Just imagine me. I’m being accommodated in a police station, there are two beds. The victim sleeps there...And there’s no chair, when you have to assist someone you must stand and you sit on the bed”*

#### ***Respondent from the group of generic social workers.***

*“...We don’t have enough office space and that greatly influences the way we work, because you may find that I have a client and the other person I share an office with also have clients...that greatly impact how I work negatively”*

### **Sub-Theme 2: Workplace Relations.**

The level of teamwork and friendliness among workers is not really good because of lack of resources. There is no solidarity because they fight over shortage of resources. Social workers in all three focus groups also indicate having a problem when it comes to sense of owning workspace where they are sharing offices with many others.

***Respondent from the group of generic social workers.***

*“As colleagues we don’t have a good relationship to be honest because of lack of resources”*

***Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.***

*“These conditions, I think they also have an impact on teamwork itself because if we are suffering from these bad working conditions it also breaks the bond that workers should have team workers”*

***Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.***

*“...you are expected to put your council certificate, where do I put it? While we share, we are 3/4 in the office what’s going to happen there really?”*

**Sub-Theme 3: Workload Management.**

Social workers were concerned about the insufficiency of human resources in Mopani District. They further indicated concern about equitability/fairness of work distribution. Generic social workers stated having a huge amount of work while social work supervisors stated being worried about the way supervision framework is not being implemented in the district.

***Respondent from the group of generic social workers.***

*“...I believe is too much for a generic social worker, you are expected to do things in a very short space of time with limited resources”*

***Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.***

*“..They have to follow policies for example: supervision framework in 1:10 but as a supervisor I have to supervise 25 social workers which is impossible...”*

Participants from the group of social work supervisors together with the one from focussed social workers emphasised the issue of efficiency in staff recruitment and selection. They also had a problem in hiring staff especially cooperate services because they believe that they are not knowledgeable in implementing policies correctly.

***Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.***

*“When they hire staff especially the cooperate services, they need to hire people who are knowledgeable. They should avoid cadre deployment because it’s affecting the morale”*

**Sub-Theme 4: Management and Leadership.**

Participants in a group of social work supervisors indicated that the department to be lacking in quality of leadership, consistency of practices, policy adherence, communication, fairness and equality. This afore-mentioned view was confirmed by a participant from the focussed social work focus group, when referring to the disorganised state of the department.

***Respondent from the group of generic social workers.***

*“I think if we (could) have good relationships with our supervisors, I mean the managers. If they (could) sometimes come to our offices and see where we are working maybe we can be comfortable”*

***Respondent from the group of focussed social workers***

*“The issue of fairness in this department does not exist. And I think it’s because the department itself is disorganised in a way that even the people at the top don’t know what they are doing.”*

**Sub-Theme 5: Performance and Reward Management.**

Participants in all three focus groups believe that the morale of social workers is not good in Greater Tzaneen because of the lack of sufficiency and/or attractiveness of

salaries, performance bonuses, car subsidies, incentives, proper employee grading systems and other fringe benefits. They also showed concern on recognition of qualifications together with promotion of opportunities within the Department.

***Respondent from the group of generic social workers.***

*“We are doing more and paid very little, we are using our own resources, we are helping the department to help their clients and you can’t work in that environment and get paid so little and have a high morale”*

*“.....I believe that if we could get paid better, we could do our jobs better.....”*

***Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.***

*“I can’t work while my colleague who is 3 years younger than me is graded and I have 7 years working experience and I’m not graded”*

**Discussion of Theme 3.**

From the statements above, it is clear that the working conditions that participants from social work supervisors, generic and focussed social workers group find themselves in are not conducive to positive morale and this affects their morale in a bad way. Rane (2011: 15) stresses that a pleasant working environment along with congenial working conditions keeps employees happy which in turn increases their productivity.

Participants from generic social work group were concerned about the lack of infrastructure which compromises client’s confidentiality since they are overcrowded in one office. This statement is supported by the Department of Labour South Africa (2008: 72) who stated that the working conditions of social workers in the welfare sector in South Africa and even in some other countries are generally poor.

**THEME 4: DISCUSSION OF THE ROLE OF FRINGE BENEFITS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE MORALE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN GTO.**

Fringe benefits were regarded as important in enhancing the morale of social workers within Greater Tzaneen Office in that lack of benefits 'killed' morale and dedication to do the quality job as required. It was demoralising for social workers when they knew that they deserved benefits but were not getting any since they were employed by the department. However, with the minimal benefits in place 'work continues and nothing stops'. Participants from the group of generic social workers indicated that without benefits, it becomes hard to help clients when they themselves are also in need. With the minimal benefits in place a supervisor is empowered and can demand delivery from the officers despite the situation within the department which leads to quantity of work instead of quality.

***Respondent from the group of generic social workers.***

*"I've been working for 8 years and I've been applying for subsidy every year. I had no luck getting it, so it influences the morale badly. Because I don't get what I thought I will get"*

***Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.***

*"..When you get employed you will be earning the same salary as a receptionist in a private sector. I think lack of benefits in this department kills our morale. Because they are working with targets so I just give them the targets and that's it!"*

*"We don't actually have a say on our benefits. They are there but they don't satisfy our needs, because we don't have a say, we don't have any influence on how decisions are made"*

**Discussion of Theme 4.**

Participants from the group of generic social workers together with the social work supervisors were quick to highlight that despite the importance of fringe benefits as described above, these were 'extremely poor' and were therefore having a negative influence on morale. A number of factors were identified as impacting negatively on the processing and management of fringe benefits, which in turn affected staff morale negatively. These included social workers having limited choices or negotiating power, lack of consultation in deciding on type of benefits they qualify for

and non-uniformity in the application of benefits. Vitality (2012: 02) supports this by stating that “a lack of open and honest communication is one of the major management missteps that can erode employee morale. Employee morale can be uplifted by sharing information and to let employees know the rationale behind the organizational decisions and their roles in achieving corporate goals”.

Social workers' morale was also affected negatively by non-approval of applications for their fringe benefits, favouritism in the processing and approval of benefits, poor representation by the Unions, slow process of applications and incorrect or irregular assessment of applications.

## **THEME 5: THE ROLE OF SUPERVISION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE MORALE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN GTO.**

There was general acknowledgement of the influence of supervision on the morale of the social workers. Amongst the pathways through which supervision could impact morale positively, having regular sessions between supervisors and supervisees and also clarifying job description and responsibilities for both the supervisor and the supervisee. It was further stated that supervision could impact morale positively by agreeing on work and performance targets, providing mentorship and guidance, sharing knowledge and information and also ensuring administrative efficiencies.

### ***Respondent from the group of generic social workers.***

*“It (supervision) improves service delivery because it's where the supervisor and the supervisee exchange knowledge doing supportive and other things”*

Once again, while the social workers appreciated the relevance of supervision to staff morale, the prevailing supervisory practices on the ground were said not to be ideal. Supervision roles were not being properly implemented due to a number of reasons which include the following:

- Resource limitations
- Low motivation or morale amongst the supervisors themselves
- Negative attitudes in some supervisors

- Limited aptitudes or competencies in some supervisors
- Inadequate supervisor to officer ratios
- Working space not allowing for proper one-on-one supervisory sessions
- Poor communication/information dissemination
- Insubordination and lack of respect by the supervisees

***Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.***

*“We know that our role is to be supportive. We know that our role is to ensure all the administrative things are done properly. We know our role is to educate. But how do you do it, how do you supervise people, how do you drive to their offices and supervise them? Because those little 2 cars we have, social workers are busy using them. How do you travel to supervise?”*

**Discussion of Theme 5.**

It is clear that supervision has a great impact on the morale of social workers in Greater Tzaneen Office. Both the supervisors and supervisees are affected because generic social workers were more concerned about not receiving supervision while the supervisors on the other hand also state that they are failing to offer necessary support to their supervisees due to lack of necessary resources like vehicles. This discussion is supported by Godden (2012:03-08) who states that effective supervision is one of the most important measures that an organization can put in place to ensure positive outcomes and quality services. He further emphasised that social workers’ concerns express a lack of or insufficient supervision and poor quality supervision.

**THEME 6: THE IMPACT OF ADMINISTRATION ON SOCIAL WORKERS’ MORALE.**

It was evident from the responses that the term ‘administration’ was understood by all participants from three focus groups to entail functions pertaining to the day to day running of the office and the systems and processes thereof. Not surprisingly therefore, there was a repeat of the earlier mentioned material resource limitations as negatively impacting social workers’ morale.

### **Sub-Theme 1: Poor Filing System.**

Participants from the group of social work supervisors, generic and focussed group social workers alluded that there is an insufficient or non-existent filing system and there are insufficient laptops/computers to carry out administration duties. They were also worried about poor file referencing, tracking systems and constant changes in filing referencing systems.

### **Sub-Theme 2: Absence of internet connectivity.**

Participants from the group of generic and focussed social workers stated that there is an inadequate or absent internet connectivity within the department which makes their tasks more difficult because when they want to submit reports they have to drive several kilometres for submission. The current referencing and filing processes are time consuming.

### **Sub-Theme 3: Lack of consultation in decision making.**

In their discussion, participants from the group of social work supervisors and focussed social workers disclosed that there is a lack of proper monthly and annual planning within the DSD as a whole. The participants further stipulated that failure by the department to consult in making decisions and failure to stick to plans, where such plans exist is disturbing them when doing general administrative tasks.

### **Sub-Theme 4: Non Availability of auxiliary social workers.**

The participants from generic social workers further indicated that non availability of auxiliary social workers to provide support is disturbing their administration process.

### ***Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.***

*“And the morale will never be high as long as we don’t have pens, papers, files and whatever it is I need to do my administration work properly. Because here they will tell you that this file needs to be stencilled while the department has never provided, not even one stencil”.*

**Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.**

*“The department is supposed to be using the Z20’s. We don’t even have those to files. We cannot talk about the file...the file is all those papers put inside then it’s a file!”*

**Respondent from the group of generic social workers.**

*“I believe that administration also plays a big role on our morale because we spend a lot of time doing paper work.....too much administration makes our work very hard because we end up having a big work load”.*

*“...for us who work in rural areas it’s a problem because we do not have the luxury of having auxiliary social workers, you have to do everything for yourself”.*

**Discussion of Theme 6.**

From the generic social workers’ discussions, it is clear that the existing administrative system and processes mean that social workers must often do a lot of paperwork, thus increasing the workload. In some cases, the social workers end up improvising by using their own money to address some of the dysfunctional administrative systems of the department. Marianne and McClam (2009:238) support the participants’ discussions by indicating that ‘there is no doubt that the paperwork takes valuable time that could be used with the client’.

**THEME 7: THE INFLUENCE OF LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE ON THE MORALE OF SOCIAL WORKERS.**

Reflecting the interconnectedness of the issues, and repeating the trend throughout the group discussions, participants from both the groups had already alluded to the issue of infrastructure before the researcher even posed direct questions on the topic. There was consensus that the infra-structure was not conducive and that was having a negative effect on the social workers’ morale.

### **Sub-Theme 1: Insufficient Infrastructure.**

The department does not have sufficient infrastructure for social workers, the only DSD owned property is on the outskirts of town; 'Park homes' which are not easily accessible. The type of working space allocated to social workers is not fit for professional use where most workspaces have no toilets in the office, water or electricity. In the situation where DSD has leased the building from traditional authorities or clinics, social workers are not allowed to use the same restrooms as other professionals. The workspace that is utilised by social workers has poor ventilation and no air conditioning.

### **Sub-theme 2: Inaccessibility of the infrastructure.**

The buildings that social workers are using are disability unfriendly/inaccessible. There is no waiting room and clients do not have chairs to sit on while waiting to be assisted. The office space allocated is not enough to accommodate all the officers so they end up sharing an office between 3 or 4 people. There are no storerooms to store food parcels which they need to provide to their clients. Because there are no cleaners in their workspace, social workers end up cleaning offices themselves.

#### **Respondent from the group of generic social workers.**

*"Since we don't have our own infrastructure, we find it very hard to render effective services. For instance, our clients don't have chairs to sit on. Even in the reception...our clients don't even have a little bench to sit on while waiting for the service".*

#### **Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.**

*"Infrastructure does kill our morale, like for instance, when you are working in an office being four and when a client comes in there are eight eyes looking at her when she says something someone says something. Do you think the client will be helped? No!. Instead of helping them we are destroying them".*

*“Even other professionals do not respect us anymore and that is what is killing us inside. We are dying bit by bit.”*

***Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.***

*“Our social workers work in funny areas, I tell you...”*

### **Discussion of Theme 7.**

Based on the statement above, lack of adequate infrastructure was said to affect the social workers morale in a number of ways. Lack of proper infrastructure made it hard to maintain clients' confidentiality. The infrastructure where social workers are working does not inspire confidence in their clients. Most Social workers fall sick because of unhealthy working conditions. Social workers were ridiculed by workers from other departments and there is a general loss of respect for the social work profession. In support of the statements mentioned by participants, Sageer and Rafat (2012: 35), indicate that 'poor working conditions bring out a fear of bad health in employees'.

The Department of Labour South Africa (2008: 72) further emphasises that 'because of the poor working conditions, the provision of quality and effective social work services has been negatively affected where some social workers do not go to the office or they go to attend meetings which they know they will benefit from'.

### **THEME 8: MORALE OF SOCIAL WORKERS AFFECTING SERVICE DELIVERY AND PRODUCTIVITY.**

The participants from the group of social work supervisors, focussed and generic social workers affirmed that there was a link between morale, service delivery and productivity. In the case of low morale, service delivery was said to suffer because dissatisfied workers could not offer a good service and that demoralised workers who just went through the motions. Social workers indicated they had lost the spirit of service delivery. Social Workers did 'touch ups' of what might look like social worker roles.

Generic social workers extended the discussion to further state that social workers ended up transmitting their own anger towards clients by quarrelling with the clients. They mentioned that it was hard to focus on clients' problems when they had their own. Social work practice was compromised because of service delivery systems in DSD and there was a general loss of enthusiasm.

**Respondent from the group of generic social workers.**

*“The morale is low, productivity is low, simple. When you are not happy you won't be able to provide better services to the client. You have to be happy first”.*

**Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.**

*“If I can actually put it clearly, there isn't bad service; there is no service at all. Yes, how are you protecting the elderly and the disabled people if they cannot even come to your office?. How are you doing it? We are not doing it at all”.*

**Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.**

*“..I don't have the spirit of service delivery inside me. Its long dead because of the way the department is treating us. Service delivery is no longer effective on our client, seriously.”*

**Discussion of Theme 8.**

Participants from all three focus groups outlined that the morale of social workers is affecting service delivery and productivity in the DSD since they are not happy. They further alluded that social work practice has been compromised by how things are done within the department, which leads them to lose enthusiasm in rendering services to the clients.

**THEME 9: IMPACT OF MORALE ON SOCIAL WORKERS' PROFESSIONAL IMAGE.**

As already mentioned above, generic and focused social workers felt their profession was losing its stature in the eyes of both clients and other professionals. Participants from both the focus groups alluded that working conditions made it hard for social workers to look like professionals. Social worker supervisors and focused social workers indicated that it was hard to afford the right type of attire to look presentable which leads them to be undermined by other professionals. Social workers were disregarded and not consulted by other professionals especially in court.

The impression was created that 'anyone can be a social worker'. Lack of resources and clear signs of desperation hampered the image in the eyes of clients. It was further stated in social work supervisors focus group that low morale also affected the profession because poor behaviour by one demoralised social worker tarnished

the image of all others. Low morale often meant that the code of ethics was not followed and this made social workers less assertive and less confident. Generic and focused social workers further stated that lack of recognition did not encourage social workers to develop themselves professionally or to equip themselves.

***Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.***

*"I want to add something...the low morale affects our professional image because if I'm having low morale I won't talk properly, I won't follow our code of ethics, I won't dress properly if I know that I'm going to work in a dusty place...so it's going to affect our professional image in that way"*

**Sub-Theme 1: Loss of Pride.**

Loss of pride in being a social worker was said to have reached a point where some of the officers were even ashamed to be associated with the profession. Participant from the group of social work supervisors stated that they are not proud to say in public that they are social workers because of how the image is within the department.

***Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.***

*“Never have I tried to be associated with social work. To a point when I introduce myself to people I say I’m a therapist, I’m a counsellor, I’m a social change agent, I’m a behavioural scientist”*

### **Discussion of Theme 9.**

Participants’ from all three focus groups discussions clearly showed that the morale impacted on their professional image. They feel undermined and looked down upon by clients and other professionals. Participants in a group of supervisors are even ashamed to tell people that they are social workers because of how the profession has been downgraded by the society.

To support the discussion above, Beckles (2015: 01) states that employees that are demotivated tend to exude negative attitudes towards their responsibilities. These attitudes tend to impact their work ethic as well their interactions. Therefore, they may start to be mean towards co-workers which may result in other employees feeling offended.

### **THEME 10: CHALLENGES NOT COVERED THAT SOCIAL WORKERS EXPERIENCE IN RENDERING SERVICES WHICH MAY AFFECT THEIR MORALE.**

Other factors that were said to have an influence on the morale of the social workers in Greater Tzaneen Office were lack of sign language skills and illiteracy in braille amongst social workers. The participants from the group of social work supervisors and focussed social workers indicated that there is not enough specialisation within the profession and they have limited chances or support for professional development. They were worried about the non-objective appraisals and unsafe working environment. They further stated that skills audits are not used to plan for workshops within the department.

#### ***Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.***

*“Every year we complete that skills audit but they don’t use it to plan for workshops. They do their own things, so if maybe they can take into consideration those skills audits that we are doing for individual development and maybe plan with it. It will be*

*better. And also, the issue of libraries maybe if each and every local area or municipality can have libraries where literature is found, even journals”*

**Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.**

*“..They say we are accessible, but there is no social worker who can use sign language. How do you render services to deaf people?”*

**Discussion of Theme 10.**

In their discussions, participants from the group of social work supervisors highlighted that lack of sign language skills, illiteracy in braille within social work profession have an impact in their morale because they cannot cater for clients with certain disabilities. Participants from the group of focussed supervisors were also worried about non-objective appraisals and professional development which also affect their morale. Marianne and McClam (2013:243) concur with the participants' statements that workshops and conferences should be made available in the organization and must direct issues of continuing professional development as a means of remaining positively involved and well supported in service delivery. By developing social workers professionally, it means that they will not serve the clients the same way as they will be utilising different skills when rendering services.

**THEME 11: INTERVENTION BY THE DSD IN UPLIFTING THE MORALE OF SOCIAL WORKERS.**

Not surprisingly, social work supervisors, focussed and generic social workers simply repeated the variety of the earlier highlighted infrastructural, material, administrative and reward related challenges as the issues that the DSD needed to solve in order to uplift the morale of social workers. These and other factors are listed below, in no particular order:

- Erect DSD structures and improve the existing infrastructure within the department

- Improve resource and avail equipment, especially transport, computers, printer, telephones and cell phones
- Improve the quality of supervision
- Increase staff development programmes
- Improve remuneration and benefits
- Enhance safety and security at the workplace
- Restructure the department after a relevant work study
- Improve leadership calibre and style
- Adopt a more consultative management style by involving employees in planning and decision making
- Implement OSD correctly
- Improve accountability
- Utilise the budget allocated by treasury more effectively
- Each social worker to have his/her own office
- Recognise qualifications
- Improve promotion opportunities
- Provide study bursaries for social work profession
- Observe and implement policies adequately.
- Improve the EAP programmes
- Improve the induction process for new employees
- Improve communication and information flow
- Improve IT systems

***Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.***

*“They should create a team of employees who should go out and do different studies of what works. And then they come back and start rebuilding this department from scratch”*

***Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.***

*“I think they can start by providing conducive infrastructure. Providing proper infrastructure where we can feel like this is our infrastructure, we belong here and maybe assess their way of doing things”*

**Respondent from the group of generic social workers.**

*“They also have to compensate us accordingly because if we do not get incentives, we won’t be able to do our work properly”*

**Discussion of Theme 11.**

It is clear that the DSD must intervene by considering several issues outlined by social work supervisors, focussed and generic social workers. To mention a few issues such as improving their remuneration (salary levels) and benefits. The DSD needs to improve the quality of supervision and improve social workers’ working environment by erecting DSD-owned structures where social workers will not be sharing. Participants from both three focus groups strongly believe that if the department can intervene by addressing these issues, they can improve their morale in a very positive way.

Vitality (2012: 02) pinpoints that the first step in resolving employee morale is to determine the cause of the problem and it can be done by getting to the bottom of the problem where employees as sources must be consulted. Employees need to be aware that their contribution is appreciated and recognized by their employer. This is further supported by Vasantham (2014: 01) who states that employees expect adequate compensation for the services they render to an organization and if the system for wages, salaries, and promotions is not good, then employee morale will be low. Sithole concludes with these words ‘pay our social workers well otherwise they will leave you’ (National Social Work Indaba, 2015).

**THEME 12: UPLIFTING THE MORALE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE DSD BY THE SACSSP.**

The participants from both the focus groups identified some areas and ways in which in the SACSSP could help uplift the morale of social workers and these include the following:

- Carrying out an employee engagement and satisfaction study
- Engaging the department’s administration to address issues of concerns

- Showing more concern for welfare and working conditions of social workers instead of just regulating
- Monitoring the department more effectively
- Holding consultation programmes with social workers
- Assisting social workers to understand their (SACSSP) roles better.

**Respondent from the group of generic social workers.**

*“I think our council; SACSSP can assist us as social workers to engage the department in addressing issues of concerns. Because we are having a lot of concerns, and our council doesn’t do anything to assist us”.*

**Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.**

*“I think council should have consultations programmes with social workers, because as a social worker I can’t tell you what council is and what their role is and how they are related to me.”*

**Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.**

*“They can just do a simple random study, they just pick, even if they can pick one office per province, they go and just see where social workers practice.”*

**Discussion of Theme 12.**

With no doubt, social work supervisors, focussed and generic social workers were concerned about the council’s engagement, visibility and support towards social workers’ professional image. They further emphasised that the SACSSP should help them understand their role and also to monitor the department more effectively so that their working conditions become in line with the councils’ code of ethics. This sentiment was supported by Vitality (2012: 02) who highlights that employee morale can be uplifted by sharing information and informing employees regarding the rationale behind the organizational decisions and their roles in achieving corporate goals.

## **THEME 13: THE ROLE OF EAP IN ENHANCING THE MORALE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN DSD.**

Notably, some of the participants from the group of social work supervisors were not even sure which function was being referred to when asking “*Which employee assistant practitioner?*” It was clear that most of the participants did not know what the role entailed.

### ***Respondent from the group of generic social workers.***

*“Maybe you can tell us a bit about the role of EAP. Maybe we will be able to respond to that question”*

Nonetheless, the point was made that anyone occupying the EAP post would still find it hard enhancing the morale because the issues causing low morale would be beyond their authority and powers. The EAP cannot solve the infrastructure, resources and remuneration challenges. Participants believed that EAP practitioners were likely to be demoralised, overworked and burnt-out themselves.

### ***Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.***

*“So, let’s say I go there, to the EAP. So, when I come back will I have the infrastructure or will I have an office?”.*

### **Sub-Theme 1: Positive role of the EAP.**

There were a few positive sentiments regarding the issue of the EAP however, with some of the social workers from a group of generic and focussed social workers believing that the EAP would be helpful in giving counselling to social workers. EAP practitioners would thus lessen the strain of dealing with sensitive or traumatic cases. They further stated that EAP would help them in dealing with the social workers’ own family problems and with stress management. A group of generic and focussed social workers believe that EAP practitioners will ensure that social workers have ‘someone to talk to’ and also offer encouragement and proper guidance to the employees.

**Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.**

*“They have a huge role to play in assisting our morale. As social workers, sometimes we are faced with cases that we need counselling after dealing with them. Just because we don’t have EAP practitioners in our district, we end up with a low morale”.*

**Respondent from the group of generic social workers.**

*“EAP is very, very important and can enhance the morale of an employee, because if EAP render services it brings and gives counselling and also removes the burden of daily working basis.”*

**Sub-Theme 2: External EAP services.**

There was a sentiment however that for EAP services to be effective, the EAP practitioner should not be someone the social workers were too familiar with. Participants believe that someone with whom they are familiar will spread rumours about them within the department and their confidentiality will not be guaranteed.

**Respondent from the group of focussed social workers.**

*“I think the department needs to find someone outside whom I can trust not the person I’m employed with here.....for EAP to be effective we need someone we are not familiar with”.*

*“IF they can provide EAP services at the district level it will boost our morale”*

**Respondent from the group of social work supervisors.**

*“The province does have the EAP, but the district does not have”.*

**Discussion of Theme 13.**

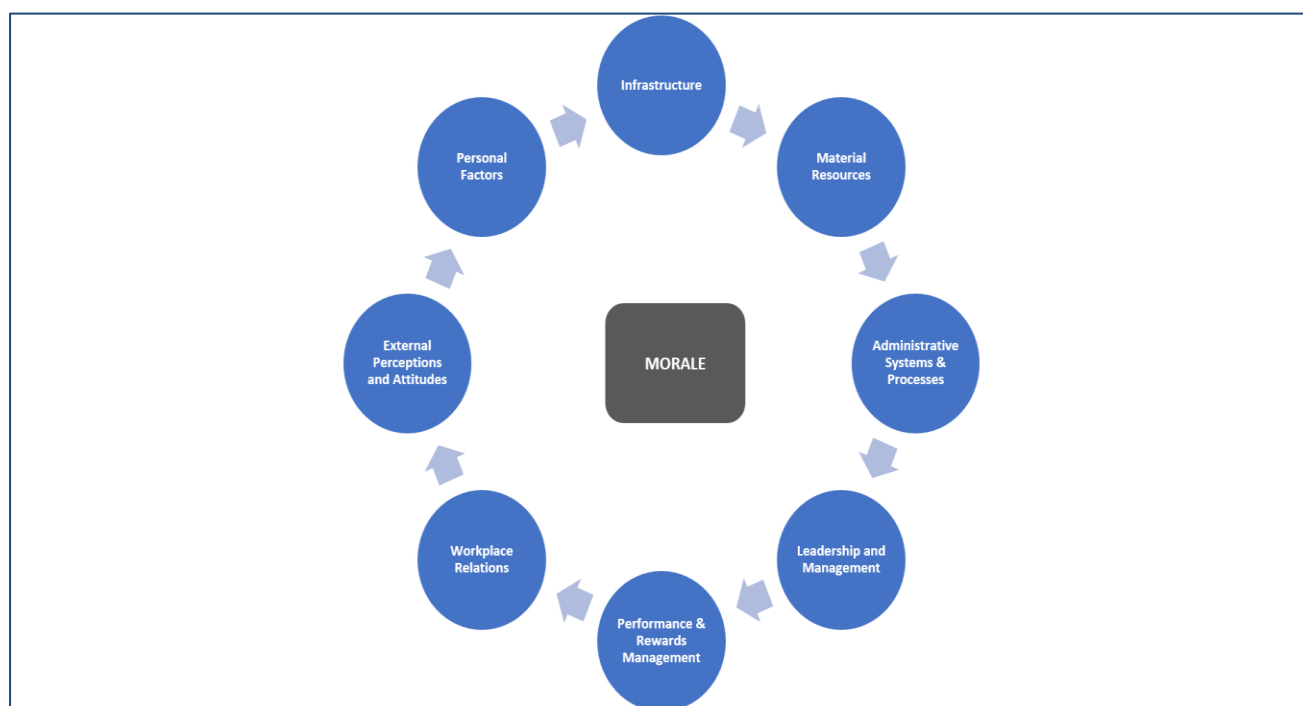
It is with no doubt that the DSD does not have accessible EAP services for employees in the district level since there is only one practitioner based in the provincial level who services all DSD Limpopo employees. It is clear in the discussion that some participants were not even aware of the role the EAP plays.

However, some participants showed an understanding on the EAP role and also believe that it can assist them in terms of their morale.

In support of participants' discussions Masi, (2005: 158), states that low morale and stress problems can be caused by systemic conditions, and EAP practitioners have a role in solving these larger issues within the workplace. Furthermore, Otto and Petrila (2009: 254) clarify the importance of EAP services within the organization by stating that "problems and complications are most likely to be encountered when the EAP professional is not clear about his or her role, or takes on multiple roles with the parties".

### 3.8.3. Figure 1: Analytical Summary of the findings.

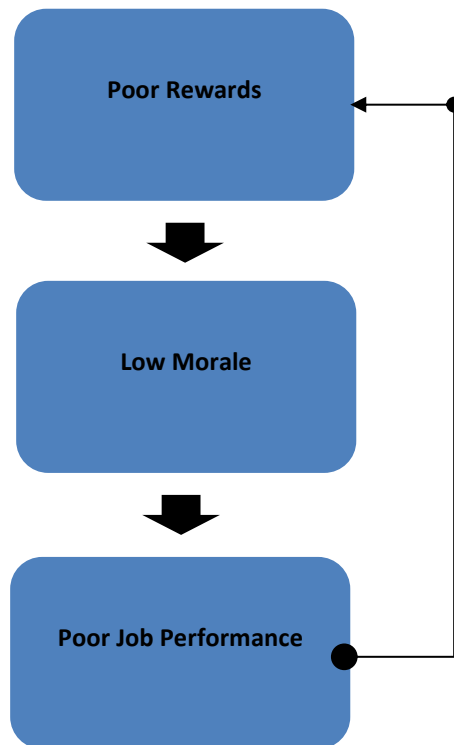
Below is a diagrammatic illustration of the main factors that were identified as impacting the morale of the social workers in Greater Tzaneen Office.



There was a constant interplay between these factors and therefore a non-optimal state in one of them did not only directly affect morale but the other factors too, thus creating a multifaceted threat to employee morale. For example, while the shortage of office space could directly affect workers' morale, it also compromises clients service delivery and it could also impact on administrative efficiency and thus further dampen morale.

### 3.8.4. Figure 1: Illustration of Morale.

There could also be a vicious cycle at play in relation to some of the influencers of employee morale. An example of a repetitive cause-effect relationship between rewards, morale and performance is given below.





The researcher presented the demographic profile of twenty-one (21) social work professionals within the Greater Tzaneen Office who participated in this study. Thirteen (13) themes and their sub-themes were discussed in this chapter to present data that was presented by the participants in the study. The findings indicate that social workers' morale in Greater Tzaneen Office is very low and is caused by their working environment, low salaries and lack of resources. Some participants believed that the EAP had a huge role to play in employee morale although some of them were not even sure of the function of an EAP.

## **CHAPTER 4.**

### **KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION.**

In this chapter, the research study will be concluded. The researcher will first discuss the goal and the objectives of the study. The second discussion of this chapter will cover the key findings where conclusions will be drawn. Lastly, recommendations and a final summary of this study will be made.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES.**

The goal of this study was to explore and describe the role of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in managing the morale of social workers in Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo.

For the purpose of this study the goal was achieved through adhering to the objectives below:

- To conceptualise 'morale' in the context of the workplace
- To explore and describe the social workers' morale in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province
- To explore the main factors impacting on the morale of social workers
- To describe the role of the EAP in terms of appropriate interventions to address the morale of social workers in the DSD, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province, should that be indicated.

## **4.3 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION.**

### **4.3.1. Demographic Information.**

The findings indicate that the participants who took part in this study were social workers in Greater Tzaneen Office and were divided into three focus groups. The groups consisted of generic social workers, programme coordinators and social work supervisors. They were between the ages of 25 to 42 years. The majority of participants were females, but there were a few males. They were all Africans.

### **4.3.2. Understanding employee morale in social work context.**

The findings indicate that morale relates to attitudinal and emotive constructs which includes the mindset in relation to the interest, happiness and enthusiasm in carrying out their duties.

### **Conclusion.**

The researcher therefore concludes that those participants from all three groups understood what morale is in the social work context which enabled them to participate in this study with complete understanding.

### **4.3.3. Description of employee morale in GTO.**

There were a few participants from the group of social work supervisors who indicated having a positive morale due to the fact that they were able to dedicate themselves to their social work profession despite the de-motivators in the workplace. The findings demonstrate the state and morale levels of generic social workers, programme coordinators and social work supervisors in Greater Tzaneen Office as being low.

## **Conclusion.**

It can be concluded that although there was a counterview that the morale was actually high amongst social workers due to the fact that they continued working even without adequate resources, the morale in Greater Tzaneen Office is actually low as they are frustrated with the lack of material resources, lack of recognition or acknowledgement for a good performance and inadequate remuneration.

### **4.3.4. Working conditions that may influence social workers' morale.**

Demonstrating the existence of strong sentiment on the matter, the findings reveal that working conditions that influence social workers' morale are the infrastructure and material resources. Almost every participant throughout all three groups (generic social workers, programme coordinators and social work supervisors) was concerned about the lack of infrastructure which hinders them from offering clients quality services. They further alluded that due to the lack of resources, the level of teamwork is comprised amongst social workers since they are fighting over working tools such as vehicles, computers and office working space. The findings also show that the morale of social workers in GTO is low because of low salaries, insufficient performance bonuses, car subsidies and improper grading systems.

## **Conclusion.**

The researcher therefore concludes that it is clear that working conditions wherein participants find themselves are not conducive to positive morale and actually affects their morale in a bad way. Working conditions also affect service delivery because confidentiality, as one of the social work code of ethics, is not adhered to due to sharing an office between three or four persons.

#### **4.3.5. Discussion of the role of fringe benefits and its influence on the morale of social workers in GTO.**

The findings reveal that the fringe benefits have a major role in enhancing social work morale in Greater Tzaneen office. Participants highlighted that despite the importance of fringe benefits, the fringe benefits were extremely poor and thus impact negatively on the morale of social workers.

#### **Conclusion.**

It can be concluded that fringe benefits have play important role in enhancing social work morale. However, lack/poor implementation of proper fringe benefits in GTO can have a negative influence on their morale.

#### **4.3.6. The role of supervision and its influence on the morale of social workers in GTO.**

The findings indicate that there was a general consensus of the influence of supervision on the morale of social workers. Participants stated that supervision could impact morale positively by agreeing on work performance targets and ensuring administrative efficiencies. The findings also reveal that prevailing supervisory practices on the ground were not ideal. The roles of supervision in GTO were not properly implemented due to lack of resources, inadequate supervisor to officer ratios, office space is not allowing for proper one-on-one supervision sessions and also low morale amongst supervisors themselves.

#### **Conclusion.**

It can be concluded that supervision has a great impact on the morale of social workers in Greater Tzaneen Office. Both supervisees and supervisors are affected because generic social workers and programme coordinators were concerned about not receiving supervision while supervisors stated that they are failing to offer necessary support to their supervisees due to lack of necessary resources in GTO.

#### **4.3.7. The impact of administration on social workers' morale.**

The findings show that there is an insufficient or non-existent filing system to support administration duties which impacts negatively on the morale of social workers in GTO.

#### **Conclusion.**

It can be concluded that it is clear that the existing administrative system and processes mean that social workers often have to do mountains of paperwork which increases their workload. Furthermore, social workers end up improvising by using their own money to address some of the dysfunctional administrative systems of the department.

#### **4.3.8. The possible influence of infrastructure on the morale of social workers.**

The findings reveal that the infra-structure that generic social workers, programme coordinators and social work supervisors in GTO are working in is not conducive and that it has a negative influence on their morale. Moreover, the type of working space allocated to social workers is not suitable for professional use since most workspaces have no toilets in the office area, nor water or electricity.

#### **Conclusion.**

It can be concluded that lack of adequate infrastructure affects the social workers' morale in a number of ways which makes it hard to maintain client confidentiality. The working conditions that social workers find themselves in are unhealthy and there is a loss of respect for the social work profession.

#### **4.3.9. Morale of social workers in affecting service delivery and productivity.**

The findings indicate that service delivery is said to suffer in the case of low social workers morale because demoralized and dissatisfied workers cannot offer good services to clients. Participants in all three focus groups further alluded that they

have lost the spirit of service delivery and it's hard to focus on clients' problems when they have their own problems.

The researcher therefore concludes that the morale of social workers is affecting service delivery and productivity in the DSD, Greater Tzaneen Office since they are not happy. Furthermore, social work practice is also compromised which leads to generic social workers, programme coordinators and social work supervisors losing their enthusiasm in rendering effective and quality services.

#### **4.3.10. Impact of morale on social workers professional image.**

The findings reveal that participants from the group of social work supervisors and focused social workers feel that their profession is losing its stature in the eyes of clients and other professionals. There is an impression in the communities that "anyone can be a social worker". The findings further reveal the loss of pride in being a social worker where participants from the group of social work supervisors are ashamed to be associated with the social work profession.

#### **Conclusion.**

It can be concluded that the low morale has impacted on the social workers' professional image. The profession has been downgraded by the community and they are looked down upon by the clients and other professionals which make them ashamed to be associated with the social work profession.

#### **4.3.11. Challenges not covered that social workers experience in rendering services which may affect their morale.**

The findings state that there is a lack of sign language skills and literacy in braille amongst social workers. Participants from the group of social work supervisors and focused social workers are worried about non-objective appraisals and when DSD plan workshops they don't use the skills audit.

## **Conclusion.**

It can be concluded that generic social workers are not skilled enough to offer necessary services to sign language clients since they did not receive any training in sign language. Generic social workers' morale has been affected since they cannot cater for clients with certain disabilities.

### **4.3.12. Intervention of the DSD in uplifting the morale of social workers.**

The findings reveal that the DSD can intervene in uplifting the morale of generic social workers, programme coordinators and social work supervisors by addressing the infrastructure, material resources, salary adjustment and by improving the quality of supervision as these challenges affect social workers' morale.

## **Conclusion.**

It can be concluded that DSD needs to consider several issues outlined by generic social workers, programme coordinators and social work supervisors for improving their morale in a positive way.

### **4.3.13. Uplifting the morale of social workers in the DSD by the SACSSP.**

The findings indicate that SACSSP could uplift social work morale by engaging the DSD administration to address issues of concern. They can also uplift social workers morale by showing them concern and support instead of just regulating them. The findings further reveal that SACSSP needs to monitor the department more effectively and also to assist social workers to understand SACSSP's roles better.

The researcher concludes that the council is not fully engaged, not supportive and is invisible towards social work profession's image. The SACSSP's roles are not understood by generic social workers, programme coordinators and social work supervisors and this affects their morale. However, the SACSSP needs to be fully engaged to uplift social workers' morale in the DSD.

#### **4.3.13. The role of EAP in enhancing the morale of social workers in DSD.**

The findings reveal that most participants did not know what the role of the EAP entails. Nonetheless, participants' made a point that there are issues that are beyond their authority and powers such as infrastructure, resources and remuneration. There were some participants from the group of focused and generic social workers who believed that EAP practitioners could lessen the strain of dealing with sensitive cases by providing counselling sessions.

The researcher concludes that EAP services within the DSD Limpopo are not visible and accessible to employees since they are only based in the provincial level. The EAP has a major role in uplifting the social workers' morale by providing several services such as counselling and educating employees in several issues of concern.

#### **4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS.**

The findings and conclusions of the study indicate that social workers' morale in Greater Tzaneen Office is very low and the DSD can improve/uplift their morale by considering the following recommendations:

- **Erect DSD structures and improve the existing infrastructure within the department.**

The DSD should erect their own structures which will be accessible to any client. They also need to improve the new one's they already have. This will dignify and restore the image of social workers within the community and also increase the respect they receive from other professionals.

- **To create an enabling working environment.**

For social workers to be productive and effective in the workplace the DSD should provide necessary resources such as vehicles (fast-tracking the processing of subsidized vehicle), computers or laptops, cellphones, access to internet, emails, photocopiers with printers and scanners. The more conducive the working

environments are, the more employees are happy to render effective services without any frustration.

- **Improve supervision quality.**

The quality of supervision in DSD will be improved by adhering to supervision ratios. This will enable supervisors to focus on a number of employees to provide necessary support and to ensure that they are well taken care by their employer.

- **Improve social work salaries and implement OSD correctly.**

The DSD should improve social work salaries by considering SAQA NQF levels. This will motivate and improve their morale in rendering quality and effective services because they will be well paid.

- **DSD must improve EAP services.**

EAP services have a major role to play in improving productivity and uplifting employee morale. The DSD needs to ensure that services are accessible and visible to all employees across the province. Internal EAP practitioners must be available in all the districts (Mopani, Vhembe, Sekhukhune, Capricorn & Waterberg). The external EAP services also need to be available since employees need to share their problems with someone with whom they are not familiar.

- **Involve employees in planning and decision making.**

The DSD should engage employees in planning and when taking decisions in the department. Involving employees will improve the communication and information flow between the employer and employees. Involving employees in decision making will improve social workers' morale because they will be familiar with and well informed about things that will be happening within their own department.

- **Collaborate with SACSSP in adhering to code of ethics.**

The DSD needs to work together with the SACSSP in order to offer support and consultative programmes to social workers. This will affirm to social workers that they are considered, recognized and valued by both DSD and SACSSP.

### ***Recommendations for future researchers.***

- Similar studies can be done across Limpopo Province to find out the morale of social workers in Limpopo.
- Similar studies can be conducted in other provinces to determine the role of EAP in enhancing the morale of social workers nationally.

### **4.5 FINAL SUMMARY.**

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the key findings, conclusions and recommendation to the DSD. The researcher also outlined recommendations for future researchers.

The key findings emphasize that the morale of social workers in Greater Tzaneen Office is very low and they are demotivated by their working environment, where the following challenges need to be addressed, the salaries they receive, lack of resources and lack of support in terms of supervision.

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## **Annexure 1: Proof of Ethical Clearance**

## **Annexure 2: Permission letter of authority**

## **Annexure 3: Data Collection Instrument**

## **Annexure 4: Informed Consent**

**Annexure 5: Faculty Data Storage Form.**

## **Annexure 1: Proof of Ethical Clearance**



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities  
Research Ethics Committee

8 August 2017

Dear Ms Chauke

**Project:** The role of the EAP in managing the morale of social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen office, Limpopo Province

**Researcher:** MT Chauke

**Department:** Social Work and Criminology

**Supervisor:** Prof Terblanche

**Reference number:** 15252354 (GW20170706HS)

Thank you for the application that was submitted for ethics review.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Ethics Committee formally **approved** the above study at an *ad hoc* meeting held on 8 August 2017. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

**Prof Maxi Schoeman**  
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate and Research Ethics  
Faculty of Humanities  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
e-mail: [tracey.andrew@up.ac.za](mailto:tracey.andrew@up.ac.za)

cc : Prof A Lombard (HoD)  
Prof L Terblanche (Supervisor)

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Dr L Blokland; Ms A dos Santos; Dr R Fasselt; Ms KT Govinder; Dr E Johnson; Dr C Panebianco; Dr C Puttergill; Dr D Reyburn; Dr M Taub; Prof GM Spies; Prof E Taljard; Ms B Tsebe; Dr E van der Klashorst; Dr G Wolmarans; Ms D Mokalapa

## **Annexure 2: Permission letter of authority**

CONFIDENTIAL



**LIMPOPO**  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

**LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS  
COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**MEETING: 30<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2017**

**PROJECT NUMBER: 2016/16 PG**

**Title: The Morale of Social Workers in the Department of Social Development,  
Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province**

**Researcher: M.T Chauke**

**Department: Department of Social Development**

**Prof S Maputle**

*S. Maputle*

**Acting Chairperson: Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee**

The Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC) is registered with National Health Research Council (NHREC) Registration Number **REC-111513-038**.

**Note:**

**Should there be any amendment to the approved research proposal; the researcher(s) must re-submit the proposal to the ethics committee for review prior data collection.**

**PLEASE QUOTE THE PROJECT NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES**



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities

Department of Social Work & Criminology

23/02/2016

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Ref. Ms. Chauke M.T, 15252354

Tel. 015 811 4308

Fax. 015 812

E-mail: [xilaveko6@gmail.com](mailto:xilaveko6@gmail.com)

The HOD

Department of Social Development

Limpopo

Polokwane

0700

Dear Head of Department

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO PERFORM EMPIRICAL RESEARCH  
MS M T CHAUKE STUDENT NUMBER 15252354**

I am a registered student for the following programme at the Department of Social Work, University of Pretoria: **MSW (EAP)**.

I am required to write a **mini-dissertation**, resulting from a research project, under the supervision of Prof. L S Terblanche. The research will only proceed once a departmental Research Committee and the Faculty Ethics Committee have approved the proposal and data collection instrument(s). The following information from the research proposal is shared with you, although a copy of the **research proposal** will be provided to you if needed:

The envisaged **title** of the study is: The role of the EAP in managing the morale of social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen office, Limpopo Province

The **goal** of the study is: To explore and describe the role of the EAP in enhancing the morale of social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province.

The **objectives** of the study is to:

- conceptualise 'morale' in the context of the workplace;
- explore and describe the social worker's morale in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province;
- explore and describe the effects of social workers' morale on service delivery in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province;
- describe the role of the EAP in terms of appropriate interventions to uplift the morale of social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province

The envisaged **target group** of the study is: All social workers in the Department of Social Development under Greater Tzaneen Office

I intend to do the empirical part of the study through means of focus group interviews according to a semi-structured schedule with social workers from your organization as stipulated above. This request will not result in any demands from you or your staff and no costs will be incurred by this request.

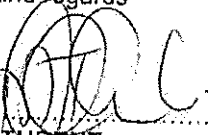
Possible benefits for your organization can be summarised as follows:

- The morale of social workers from the department may be enhanced, which may result in them becoming happy, motivated and productive social workers;
- The rate of misconduct may be lowered;
- The social workers may also comply/adhere to the professional ethics more willingly; and
- The role of EAP in terms of enhancing the morale of social workers will be clarified.

I undertake responsibility to provide you with a copy of the final report – if required.

It would be appreciated if you will consider this request and grant **written permission** (on an official letter head and with the official stamp of your department) to proceed with the project, at your earliest convenience.

Kind regards



.....  
STUDENT  
M T CHAUKE

Kind regards,



PROF L S TERBLANCHE  
SUPERVISOR

**Annexure 3: Data Collection Instrument**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE  
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW**

**Title of the study: Exploring Social Worker's morale in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province.**

**Goal of the study: To explore and describe the morale of social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen Office in Limpopo Province.**

**DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS**

1. Sex:       Female:                Male:
  
2. Age:       25-29:     30-34:     35-39:     40-44:     45-49:   
              50-54:     55-59:     60+:
  
3. Race:        African:                Coloured:                White:        Indian:
  
4. Job position:    Generic Social Worker:  Focused Social Worker:  Social  
                  Work Supervisor:
  
5. Years of experience as a social worker:  
      1-5:    6-10:     11-15:     16-20:     20-25:     25-30:     30+:
  
6. Area of operation:    Tzaneen Clinic:                Ritavi Office :   
                          Mavele Office :                Naphuno Office:
  
7. In which year have you completed your social work studies? .....

## QUESTIONS

1. In your understanding, please explain what morale is, in Social Work context?
2. Discuss and then describe the morale of social workers in Greater Tzaneen Office?
3. In your view, what kind of working conditions may influence social workers' morale?
4. Discuss the role of fringe benefits and the influence on morale
5. Discuss the role of supervision and its influence on the morale of social workers in the Greater Tzaneen office.
6. Discuss the impact of administration on social workers' morale
7. Discuss the possible influence of infra-structure on the morale of the social workers in Greater Tzaneen office
8. Does the morale of social workers affect service delivery and productivity at your workplace?
9. To what extent does the morale of Social Workers impact on the professional image of Social Workers?
10. What other challenges not already covered, do you experience in rendering services within the Department of Social Development that may influence the morale of social workers?
11. How can the Department of Social Development intervene in uplifting the morale of social workers?
12. What do you think can be done differently by the SACSSP in order to uplift the morale of social workers, if needed?
13. What role can an Employee Assistance Practitioner play in enhancing the morale of social workers in the DSD and more specifically in the Greater Tzaneen Office?

**Annexure 4: Informed Consent**



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities

Department of Social Work & Criminology

13/08/2016

Our Ref: Prof L S Terblanche

Tel: (012) 420-3292

E-mail: [lourie.terblanche@up.ac.za](mailto:lourie.terblanche@up.ac.za)

Participant's Name: .....

Date: .....

Principal Investigator: Ms. Chauke M.T

Name: Mawisa Trezar Chauke

Institution: University of Pretoria

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

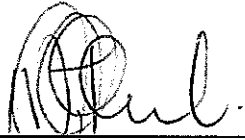
1. **Title of Study:** *The morale of social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen office in Limpopo Province.*
2. **Purpose of the Study:** The goal of this study is to explore the morale of social workers in the Department of Social Development, Greater Tzaneen office in Limpopo.
3. **Procedures:** Data will be collected through focus group interviews. These group sessions will take approximately 1 to 1.5 hours. All group sessions will be scheduled according to the preference of group members.
4. **Risks and Discomforts:** There are no known medical risks or discomforts associated with this project.
5. **Benefits:** There are no known direct benefits for participating in this study. However, the results of the study may help researchers gain a better understanding of the research topic under investigation.
6. **Participant's Rights:** Any focus group member may withdraw from participating in the study at any time.
7. **Financial Compensation:** There will be no financial reimbursement taking place for participation in the focus group sessions.
8. **Confidentiality:** In order to keep reliable records, a digital recorder will be used during the focus group sessions. These records will only be listened to by the Principal Investigator and authorized members of the research team at the University of Pretoria
9. **Record keeping:** All raw data generated through this study will be stored at the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years for archival purposes and possible future research. The results of this study may be published in professional journals or presented at professional conferences, but no records or identifying details will be revealed unless required by law.

If I have any questions of concerns, I can call Ms. Chauke M.T at (076) 570 2786 at any time during the day.

I understand my rights as a researcher subject, and I voluntarily consent to participation in this study, I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done. I will receive a signed copy of this consent form

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE



\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

Kind regards,



**PROF L S TERBLANCHE  
SUPERVISOR**

**Annexure 5: Faculty Data Storage Form.**

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND CRIMINOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

STORAGE OF RESEARCH DATA

Ref. No.: .....

1. IDENTIFYING DETAILS

1.1 Researcher: Ms. Chauke MT ..... Registration number: 15050354 .....

1.2 Programme: Masters in EAP ..... Graduation date: April 2019 .....

1.3 Supervisor/ Promotor: Prof. L.S. Terblanche .....

Co-supervisor / Co-promoter (if applicable): .....

1.4 Title of study: The Role of EAP in Managing the Morale of  
Social workers in the Department of Social Development,  
Greater Tzaneen Office, Limpopo Province

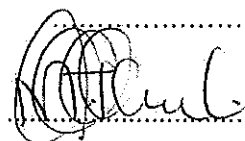
2. DATA SUBMITTED

2.1 Date of submission of data: 2018-12-07  
YYYY/MM/DD

2.2 Data will be stored until: .....  
YYYY/MM/DD

2.3 Details of data submitted (please specify type and quantity):

Questionnaires: 1 ..... Transcripts: 3 .....  
Video tapes: 1 ..... Audio tapes: 3 .....  
Informed consent forms: 21 .....  
Others (specify): Interview schedule (1) .....



Researcher Supervisor / Promoter Co-supervisor/ Co-promoter

06-12-2018

Date

Date

Date

Head of Department

Date