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

by

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ABSTRACT

The experiences of Newly Qualified Social Workers' readiness in providing services to families and children in Gauteng.

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Transitioning from university into the professional workplace is challenging for newly qualified social workers (NQSWs). With a growing number of NQSWs entering the field, it is crucial to evaluate their experiences, to enhance academic programmes and workplace support systems. Research shows that many NQSWs lack sufficient organisational support necessary for effective service delivery to children and families. Collaborative efforts between NQSWs, senior social workers, and multidisciplinary teams within and outside organisations, as suggested by the Theory of Collaborative Advantage (TCA), are essential for overcoming challenges and maximising outcomes.

This qualitative study explored NQSWs' readiness to provide services to children and families in Gauteng using an interpretivist paradigm and instrumental case study design. Seven participants were selected through purposive sampling, interviewed using semi-structured interviews, and analysed through thematic analysis. Findings revealed that NQSWs perceive readiness as possessing both knowledge and skills in social work, and their experiences involve both positive and negative experiences with service users. Challenges identified included workload management and the need for more supportive organisational initiatives.

Recommendations emphasise organisational support for training in critical areas like court proceedings, accessible workplace structures for disabled employees, and manageable caseloads. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are recommended to enhance curricula by integrating practical aspects such as foster care services and court procedures. Continuing professional development through seminars and workshops is also recommended to strengthen NQSWs' competencies.

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Future research should expand on these findings with a larger, representative sample across various social work sectors, focusing on effective support structures during the university-to-workplace transition.

KEYWORDS:

Child

Family

Newly Qualified Social Worker

Readiness

Social work

Social Work Service Experience

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

NQSWs	Newly Qualified Social workers
SWSs	Social Work Services
TA	Thematic Analysis
TCA	Theory of Collaborative Advantage
DSD	Department of Social Development
NASW	National Association of Social Workers
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
IASSW	International Associations of Schools of Social Work
SACSSP	South African Council for Social Service Professions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Research on the readiness of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) for practice has emerged, however, there has been little emphasis on the perspectives or experiences of NQSWs regarding their preparedness to provide services to children and families in South Africa. The shift from student to social worker proved to be a challenging one. It was widely acknowledged that the first year after certification is crucial for social workers (Grant, Sheridan & Webb, 2014:9). With new graduates entering the field of professional practice every year, it is fundamentally important to assess their reflections and experiences to further strengthen the academic programmes that produced them as well as workplace systems that transform them from graduates to social workers. The integration of the NQSW into the workplace is crucial for the development of practitioner competence and experience within the workplace. In the context of this study and borrowing from Hunt, Tregurtha, Kuruvila, Lowe and Smith (2017:140), it was identified that NQSWs need effective induction, supervision, and workload management techniques for them to seamlessly be integrate and work-ready. Undertaking a study to explore the reflections of NQSW in Sweden, Tham and Lynch (2019:401-408) highlighted the need for workplace introduction and support systems for these new professionals so that they are inclusively integrated into the workflow mechanisms and are therefore seen as work-ready. The intended study focused on a specific area of readiness, where the researcher sought to examine the experiences of NQSWs' readiness in providing social work services to children and families in Gauteng.

NQSWs in Jansen's study (2018:1535) stated that their undergraduate education presented an idealised view of social work, while arguing that it is not possible to fully prepare students as they must first experience what it is like to be a professional before becoming one. The study seeks to expand on Jansen's observation (2018:1532-1536) that one cannot fully comprehend the responsibilities of a professional unless they are fully engaged in professional conduct. To this end, the study explores NQSWs' experiences with readiness to provide social work services in the Gauteng workplace.

1.2 KEY CONCEPTS

The key concepts adopted for this study were the following:

Social Work

According to the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and International Associations of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) (2014), social work is an academic discipline and a practice-based profession that supports social development, social cohesion, and

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individual and collective empowerment. Key principles of social work practice include respect for diversity, human rights, social justice, and collective responsibility (The International Federation of Social Workers and International Associations of Schools of Social Work, 2014). In this study, social work was defined as a praxis-based profession and academic discipline that draws on social science, humanities, and indigenous knowledge theories to address life difficulties and improve the well-being of individuals and communities.

Newly Qualified Social Worker

NQSWs are typically defined in literature as social workers with two years or less of experience. For this study, a social worker with three years or less of experience was considered a NQSW (Cloete, 2012; Janse van Rensburg, 2009; Pretorius, 2020). In other words, NQSWs refer to freshly hired graduates who grow into competent, confident, and skilled social workers through internal and external transition processes (Hunt et al., 2017: 150). In this study, NQSWs are specifically referred to NQSWs providing services to children and families.

Social work service experience

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

Readiness

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

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Child

A child is defined as any human being under the age of eighteen years (the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990). Furthermore, according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1990), the term *"children"* refers to any person under the age of eighteen as defined by South African law.

Family

The term *"family"* in this study refers to every individual residing in the same home. The operational definition comes from Cliquet (2003:14), who notes that a person's family is typically considered to be a significant social institution and the centre of a lot of their social interactions. The family has historically changed over time. The Revised White Paper on Families, however, defines the family as a societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care, or the ties of marriage (civil, customary, or religious), civil union, or cohabitation and goes beyond a particular physical residence. In traditional South African society, however, the family was never regarded as man, woman, and child (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Ministry for Welfare and Population Development, 2021).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE

The readiness of NQSWs for employment at social service organisations in the public and private sectors has been a topic of discussion among social work academics for a long time (Grant et al., 2014; Howard, Johnston & Agllias, 2015:17; Welch, Lerpiniere, & Young, 2014:33). South Africa has significant rates of NQSW burnout, "brain drain," and job loss despite the enormous number of social work graduates joining the sector each year (Engelbrecht, 2006:129; Kheswa, 2019:6; Ntsoane, 2017:71). This study is anchored on dual assumptions. On one hand, once a student social worker exits tertiary education level, either at NQF Level 7 or 8, it is assumed that they are work-ready. On the other hand, supervisors of NQSWs argue that they are not work-ready and therefore need practical experience, additional professional training as well as strict supervision (Wolfaardt, 2022:2; Mokoka, 2016:19; Pretorius 2020:18). Exploring and describing NQSWs' work readiness from their experiential perspective within their first three years of work after attaining their qualification, grants this study the opportunity to focus on the missing link to better understand the challenges they faced. This study aims to collate, collect, and analyse the experiences of NQSWs related to their work readiness to provide social work services to children and families in Gauteng.

The lacuna that the proposed study attends is the lack of information regarding the work readiness of NQSWs to provide services to children and families from their experiential

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perspective in South Africa. Based on the research findings, the proposed study offers recommendations to social workers, supervisors, hiring organisations, universities and the SACSSP related to maintaining or improving the work readiness of NQSWs in providing services to children and families. This proposed study provides data and the much-needed synthesised information, from the research findings, about NQSWs' experience of their work readiness to provide services to children and families, competencies and needed support systems from and within a developing country as South Africa. Finally, the availability of the data and synthesised information from the proposed study raises awareness among the key stakeholders on the work readiness and competency challenges faced by NQSWs offering services to children and families during their initial years at work.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

The overarching question for this study was:

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

1.5 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

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

The following **objectives** had to be achieved to meet the goal of the study:

1. To explore and describe NQSWs' understanding of "work readiness" regarding competencies required for service provision to children and families in Gauteng.
2. To explore and describe challenges NQSWs face in providing services to children and families.
3. To explore measures implemented to support NQSWs in providing services to children and families in Gauteng.
4. Based on the research findings, to formulate recommendations to social workers, higher education institutions (HEIs), and organisations to maintain or improve NQSWs' readiness to provide services to children and families in Gauteng.

1.6 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher entered the participants' world to better understand how individuals generate meaning and observed them from within, using the interpretivism paradigm to obtain the participants' subjective viewpoints (Nieuwenhuis, 2020a:67). The study's purpose was dual

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and used the interpretivism paradigm to explore the experiences of NQSWs providing social work services to children and families, through conducting semi-structured interviews.

This study undertook a qualitative approach to better explore and describe from the viewpoint of participants the phenomenon while multifaceted questions about the nature of the phenomena were being answered (Fouché, 2021:40). Since the goal of the study was to comprehend social life—that is, the experiences of NQSWs readiness to provide social work services (SWS) to children and families—a qualitative approach was most appropriate (Fouché, 2021:42).

The research study was applied research. This type of research uses information gathered to expand on what is known about a phenomenon and to help practitioners and policymakers use this knowledge to make decisions and provide services more successfully (Hilton, Fawson, Sullivan & DeJong, 2019:8).

The research design that was used in the study, which is generally used in explorative and descriptive studies, was the case study design-instrumental case study design (Yin, 1994 in Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:90). The research design gave an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in its context and thus the reason that it was the most appropriate for this research study (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:91).

The study population for this research study was NQSWs who were employed and had a maximum of three years of working experience in rendering services to children and families within Gauteng Province. This research study made use of non-probability sampling, which can be described as a sampling method that does not use random selection of the research participants (Maree & Pietersen, 2021:219) and it was the most suitable as the research study was qualitative.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select NQSWs who are rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Maree & Pietersen, 2021:220; Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:34).

The researcher applied specific inclusion criteria to identify suitable participants forming part of the sample (Koch, Niesz, McCarthey, 2014:136). The criteria that were used in selecting the sample of participants in this research study were as follows:

- Be available and willing to participate in the research study.

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- Had been employed as a social worker with a maximum of three years' experience in rendering social work services to children and families.
- Provide social work services to children and families in Gauteng.
- Be registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions.
- Able to converse in English.

The intended sample size consisted of between seven and nine NQSWs who were rendering SWSs to children and families in Gauteng Province, or until data was saturated (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:92). A total of seven individuals formed part of the study.

Data collection is the core and fundamental aspect of the research study. Data collection is described as a process of gathering information to answer the research question of the study (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012:269). Data for this research study was gathered using interviews, specifically semi-structured interviews that were led by an interview schedule with open-ended questions followed by additional probing and clarification during interviews (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:108).

Gatekeepers are referred to in the literature as being important contacts that have the authority to grant access to an organisation (Tracy, 2013:72). The managers of the registered organisations were formally asked in writing for permission to conduct the study, and permission was granted. Data was then collected from the willing, consenting, and voluntarily participating NQSWs who provided services to children and families in Gauteng. Using the phone number or email address they gave, the researcher set up a meeting with the research participants to explain the nature and goal of the study, gather official research data through interviews, and make other arrangements. They were given consent forms to fill out and sign, and with the consent of the participants, audio recording was carried out with the interviews.

The researcher employed thematic analysis for data analysis using an inductive and latent approach for coding because the researcher interpreted, explored, and described the experiences of NQSWs' readiness to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017:2).

The researcher ensured trustworthiness by using the four criteria that were considered by qualitative researchers in pursuit of the trustworthiness of a research study, namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Anney, 2014:7-15; Nieuwenhuis, 2020c:144-146; Nowell et al., 2017:3).

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The researcher tested the interview schedule in a pilot study using a face-to-face interview with a single participant who met all selection criteria. Because the pilot study's data was so rich, the researcher incorporated it into the main research. A pilot study helps the researcher identify practical problems and ethical responses that could interfere with the main research study. It also helps the researcher decide whether the interview guide needs to be adjusted (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:41; Strydom, 2021a:387). Additionally, by changing the questions' order, structure, or phrasing to better meet the objectives of the planned study, a pilot test may help the researcher confirm, refine, or enhance the data collection instruments (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:41). After testing the interview guide, the researcher made a few necessary changes to the questions by rearranging how they were asked. These changes included “When did you qualify as a social worker and when did you start working”. These changes were included in the biographical information part of the interview schedule.

The avoidance of harm, informed permission, voluntary involvement, non-deception, anonymity, and confidentiality were among the ethical factors taken into account for this research study. Ethical clearance was obtained after applying to the Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Humanities.

Chapter 3 Section A will provide a thorough explanation of the research methods used in this study.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

It is important to take into account the following study limitations:

- The research was conducted with a sample of newly qualified social workers, working with children and families in the Gauteng Province. As such, the study is only representative of a percentage of the working NQSWs population. Generalisation in terms of the experiences of NQSW's readiness to provide social work service in Gauteng Province amongst all social workers may, therefore, be difficult.
- This research endeavour was, furthermore, only focused on interviewing NQSW working at organisations that provide SWSs to children and families in Gauteng Province. The study sample is thus not representative of all NQSWs working at different organisations across South Africa.
- As this study was conducted within an urban area, the experiences of NQSWs’ readiness to provide services to children and families in rural areas were not considered. Therefore, the experiences of NQSWs in rural areas may differ considerably from those represented in this research study.

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- The research approach used in this study may have led to some NQSWs withholding information, thus affecting the findings. This might be due to reasons such as power dynamics, or reluctance of NQSWs to fully express themselves in the interviews.
- Due to financial constraints, the researcher had to interview one participant via a WhatsApp call. This was a limitation for the researcher because the only information she got was from the tone and what the participant said, however, if the researcher had the interview in person, the body language could have been observed well to see whether what the participant was saying correlate with the body gestures.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The remainder of the chapters are as follows:

Chapter 2: Review of literature and theoretical framework

A review of the literature and the theoretical framework used in the research study will be presented in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

This chapter is divided into two sections: research methodologies are covered in part A, and research findings and their interpretation are covered in section B.

Section A: Research methods

This section will provide an overview of the research study's methodologies.

Section B: Research results and findings interpretation

The research findings and their interpretation, along with the participant's personal information, will be presented in this section.

Chapter 4: Key findings, conclusion and recommendation

This chapter will discuss the key findings and draw conclusion from them. As a result, recommendations will be made.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Newly Qualified Social Workers' transition from the university environment into the workplace environment is challenging and is seen as crucial for NQSWs (Grant, Sheridan & Webb, 2014:9). The term newly qualified social workers (NQSWs), refers to recently employed graduates who develop into capable, self-assured, and proficient social workers through a combination of internal and external transitional mechanisms (Hunt et al., 2017: 150). Within the context of this research, NQSWs refer to those who have a maximum of 3 years of experience working as a social worker and for this study, the researcher will focus on NQSWs in the field of children and families. For this study, the researcher has adopted the theory of Collaborative Advantage (TCA), which is based on management collaboration and focuses on collaboration between organisations that team up to understand an issue that any of them could understand by themselves (Vangen & Huxham, 2013:1; Gray & Purdy, 2018:2). The theory is related to this study in the sense that when NQSWs collaborate with other stakeholders as the theory suggests, they would be thoroughly equipped to render services to children and families, as the theory states that collaboration helps both teams better understand issues at hand together than any of them could understand alone.

The chapter aims to give an overview to the reader of the literature that is connected to this study. This chapter reviews the experiences of NQSWs' preparedness in providing children and families with SWSs. The literature review will discuss the transitional period of newly qualified social workers from the university environment to the workplace. It will also be looking at the readiness for work of the NQSWs as well as their preparation for the profession of social work. Moreover, the literature review will discuss the mandate for providing services to children and families; the challenges and needs that they experience as well as how these challenges can be addressed. The discussion will also include the supervision, mentorship, support, learning and development offered to NQSWs in the workplace. Lastly, the literature review will show the reader what is not yet known about the topic by highlighting the knowledge gap and what is already known.

2.2 THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS: FROM UNIVERSITY TO THE WORKPLACE

Transition in itself can be challenging, as adjustments to one's way of doing things have to be made. Hunt, Lowe, Smith, Kuruvila & Webber-Dreadon (2016:56) mention that in the first year after qualifications, social work graduates find it challenging as they are in a period of embarking on their career as qualified social workers. Tham and Lynch (2019:401) mention that the transition process is very complex as it includes different dimensions of individual and

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organisational factors. The NQSWs' transitional period is between the 12 to 18 and 24 months' interval of graduating and entering practice (Tham & Lynch, 2014:706). In a study by Hay, Franklin & Hardyment (2012:2-9) it was found that during the transition period from university to the workplace, NQSWs are affected. According to Hay et al. (2012:2), there are a number of intricate aspects that might impact the NQSW transition, including personal and academic characteristics, tertiary training, placement agency preparation, and the design, functionality, and management of the new workplace. Additionally, Wolfaardt (2022:20) highlights the difficulty of university-to-workplace transition because NQSWs are rapidly exposed to high caseloads, the decision of whether to implement procedures, steps, and theories learned during their studies, or delivering time-efficient services to one client to help the next. These issues will be looked into in this study as to whether they affect NQSWs' perceptions of their readiness for practice, with a particular focus on working with children and families.

Tham and Lynch (2019:401-408), allude that transitioning from university to the workplace job is frequently a difficult process because it involves both organisational and individual components. In Tham and Lynch's study, NQSWs frequently felt alone and had to manage their work on their own. Moreover, NQSWs reported a lack of practical skills, such as dealing with hostile or demanding clients, as being directly related to their feelings of "readiness for practice." Those who had the opportunity to "shadow" experienced colleagues felt more qualified to do their job, emphasising the importance of NQSWs paying close attention to colleagues' practice; nonetheless, this raises challenges for organisations with heavy case caseloads. Supervision was also a significant component in the transition of NQSWs. As a result, NQSWs encounter severe challenges in their transitioning phase at work. In light of the above-mentioned, employers who want perfectly prepared NQSWs will undoubtedly be disappointed. To ensure that their new employee is ready for work in any field, these companies need to be ready to offer additional assistance, training, and development (Ryan, Fook, & Hawkins, 1995 in Hunt et al., 2016:59). Although fieldwork placements help in the integration of theory into practice and instil a particular set of values in students (Bates et al., 2010; Parker, 2007 in Hunt et al., 2016:59), finding high-quality, relevant placements can be difficult, and additional support is needed when it comes to finding employment after graduation. On the other hand, studies by Agllias (2010); Donnellan and Jack (2015); and Grant, Sheridan, and Webb (2014) list factors such as debriefing and support from colleagues, effective supervision, coaching and mentoring, and phased increase in complexity and volume of case-load as factors that can assist NQSWs to cope with their new roles in workplaces. In a survival guide, Donnellan and Jack (2015) addressed the shift from student to employee and recommended that in order to sustain job satisfaction, focus be placed on continuous learning and applying knowledge and skills in the workplace, self-management, time and workload

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strategies, seeking support, and stress management techniques. These authors postulate that the transition period is distinguished by both fundamental knowledge which develops in practical learning and overarching knowledge obtained from academic learning, arguing that "bringing them together into an individually balanced equilibrium is one of the main tasks for transition into any profession" (Donnellan & Jack, 2015: 59).

2.3 NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS' READINESS FOR WORK

The term readiness in this study refers to NQSWs' opinions on their readiness to begin working in their profession or area of expertise. According to Nathaniel (2018:4), readiness refers to an evaluation of a NQSW's ability to engage in professional activities. Another author, Wolfaardt (2022:i), defines "[r]eadiness as a concept that is interpreted differently amongst various entities, and thus, being impossible to satisfy all individuals' expectations as to what constitutes a NQSW that is ready for practice." Parker (2017: 235) however, states that basic and functional competencies can be used to analyse and explain readiness. Studies have shown that placement experiences during degree-related coursework and interactions with licensed social workers during this time have an impact on NQSWs' perceptions of their competence to work in a specific field (McSweeney & Williams, 2019:360–361). Thus, it can be said that supervision and support are crucial in helping NQSWs feel prepared for their new position at work.

The first stakeholder in the South African context is the tertiary institution during the formal education process, followed by the social work organisation that employs the NQSW (Mokoka, 2016:79; Wolfaardt 2022:158), and ultimately the NQSW themselves. Nathaniel (2018:7) posits that 'work readiness' is a notion that is subject to negotiation because it is based on the expectations of both NQSWs and supervisors. These expectations are based on the skills and knowledge that NQSWs have acquired throughout their years of university training, where they are expected to develop important skills like critical thinking, practical knowledge, emotional intelligence, report writing, and administration (Parker 2017:2).

The gap between what institutions and the NQF exit profile report regarding a NQSW's job readiness and competencies and what supervisors at hiring organisations notice puts the NQSW in a difficult situation (Wolfaardt, 2022:22–24). In short, it appears that there is a disparity between the NQF departure profile and the job entry profile in South Africa when it comes to expectations connected to work preparedness (Mokoka, 2016:79; Wolfaardt, 2022:22). This brings up another aspect that this study wants to investigate. While research has highlighted the viewpoints and experiences of supervisors (speaking for the organisations) and NQF expectations (connected to the educational process), the voice of the NQSWs is still

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lacking. In essence, this raises issues with how the concept of work readiness is understood, applied, and accepted concerning NQSWs and their capacity to provide children and families with SWSs.

A study by Tham and Lynch (2019:403) regarding perceptions of skills, competence and preparedness for work, students expressed that they feel confident to work as social workers. Contrary to this, other students demonstrated insecurity and felt unprepared for practice (Tham & Lynch, 2019:403). These students expressed that they needed further training and support at their workplace to manage their workload (Tham & Lynch, 2019:403) and this is something that organisations need to note and invest in their NQSWs. The need for further training was noted concerning a lack of conversation skills, handling clients in deep crisis and managing difficult talks with clients (Tham & Lynch, 2019:403). Moreover, it was highlighted that learning practical skills such as relationship building, interviewing skills, academic writing and how to relate with people were important to have learned them (Hay et al., 2012:3). Two skills that the participant in the study mentioned that could have been taught extensively at university are: having challenging conversations with families and being able to handle conflict situations (Hay et al., 2012:3). Drawing from these two studies by Hay et al. (2012:3) and Tham and Lynch (2019:403), a common theme of learning to handle difficult conversations with clients and handling conflict is seen. Again, the participant mentioned that increasing knowledge of issues related to mental health disorders and how to utilise tools effectively that are associated with this field of practice would be valuable in working as a child, youth and family social worker (Hay et al., 2012:3). Moreover, teachings on mental health during university, induction and during continuing professional development may help in increasing the confidence levels of NQSWs in the area of working with children and families (Hay et al., 2012:3).

In a study by Grant et al. (2014:9), one of the key findings suggests that focusing only on the content of a degree programme to improve NQSWs' readiness to render SWSs is simplistic. It was thus noted that readiness for work should be considered holistically with other pathways of professional development as well as aspects of the environment that the NQSWs will be practising in. Thus confirming the needs that NQSWs raised in a study by Tham and Lynch (2019:403) for further training to feel more prepared and able to manage their work. Therefore, NQSWs' preparation for employment depends not only on graduation and confirmation of registration at the SACSSP but also on their knowledge of pertinent skills and the resources they had access to during their first years of providing services to children and families. Moreover, the preparation of NQSWs for the profession seems to be important, especially with the evidence of the difficulties that NQSWs face in transitioning from university to the

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workplace, as well as their readiness for work being difficult, it can be said that thorough preparation for the profession is needed.

Social workers have mandates guided by policies on how to render or provide quality services to children and families and the discussion below will look at those mandates.

2.4 SOCIAL WORK MANDATE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Social workers work following national and international policies. This is essential in providing quality services to children and families. These policies are important also for regulating how social workers provide these services.

2.4.1 International policies

The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development was first proposed in March of 1995. The proclamation placed a strong focus on the need to eradicate poverty as a global ethical, social, political, and economic imperative. Therefore, it can be argued that SWSs worldwide ought to concentrate on these while rendering services to children and families (Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, 1995). The American National Association of Social Workers (NASW) pioneered best practices for social workers in the field of child welfare. In addition to reflecting and encouraging effective social work practice throughout the complete range of child welfare services, standards for social workers must also take into account changing policies and practices outside of the child protection field. In order to better reflect the values of the profession and keep up with evolving practice standards, the NASW Standards for Social Work Practice in Child Welfare are updated on a regular basis. It is possible to view these guidelines as a vital resource for social workers who specialise in child welfare. Prevention, parenting courses, family support programmes, family-centred services, family foster care, kinship care, residential group homes, adoption, and independent living are some of the possible facets of this endeavour. Since the creation of the NASW Child Protection Standards, the child welfare sector has experienced a number of noteworthy practice and policy developments. As a specialised area of practice, child welfare influences and advances shifts in research, policy, and practice paradigms (NASW, 2012).

2.4.2 National/domestic policies

The Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978 governs social workers' scope of practice in South Africa. Social workers in South Africa must follow the standards contained in the Children's Act 38 of 2005 when dealing with children and families. The values outlined in the act are social integration, social involvement, empowerment, universal access, self-reliance,

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appropriateness, and accessibility. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 can thus be considered as the primary mandate that social workers must follow while working with children and families to guarantee their rights are protected during service delivery.

A section of the Republic of South Africa's 1996 Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights, deals with children's rights. Furthermore, Section 28 of the Bill of Rights largely addresses the rights of children. According to Section 28, every child has the right to appropriate alternative care, family care, or parental care. In addition, they have the right to social assistance, protection against abuse, neglect, mistreatment, and humiliation, and the right to have their best interests taken into consideration in all decisions that have an impact on them.

The National Department of Social Development's (DSD) long-term national strategy plan calls for increasing the availability of preventive services, which will reduce the demand for early intervention, statutory, and aftercare services (DSD National Strategic Plan, 2013:7). The White Paper on Families (Republic of South Africa, Department of Social Development, 2021) also guides SWSs as it emphasises promoting family well-being, supporting families by empowering them through physical, emotional, psychological, financial, spiritual and intellectual care and support. The White Paper on Families specifies SWS as a cornerstone of the implementation of the document's strategic priorities. The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) states that "family and child welfare services aim to preserve and strengthen families so that they can provide a suitable environment for the physical, emotional and social development of all their members" (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Ministry for Welfare and Population Development, 1997) and social workers mostly focus on this when delivering services to children and families.

2.5 SOCIAL WORK SERVICES OFFERED TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Social workers provide a wide range of services to vulnerable children and families both internationally and in South Africa. The international and national services that social workers provide will be discussed.

2.5.1 Internationally

From the very first social work practices, families were the core of services. Originally known as the Home-builders program, family preservation services were first introduced in California in the 1970s and quickly extended across the country. A service concept and method known as "family-centred service" emphasises cooperation between parents and service providers, allowing families to take part in the delivery of services to their children. Family context must

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be taken into account when providing SWSs because families often include children (Nhedz & Makofane 2015:354).

All UN member states ratified the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 with the aim of eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, and fostering the formation of a prosperous and peaceful society by 2030. The Global Goals, also referred to as the Sustainable Development Goals, are an appeal to action to build an inclusive future. If the rights of children are not respected, the SDGs cannot be accomplished. In the framework of achieving the SDGs, more than 100 Member States have reaffirmed their commitment to upholding children's rights. To ensure that the goals are accomplished, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) works in conjunction with governments, partners, and other UN organizations (UNICEF, 2021).

2.5.2 Nationally

Policies and practices vary from nation to nation, and therefore, SWSs are also different from other countries. The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) had an impact on the transformation of social services in South Africa as a result of the country's political and economic climate. Instead of using a corrective approach, social services now take a developmentally oriented approach. As a result, social workers began to concentrate on preventative services rather than providing services to improve a client's position (Ziyambi, 2020:20). Social workers are mandated to focus on four levels of intervention—preventative, early, statutory, and aftercare—that are outlined in South African legislation for the provision of family preservation services (Nhedzi & Makofane, 2015:355). Preventative services such as community development programmes focus on preventing social issues within families which can adversely affect children and traumatise them. When preventative services are not successful, early intervention services are provided which entail identifying and addressing problems before they cause severe trauma to children. If this fails, social workers provide statutory and aftercare services including treatment, rehabilitation and reunification to children and families to remedy the trauma children experienced (Ziyambi, 2020:24:25).

2.6 THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF NQSWs

NQSWs usually start their careers in very stressful and demanding work environments (Wolfaardt, 2022:23) resulting in many challenges that they face and needs that arise from those challenges at times. This section will discuss the many challenges and needs of NQSWs and how these challenges are or can be addressed.

2.6.1 NQSWs' challenges and needs

Social workers face many challenges in the workplace which leads to needs that arise in the process of practice. Pretorius (2020:30) mentions that healthy working environments may

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produce effectiveness, and productivity, help in improving the well-being of the social worker and create the opportunity for growth. While healthy environments can create these advantages for social workers, unhealthy working conditions can, on the other hand, contribute to the departure of NQSWs from the social work field, among other reasons (Skhosana, 2020:117).

In the profession of social work, the issue of excessive caseloads is often discussed due to the vast amount of social problems that exist in our society. This is made worse by the scarcity of social workers in South Africa, which forces those who do exist to handle a variety of socioeconomic issues. High caseloads have an impact on social work staff members (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:471). According to Fisher, Katz, Milner, and Thatcher (2003: 137) work overload "leads to excessive demands on time and may lead to feelings of uncertainty about one's ability to perform any of the roles properly." This explains why NQSWs would find it difficult to adapt to their new environment, which would hinder their transition (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:471). Calitz, Roux and Strydom (2014:163) admit that the high level of stress related to rendering services can lead to burnout, poor mental health, decreased concentration, impaired performance and impaired cognitive functioning for social workers, as well as health-related problems which can motivate the reason to leave the profession. Huni and Chikadzi (2014:471), moreover, mention that tasks completed in the workplace are determinants of the employee's well-being and job satisfaction. Therefore, when creating the work characteristics, it is imperative to take an employee's capacity to perform particular duties into account. Failing to do so would have negative effects on the employee as well as the organisation.

Results from Tham and Lynch's (2021:547) study of NQSWs' comments on their first years of practice show that NQSWs thought that certain cases were difficult and took up a lot of their time. Moreover, it was found that these NQSWs did not have thorough preparation to handle such cases and no apparent experience in handling difficult child cases and as such, leading to health complications for one of the NQSWs (Tham & Lynch, 2021:547). This correlates with what Calitz et al. (2014:163) describe that too much stress related to case management can lead to health-related problems. According to Huni and Chikadzi (2014:468–472), social work graduates have numerous difficulties that impede their ability to transition from university to the workplace, consequently impeding their ability to advance professionally. From the findings of this research, age differences between NQSWs and service users were a challenge that caused barriers to providing quality services which resulted in feelings of frustration and anxiety for the NQSW and thus affecting the effectiveness of the organisation (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:468). Age discrepancies between NQSWs and those previously established inside the organisation resulted in a clash of attitudes and work practices. Considering that collaboration amongst NQSWs and co-workers is proposed in the theoretical framework, this

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challenge will have to be addressed and overcome to successfully establish those collaborations and render quality services. The age difference and different work patterns in the workplace restrict the NQSW as they are not able to establish their working pattern, making it difficult for them to adapt to the new work environment and discouraging even individual initiative. Instead of resisting the differences, as differences are inevitable, the organisation should rather embrace these differences by coming together (both NQSWs and social workers already established) and collaborating by exchanging their knowledge and skills and by doing so effectively render quality services (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:469).

Even though looking at these challenges may be discouraging, addressing them would go a long way in creating a safe work environment for NQSWs.

2.6.2 Importance of addressing NQSW challenges

Addressing the challenges faced by NQSWs would help ensure retention and job satisfaction in the workplace. Carpenter, Patsios, Wood, Platt, Shardlow, McLaughlin, Scholar, Haines, Wong, and Blewett (2012) and Carpenter, Shardlow, Patsios, and Wood (2015) have a comprehensive programme focusing on the support of NQSWs and is titled the Newly Qualified Social Worker Programme which was first established in 2008 in England (Engelbrecht & Ncube, 2021:146). The NQSW program was developed by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) to assist employers in providing program participants with organised, systematic support. The initiative aimed to guarantee that NQSWs received reliable, high-quality support and that those in charge of overseeing them were assured of their ability to do so. It sought to help more people pursue a long-term career in social work with children and families (CWDC, 2008 in Carpenter et al., 2012: vi). Engelbrecht and Ncube (2021:146) state that the main objective of the NQSWs' programme was to assist NQSWs in systematically enhancing their knowledge, expertise, and self-assurance as social workers throughout their first year of practice. Employers were also able to offer support, supervision and direction. The programmes' goals were to enhance work satisfaction, encourage retention, and assist NQSWs with their post-registration training and education. Notably, NQSWs worldwide believe that having a protected caseload and regular, organised supervision that encourages reflection on practice are the two strategies that have helped them the most. In the end, conclusions about specific programs designed to address difficulties faced by NQSWs show that those NQSWs who are supervised experience significantly lower levels of stress than those who just had minimal supervision or none at all (Engelbrecht & Ncube, 2021:146).

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2.7 SUPERVISION, MENTORING, SUPPORT, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF NQSWs IN THE WORKPLACE

Receiving supervision, mentoring, support as well as training and development in the workplace as a NQSW is very crucial for professional development. The depths of supervision, mentoring and support, as well as training and development that NQSWs receive, will be discussed thoroughly below, looking also at the existing research that speaks to the core of supervision and support for NQSWs.

2.7.1 Supervision of NQSWs

Supervision is one of the core elements in a social worker's career and professional bodies mandate it as it contributes to career-long competency and professional development (Beddoe, Ballantyne, Maidment, Hay & Walker, 2020:17). Social work supervision "is an interactional and interminable process within the context of a positive, anti-discriminatory relationship, based on distinct theories, models and perspectives on supervision whereby a social work supervisor supervises a social work practitioner by performing educational, supportive and administrative functions to promote efficient and professional rendering of SWSs" (Department of social development & The South African Council for Social Service Professions, 2012:10).

The above-mentioned functions of supervision will be discussed briefly.

2.7.1.1 Functions of Supervision for NQSWs

Different supervision techniques can be applied, with different priorities placed on crucial duties. Nonetheless, supervision serves three purposes: administrative, educational, and supportive (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:24). The researcher will briefly discuss the different functions of supervision as it forms part of helping NQSWs to be prepared and render SWSs more effectively.

- **Administrative function**

The accurate, suitable, and efficient application of agency policies and procedures is the main focus of the administrative function. The supervisor is in charge of making sure the organisation's policies are followed (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:25). Engelbrecht and Ncube (2021:148) mention that a comprehensive induction programme introduced to NQSWs at the beginning of their employment is the start point of their supervision. Supervision tasks such as planning, organising, controlling, and leading a supervision process as well as the design of personal development and/or supervision plan and use of performance evaluations should be executed immediately by the supervisor (Engelbrecht & Ncube, 2021:148). Along with or rather in addition to supervision, time and resources for structured ongoing professional development activities should be planned as well (Engelbrecht & Ncube, 2021:148).

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- **Educational function**

The primary goal of the educational function is to help NQSWs improve their skills, knowledge and attitude to perform better when rendering services (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:25). With the goal being on the improvement of skills, knowledge and attitude, supervisees should be encouraged to get involved on different levels in different situations (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:25). The educational function is focused on educational needs of the supervisee within their workload context. The content of educational supervision varies based on each worker's background, experience, and skill set (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:25). Due to preconceived perceptions about supervision, Engelbrecht and Ncube (2021:149) mention that NQSWs may not easily respond to this type of supervision as it may be perceived as a "performance-grading". Thus, it is important to clarify with the NQSW about the content of the educational supervision.

- **Supportive function**

Worker morale and job satisfaction are the main areas of focus for the supportive function (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:25). An enabling environment fosters productivity, and both the supervisee and the supervisor can use this as a useful tool to manage stresses and work-related tensions that could negatively impact work output and service delivery (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:25-26). Engelbrecht and Ncube (2021:149) mention that for this function, the supervisor's level of understanding and empathy for NQSWs is important.

2.7.2 Mentoring and Shadowing

Mentoring can be a way of supporting NQSWs as well as shadowing colleagues who have more experience in the field. The South African social work profession's supervision framework defines mentoring as "a formal or informal transmission of knowledge, skills, attitudes, psychosocial support, and professional development within a sustained period" and it increases the overarching goal of supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:7).

According to Cloete (2012:149) the use of many types of mentoring, including informal, formal, situational, reverse, and electronic-supported mentoring, is encouraged by social work supervisors. Although NQSWs use informal mentoring, social work supervisors posit that it is less structured, and voluntary, and may lead to uncertainty about roles. As a result, social work supervisors advocate the use of formal, situational, reverse, and technologically enabled mentoring.

According to Welch, Lerpiniere, and Young's (2014) study, which examined the perceptions of Scottish first-line managers regarding the practice readiness of NQSWs, in the event of a complex case at their organisation, a NQSW will be paired with a senior or more experienced

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social worker to collaborate on the case and foster the professional development of the NQSWs. Since the senior social worker is not a supervisor, power struggles and intimidation may be less common. The results also show that working with peers was regarded as an important source of knowledge, support, and encouragement. Peer support includes mentorship and shadowing (Welch et al., 2014:25). Of the findings, one of the participants highlighted that mentoring helps foster relationships and offer effective support. Moreover, another participant said that mentoring and peer support are important as they will have a huge impact on the career of the NQSW (Welch et al., 2014:25).

Effective induction procedures, in the opinion of the participants, are crucial for NQSWs. Effective 'induction' was seen as being accomplished through a variety of support mechanisms (both formal and informal), including generic agency-wide induction protocols and supervision, mentoring, shadowing, training, and development

In the opinion of the participants, effective induction techniques were essential for NQSWs. Various forms of informal and formal support mechanisms, such as agency-wide induction protocols, mentoring, shadowing, training, and development, were considered to be effective ways to facilitate 'induction' (Welch et al., 2014:30). The following will discuss the importance of quality induction and orientation for NQSWs when entering the workplace.

2.7.3 Induction and orientation for NQSWs in the workplace

Quality induction of NQSWs is very important and recommended to go alongside good, regular and quality supervision (Hunt, Lowe, Smith, Kuruvila & Webber-Dreadon, 2016:66). Induction can be seen, according to Donnellan and Jack (2015:84) as a process that is concerned with how the NQSW is introduced to the formal requirements of the organisation, both as an employee and with responsibilities and duties of the role within the organisation. Moreover, Donnellan and Jack (2015:84) mention that this type of induction is ongoing throughout the first year of employment. Huni and Chikadzi (2014:469) highlighted poor orientation practices as one of the themes found in their research study. They mention that orientation serves a great purpose in the workplace which is meant to introduce new employees to their working environment so they can become a part of the organisation's existing group. Moreover, Huni and Chikadzi (2014:469-470) state that the majority of the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with their job orientation experience, saying that it inhibited them from maximizing their abilities during their first year of work. Many participants mentioned that social service providers were failing to provide NQSWs with the networks of support they needed to comprehend the nature of their jobs and how to carry them out. Essentially, this suggests that the transfer from college to the workplace is hindered and that NQSWs in the social work profession have challenges of working in an organisation without having a firm understanding

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of how to do work-related tasks and without accepting the fact that the organisation lacks the internal resources to support the employees (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:470).

Therefore, a major issue that accounts for NQSWs' difficulties integrating into the workplace after obtaining their qualifications is a lack of effective orientation to organisations (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:470). Introducing students to their work environment increases their knowledge of the responsibilities and choices they will have to make. This encourages individuals to take control of their performance by assuming particular actions and attitudes (Savickas, 1999:332). Given the significance of orientation, it is obvious that a lack of thorough employee orientation in organisations hinders the process of acclimating NQSWs to their new environments (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:470). Hence the need for support systems in the workplace for NQSWs

2.7.4 Support systems for NQSWs in the workplace

NQSWs are found to seek support from colleagues or other professionals, friends and family when not feeling sufficiently supported in their workplace transition (Grant et al., 2014). Moreover, Hay et al. (2012) suggests that to support NQSWs, there should be a gradual increase in workload. It was found that support for NQSWs was different and included limiting the complexity and volume of the case-work, and workload protection. Furthermore, supervision was identified as an important professional supportive tool which provided an opportunity to reflect and examine practice (Hunt et al., 2016:66). With this being said, obtaining feedback from your colleagues can be a way of supporting them as it will help you know if the direction you are taking is correct. Adams and Sheard (2017:31) mention that as a NQSW you can seek feedback from colleagues and even co-work on a case together or do a joint visit if appropriate and ask colleagues to give constructive feedback. Knowing what you are doing and even if it is working is very important for the motivation to continue providing the service and the researcher views this as a very resilient skill that a NQSW can use to receive support from their colleagues. Huni and Chikadzi (2014:470) found that inadequate support systems and resources were among the challenges experienced by NQSWs amongst others. They posit that resources and support systems at work are crucial because they give employees a setting in which they may complete their duties making it possible for staff to provide services to service users efficiently and effectively. Contrarily, a lack of resources and support leads to workplace discontent and low productivity.

2.7.5 Training and development of NQSWs in the workplace

Tham and Lynch (2019:408) mention that social work education is generic in Sweden and the South African social work education is also generic. This implies that NQSW, upon entering the workplace should aim to receive further training and guidance specific to their field of

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service rendering, which enables them to acquire more skills and knowledge related to that field (Tham & Lynch, 2019:408). On entering the workplace, professional development now plays a role for the NQSW as established by the SACSSP in which the aim is to enhance and ensure quality SWSs (SACSSP, 2019). The SACSSP (2019:5,7) defines Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as an aimed process to maintain registration through enhanced skills, knowledge and experience related to the activities of the profession, following completion of formal education as a social worker and social auxiliary worker. Moreover, the SACSSP notes that through CPD, social work practice skills, attitudes, and knowledge are enhanced. Grant et al. (2017:489) states that NQSWs' professional development begins when they end their undergraduate social work studies which represent only one layer. NQSWs get to develop specific professional knowledge and skills (Tham & Lynch, 2019:408) and follow a developmental approach in their field of expertise, showing that they are professionally developing (Ballantyne, Beddoe, Hay, Maidment, Walker & Mayhew, 2019:50).

According to Moorhead (2019:2), countries such as England, Scotland, New Zealand and Australia consider the post-qualifying period of NQSWs as important and an opportunity to continue to learn and grow in the profession. Post-qualifying professional development occurs in the workplace and is a very crucial developmental need that is recognised for NQSWs to have (Jack &Donnellan, 2010:306). Training and development are essential in the workplace after initial qualifications as NQSWs are inclined to lack thorough preparedness and therefore find it difficult to render SWSs. Hence, Tham and Lynch (2019:408) mention that to thoroughly have the skills to manage complex tasks in rendering SWSs, the development and preparation of those skills should occur in the workplace.

2.8 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE EXPERIENCES OF NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS IN PROVIDING SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Studies show that NQSWs are equally prepared to serve children and families, according to experience. NQSWs' lack of confidence in their ability to apply what they have learned in class to the reality of the workplace is a significant factor. Findings by De Jager (2013) on the reflections of NQSWs indicate that many did not feel prepared for statutory work upon graduation and had trouble putting theory into practice because the majority of their roles involved delivering child protection services.

The realities of the job and the organisational settings in which the job was performed eventually led to levels of frustration and discontent, which was evident from a study in Scotland regarding NQSWs' readiness for practice (Hunt et al., 2017:154). When it comes to employer assistance, supervision, and possibilities for ongoing continuous professional development, the workplace these NQSWs enter has been proven to be directly related to

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their experiences (Hunt et al., 2017:154). It appeared that the reason for this abrupt decline in NQSWs' well-being was due to their employers' inadequate recognition of the individual inside the new profession. Because of this, NQSWs were discovered to be inadequately prepared to give services to children and families (Grant et al., 2017:506). As a result of their inability to provide their children with safety and protection, families they work with are said to frequently show anger and resistance against social workers in the child protection sector (Goliath, Vetfuti & Perumal, 2019:2). It is possible to claim that giving services to children and families puts NQSWs at danger.

2.9 KNOWLEDGE GAP WITHIN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Several databases were consulted that yielded no results for studies conducted regarding the experiences of Newly Qualified Social Workers' readiness in providing services to children and families in Gauteng. Databases searched included Social Work Abstracts, EBSCOHost and Google Scholar. Although research does exist about the readiness of practice by NQSWs, no research about the experiences of NQSWs' readiness to provide services to children and families in Gauteng exists.

2.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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

2.10.1 Theory of Collaborative Advantage

Collaboration is a dynamic process in which two or more social groups that are actively and reciprocally participate in cooperative actions focused on achieving at least one common goal (Bedwell, Wildman, DiazGranados, Salazar, Kramer & Salas, 2012:135). Gray (1989:5) notes that early collaboration can involve both cooperation and coordination, but collaboration is a longer-duration integrated procedure "through which parties who see different aspects of a problem constructively explore their differences, search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" and together implement solutions (Thomson & Perry, 2006:23). A common set of norms and procedures that will govern their future interactions and be open to amendment as they renegotiate their ties over time may be negotiated during this process, which may simply include stakeholders informing each other about the topic of interest (Gray & Purdy, 2018:1). By examining it from the perspectives of all the stakeholders, teamwork aims to develop a more complete understanding of the issue than they could

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individually do alone (Gray & Purdy, 2018:2). Collaboration makes it possible for one to achieve visions as there is a wide range of available resources and expertise from other people and not limited to only one's resources and expertise (Huxham & Vangen, 2013:3).

There are five key dimensions in collaboration and to solve collective issues, parties involved in the collaboration should balance these dimensions (Thomson & Perry, 2006: 24). These five dimensions will be explained while being linked to the context of this research study. Among the five dimensions are "The process of collaborative governing: The governance dimension; The process of collaborative administration: The administrative dimension; The process of reconciling individual and collective interest: The autonomy dimension; The process of forging mutually beneficial relationships: The mutuality dimension and The process of building social capital norms: The trust and reciprocity dimension" (Thomson & Perry, 2006:24-28). According to Thomson and Perry (2006:24), public managers would gain from a methodical and thorough analysis of the manner in which partners engage, with an emphasis on the aforementioned five dimensions that together constitute collaborative action. From this study's perspective, social work managers would benefit from establishing systematic collaborative partnerships between NQSWs and supervisors, as well as experienced social workers. This collaboration can even be between government organisations and non-governmental organisations (inter-organisational) in the sharing of resources and information. When partnership takes place between public organisations and non-profit organisations, this is when collaborative advantage is achieved (Huxham & Vangen, 2013:3). This leads us to the Theory of Collaborative Advantage (TCA) which is derived from practitioner's research on issues that are of concern to them, in which action is needed. This theory is based on the management of collaboration, and it is a practice-based theory (Vangen & Huxham, 2013:1). TCA, a work-in-progress that was introduced in 1989, was developed because of a study that included a range of collaborations which ranged from dyads to international networks that addressed numerous areas such as health, education, drug abuse, economic growth, community planning, poverty alleviation and many other topics (Vangen & Huxham, 2013:1). According to the concept of collaborative advantage, synergy can be attained by combining the resources and skills of many organisations (Vangen & Huxham, 2006:3). Partnership actions are another way that collaboration results in synergy. When like-minded partners who offer comparable services or hold similar opinions are brought together, these initiatives can be strengthened (Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001:185). The combination of the resources of various organisations, enables organisations to do things that none of them could do independently. Therefore, in theory, collaboration offers organisations the chance to continuously vary and develop their portfolio and thus realise whatever goals they may have (Vangen & Huxham, 2006:3). The significant interest and investment in collaboration assumes

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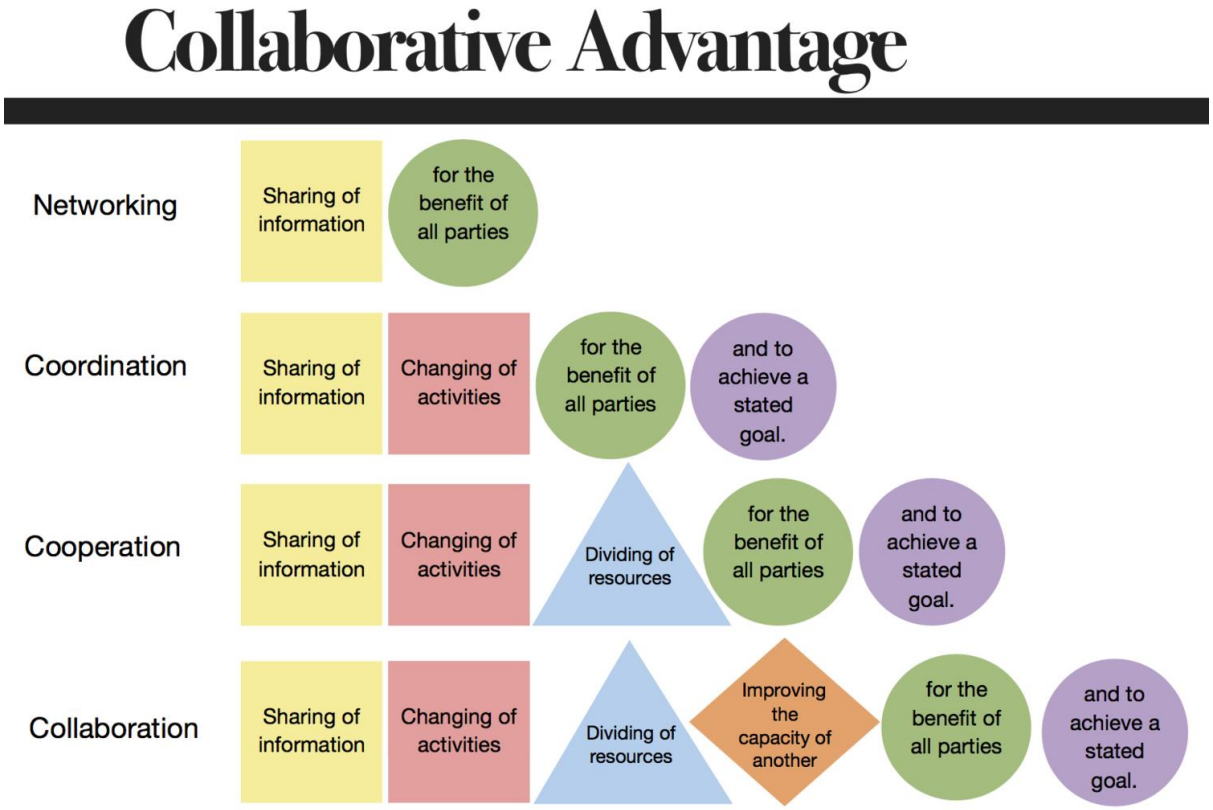
that collaboration improves people's and organisations' ability to meet health and systemic objectives (Lasker et al., 2001:183).

Access to resources shared risk, efficiency, and learning are a few common bases for collaborative advantage (Huxham & Vangen, 2013:5-7). When it comes to resources, organisations frequently work together if they cannot accomplish their goals using only their resources. This necessitates combining various resources, such as expertise (Huxham & Vangen, 2013:5). Collaborations between businesses from the public and non-profit sectors are frequently projected to require the sharing of resources, skills, contacts, and information. For instance, to address youth criminal justice issues, cooperation between the police, legal professionals, probation services, schools, and neighbourhood and youth groups is the norm (Huxham & Vangen, 2013:5).



Huxham, C. (1996). The search for collaborative advantage. In C. Huxham (ed.), *Creating Collaborative Advantage*, pp. 176-180. Sage, London.

Figure 1. Collaborative advantage illustrated

Condensing and linking this theory to the context of the proposed research study, the collaboration required would be between NQSW with supervisors and other social work colleagues who have gone ahead of them and have more experience in the field. Moreover, these collaborations go beyond supervisors and experienced social workers and extend to

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other professionals who provide services to children and families, such as services within the court and related legal professionals, police, and schools. When following a collaborative approach, NQSWs are better equipped to achieve their tasks which links clearly to theory, describing collaborative advantage as a process that allows autonomous people and organisations to combine their material and human resources to achieve goals that they are unable to achieve on their own (Kanter 1994; Lasker et al. 1997; Mayo 1997; Wandersman, Goodman, and Butterfoss 1997; Zuckerman, Kaluzny, and Ricketts 1995 in Lasker et al., 2001:183).

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

2.11 SUMMARY

Social workers are mandated to render services to their service users in a professional manner that is even of quality. However, NQSWs face it differently as it is a new environment for them and have no prior work experience to a certain level. The transition of NQSWs from university to the workplace seems to be a difficult one that NQSWs experience as they are faced with many challenges and difficulties in the new workplace. With this being evident, it can be said that NQSWs prove to have a certain level of preparedness to a certain extent to render social work service. Their lack of thorough preparation suggests that they require continued support in the workplace which will help in the development of their professional capabilities. As these difficulties are noted, it can thus be said that supervision and support are crucial in helping NQSWs feel prepared for their new position at work. Moreover, the qualities of support that were highlighted such as mentoring, shadowing goes to show that collaboration in the workplace between NQSWs, supervisors and other colleague members would be essential and contribute to NQSWs offering quality services and so all of them gain a bigger advantage, including the service users.

Chapter 3 will discuss in more detail the research methods and ethical considerations for the research study as well as the empirical research findings and interpretation of the findings.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the research study was to explore and describe the experiences of NQSWs in Gauteng Province who were delivering social work services to children and families. An extensive literature review and the theoretical framework supporting this research study were presented in Chapter 2 of the study. Chapter 3 provides a more detailed explanation of the applied research methodology, the results of the empirical research, and an interpretation of the findings. This chapter is divided into two sections: section A presents the research methodology, and section B presents the results and interpretation of the empirical research.

SECTION A: RESEARCH METHODS

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

The overarching question for this study was:

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

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach is informed first by the research paradigm, then by the research purpose. The interpretivism paradigm was employed in the research study because it calls for the researcher to immerse themselves in the participants' lives in order to have a deeper understanding of how they create meaning and observe from within (Nieuwenhuis, 2020a:67). For the research study, the experiences of NQSWs in providing services to children and families was studied, aligning with the chosen paradigm. The researcher chose to work with NQSWs with three years of experience or less instead of two years for the research to have enough research participants and gain rich data. The researcher entered the world of the participants (NQSWs) and made observations from within to gain an understanding of how they construct meaning (Nieuwenhuis, 2020a:67). Through semi-structured interviews with participants, this paradigm was utilized to explore the experiences of NQSWs providing social work services to children and families. After gathering data through interviews which were transcribed on paper, the researcher described these

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experiences of NQSWs and developed a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon and the significance they ascribe to it.

In order to fully explore and describe the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants and address a variety of questions regarding its nature, this study used a qualitative approach (Fouché, 2021:40). Since the goal of the study was to comprehend social life—that is, the experiences of NQSWs' readiness to provide social work services (SWS) to children and families—a qualitative approach was most appropriate (Fouché, 2021:42). In addition, the study sample was small, and its goal was to explore and describe the phenomenon while taking the participant's perspective into account, as opposed to predicting and explaining it (Fouché, 2021:42).

The study's purpose was dual in that it explored and described the experiences of NQSWs in providing social work services to children and families in Gauteng and explored and described their readiness to provide these services and support systems. Exploring their experiences and readiness helped the researcher gain an insight into how the NQSWs think that they were ready to provide social work services to children and families and what could be done to prepare them to be more prepared to provide these services. Moreover, describing these experiences will help the profession and other NQSWs have an idea and understanding of the needs of NQSWs when it comes to rendering social work services to children and families, as well as knowing the recommendations from the participants with regards to the support that they need to be more prepared to provide SWSs.

3.4 RESEARCH TYPE

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

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The case study design was used in the intended study and more specifically the instrumental case study design which is generally used in explorative and descriptive studies (Yin, 1994 in Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:90). The research explored and described the

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work readiness of NQSWs in providing services to children and families, consequently, as this is a modern-day inquiry of a phenomenon that is in the context of the real-world, the case study research design was used (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:89). An instrumental case study was used as the study explored and described the experiences of one study population that is within a specific geographic area and provided an understanding of the issue which was of primary focus (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:90). It was an advantage of this research approach that the researcher and the participants collaborated, exchanging experiences together, which allowed the researcher obtain a thorough depth of the phenomenon (Crabtree & Miller, 1999 in Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:90). Which links to the theory of collaborative advantage which is based on management of collaboration, and it is a practice-based theory (Vangen & Huxham, 2013:1). It emphasises that visions and goals are better achieved as the collaborations makes resources available as well as expertise from other people which is not limited (Huxham & Vangen, 2013:3). The possibilities of these cases being diluted were minimal, however, because the targeted research involved roughly seven participants or until data saturation was reached.

3.6 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods describe the study population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, data quality, as well as the pilot study of the research study (Creswell, 2014:296; Singh, 2015:133). The research methods aimed to comply with the requirements of a qualitative approach (Singh 2015:134). As mentioned previously, this research proposal was conceived and conceptualised as a group and five independent researchers conducted the remaining research process.

This section aimed to thoroughly explain the choice of qualitative research method and the research techniques.

3.6.1 Study population and sampling

The next section discusses the sample size and research study population that were used in this study.

3.6.1.1 Study Population

A research study population is defined as a group of elements, events, objects, or individuals that are being studied (Leavy, 2017:264; Fain, 2017:134). The study population may consist of the individuals or any unit group that a researcher might be interested in, such as organisations and locations which are regarded as a unit that defines the research population

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(Fain, 2017:135). According to Makofane and Shirindi (2018:34) the study population consists of all participants who meet certain criteria and may be included in the study that the researcher is interested in. The study population of this research study was NQSWs in Gauteng Province, who are rendering social work services to children and families (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:34). The researcher chose the NQSWs in Gauteng Province due to time and financial constraints and it was feasible to attain social workers in Gauteng Province as the researcher resides in this Province.

3.6.1.2 Sampling

The researcher did not include the whole population in the research study due to time and financial constraints, hence, a sample of the population was chosen. The participants in the research study population are referred to as the sample or sampling, who will be engaged and recruited using the prescribed procedures of recruiting suitable participants, to take part in the research study through research interviews to obtain data (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:34; Moser & Korstjens, 2018:10). The researcher engaged in a process of recruiting NQSWs, who were rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province.

3.6.1.3 Sampling techniques

Non-probability sampling, which is a sampling technique that does not employ random participant selection, was used in this study (Maree & Pietersen, 2012:219). It is mostly used in the qualitative approach where the specific features of individuals are relevant to select them as part of the sample (Flick, 2018:174). The advantages of non-probability sampling are that it is suitable when time (both for final results and when the measuring instrument needs to be tested through a pilot study) and financial resources are limited (Maree & Pietersen, 2021:19).

Purposive sampling was chosen from among the non-probability sampling methods to choose NQSWs who were providing social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Maree & Pietersen, 2021:220; Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:34). The researcher aimed to use purposive sampling because there is a specific purpose of the research study, which is to gain insight into the experiences of NQSWs' readiness in providing social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Maree & Pietersen, 2021:220; Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:34).

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The researcher provided specific inclusion criteria to identify suitable participants forming part of the sample (Koch, Niesz, McCarthey, 2014:136). To collect the information required for data saturation, the selection criteria for the study's sample of participants were compiled.

According to the requirements for sample inclusion, the participants had to:

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

The sample size for a qualitative study is not predetermined because the researcher will be collecting data until the principle of data saturation is reached, which implies that the sample is complete when no new data is obtained and the themes and categories are saturated (Koch et al 2014:136; Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:92; Creswell 2014: 239). The proposed sample consisted of 7 NQSWs who rendered social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province, or until data was saturated (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:92).

3.6.2 Data collection

The important component of every research study is data collection, which is connected to the research design. The process of obtaining information to answer the study's research question is known as data collection (Wagner et al. 2012:269). The researcher used interviews as a means of data collection. To get permission to conduct the research at their organisation and obtain assistance with selecting NQSWs who were rendering services to children and families in Gauteng to make up the research study sample, the researcher approached the managers or social work supervisors who served as the organisation's gatekeepers. The gatekeepers were supplied with an informative letter stating the nature and intention of the research study. Gatekeepers are referred to in the literature as being important contacts that have the authority to grant access to an organisation (Tracy 2013:72). Data was collected from the volunteered, willing and consenting participants, which were NQSWs who were providing services to children and families in Gauteng, after the managers of the registered organisations were requested formally in writing for permission to undertake the study and permission was granted to do so. The NQSWs were well-informed about the nature, aims and procedures of the research study. Arrangements with the research participants were made through the provided contact details (telephonic or email) to meet and inform them about the purpose and

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nature of the study and facilitate a formal research data collection through interviews. They were provided with consent forms for completion and signature and a copy of the infographic was provided to them with the details of the study as well as background questions that they were asked about.

The researcher utilised semi-structured interviews in the study, as they are usually used in research study to validate data emerging from other data sources (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:108). During the interviews, the researcher utilised open-ended questions followed by additional probing and clarification (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b:108). Data was collected in one single interview with the NQSW who was rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:38). Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, and a brief set of open-ended questions was included to encourage participants to provide further details about their experience and readiness to provide social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Yates & Leggett 2016:226; DeJonckheere & Vaughn 2019:6). All research interviews were audio recorded through the use of an audio recording device and data gathered was then transcribed.

Data analysis and the subsequent interpretation of collected data are essential and discussed below.

3.6.3 Data analysis

The process of analysing qualitative data entails organising the collected data, reading all interview transcripts, identifying, and developing the patterns, themes and categories (Yates & Leggett 2016:227; Moser & Korstjens, 2018:15).

Maree (2020:42-43) indicates that most interpretive paradigm researchers would rather organise an inductive data analysis, which involves words and themes that are allowed to emerge from the data itself, and the use of literature criteria to assist with data analysis planning since the data generation or construction instruments should be constructed accordingly. Thematic analysis at the inductive and latent approach for coding was used to interpret, explore, and describe the experiences of NQSWs' readiness to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017:2).

To analyse data, the researcher followed the thematic analysis steps listed below (Nowell et al., 2017:4-11; Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017:13-25):

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Step 1: Familiarising yourself with your data

During the data collection procedure, the researcher became acquainted with the collected data and notes taken during interviews (Nowell et al., 2017:5). The researcher then transcribed the interviews and reviewed and listened to the recordings several times to get a thorough picture of NQSWs' readiness to provide social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Terry et al., 2017:13). Understanding the dataset allowed the researcher to develop potential codes for generating themes and link the dataset to the previously mentioned literature review on NQSWs' readiness to provide social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Terry et al., 2017:13). The research data collected through recorded interviews will be archived with dates to offer an audit trail and corroborate data analysis and interpretation for validity and appropriateness (Nowell et al., 2017:5).

Step 2: Generating initial codes

After becoming acquainted with the dataset, the researcher could be able to use it to produce possible initial codes and engage in a theorizing exercise that calls for the researcher to triangulate and refine, revise codes throughout the process of revising dataset of the experiences of NQSWs' readiness to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province, for code consistency (Terry at al., 2017:17; Nowell et al., 2017:5). The researcher produced a list of initial codes that adequately identify the experiences of NQSWs' readiness to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province, where after, she formulated appropriate themes to enable the answering of the research question (Terry at al., 2017:18).

Step 3: Searching for themes

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

Step 4: Reviewing themes

In order to determine whether the generated code dataset extracts for each theme formed a cohesive, all-encompassing pattern, the researcher refined and examined them throughout this phase (Nowell et al., 2017:9). Through triangulation from the dataset recorded interviews,

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the validity of each theme was taken into consideration to ascertain whether the themes reflect the experiences of NQSWs' readiness to provide social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Nowell et al., 2017:9).

Step 5: Defining and naming themes

After the researcher formulated appropriate themes that answer the research question, she began with the interpretative aspect that represents the experiences of NQSWs' readiness to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Nowell et al., 2017:10; Terry et al., 2017:22). Short descriptions of each theme may assist the researcher to determine whether each theme answers the research question and whether there are enough details for each theme (Terry at al., 2017:22). The researcher also engaged in peer debriefing with her fellow research colleagues and the research methodology practice supervisor (Nowell et al., 2017:10).

Step 6: Producing the report

The final stage involves the comprehensive establishment of appropriate themes and subthemes, thus equipping the researcher to write a research report (Nowell et al., 2017:10). Short direct quotes from the raw data collection method were included to foster an understanding of specific experiences of NQSWs' readiness to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Nowell, 2017:11). By consulting the literature study and theoretical framework, the researcher developed a convincing argument for selecting a particular theme, which in turn added value to the social work profession and the NQSWs providing services to children and families in Gauteng Province (Nowell et al., 2017:11; Terry at al., 2017:25).

3.6.4 Data quality

Data quality ensures the validity and trustworthiness of the dataset received from the participants. Data verification is a procedure that involves evaluating whether the research's findings obtained are accurate (Creswell, 2014:251). In verifying the data quality of qualitative research, the researcher focused on developing thick descriptions and interpretations about the NQSWs' readiness to rending social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province, applying the concept of trustworthiness or rigour (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:121; Sousa, 2014:211). Guba and Lincoln (1982) propose four criteria that they believe should be considered by qualitative researchers in pursuit of the trustworthiness of a research study namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Anney, 2014:7-15; Nieuwenhuis, 2020c:144-146; Nowell et al., 2017:3).

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3.6.4.1 Credibility

Moser and Korstjens (2018:121) define credibility as a confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. Credibility establishes whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and are a correct interpretation of the participants' original views (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:121). In a qualitative research study, a researcher establishes rigour of the inquiry by adopting the following strategies:

i. Prolonged engagement in the field or research site

Qualitative research data collection requires a researcher's lasting presence during observation of interviews as it helps a researcher to understand and investigate in sufficient time and become familiar with the setting and context, to test for misinformation, minimise distortions of information, build trust, and to get to know the data to in turn get rich data (Anney, 2014:8; Moser & Korstjens, 2018:121). The researcher conducted a data collection process in the NQSWs' field of work to observe their readiness to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province.

ii. Use of peer debriefing and persistent observation

Peer debriefing provides a researcher with an opportunity to test their growing insights and to expose themselves to searching questions, by seeking support from other professionals who are willing to provide scholarly guidance such as a research supervisor, postgraduate dissertation committee and members of the department (Anney, 2014:9; Nieuwenhuis, 2020c:144). The researcher engaged in frequent debriefing sessions with her research supervisor as well as other students who were engaging in a research study of NQSWs' readiness to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province.

Persistent observation involves developing the codes, the concepts, and the core category as it helps to examine the characteristics of the collected data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:122). The researcher facilitated persistent observation of the data through the use of thematic analyses to analyse data received from the NQSWs in Gauteng Province.

iii. Triangulation

Triangulation involves the use of multiple and different methods, researchers, sources, and theories to obtain corroborating evidence (Anney, 2014:10). The following are the major triangulation strategies/techniques that were applied during the research process (Anney, 2014:10; Moser & Korstjens, 2018:121):

- Investigator/researcher triangulation: It is concerned with the use of two or more researchers in investigating/researching the same problem, as it will bring different

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perceptions into the inquiry and helps to strengthen the integrity of the research findings through coding, analysis and interpretation decisions (Anney, 2014:10; Moser & Korstjens, 2018:121).

- Data triangulation/informant's triangulation: Refers to the use of multiple/different data sources or research instruments in time, space, or persons, to enhance the quality of data from different sources (Anney, 2014:10; Moser & Korstjens, 2018:121).

Anney (2014:10) states that it is therefore recommended that qualitative researchers should at least include one or two techniques of triangulation. The researcher utilised investigator/researcher triangulation because her other fellow play-based intervention master students, focused on researching the experiences of NQSWs' readiness to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province. Informants' triangulation was employed to gather data in a different way and from multiple sources to finalise the suitable interpretation, such as from literature review, theoretical perspective and interviews with NQSWs' who were rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province.

iv. Member checks

Anney (2014:10) mentions that member checks mean that data and interpretations are continuously tested as, they are derived with members of the various audiences and groups from which data are requested. Researchers are required to include the voices of participants in the analysed data and interpretations made from the data (Anney, 2014:10). The researcher requested a few participants, who volunteered to provide feedback about their interview transcripts to assist the researcher in making valid conclusions and recommendations based on true information connected with the research question.

3.6.4.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the generalisation and aspect of application of the research study, to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other participants (Anney, 2014:12; Moser & Korstjens, 2018:122; Nowell et al., 2017:3). According to Bitsch (2005) researchers facilitate transferability judgement of a potential user through thick description and purposive sampling (Anney, 2014:12):

i. Thick description

Thick description involves a rich and extensive set of details concerning methodology and context, involving the researcher in elucidating all research processes from data collection, and context of the study to the production of the final report (Anney, 2014:12). It is the responsibility of the researcher to provide a thick description of the participants and the

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research process, to enable the reader to assess whether research findings are transferable to their setting (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:122). The researcher provided a thick description of the research process as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the research study.

ii. Purposive sampling

This is mainly a technique used in naturalistic research studies and is defined as selecting units based on specific purposes associated with answering a research question (Anney, 2014:12-13). The researcher purposely selected NQSWs' who were rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province as they were able to provide their experiences on their readiness to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province. As a result, transferability judgement was facilitated by carefully selecting the participants through purposive sampling and presenting a thick description of the enquiry. The researcher is required to receive permission from a purposively selected organisation/s, where they can gain access to NQSWs who meet the proposed research criteria. The researcher requested the organisation to send the invitation to prospective participants, who volunteered to partake in the research study and the participants were made aware of confidentiality and the aspects of the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 that governs the protection of their privacy.

3.6.4.3 Dependability

Dependability includes the aspect of consistency, where the researcher needs to check whether the analysis process is in line with the accepted standards of research design (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:122). The researcher provided data quality through dependability by using audit trails of keeping records of the raw data, field notes, transcripts, and a reflective journal to help systemise, relate, and cross-reference data, as well as ease the reporting of the research process as these are all means of creating a clear audit trail (Nowell et al., 2017:3).

3.6.4.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are derived from the data and are neutral, requiring the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached and that it is not only presented according to the researcher's preferences and perspectives, but well balanced (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:122; Nowell et al., 2017:3). To ensure confirmability of the research study, the researcher's views were supported by the relevant theoretical framework and literature from previous research studies on the experiences of NQSWs' readiness to render social work

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services to children and families in Gauteng Province and were further aligned with this research study question, goal, design, and data analysis (Trainor & Graue 2014:271).

3.6.5 Pilot study

Data collection is a critical stage that requires the researcher to first test the instrument of data collection to determine whether the structure of the questions is appropriate, that they are clear and unambiguous and that they will produce the required information (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:41; Strydom, 2021a:387). Pilot testing is considered the rehearsal of the interview process and the interview guide with a small number of test participants before conducting the main study. Before embarking on the main research data collection process, the researcher did a pilot test by interviewing one recruited NQSW who met the inclusion criteria to participate in the pilot study. Where possible, the researcher made necessary adjustments to the interview guide to improve data collection in the main research study. The data collected from the pilot test interview was rich and relevant and not many changes were required to be made to the interview schedule, only a few changes regarding the order of the questions and the data obtained were included in the main research study findings.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical values including mutual respect and accountability promoting cooperation and coordination between stakeholders, are essential in collaborative work and were therefore essential to this intended research (Resnik 2020). Permission from organisations employing NQSWs was sought for the study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Pretoria Faculty of Humanities and the University of Pretoria Postgraduate Ethics Committee. Organisations and participants in this study were required to sign the informed consent and release forms. Avoidance of harm, informed consent, voluntary participation, no deception of participants and anonymity and confidentiality were all adhered to during the study.

3.7.1 Avoidance of harm

The avoidance of harm principle consists of the researcher's moral intention to prevent and avoid or minimise all forms of accidental or intentional harm, risk of harm, or inconvenience to research participants (Motloba, 2019:40; Sobočan, Bertotti & Strom-Gottfried, 2019:5). At the inception of the study, the researcher debriefed the participants to make sure they are fully aware of the proposed research goals, aims and the potential impact it might have on their persons. The researcher prepared for the debriefing of participants by organising support services to be availed to the participants, by Ms Yeukai Muruzi, a qualified social worker, who may have suffered harm due to sharing their private details about their employment situation (Strydom & Roestenburg 2021: 283).

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3.7.2 Informed consent

Participation was voluntary as participants were not compelled to participate in the research study. Research data was stored in the university's online database for five years. All relevant information regarding the research process was included in an informed consent form. During the data collection process, informed consent forms were signed before commencement. The researcher ensured that participants knew the purpose and goal of the research project before obtaining their permission, for data collection processes and clarified their rights through the completion of a statement providing informed consent (Neuman, 2014:151; Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:296).

3.7.3 Voluntary participation

Participation was completely voluntary, and the participants had full understanding of what they were volunteering to complete as the researcher explained to them (Babbie, 2017:64). The participants were given the option to participate or not which meant that they were not coerced into participating in the study.

3.7.4 No deception of participants

Closely related to informed consent is the concept of deception in research. If participants agree to participate in research, they must be informed of all aspects related to the study (Neuman, 2014:151). The interviews were audio recorded, using an audio recording device as a recording device and permission was obtained from the participants for this purpose. The researcher ensured transparency of participants regarding their role, the purpose of the research, and the sharing of findings (Babbie, 2017:70).

3.7.5 Competence

The adequacy of fieldworker or researcher training in conducting research, including collecting data is crucial to ensure that the research does not produce invalid results (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:126-127). The researcher was trained in both undergraduate fourth year level as a social worker and in the first year of the enrolled Master's Programme to conduct qualitative research with Human participants. Through the training, the researcher gained the necessary skills and knowledge to handle the research process, including data collection through interviews, observations and the analysis of the collected data. Additionally, having an experienced supervisor for the study ensured a rigorous competent level in the research process.

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3.7.6 Anonymity and Confidentiality

The participant's identity was protected by ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity refers to sharing information, but not exposing or sharing names in the public domain (Neuman, 2014:154-155). The organisation's gatekeepers sent the invitation to the prospective NQSWs to ensure their anonymity as they participated in the study. The entry into force of the Personal Data Protection Act (also known as the POPI Act) in South Africa on July 7, 2020, has increased the focus on data protection and compliance. The researcher collected data and therefore knew the names of the participants, which influences anonymity, yet the researcher did not attach names to information in the final report but rather used pseudo names (Babbie, 2017:67). The researcher ensured that the interview took place within a setting that ensures privacy and confidentiality of the information being discussed. Participants agreed to have the interviews at their place of work in a private space, except for one participant whom the researcher opted to have the interview online due to financial constraints. The researcher, with assistance from the University of Pretoria, will keep all documentation collected from the interviews in a safekeeping cabinet for ten years' post-study, which will include audio recordings taken during the interview process.

Section B will discuss the empirical research findings and the interpretation of the findings from the theoretical framework and literature provided in Chapter 2 of this study.

SECTION B: RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS INTERPRETATION

The research findings will be presented in two forms

SECTION B1: Biographical profile of participants

SECTION B2: Empirical findings and interpretation

3.8 SECTION B 1: BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

The researcher interviewed a total of seven participants, i.e. NQSWs from two different organisations, one being the government and the other a non-governmental organisation (NGO) all situated in the Gauteng Province. To maintain confidentiality, the researcher used pseudo-names for the participants and other identifying profile details including their age, the year they qualified as a social worker, the year that they started working as a social worker, and years of experience as a social worker and the type of organisation that they work for. All the participants were under the age of fifty and they were all females. All the participants qualified in less than five years and started working shortly after qualifying. They had varying

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years of experience; of which it was less than three years with all of them. Four of the seven participants were working in the government while three were working at an NGO. The following table 3.1 shows the profile of the participants.

Table 1. Biographical Profile of Participants

Participant number	AGE	GENDER	YEAR QUALIFIED	YEAR STARTED WORKING	YEARS in EXPERIENCE	TYPE OF ORGANISATION
1	27	Female	2020	2022	1 year	Government
2	48	Female	2020	2022	1 year 8 months	Government
3	40	Female	2021	2021	2 years	Government
4	28	Female	2019	2020	2 years 11 months	Government
5	42	Female	2019	2023	6 months	Non-governmental organisation(NGO)
6	35	Female	2022	2023	8 months	Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
7	43	Female	2017	2021	1 year 10 months	Non-governmental organisation (NGO)

The following section will present the empirical research findings and interpretation thereof.

3.9 SECTION B2: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

This section will present the themes and sub-themes that were identified from the interviews conducted with the participants using thematic analysis. The themes will be linked to the literature presented in this research study and interpreted using the theoretical framework where suitable. To ensure the validity and authenticity of the data, the researcher will present the verbatim quotes of the participants in each sub-theme. The following 3.2 table presents the themes and sub-themes identified.

Table 2. Themes, subthemes and codes

No	THEMES	SUB-THEMES	CODES
1.	NQSWs understanding of work readiness and competencies/skills considered for them to be work-ready	Sub-theme 1.1: Knowledge and skills Sub-theme 1.2: Preparation and experience	Case management court procedures Legislatures
2.	Experiences of NQSWs in rendering social work services	Sub-theme 2.1 Positive experiences Sub-theme 2.2 Negative experiences	Professional dilemma Client behaviour Capability

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		Sub-theme 2.3 Experience regarding readiness to offer social work services to children and families	Collaboration with colleagues
3.	Challenges faced by newly qualified social workers when rendering social work services to children and families	Sub-theme 3.1 Lack of resources and lack of inclusive working environment Sub-theme 3.2 Lack of support Sub-theme 3.3 Inadequate quality of services provided to children and families Sub-theme 3.4 Gaps in knowledge Sub-theme 3.5 Dealing with service users that are difficult and unsafe environment for NQSWs	CYCC Placements Vehicles Playroom and toys Lack of Adequate orientation The quality of work provided is low Because of the limited timeframe) effective services not rendered Case management Unqualified supervisors
4.	Measures implemented by NQSWs to cope	Sub-theme 4.1 Planning and Self-care Sub-theme 4.2 Consultation and debriefing with colleagues	Wellbeing debriefing planning
5.	Measures implemented to support newly qualified social workers	Sub-theme 5.1 Supervision Sub-theme 5.2 Training Sub-theme 5.3 Mentorship	
6.	NQSWs suggestions to improve their work readiness	Sub-theme 6.1 Training and Gradual Workload for better Well-being Sub-theme 6.2 Mentorship and Continuous Learning	Gradual workload learning continuously training mentorship

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Theme 1: NQSWs understanding of work readiness and competencies/skills considered for them to be work-ready

The understanding of what work readiness means from the perspective of NQSWs can be seen as a gateway to understanding the experiences of NQSWs from their perspective. The theme explores NQSWs' understanding of work readiness and what knowledge, skills, preparation and experience is needed to be considered work-ready.

Sub-theme 1.1 Knowledge and skills

The need to be knowledgeable in the scope of one's work was seen as one of the components of being work-ready. The majority of the participants mentioned the need to know legislature, procedures, mandates, support structures/organisations within the department, continuous learning, and report writing. The majority of participants mentioned that they did not have knowledge in the above mentioned hence the need for them to be trained in obtaining this knowledge and skills. The participants who mentioned the above about being work-ready expressed their views in the following way:

> **Participant 1:** *"... The knowledge, of course, and having those skills...."; "Knowing the procedures to be followed"; "Legislatures ….to refer to and mandates. Knowing the support that you have within the organization"; "Knowing other….. organisations that you work with within the department …. for referrals."; " I would say you should be emotionally intelligent."; "..advocacy is important because we advocate for the clients, ….. being able to network and …., because as I stated for referral purposes, you should also have like, Organisations that you know….that you can refer to……to make the process easier."; "....for active listening, your empathy, they should be there at all times."*
>
> **Participant 3:** *"...The Children's Act guides us on what to do, how to help."; " I think it's a listening skills"; " we have to respect the clients all the time. We don't have to judge, we just have to just listen to the client."*
>
> **Participant 5:** *"Being ready. I can say if you know how things are done, how to do interventions…"; "Communication skills. And you have to be computer literate. And you need to also, you also have to maintain confidentiality. And to be able to, you know, engage with people."*
>
> **Participant 6:** *"You need to be willing to learn as you go"; "If you're dealing with life situations, so you need to be willing to learn as you go."; "I need to know my people here"; " I need to know, um.. like, in the organisation that I'm going to, I need to make*

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myself aware of the policies and everything that's going around in the organisation I can't just come and just throw myself into something that I don't know.";

The finding confirms what Nathaniel (2018:7) mentions, that expectations by employers are mainly based on the skills and knowledge obtained by NQSWs during university studies, where they are expected to develop skills such as critical thinking, practical knowledge, emotional intelligence, report writing and administration (Parker, 2017:2). The participants mentioned that being work ready includes being knowledgeable about social work practices and involves skills such as emotional intelligence and communication, thus confirming with literature. Because social work is generic, this indicates that NQSW should seek more training and supervision unique to their field of service rendering when entering the workplace, allowing them to acquire more skills and knowledge in that profession (Tham & Lynch, 2019:408) which for the participants in this research study is working with children and families. Parker (2017:235) mentions legal knowledge and ethical practices as essential attributes that NQSWs should have. This aligns with what four of the participants above mentioned regarding being work-ready as NQSWs, that they should possess the knowledge of legislatures, court procedures, maintaining confidentiality and policies.

Sub-theme 1.2 Preparation and experience

The majority of participants mentioned that being thoroughly prepared and having experience, even though it was through the exposure they got from the undergraduate programme in social work, is an important aspect of work readiness. With regards to preparation, participants mentioned aspects which link to practice-related situations such as planning, being organised, and psychologically ready.

Participant 1: *"and then readiness also involves experience."*

Participant 2: *"Yeah, hence I said by planning, I know what I've planned."*

Participant 3: *"I consider myself being ready by, uh, like we do, uh, write the weekly plan"; "Uh, on Monday we have to write what are you going to do for the whole week, and so. That's what keeps me know what I'm going to do from Monday until Friday. So I have to follow that weekly plan."*

Participant 4: *"you need to be making sure that you're organised."; "I think when you're coming into the workspace, being organised is something that you need to prioritise. Knowing how to manage your time."; "So I think for me those little skills that you we sometimes take for granted time management, organisation are very key into making sure we're ready."*

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Participant 5: "*Readiness? You have to be psychologically ready."; "Yeah, you need to deal with your emotions, know what you want, where you are going. Prepare yourself mentally."; "... if you've also been provided with adequate training, yeah, then I can say you are ready."*

Participant 7: *"Your mindset. You also need to be in a good state of mind."; " You cannot, this profession doesn't need stress. You cannot go to people while you are stressed. You need to deal with your emotions first. And your stress, trauma and everything."*

Lack of understanding of the compounding features of real professional daily life is the root cause of unpreparedness (Jansen, 2018:1535). Participants mentioned regarding having experience and knowledge of social work practice, including being psychologically ready to render social work services as core to being considered work-ready. In Jansen's (2018:1535) study, NQSWs' participants mentioned that experience was the most important in their development of professional competency. Moreover, they expressed the lack of concrete knowledge they had being related to lack of experience.

Theme 2: Experiences of NQSWs in rendering social work services

The participants mentioned their negative and positive experiences in rendering social work services to children and families. About four participants linked their positive experiences with a sense of fulfilment of being able to help their service users. The participants mentioned negative experiences that they experienced when rendering SWSs to children and families that also affected them personally.

Sub-theme 2.1 Positive experiences

Feedback related to positive experiences included expressions of self-fulfilment when rendering social work services to children and families. Five out of the seven mentioned the ability to advocate, help, restore and reintegrate children and families as well as appreciation from service users as a positive experience. Moreover, one participant mentioned learning to assess families by interacting with different family dynamics.

Participant 1: *"but... Um, knowing that you made a difference in someone else's life.."; "Knowing that you contributed towards the family."; "Yeah. It makes you feel good about yourself and, um, it also encourages you to continue ...coming to work and to do more."*

Participant 6: *"Positive, um…the beneficiaries are always appreciative for what you do… as a social worker."; "So, I think it has to do more with the client …..and they*

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appreciate you."; "Um.. And also at the end of the day you feel like you've done something good into someone's life."

Participant 7: "*To be able to make sure that a child has something on the table."; "It's very, to me it's something important…. yeah. It's a rewarding thing."; " It's a rewarding thing because you're giving somebody a bread…..whereas maybe they never had that before."; " And also when we deal with the abused children, when you find out that at the end of the day maybe the perpetrator goes to jail. Maybe like, yeah….It's a rewarding thing…. Because it means that cycle of abuse…..It's broken."*

Pretorius (2020:49) mentions that to flourish, NQSWs and social workers should experience great pleasure in helping others and find fulfilment in their work. Five participants mentioned this as their most positive experience, that they experience fulfilment when they can help children and families with whatever challenges they face. For them, it is a rewarding thing to see children and families living together peacefully.

Sub-theme 2.2 Negative experiences

Likewise, almost all of the participants mentioned a lot of negative experiences that they have experienced while rendering social work services to children and families. Handling difficult cases was one of the negatives that one of the participants mentioned and such cases also affect them emotionally. Other negatives that participants have experienced are conflict with children and families that they render services to as well as professional dilemmas. One participant mentioned low salary as a negative.

Participant 1: *"Um..Professional dilemma."; "Um, when your personal views conflict with the professional ..Yeah, values that you have to uphold."; "Um, I remember there's a time when you have like an instinct and you have a feeling, ..but there's no like, um, evidence….. factual evidence to say that this is what's going on. The child is being abused, but you can see from your observation, although you can argue, but then sometimes you need factual proof..to say that this is what's happening. Or when you feel that, um. Maybe a foster parent after screening them,...it's not fit."; "And then now it's, it's, now it's a conflict of your personal feeling…with a professional feeling…"*

Participant 2: *"The negative experiences is when you fight with a client."; "Especially when you fight with a client, when you saw the situation."; "Ehh…. sometimes, go na le bao ba ele gore (there are those that) you find gore (that) she doesn't care."; "And then, you need to put the pressure for a parent gore a etse (that they should do) the right thing. We can take the parent ko foster parent ko di group sessioneng (to group sessions), you can take the foster parent for parenting skills. But o kereye gore (find*

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that) it's failing…gwa pala (it's failing)…totally."; ".....those are the some of the negative tse ele gore (that we are) we are dealing with in this career of foster."

Participant 3: *Yeah, the negative things is because Some of the families, uh, they fight for, for, for the children or maybe for the assets."; "So it, yeah, it became so difficult because you are in the middle of those two families."; "Sometimes they don't want to resolve their problems ….so it's... It's a negative."*

Participant 4: *"....I would say it's a negative, but um, when you get a family that has old ways of doing things…and families that would hide. Like instances, rapes,... families that do not report child abuse because they believe it's discipline, even though a child has bruises, ….you know, those are the negatives and going into the unknowns. Because when we do this job and we do home visits, you are going to an unknown. If a case is reported, they say a child is being abused way, way…And when you get there, it's an unknown. It's a jungle."; "you don't know what you're getting into. You might find an uncle here who's like, I don't want you here."; "You know, so for me, the negatives is always having to find families that have traditional thinking and they think rape is just, you know. Um, domestic abuses, right?"*

Participant 6: *"The salary."; "The salary…that's the major one."*

Participant 7: *Mmm…It's when, how can I put it? It's when you have to face some of the difficult cases.....whereby it also affects you emotionally."; "There is some of the cases whereby when you attend them, you won't even sleep at night….It seems as if you also need debriefing or something or maybe counselling, something like that."*

There have been studies that show that NQSWs experience difficult cases that they struggle with handling them. One study that highlighted this is by Tham and Lynch (2021:547), they mentioned that some cases were stressful and NQSWs had no thorough preparation to handle difficult child cases which led some to experience burnout (Tham & Lynch, 2021:547). This correlates with what Calitz et al. (2014:163) describe that too much stress related to case management can lead to health-related problems. The majority of participants mentioned different challenges that they have experienced as negative, which confirms what the above literature says.

Sub-theme 2.3 Experience regarding readiness to offer social work services to children and families

Almost all of the participants identified that it was difficult for them at the beginning of their rendering of social work services to children and families. Though difficult, three participants mentioned that it was a learning curve for them to learn new skills and do things with a good

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attitude which resulted in loving the field they were in. A strategy that most used during this stage of their profession was utilising the support systems in their workplace such as more experienced colleagues and managers to help them be more prepared to render social work services to children and families. Another important thing that one of the participants mentioned that would be beneficial for NQSWs to note down, is working collaboratively with service users in that they lead the process of finding solutions to their problems that they are faced with which demonstrates that service users have the capacity and skills to help themselves.

> **Participant 1:** *"I've also learned, as an individual, a few skills, not a lot of a few, I've learned a lot of skills from that."; "So the experience has been a really great learning curve."; "Sometimes I feel like the clients can see that I'm not, I'm not as experienced ....and ready, so that kind of like. It's a bit,...yeah, it causes some demotivation."*
>
> **Participant 2:** *"I could say it was difficult,... but patiently so….I was learning."; "It was a learning curve."; "I knew that I don't know nothing."; "It was so terrible, terrible, terrible for me…But up until I found people ……who will, who are able…. to take me out of that…of that situation ..."; "Because if I can come with this attitude, negative attitude, I won't … do things that are supposed to do at work. And I won't grow. I need to grow….., I just find myself doing things in the right way, positive way and I change from there."*
>
> **Participant 3:** *"I have to prepare myself before seeing the client. And then just go through the children's act or something to be ready when they come. So I know how to... Uhh talk to them…to the clients."*
>
> **Participant 4:** *"...My experiences. I'll repeat what I said. I think it's a learning process. I think when you look at social work as a learning, an ongoing learning process, it...it gives you a different view when you're meeting clients because you, you don't know everything….. I'm the professional in that chair. You know, when we're sitting across the client, they're looking at you as the expert of whatever is going on, but our experience, our human experiences and our professional experiences are two different things."; "...So I think for me, my experiences have been to look at everything as a learning process. For me, my readiness comes from the experiences with my clients, comes from the conversations I have with them, and seeing them not as a problem, but as a human. I think the best experience when it comes to readiness is look at your client, not as a problem that comes to, uh, bother you during the day, but a human being."*
>
> **Participant 5:** *"It was not easy at all. All I needed was guidance each and every day. It was not easy at all. And supervision, If you get supervision with the manager, Yeah."*

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Participant 6: *"My experiences, I had to always ask for advice."; "I was too scared to go about it just because I'm not sure if I'm doing the right thing. In social work, there's so many policies, there's so many, there's so much red tape, you're not allowed to do that. We think we can do everything, but not everything is ..a social worker must do."; "My experience has always said I need to first ask from the senior people, the social workers that have been here before."*

Participant 7: *"When I started here, I thought it was going to be easy. But when I started working, I saw that it was… I identified that it was not easy. But what I have experienced is, and what I always tell myself is, I make sure that each and every case, I deal with it in a professional way and accordingly. Sometimes, I can say, okay, I want to maybe write this report today, only to find out that it can take maybe two or three days, whereas I've got another report. So… But if I've got my time management, if I manage my time in a proper way, that also helps me like… time management, yeah. It also helps me a lot."*

The expressed experiences of the participants confirm what the literature says about NQSWs in that qualifying for a degree does not fully make a person experienced in their field of work. Social work graduates find it challenging in the first year after qualifications as they are in a period of embarking on their career as qualified social workers. Tham and Lynch (2019:401-408) allude that transitioning from university to the workplace is frequently a difficult process because it involves both organisational and individual components. In the study, NQSWs often felt alone and had to manage their work on their own. Moreover, NQSWs reported a lack of practical skills, such as dealing with hostile or demanding clients, as being directly related to their feelings of "readiness for practice." Those who had the opportunity to "shadow" experienced colleagues felt more qualified to do their job, emphasising the importance of NQSWs paying close attention to colleagues' practice, and this resonates with what participant 2 mentioned regarding getting colleagues to help her; nonetheless, this raises challenges for organisations with heavy caseloads.

Theme 3: Challenges faced by newly qualified social workers when rendering social work services to children and families

In describing their experiences, NQSWs also highlighted some challenges they face when rendering social work services to children and families and these challenges will be explained below as sub-themes. Only one participant mentioned not experiencing challenges except that of load shedding.

Sub-theme 3.1 Lack of resources and lack of inclusive working environment

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Working in an inclusive and resourced workplace environment is crucial for effective service rendering. Participants mentioned that they lack resources which for some limits their ability to render effective services to children and families. However, some participants mentioned that the lack of resources in their workplace challenges them to be more creative by coming up with ideas that allow them to render services to their service users. Some even contribute from their own pockets just to provide the necessary resources needed.

> **Participant 1:** *"Well, resources are always a problem…… for someone who has a disability, I'll say, um, if having a driver. It will be, You know help."; "The organisation, if they have a driver, and then for employees who don't have licenses yet, or for employees who are unable to drive, they can then know that they know, they can conduct home visits with the help of a driver instead of relying on other social workers or auxiliary social workers because sometimes our, our schedules can clash."; "Structure. There's no playroom in our organisation, it's not wheelchair friendly, it's not child friendly, and it's difficult for me as a newly employed, so I feel like I should have the knowledge to just get the parents and the children to be involved without the resources. I have to make means myself. I bought, this other day, I bought this bunnies and crayons so the parents can use with the child, not for them to just sit nje (just)...Just for child friendliness and so the parents can be comfortable."; "There are services for mental health. So if you want to debrief, if maybe you want to, you want therapy, counseling, services are there. The problem is, uh, there's no, um, Confidentiality, I feel like they don't maintain confidentiality. And your personal information will be known around offices and, …yeah, just lack of trust ...."*
>
> **Participant 2:** *"when I arrived here, anyway there was no resources….and then we have to wait for the resources. There were no resources at all. I stayed here, July, August, no resource, September, and by then, the work was coming. But I don't have anything, but there was a work.…The work was piling like this, the files."; "....and then it was a concern. Where are the resources? Because I need to work. Where are the resources? No computer, no table, no chair. How am I going to cope with this?"; "their expectation of me to perform in that way, yet I don't have the resources. It was killing me that thing,...because they were expecting more from me…"*
>
> **Participant 3:** *"It's only about load shedding. If we have load shedding, then that's where you will find the difficulties to write in time."*
>
> **Participant 4:** *"Lack of resources….we have limited numbers of CYCCs. We have limited numbers of alternative placements, basically. So you'll find that in a day, five kids are being reported to be neglected or abandoned or whatever. We struggle with*

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getting placements for them. Lack of resources in terms of as well for domestic violence, families. There's limited number of where you can take a mother and her children. So you always have to divide the mom from the children. Understand? So, and also... There's no services, like I can say that the lack of resources, there's not a lot that is being done, especially when you're in this locations where I am. We, it's limited psychologist, it's limited,...placements……those are our challenges. Limited resources all the time."

Participant 6: *"Most challenges is.. in regard to funding. Yes, we've got funding problems. We don't have a vehicle. There's always problems. You want to help people, but you aren't able to get there because there's no vehicle, there's no funds…..Resources are a problem."*

The lack of resources was mentioned by the participants as limiting and it does not create an inclusive working environment, especially for people with any disability. Huni and Chikadzi (2014:470) posit that resources and support systems at work are crucial because they give employees a setting in which they may complete their duties. They make it possible for staff to provide services to service users efficiently and effectively. Contrarily, a lack of resources and support leads to workplace discontent and low productivity.

Sub-theme 3.2 Lack of support

The lack of support was indicated to be with management mostly in that they put too much pressure on the NQSWs to get the job done. One participant, however, mentioned that their supervisors do not guide them properly and two participants mentioned that their orientation was vague.

Participant 1: *"So, my supervisor is there, but then the management is the ones that are not providing the necessary um, support, and they have unrealistic expectations like I've stated."; "So, lack of support. I don't know if they don't understand, but I, I would like to believe that most people who were in this, uh, were social workers before they got the positions. So, yeah, we. We lack a lot of support. We end up having to be very creative in…in the services we provide.*"

Participant 4: *"....we didn't even have an orientation until last year. I've been here in, an orientation last year was online. I don't even remember what they were talking about in that orientation because I was working."*

Participant 5: *"So the challenge is the supervisors. I have the challenge with the supervisors…..we are not, we are not um… guided accordingly. So sometimes you*

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find yourself um lacking in some…in some..in some…I feel like they are not qualified to guide…to guide us throughout the whole…throughout the whole process."

Participant 6: *"....my orientation was very vague. I was thrown in. There was not much of training."*

Two participants mentioned getting vague orientation. Huni and Chikadzi (2014:469) mention that orientation serves a great purpose in the workplace which is meant to introduce new employees to their working environment so they can become a part of the organisation's existing group. From the expressed views of the participants, the orientation that was given to them was not sufficient enough to create an environment of belonging in the organisation with the existing group of colleagues, rather it was just vague. Of importance to note is that a lack of proper orientation can limit NQSWs in making the most of their skills in the workplace (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:469-470). The lack of proper support structures explains why NQSWs struggle to integrate themselves into the workplace after obtaining their degree. Orienting students to their workplace raises their awareness of the tasks they will face and the decisions they will need to make. This motivates them to take charge of how they handle the task by adopting specific attitudes and actions (Savickas, 1999 in Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:470). Given the significance of orientation, it is obvious that a lack of thorough employee orientation in organisations hinders the process of acclimating NQSWs to their new environments (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:470). Hence, the need for support systems in the workplace for NQSWs.

Sub-theme 3.3 Inadequate quality of services provided to children and families

The participants mentioned that the pressures that they experience from management are too much and negatively affect the quality of their service delivery as they have unrealistic deadlines and management focuses more on statistics than effective service delivery.

Participant 1: *"So, my supervisor is there, but then the management is the ones that are not providing the necessary…., support, and they have unrealistic expectations like I've stated……. You are expected to do home visits, to see families. We have four weeks, neh? So it's like you have to do, is it 60 per month? ….. it's really unrealistic to say that you have to do programs, home visits, finalise matters, and to not have lapsed orders, and uh, also, did I mention going to court in, in, in one month? It's not enough. And also the children's Act states that we have 30 days, 90 days rather, which is three months to conduct investigations. And your report should be compiled by then. But then management, when they have to report it's like they expect you to do, uh, quick investigations. To…..finalise. And your investigations will not be thorough and then for that it's not a true reflection and you wouldn't render, like, effective services in that sense."*

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> **Participant 4:** *"Like I said, there's a number chasing, you know, stats, but we are quick to say, okay, I had a case. I worked on it. I closed it. That's finished because those are numbers, but did we provide quality service..And we are failing to provide quality service, not because social workers are not working, but because there's so much pressure to say this must pass. You understand, for example, you are given 90 days. On a….case,....Some cases require more than that…And then you'll be pressurised to closing it or just finishing with it. Uh, so that you can say, I've closed three, five cases in a week."*

One of the participants mentioned that the management in their organisation does not provide proper support for them as their focus is only on the number of people the NQSWs have helped which rushes the process and reduces the quality of services rendered to children and families. Huni and Chikadzi (2014:470) identified inadequate support systems and resources as one of the challenges experienced by NQSWs amongst others. They posit that resources and support systems at work are crucial because they give employees a setting in which they may complete their duties. They make it possible for staff to provide services to service users efficiently and effectively. Contrarily, a lack of resources and support leads to workplace discontent and low productivity. The majority of participants in the study brought up the issue of lack of inadequate support systems and resources and expressed their frustration over the absence of resources and support that would allow the NQSW employee to practise to the fullest extent (Huni & Chikadzi, 2014:470).

Sub-theme 3.4 Gaps in knowledge

Gaps in knowledge that participants were expected to have were mostly related to how they should apply certain mandates, case management, report writing, skills and knowledge when rendering social work service to children and families.

> **Participant 1:** *"Case management...It's new to us. We've been utilising scenarios in varsity…..We've been relying on research. You've never worked with service users before…..or training on that, case management….Court, Presentation. How do you present the matter before court? ….But the…the advantages that you have as a social worker before the magistrate, because sometimes the magistrate can overrule your recommendations. So we need to know how to stand our grounds and say these are my recommendations. I advocate and this is this. So when you are new, you don't know that. Actually, you have to advocate for the client's Right. And stand with your recommendations regardless. It's something that, you know, on a later stage."; "Reunification…. It goes to training. I feel like for every intervention, there should be training on how to provide services for that intervention. So, some of the services that*

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we are rendering, it's new to us and there's no guidance even in… the mandate, which is the children's act that we mostly refer to. There's no guidance for reunification, so it's difficult for us to render services that we are ..we don't know where we're headed…"

Participant 4: *"The Children's Act. You know, it's just one of the few. But I've seen... Um, my colleagues that came in with me and we're going to court. You see, when they say people, lawyers and whatever disrespect us a lot of social workers, it's because nathi (we) don't really enhance our languages. We don't know anything."*

Participant 5: *"As a newly qualified social worker, ….I come to the organisation or to a workplace without enough knowledge of how to render services…."; "…I can say this, the reports, …the employer expects you. Okay, fine. In the reports, you need to know what information, relevant information you need to put in, especially when you do the assessments. So the employer, most of the time, they expect you to know, let's say, for example, you are going to do investigations, maybe you need to write a report on the home circumstances, to do investigation on the home circumstances, you need to know how to assess. So that's what they expect. Then, yeah, firstly, in my experience, I just went to do the home visit, not knowing what to say to that client, how to do things like I was writing my report, I was just like collecting information, but not knowing that I have to assess and do all the stuff and not knowing which relevant information I should focus on."*

Participant 6: *"I think, um…you know, there's a challenge between studying social work. So, whatever we learned at school is not what we are doing right now. Because most of the learning theory, yes we are learning theory and everything but it doesn't get us ready. So, that's a challenge because you're always learning new things. You have to work your way around everything in here."*

The gap between what institutions and the NQF exit profile report regarding a NQSW's job readiness and competencies and what supervisors at hiring organisations notice put the NQSW in a difficult situation (Wolfaardt, 2022:22–24). In short, it appears that there is a disparity between the NQF departure profile and the job entry profile in the South African context in terms of expectations connected to work preparedness (Mokoka, 2016:79; Wolfaardt, 2022:22). Participants in the study mentioned quite a few gaps in knowledge that they have and that employers expect them to have. Of the few mentioned are case management, court presentation, report writing and a gap between what was learnt in university and what is needed to be done in the workplace.

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Sub-theme 3.5 Dealing with difficult cases of service users and unsafe working environments for NQSWs

Safety issues were a concern that most participants spoke about and experienced a violation of their safety. Moreover, the majority of participants mentioned the difficulties of working with service users who have put their lives in danger or purely disrespect them, uncooperative and service users who do not report abuse.

> **Participant 1:** *"...when you deal with, um, Older persons or when you deal with youth is both in fact, especially when you deal with youth when they see that you are young they tend to take advantage and they tend to be disrespectful and then they don't listen and yeah, with parents the, with older ones some of them they feel like they can tell you what to do because you are young so that uh It's challenging.."; "I feel like I had difficult cases for someone who is new and not that I shouldn't. It's not that I don't want to work, but then I feel like it's overwhelming for someone who has no knowledge like myself. So such cases should have been given to me after a certain period of time."*

> **Participant 2:** *"Yes, clients sometimes they're negative. We find that in a foster, someone will hold a gun for you."; "...A person will come with a gun, wanted to kill you or to threaten you."; "And then the other time, it was me and my colleague, we went to home visit in this area. And you know, when you arrive there, we arrive and we talk, we try to talk them in a civil manner, but they were so high. High, why? Because we were looking for this, we were looking for that, we were looking, there was none….So it happened that it created a lot of tension and they lock us inside their house. So you're not going, you're going to show you.."; "We're at risk. Our job is a risk. We're at risk, higher risk as social workers……And we were there like helpless. Now what are we going to do now? This person she locked us in her yard."*

> **Participant 3:** *"…Some of the families, in the families, you can get somebody who is dangerous. I don't know how to put it. Maybe we are working with two families and then Between those two families, one of them maybe, I don't know how to explain, the other family is afraid of one person in another family. So it's a challenge because you don't know how to help them to resolve their issues. Because there's a threat between these two families."*

> **Participant 4:** *"...and families that would hide. Like instances, rapes, families that do not report child abuse because they believe it's discipline, even though a child has bruises.."*

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> **Participant 7:** *"In most cases, most of our clients, they don't cooperate. You have to, like when you need the documents, you have to beg for those documents. And sometimes they can even blame you for other cases, saying that maybe you're taking sides whereas you're trying to help. So those are the challenges that we face….They can even insult you if they want. So sometimes it's painful…"*

Having mentioned the difficulty of their cases, participants expressed that they felt overwhelmed to deal with such cases. Welch, Lerpiniere and Young (2014:25) say that there is a sort of collaboration that happens between NQSWs and senior social workers when a complex case arises within the organisation to work together on that case and support the NQSW which helps with their growth and development. The theoretical framework for this study is collaborative advantage, and what the study has reported regarding NQSWs and senior social workers being paired shows that collaboration is important and is to the advantage of the organisation as a whole.

Theme 4: Measures implemented by newly qualified social workers to cope

People use numerous ways to cope, and the participants mentioned different ways of coping that are important to take note of. One of the important things that a participant mentioned regarding coping is self-care which can help in curbing burnout in social workers. Planning, consultation, and debriefing with colleagues were also among the strategies that the participants mentioned.

Sub-theme 4.1 Planning and Self-care

Planning is crucial for the smooth running of things and this was one of the strategies used to cope which also allows for self-care instead of carrying over cases which in turn may cause burnout. However, when there is planning, it creates an environment that nurtures self-care.

> **Participant 2:** *"most of the time, when I came to work, I come to, I tell myself I'm here to work. If I have a plan, I know how to plan, I can plan my work….You plan, you know, Monday you do this. I plan, I have a weekly plan, call it a weekly plan. So, yes, that's the only thing that will make you to cope. Because without planning, you can't cope.*

> **Participant 7:** *"So in most cases, I also make sure that whenever I leave the office, I leave home. I deal with all the problems, all the cases, even though I will have to remind myself about the case because I'm working with that case, but I make sure that I make time for my kids and I also make time for myself. Taking care of yourself as well.."*

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According to Bressi and Vaden (2017:34), self-care includes activities or procedures initiated and controlled by employees to promote their health and well-being, attend to their needs, or relieve stress. Moreover, self-care is mostly about caring for oneself. Looking at the definition of self-care, confirms what Participant 7 mentioned regarding "making time" for their kids and themselves. One might undermine the planning of activities to be done, and as seen in the definition of self-care, planning can be evident in it, in that the employee purposely initiates activities and procedures in their lives to promote their well-being and health. Purposeful planning can contribute to promoting the health and well-being of NQSWs.

Sub-theme 4.2 Consultation and debriefing with colleagues

Consulting and debriefing with colleagues were also other strategies that some of the participants used as a coping strategy. The importance of collaboration is demonstrated in the strategies that some of the participants used.

> **Participant 1:** *".... I also consult regularly with my supervisor….And debriefing."*
>
> **Participant 3:** *"....the help of the colleagues because, uh, as I said, we are working as a team. Some of the things, uh, they teach me how to do. Because I'm a new social worker. they're helpful."*
>
> **Participant 5:** *"Normally what I do, if I find that my supervisor is not cooperative, I do consult with my other colleagues and my manager."*
>
> **Participant 6:** *"How I get through is by debriefing with colleagues so that I can get advice and also asking my supervisor for advice on how to go about certain cases. So, that's the best way to get through it all."*

Studies by Agllias (2010); Donnellan and Jack (2015); and Grant, Sheridan, and Webb (2014) list factors such as debriefing and support from colleagues, effective supervision, coaching and mentoring, and staggered increase in complexity and volume of case-load as factors that can assist NQSWs to cope with their new roles in workplaces. Four participants mentioned debriefing and support as ways to cope as they get supportive help from colleagues. Adams and Sheard (2017:31) mention that as a NQSW, you can seek feedback from colleagues and even co-work on a case together or do a joint visit if appropriate and ask colleagues to give constructive feedback. This reiterates what the participants implemented in their workplace to cope with rendering services to children and families.

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Theme 5: Measures implemented by organisations to support newly qualified social workers

In exploring the measures organisations have implemented to support NQSWs, almost all participants mentioned supervision as one of the strongest supports they receive. Moreover, training is also one of the support that organisations provide to NQSWs as well as mentorship and colleague support.

Sub-theme 5.1 Supervision

Four of the participants mentioned that they receive thorough supervision from their supervisors and are satisfied with the way it is done and the frequency of the supervision. Only one participant mentioned that they have issues with their supervisor as she feels that the supervisor is not thoroughly equipped to supervise.

> **Participant 1:** *"Um, supervision. I have supervision with my supervisor. we are getting, I am getting rather individual supervision. And there's also group supervision. for, um, supervises that are under our supervisor."*
>
> **Participant 2:** *"Supervisors, they do support us. Regarding that, they do a lot. Yes, they do support us regarding that."*
>
> **Participant 3:** *"Supervision…..yes. Yes, because, uh, we do have, uh, supervision with the, with our supervisors. So they just, uh, guide us what to do. Uh, we go once a month."*
>
> **Participant 6:** *"....and then, I get support from my supervisor"*

This one participant mentioned that she has a challenge with the supervisor as she feels that she is not guided properly by the supervisor.

> **Participant 5:** *"So the challenge is the supervisors. I have the challenge with the supervisors. Eh we are not, we are not um… guided accordingly."; "I feel like they are not qualified to guide…to guide us throughout the whole…throughout the whole process. Normally what I do, if I find that my supervisor is not cooperative, I do consult with my other colleagues and my manager….. I don't only focus on her specifically."*

NQSWs worldwide believe that organised supervision that encourages reflection on practice is one of the strategies that helps and NQSWs who are being supervised experience significantly lower levels of stress than those who just had minimal supervision or none at all (Engelbrecht & Ncube, 2021:146). The majority of participants mentioned that they get sufficient supervision from their supervisors which helps as they are in their early stages of development.

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Sub-theme 5.2 Training

Training was one of the support that participants mentioned received from their workplace. The training on ethics and the Children's Act were the ones that most participants mentioned that they had attended.

> **Participant 3:** *"As I said, we have trainings…Ethics, sometimes we do ethics…. then Children's Act also we did. On how to use the The act. Yeah, we also go to the H I V trainings. So it's really helpful because, uh, we are new in this."*

> **Participant 4:** *"Um, there's a lot of trainings that ....are provided. We recently attended the, um, The act. Um, there's a 2022 act amended, but I'm not sure if it's promulgated by the presidency yet, but I know they were working on. So, you know, we got there, we learned. There were things that you thought you knew about certain sections and you're like, Oh, this is how it is when you really go deeper into it. So our organisations do provide trainings on ethics. They do provide trainings on principles, they do provide. It's just every year, I think there's a list of trainings that they will say, do you want this? Do you want that? And also when we have supervision, your supervisor asked you, what are areas of development that you would like to tap into? So if you say there's nothing, I'm good, then le yena (even her) she's going to just write there's nothing. I'm good. You're good. So always say, Oh, I want to learn this. Go to your supervisor. I think I need to develop in one, two, three. She will also look into where can she. In our department, the nice part about it, they have bursaries."*

Because social work education is generic, NQSWs should seek further training for their specific field of delivering services (Tham & Lynch, 2019:408), which could be more training for the participants in this research study on the Children's Act. Professional development becomes an important part of the NQSW upon entering the workplace which enhances and ensures quality social work services (SACSSP, 2019). Through these Continuing Professional Development training, NQSWs' skills, attitudes and knowledge are enhanced (SACSSP, 2019:5,7). By looking at the above quotes, continuous training seems helpful as it catches up the NQSWs' on the latest developments such as amended acts which teaches them new ways of delivering services.

Sub-theme 5.3 Mentorship and colleague support

Mentorship and support from colleagues is a crucial contribution to the growth and development of NQSWs'. This allows for collaboration between the NQSW and colleagues who have more experience and exposure.

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Participant 1: *"And, um, what else.. recommendations, what I say is simply, um, they should do, uh, what is this? More like a group work for employees. Where employees, ….discuss their difficult case, they centers. It was there, you know, the organisation I had, I've never attended one. But then were…. we sit, we discuss our difficult cases and then we… we provide each other with guidance and support.."*

Participant 3: *"Okay, in terms of mentorship, we do have training that we attend. And that, it's very, uh, helpful."*

Participant 7: *"…our manager is very supportive. And she will guide you. Especially when you're facing a crisis. She will be there for you. You can phone her. You can send WhatsApp to her. It doesn't matter what time of the night. She will respond to you.So that is a support. We're actually getting support. And from our senior social workers also. We're getting support. They also help us with, like when I started here, I couldn't even write the report."*

Mentoring is defined in the supervision framework for the social work profession in South Africa as "a formal or informal transmission of knowledge, skills, attitudes, psychosocial support, and professional development within a sustained period of time" and it increases the overarching goal of supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:7). Cloete (2012:149) mentions that although informal mentoring is used by NQSWs, social work supervisors posits that it is less structured, voluntary, and may lead to uncertainty about roles. As a result, formal mentoring is advocated for. The NQSWs mentioned getting both formal and informal supervision which balances the support they get from their supervisors. Tham and Lynch (2019:401-408) mention that those who "shadow" experienced colleagues felt more qualified to do their job, emphasising the importance of NQSWs paying close attention to colleagues' practice. This goes back to the theoretical framework of the study that emphasises collaboration to enable NQSWs to render effective services as they will be getting help and support from senior colleagues.

Theme 6: NQSWs' suggestions to improve their work readiness

This theme will discuss the suggestions that NQSWs have mentioned that can be implemented to improve their work readiness. Of the suggestions, NQSWs mentioned the need for more training, gradual workload for better wellbeing, mentorship and continuous learning.

Sub-theme 6.1 Training and gradual workload for better Well-being

When asked about suggestions to improve their work readiness, the participants mentioned the need to be trained more and be given work gradually. Moreover, the need to notice the

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emotional well-being of the NQSW by supervisors was something that one of the research participants mentioned.

> **Participant 1:** *"I'm going back to mentorship. Mentorship and training."; "…I will also recommend gore mmereko, ba gofe mmereko gradually (to be given work gradually)..... I would, I would actually even recommend that for the first, if, if not three or two ones, they should give you, like for statutory for the first month, they should acclimatise you to how the case can be carried out for foster care, how you conduct home visits, how you present the matter before the court. And then for the next month you can go to mediation to see how do you render services for mediation. Then you move to CYCC. Then it gives you a whole spectrum of the knowledge of the whole services that are given here. Because even if you are doing foster care, you can have mediation within foster care. So with that knowledge, you will be able to tackle the case better, unlike being, encountering it now and then having to go back and ask again."; "and then there should be mental health day. Yeah, or consideration of mental health too, for the employees. Because I feel like that is overlooked. Yeah, it's very much overlooked. Considering the caseload that we have."*
>
> **Participant 2:** *".....It's like people, they should know more, to know how to write a report more. The reports, the quality of the reports, it is needed. It is needed indeed because I've seen myself….I was thinking I'm from school, ahh..what is a report. But then..yoo, it was an issue and it was a real thing."*
>
> **Participant 6:** *"I would recommend more training because my orientation was very vague. I was thrown in. There was not much of training. That also falls under what they expect you to do when you're here, when you are a social worker. You need to know everything, but it's not like that. So, the training is very important."; "Okay, one, an important part that I think for supervision is that the supervisor needs to be aware of the emotions of the social worker, because we are still new, and now we're dealing with emotions of other people on a single, on a day. And then, we kind of forget about our own emotions, and that could lead to a breakdown in a long run."*
>
> **Participant 7:** *"Trainings. Plus, in this organisation, we get a lot of trainings. And then, you know that, okay, cases like this, sometimes we also do, we also have groups where we attend some of the difficult cases. Then we help each other with that…..And each and every Friday, we've got a training, a peer group. We discuss about things in our lives, personal and professional."*

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Similar to what some of the participants mentioned regarding the need for more training, participants in a study by Tham and Lynch (2019:403) noted the need for further training concerning lack of conversation skills, handling clients in deep crisis and managing difficult talks with clients. Moreover, it was highlighted that learning practical skills such as relationship building, interviewing skills, academic writing and how to relate with people was important to have learned them (Hay et al., 2012:3). The lack of these in NQSWs points to a need for training in acquiring these practical skills. Furthermore, studies by Agllias (2010); Donnellan and Jack (2015); and Grant, Sheridan, and Webb (2014) list factors that can help NQSWs cope with their new roles in the workplace and among those factors they mention the gradual increase in complexity and high caseload, which participants in this study mentioned the need for. One of the participants mentioned that it is important for supervisors to note the emotional well-being of the NQSW as they deal with the emotions of other people and might neglect or forget about their own emotions. Pretorius (2020:30) mentions that healthy working environments may produce effectiveness, and productivity, help in improving the well-being of the social worker and create the opportunity for growth. This confirms what one participant mentioned about the awareness of NQSWs' emotional health. As the supervisors take note of the NQSWs' emotional health, this shows and creates a supportive work environment. Calitz, Roux and Strydom (2014:163) admit that the high level of stress related to rendering services can lead to burnout, poor mental health, decreased concentration, impaired performance and impaired cognitive functioning for social workers, as well as health-related problems which can motivate the reason to leave the profession. Huni and Chikadzi (2014:471), moreover, mention that tasks done in the workplace are determinants of the employee's well-being and job satisfaction. Therefore, considering the ability of an employee to carry out specific tasks is very crucial when designing the job characteristics and failing to do so would cause detrimental consequences to both the employee and the organisation.

Sub-theme 6.2 Mentorship and continuous learning

Mentorship was one of the suggestions given by a participant concerning improving their work readiness as well as continuous learning. With continuous learning, the participants saw the need to continue studying for the improvement of their work readiness.

> **Participant 1:** *"I'm going back to mentorship. Mentorship and training."*
>
> **Participant 4:** *"study study study study. Um…Social work is not, there's no formula to social work. You need to always be willing to study because remember that there's new ways of doing things that are coming in, there's new theories that are coming in. There is new issues. We are dealing with Ama 2k (2000s). You need to also learn how to function and work with those people. So I think once you're done with school and*

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you graduated, don't stop. Open a book, learn, even if it's not a social workbook, but something that can enhance your skills in the profession…..learn, Open a psychology book. Have resources. Have people that you can contact. People who are not in your field. Maybe people who are in the social science field, you know. People who are in, working with human beings, you know. You can learn a lot from a nurse. You can learn a lot from a psychologist. You can learn a lot from a police officer. So, never stop learning. Never stop learning when you're in this profession."

Participant 5: *"I think, I think if I keep on studying, doing research, then yeah, that will be, will make me ready. Studying."*

Donnellan and Jack (2015) developed a survival guide for the student-to-employee transition. They advocated for an emphasis on continual learning and using knowledge and skills in the workplace, self-management, time and workload tactics, as well as seeking help and practising stress management approaches, to maintain job satisfaction. In the words of these authors, "Bringing them together into an individually balanced equilibrium is one of the main tasks for transition into any profession." They contend that the transition period is distinguished by the acquisition of both fundamental knowledge from practical learning and broad knowledge from academic learning (Donnellan & Jack, 2015: 59). This confirms what two participants mentioned regarding continuing with learning the necessary skills to be utilised in their service rendering.

3.8 Summary

The researcher discussed the research methodology that was used in this study in more depth by looking at the methods used and how such methods were applied. The empirical research findings and the interpretation thereof of the findings were presented in a form of themes and sub-themes of which the data analysis method used was thematic analysis. These themes and sub-themes were discussed in more detail and the following themes were identified: NQSWs understanding of work readiness, Experiences of NQSWs in rendering social work services, Challenges faced by newly qualified social workers when delivering social work services to children and families, Measures implemented by newly qualified social workers to cope, Measures implemented by organisations to support newly qualified social, Proposed recommendations for improvement of work readiness. In chapter 4 the researcher will focus on presenting the key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

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Chapter 4

KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, the researcher presented the empirical research findings of the study. This chapter will conclude the research study. The researcher will show how the goal and objectives of the study were achieved and present the key findings and conclusions to answer the research question. Moreover, recommendations will be given based on the research findings. They will focus on how social workers (including newly qualified social workers), institutions, and organisations can maintain or improve the readiness to provide services to children and families by NQSWs.

4.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to explore and describe NQSWs' experiences regarding their work readiness to provide social work services to children and families in Gauteng.

To achieve this goal, the following **objectives** had to be met:

Objective 1: To explore and describe NQSWs understanding of "work readiness" regarding competencies required for service provision to children and families in Gauteng.

Based on limited research regarding the experiences of newly qualified social workers regarding their readiness to render social work services to children and families, the researcher sought to explore and describe NQSWs' understanding of what it means to be work-ready. This was done by considering the competencies required for social workers to provide social work services to children and families and this exploration was specifically within the Gauteng Province. The study focused on the experiences of NQSWs as shared in Chapter 3 (Section B2) in Theme 1 which is: NQSWs understanding of work readiness and competencies/skills considered for them to be work-ready. The sub-themes were sub-theme 1.1 Knowledge and Skills and sub-theme 1.2 Preparation and Experience. Achieving this objective meant indicating the competencies/skills NQSWs thought they needed to provide social work services to children and families effectively. However, many NQSWs indicated that they still lacked a large number of competencies/skills such as effective case management and effectively providing quality services.

Objective 2: To explore and describe challenges faced by NQSWs in providing services to children and families.

This objective was achieved in both Chapter 2, the literature review and Chapter 3 which included a discussion of the empirical research findings. Research findings included are in

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Theme 3: Challenges faced by newly qualified social workers when rendering social work services to children and families, sub-theme 3.1 Lack of resources and lack of inclusive working environment, 3.2 Lack of support, 3.3 Inadequate quality of services provided to children and families, 3.4 Gaps in knowledge, and 3.5 Dealing with difficult cases of service users and unsafe working environment for NQSWs. These sub-themes indicated the challenges that NQSWs face and this research study discovered that the challenges hinder NQSWs in providing quality services. The researcher also discovered that NQSWs do apply coping mechanisms and to some extent, receive support within their work environment.

Objective 3: To explore measures implemented to support NQSWs in providing services to children and families in Gauteng.

The objective was to explore what measures are in place to support NQSWs in their new workplace and this was achieved in Theme 5 sub-theme 5.1 Supervision, 5.2 Training, and 5.3 Mentorship. These sub-themes indicated that mainly supervision, training, and mentorship support was given to NQSWs in their workplace.

Objective 4: Based on the research findings, formulate recommendations to social workers, higher education institutions (HEIs), and organisations to maintain or improve NQSWs' readiness to provide services to children and families in Gauteng.

This objective was particularly achieved in Chapter 3 (Section B2) and was described through Theme 6: NQSWs suggestions to improve their work readiness. Further recommendations will be discussed in this chapter later on, regarding the improvement or maintained readiness of NQSWs to provide services to children and families in Gauteng Province.

4.3 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the key findings based on the literature study (chapter 2) and the empirical research (chapter 3) of this study. The main key findings are provided by concentrating on each distinct theme in the sequence that they were introduced and covered in Chapter 3, Section B2.

4.3.1 NQSWs understanding of work readiness

- Being knowledgeable about social work scope is seen as essential for being work-ready.
- Knowledge about the legislature, procedures, mandates, and support structures, engaging in continuing learning, and being equipped to write reports form part of NQSWs' work readiness.
- Willingness to continue learning and familiarise oneself with the organisation's policies is reported as one of the essentials for work readiness for NQSWs.
- Self-determination is key in preparing NQSWs' readiness for work as it motivates growth.

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- Some participants also mentioned preparation through planning as an important aspect of work readiness for an NQSW.
- Some participants mentioned that having experience in the field of service rendering helps in preparing NQSWs for work readiness, and the researcher anticipates that practical work in the final year of a social work student plays an important role in preparing NQSWs to be work-ready when transitioning from university to the workplace. This anticipation is due to what some of the participants mentioned regarding having experience in the field that they are in for work readiness.
- The participants mentioned that being psychologically ready is also important for the preparation of NQSWs' work readiness. This includes being emotionally ready to handle service users' cases.
- Being adequately trained was one of the essentials for preparing NQSWs to be work-ready.

CONCLUSION: From the key findings on NQSWs' understanding of work readiness, different aspects of NQSWs are required for enhancing work readiness, as well as what they understand are requirements for work readiness. The participants mentioned that having certain social work knowledge and skills is important for work readiness. Knowledge regarding aspects such as court procedures, mandates, legislatures, and support systems within and outside the organisation was mentioned as identified. Knowing the support systems within and outside the organisation aligns with the theoretical framework of this research study and shows the importance of collaborative advantage as it contributes to the work readiness of NQSWs. Another aspect that participants mentioned is self-determination and willingness. These were mentioned as important contributors to NQSWs' readiness for work, as they create an opportunity for continuing learning. Preparation and experience were also found to be contributing factors in the work readiness of NQSWs' and this alludes that practical work experience for social work students in their final year is important in preparing them for work readiness. Social work involves working with service users' problems which involve emotions and end up personally affecting the social worker, which now brings us to being psychologically ready to work with service users. One of the participants mentioned that being psychologically ready and mentally prepared to be able to work, enhances the general work readiness of NQSWs.

4.3.2 Experiences of NQSWs in rendering social work services

- NQSWs highlighted that working with different families who have different dynamics exposes one to different experiences on how to do interventions and assessments.
- Positive feelings related to helping and seeing families reconciled were expressed by NQSWs

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- Professional dilemmas that conflict with personal views were one of the experiences that NQSWs faced when rendering social work services to children and families.
- NQSWs experience conflict with clients, making it difficult for them to render services effectively.
- NQSWs experience cases that are difficult for them to handle as they lack the proper experience to work with such cases.
- Working with uncooperative families makes the experience negative for NQSWs.
- Families hiding child abuse is also a negative experience that NQSWs have experienced.
- Working with the unknown in terms of the environment and families also forms one of the negatives that NQSWs have expressed.
- A low salary was expressed by one of the NQSWs as being a negative experience for her.
- Some cases affect NQSWs emotionally and therefore require debriefing.
- NQSWs experienced that working with children and families was a positive learning curve as new skills were learnt.

CONCLUSION: it is concluded that NQSWs have different experiences when rendering social work services. These experiences include both positives and negatives. From a positive perspective, NQSWs highlighted that working with different families teaches or exposes them to family dynamics which helps to better prepare them for assessments and interventions. Moreover, some expressed that it gives them delight to see other people being assisted, so one can say that NQSWs have a sense of fulfilment when rendering social work services to children and families. It can be concluded that NQSWs' positive attitude is a strength as it helps them maintain enthusiasm for providing SWS amidst challenges such as lack of resources. On the negative side, NQSWs have expressed quite a few downfalls that impede their rendering of services to children and families. Some NQSWs have shared that they encounter situations where they struggle to provide effective services to service users due to conflicts. This can be challenging as the environments in which they work with children and families can be unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Furthermore, uncooperative service users impede the effective rendering of services by NQSWs and this impacts the child negatively because some service users might conceal child abuse. The NQSWs also experienced professional dilemmas with personal beliefs conflicts. NQSWs have explained experiencing difficult cases they battled handling due to lack of proper experience, hence the importance of collaborating with colleagues in the workplace who have more experience. Some NQSWs expressed that certain cases affected them emotionally and that it was important for supervisors to focus on the mental health of NQSWs. Lastly, a low salary was a concern for one participant.

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4.3.3 Challenges faced by NQSWs when delivering social work services to children and families

- Challenges such as lack of resources including time, access to Child and Youth Care Centre placements and vehicles, and the lack of playrooms for parents to use while waiting for their appointments, affected NQSWs' effective service rendering.
- One of the participants mentioned the lack of an inclusive working environment for both the service users and the NQSW, especially those with disabilities. The participant mentioned that the work environment does not cater for much in terms of required resources for children, such as a playroom and transportation for people with disabilities.
- The majority of the participants mentioned a general lack of support within the work environment with the management, and a supervisor, as well as a lack of adequate orientation. One of the participants mentioned that their management is not very supportive as they only focus on the number of cases the NQSWs have done and put too much pressure on them to close cases within a certain period under strict time constraints. Moreover, this pressure placed on them causes NQSWs to render inadequate services to children and families as the focus is on the statistics of the cases done and not on whether adequate services were rendered.
- The majority of participants mentioned that they get support from their supervisors with adequate supervision apart from one participant who mentioned that their supervisor does not provide quality supervision. The lack of quality supervision affects the participant's rendering of effective services to children and families.
- Two participants mentioned that they received a superficial orientation when entering the workplace which left them wondering what they had to do without proper direction. The participants also mentioned that having orientation before working is crucial in providing the necessary training regarding the work that they will be doing.
- Gaps in knowledge were also found to be another challenge to rendering effective services. Gaps in knowledge related to the application of relevant Acts related to social work mandates, case management, report writing, and certain skills in social work were found to be lacking in NQSWs, which affects their effective service rendering to children and families.
- Lastly, some of the participants mentioned dealing with difficult cases of service users and unsafe working environments for them. This was an obstacle to their effective service rendering to children and families.

CONCLUSION: Findings indicate that the majority of participants face several challenges when rendering social services to children and families. Challenges such as lack of resources including time, access to CYCC placements and vehicles, and the lack of playrooms affected

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NQSWs' effective service rendering. Moreover, a lack of an inclusive working environment for people with disabilities was found to be a challenge for one of the participants. The inclusivity was mostly related to the lack of playrooms for children and inadequate transportation for someone with a disability who works at the organisation. Although most participants mentioned getting support from their supervisors, apart from one participant, the majority of them mentioned a lack of support from their management. This was because the management focused mainly on statistics of how many cases have been closed, without considering whether the case was resolved or not and without considering whether service users got effective services. Considering that orientation processes are important for familiarising new employees with the working environment, some participants mentioned getting limited orientation and then being left to wonder what to do. Another challenge the participants faced was the timeline period in which they were required to have closed cases, which affected the quality of services rendered to children and families. Although NQSWs have knowledge and acquired skills in social work, there seem to be gaps in knowledge of social work skills that NQSWs should have to render effective services. NQSWs are faced with challenging cases that they do not yet have the experience to deal with.

4.3.4 Measures implemented by NQSWs to cope with work pressure and measures implemented to support newly qualified social workers

- One coping mechanism a participant use is planning her work schedule and creating a weekly plan that helps her stay on track.
- Planning ahead of time helps to avoid burnout and prevents creating issues with the supervisor.
- One of the participants mentioned that taking care of oneself is very important. This can be done by creating boundaries and separating home and work times.
- Another strategy provided for enhancing coping is consulting with their supervisor as they face different cases in the workplace.
- Collaborating with colleagues in their workplace helps them cope as they are more advanced in experience and working as a team helps as the participants also learn from their colleagues.
- Debriefing with other colleagues is also a strategy used by one of the participants which increases coping in the workplace.
- The majority of the participants mentioned that they get satisfactory supervision from their supervisors, which supports them as NQSWs.
- Group supervision is also one of the strategies that organisations implement to support NQSWs.

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- Two participants mentioned that they receive training on ethics, HIV, and the Children's Act. One participant mentioned having mentorship which is very helpful for her.
- Participants also mentioned receiving support from colleagues, and one participant mentioned getting support from her manager who is readily available and willing to help.

CONCLUSION: From the key findings, the majority of the participants mentioned getting supervision which is an important aspect of providing support to NQSWs by their supervisors and assists in navigating their new roles in the workplace. Planning is a way to help the NQSWs cope in their workplace, avoid experiencing burnout and prevent issues with supervisors. Moreover, it is evident from the key findings that self-care is essential in preventing workplace stressors and promoting overall well-being for NQSWs. It is also evident that NQSWS must plan their workload effectively to avoid carrying over cases and reports to the next day or week, which can contribute to increased stress levels. Working collaboratively with colleagues is one of the ways NQSWs cope in their workplace as they get to learn from their colleagues who have more experience and this correlates with the theoretical framework of the study, which focuses on collaboration with others to achieve what one person cannot achieve by themselves. This, in conjunction with group supervision, affords a chance to share experiences and try to find solutions by sharing ideas in the group. Consulting supervisors was also one of the strategies one of the participants used to cope. Apart from supervision, other strategies that organisations use to support NQSWs is providing training to NQSWs that will help and support them in their service rendering. Having superiors in the workplace like managers supporting NQSWs was one of the strategies used to support NQSWs to cope in their workplace.

4.3.5 Proposed recommendations for improvement of work readiness

- Providing mentorship or mentor programmes was proposed by one of the participants for the improvement of NQSWs' work readiness.
- The training of various service rendering methods was also proposed to help NQSWs acclimatise to the various contexts of rendering services as social workers, such as how to do court cases, how to work with the Child and Youth Care Centre (CYCC) which will give the NQSW a spectrum of knowledge. One of the participants mentioned more training to be given since her orientation was vague.
- Developing knowledge of writing reports was also recommended for NQSWs to improve their work readiness. More specifically writing reports that are of high quality was recommended.
- Recognition of the mental and emotional health of employees was recommended by two of the participants.

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- One participant mentioned that they should be given a protected caseload to acclimatise them to the workplace environment and to the services they provide to children and families.
- Having a peer group to discuss both professional and personal subjects was also recommended by one participant as it helps in providing a safe space for NQSWs.
- Having a group with other colleagues to discuss the difficult cases that NQSWs face in the workplace was also a recommendation for improving their work readiness.

CONCLUSION: From the findings, the participants recommended having access to mentors to improve their work readiness and to add on to the mentorship, get training that will help NQSWs get familiar with the different ways of service rendering such as how to do court cases, working with CYCCs and training on proper orientation when entering the workplace. Apart from training, the participants mentioned requiring additional knowledge for writing reports that are of quality to improve their work readiness. Two participants mentioned that employers or supervisors should recognise the emotional and mental health of employees as it contributes greatly to their effective service rendering to service users. Moreover, having peer group discussions on personal and professional matters was recommended by one participant as it will help provide a safe space for NQSWs, and having a group with other colleagues to discuss difficult cases that NQSWs face in the workplace was recommended.

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question that the study sought to answer was as follows: *"What are the experiences of newly qualified social workers providing social work services to children and families in Gauteng regarding their work readiness to provide these services?"* This research question is presented and answered in chapter 3 of this research study.

The research question was answered in Chapter 3 through the discussion provided in the themes and sub-themes, which are the expressed views of the research participants in the study. The answer to the research question was presented in Chapter 3 section B which focused on NQSWs' understanding of work readiness and competencies/skills that they deem necessary for them to be work-ready, experiences of NQSWs in rendering SWSs, challenges faced by NQSWs when rendering SWSs to children and families, measures implemented by NQSWs to cope, measures implemented to support NQSWs and NQSWs suggestions to improve their work readiness. The data collected highlighted the negative experiences and positive experiences NQSWs have experienced when rendering SWSs to children and families, the various challenges that hinder their service rendering, and what can be done to improve their work readiness.

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NQSWs' experiences regarding their work readiness to provide SWSs to children and families are as follows: 1) NQSWs view work readiness as being knowledgeable about the procedures, mandates, and Acts when rendering SWSs and having skills such as empathy. Moreover, work readiness involves experience and preparation both emotionally and psychologically. 2) The experiences that the participants experienced include both positive and negative experiences. With positive experiences, NQSWs felt a sense of fulfilment when they could render SWSs effectively to service users, and with negative experiences, the participants mentioned dealing with difficult cases that even affected them emotionally and put them in danger. Additionally, the participants mentioned having difficulties when they began but those difficulties were a learning curve for them and they got the chance to collaboratively work with their service users and get support from colleagues. 3) In their experiences, NQSWs explained the challenges that they experience in their workplaces and these challenges include the lack of an inclusive working environment especially for employees with disability and for mothers with children, lack of resources, lack of support, inadequate quality of services provided to service users, experiencing gaps in knowledge that supervisors are expecting NQSWs to have, difficult cases and unsafe working environment for NQSWs. 4) In their experiences, NQSWs were asked which measures they employ to cope and they mentioned planning and self-care to avoid burnout, consulting, and debriefing with colleagues. 5) The measures that NQSWs mentioned regarding their organisations supporting them include supervision with supervisors/managers monthly, training on various aspects such as ethics, the Children's Act, HIV training, mentorship, and colleague support. 6) The suggestions NQSWs gave to improve their work readiness include receiving workload gradually for better well-being and training, continuing learning, and mentorship.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for this study were made from the above key findings. Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are made to social workers, higher education institutions (HEIs), and organisations to maintain or improve NQSWs' readiness to provide services to children and families in Gauteng.

4.5.1 Recommendations to organisations to improve/maintain work readiness for the practice of NQSWs

Based on the research findings:

- It is recommended that organisations provide NQSWs with training on how court procedures work so that they are better prepared for this task. This will enable NQSWs to provide effective social work services to children and families in Gauteng by ensuring that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the legal system.

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- The majority of participants mentioned that having knowledge of legislature, social work procedures, mandates, support structures/organisations within the department, interpreting and filing in forms (e.g. form 22) and report writing is important for work readiness, hence the need for them to be trained in obtaining relevant knowledge and skills.
- NQSWS need to be given a manageable workload that allows them to gradually acclimatise themselves to the different aspects of service rendering such as managing court cases and working with Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCC). This was one of the suggestions made by NQSWs to improve their work readiness, as discussed in Theme 6 of Chapter 3. By gradually introducing them to different aspects of the job, NQSWs can gain the necessary experience and skills to provide quality services to children and families. Moreover, a protected caseload can help reduce stress and burnout among NQSWs, allowing them to provide quality services to children and families and better mental health.
- NQSWs recommended that they should have their more experienced colleagues as mentors. Due to high caseloads, some colleagues might not have the time to mentor NQSWs, however, organisations should incorporate it into their system as part of the professional development of the social workers to encourage them to mentor NQSWs.
- Based on the research findings, an important recommendation for organisations is to create a debriefing group for employees, including social workers and NQSWs. This group would provide a safe space for employees to discuss both their professional and personal matters and receive support from colleagues. This would help alleviate some of the challenges faced by NQSWs, such as lack of support and dealing with difficult cases of service users. Additionally, it may improve the quality of services provided to children and families by NQSWs. Organisations could consider implementing this recommendation to promote a supportive and inclusive work environment.
- NQSWs felt that their service rendering is ineffective because the focus is mainly on the number of cases worked on and closed, therefore, a recommendation to have an open line of communication with management was suggested to communicate with them on how to render effective services without compromising service users by rushing through cases.
- Organisations should ensure that their physical structures are accessible to employees with disabilities. This can include physical accessibility such as wheelchair ramps and accessible bathrooms. By making these accommodations, organisations can ensure that their employees with disabilities can fully participate in the workplace and have equal opportunities for success. It is also important to consult with employees with disabilities to ensure that their specific needs are being met and to continuously improve accessibility within the organisation. Moreover, organisations need to ensure that their employees with disabilities have access to transportation that is accessible and accommodating. For those

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who cannot drive themselves, it is crucial to provide alternative transportation options that are accessible and meet their specific needs. This can include options such as accessible vans or shuttle services. By providing these options, organisations can ensure that all employees can do home visits and be effective in their service rendering.

- Creating a safe space for employees to debrief freely without fear of confidentiality breaches can help build trust and improve the overall working environment. This ensures that NQSWs can discuss their experiences, challenges, and difficulties without any fear of judgment or repercussions. For example, organisations can use outside sources for their employees to debrief or the employees themselves debrief amongst themselves.
- Organisations must provide NQSWs with the necessary basic resources such as tables, chairs, laptops, and other equipment needed to render services to children and families effectively. This can help ensure that NQSWs have access to the tools they need to provide quality services and improve their work readiness.
- One of the recommendations based on the research findings is for social workers to create a network with other professionals for ease of referrals. This network can be made using social media, such as having a Facebook group/ website of multidisciplinary teams for specific areas or communities for ease of reference. This network can include psychologists, psychiatrists, teachers, and medical doctors. By creating such a network, social workers can improve their services to children and families by referring them to other professionals when needed. This can lead to a more comprehensive and effective approach to social work services. Additionally, this network can be used to share knowledge and best practices, enhancing the quality of services provided to children and families.

Concerning addressing service users' problems, NQSWs gave the following recommendations:

- Implement foster parent's meetings and foster care support groups for foster parents to help create a sense of community and support.
- Implement a foster care support group for foster children to help them feel supported and included.
- Implement recreational/fun days for foster children
- Implement unemployment programmes for foster parents which can help alleviate financial stress, to provide for their foster children.
- Recommendation to make the workspace child-friendly and accessible to create a welcoming safe environment.

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Addressing these problems, service users' experience can help NQSWs render services effectively as organisations will implement measures necessary to support them, linking to objective 3 of the study. These recommendations can also be implemented by NQSWs and senior social workers collaboratively to address some of the challenges experienced when delivering services to children and families.

4.5.2 Recommendations to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to improve/maintain work readiness for the practice of NQSWs

- HEIs should specifically educate students on rendering foster care services in aspects such as:
  - ➔ Court proceedings
  - ➔ Writing reports for the court
  - ➔ Presenting in court
- HEIs and organisations should collaborate to ensure that NQSWs get the appropriate training to effectively apply the skills and knowledge learnt in university to their workplace. Looking at the TCA of this study, a collaboration between HEIs and Organisations will help them achieve more than any of them could alone. For example, acquiring both theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge for students in the fourth level of study will help in rendering effective services to children and families. This collaboration will advance bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application of the learnt skills and knowledge and by doing so, improve the work readiness of NQSWs. This collaboration can create a seamless transition for NQSWs from university into the workplace and provide them with the necessary support to succeed in their roles as NQSWs.
- HEIs should provide social work students with more practical work regarding foster care services rendered to children and families while in university, helping them be more work-ready for the professional workplace gives them opportunities to gain experience that they can use when they start working as NQSWs. This should be in collaboration with organisations that provide foster care services.
- HEIs can engage employers using surveys to see if the skills NQSWs learnt in their undergraduate programme are being applied in the workplace and identify gaps in NQSWs' readiness to render SWSs to children and families.
- HEIs can also conduct needs assessments from NQSWs and employer organisations to identify the needs that both parties require that HEIs can implement in their programmes/courses.

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4.5.3 Recommendations for continuing professional development of NQSWs in providing Social Work Services (SWSs) to children and families

- The organisations' management should engage and encourage NQSWs to enhance and develop continuous learning.
- NQSWs should continue to study/research the aspects that they render SWSs to service users such as studying the *Children's Act*.
- Attending workshops and seminars related to rendering services to children and families is recommended to improve NQSWs' work readiness and employers should support NQSWs in attending these events.
- NQSWs should be trained continuously on policies, legislation, ethics, and mandates in their field.

4.5.4 Recommendations for future research

- Research in the future should be more representative of NQSWs and broadened by researching a larger sample of NQSWs in South Africa, on their experiences of their readiness to render SWSs to children and families as this study only focused on one Province, Gauteng.
- Research on NQSWs rendering services in other fields of social work should be conducted to get their views on their experiences of their readiness to render SWSs. This will help in identifying gaps in the teaching experiences that they receive in university.
- Research on NQSWs rendering services to children and families in rural areas in South Africa should be done to get a view of their experiences, on their readiness to render SWSs to those living in rural areas as this research focused mainly on NQSWs in urban areas.
- Future research should seek to explore support systems in the workplace for NQSWs to support them in their work readiness and professional development and also identify what can be done to support them in improving their work readiness.
- Research on the perspectives of children and families receiving SWSs from NQSWs should be implemented, to get insight into the challenges they face and the support they need. This can allow for improved service delivery to children and families. Moreover, the research can inform HEIs, social workers, and organisations to effectively develop interventions and strategies to enhance NQSWs' work readiness and so improve the quality of services provided to children and families.

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ADDENDA

ADDENDUM A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS

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

Researcher: Seboke Prodence Shai 16324367

Semi-structured Interview

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

- The research participants (newly qualified social workers) will receive an informed consent form to complete prior to the research process, which will contain all relevant information regarding the process;

- The duration of the semi-structured interview is scheduled to be 45 minutes to one hour;

- The interviews are to be scheduled at a mutually agreed time and venue and it will not impact working hours or the employer.

1. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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

1.1.1 What is your name? False names or code numbers will be used in the research report writing in order to maintain confidentiality.

1.1.2 How old are you

1.1.3 When did you qualify as a social worker?

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1.1.4 Where are you working? The name of the organisation will not be revealed due to confidentiality.

1.1.5 When did you start working at the current organisation?

1.1.6 How long have you been rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province?

1.1.7 How would you prefer to be addressed in terms of Gender?

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

1. Please describe your role as a social worker in the organisation (may use the name of the organisation).

2. Please share with me your positive experiences when rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province.

3. What are your negative experiences when rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province?

4. What are the challenges you are experiencing or have experienced while rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province?

5. How do you cope with your day-to-day challenges in rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province?

6. Do you feel/think you were/are ready to render social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province?

6.1 Discuss the general perception of the readiness for work of NQSWs in the organisation.

6.2 Do organisational views differ from views of the NQSWs?

6.3 What do you consider as 'readiness'?

6.4 What does readiness mean to you?

6.5 What are your experiences regarding your readiness to offer social work services to children and families in Gauteng?

6.6 What competencies do you deem necessary for you to be considered work ready?

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6.7 What would you recommend to enhance your readiness for practice?

7. Based on your experiences of rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province, what suggestions do you have in addressing some of the challenges that you have/are experiencing in rendering social work services to children and families in Gauteng Province?

8. Please share with me the nature of the support you are getting in your workplace regarding service delivery

8.1 Are NQSWs provided with entry-level work-related support (including additional supervision and protected caseloads)? Consider activities or structures that could enhance

general support in the workplace with a focus on the transition from graduate to social worker.

8.2 Is sufficient supervision provided on a regular basis?

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

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

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ADDENDUM B: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

2023/04/20

Principal investigator

Our Ref: Seboke Prodence Shai

Tel/Cell: 073 165 6310

E-mail: u16324367@tuks.co.za

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE OF THE STUDY

The experiences of Newly Qualified Social Workers' readiness in providing services to families and children in Gauteng.

GOAL OF STUDY

The goal of this study is to describe and explore NQSWs' experiences regarding their work readiness to provide social work services to children and families in Gauteng

INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

The procedure for the research will entail individual interviews with a duration of 45-60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded by the researcher. The interview will be held at the participant's workplace.

RISKS AND EFFECTS OF INTERVIEW

No risks and discomforts/emotional harm are foreseen. Should you experience any emotional discomfort prompted by sharing your experiences as a Newly Qualified Social Workers' readiness in providing services to children and families, you should inform the researcher. The researcher has prepared for psychosocial support from Yeukai Muruzi.

BENEFITS

As a research participant, you confirm that you understand that this study has no immediate benefit for you. However, the results of the study could contribute to enhancing the knowledge and development of sufficient support structures for a newly qualified social workers' readiness to provide services to children and families in Gauteng Province and within the organisation.

COMPENSATION

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You confirm that you will receive no financial compensation for your participation in the study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

You understand that you will not be coerced into participating in the interview. You will participate of your own free will and can withdraw from participating at any given time without reason. Withdrawing will not affect any relations between you and the organisation or the researcher. If you withdraw during the interview, the data gathered will be destroyed or provided to you to keep.

INTERVIEWEE'S RIGHTS

You can withdraw within the interview, when feeling uncomfortable, at any point. You may decline to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable answering.

All information obtained will be treated confidentially. To protect the identity of the participant, the researcher will use a pseudonym. Neither the data nor the conclusions reported will include any information which may lead to the identification of the participant, unless required by law. The organisation will also not be identified as the participating organisation in the study.

The documentation will be accessed by the researcher and authorised University of Pretoria research team. The researcher, with assistance from the University of Pretoria, will keep all documentation collected from the interviews in a safekeeping cabinet for 10 years' post-study. The electronic documents will be stored in a password protected format at the Department of Social Work and Criminology for a minimum of 10 years. Data might be used in future research studies.

PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION GATHERED FROM INTERVIEWEE

The findings gathered from the study will be published as a research report and articles in scientific journals and conference papers. The terms of confidentiality will be kept throughout these engagements or publications.

The study will be conducted under the supervision of Mrs Leanne Jordaan, Department of Social Work and Criminology, University of Pretoria leanne.jordaan@up.ac.za/Tel +27 (0)12 420 4162; Cell +27 (0)73 367 3762

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INTERVIEWEE CONSENT

I, _____ (*full name*) have had the researcher explain the Informed Consent form and understand my rights in participating in the study. I voluntarily consent to participate in the study, with the insight into the purpose of the study and what the data gathered will be used for. I will be provided a pseudo name for the study and all information shared will be handled with confidentiality, unless requested otherwise by myself. All information shared will be kept at the University of Pretoria for safekeeping for 10 years. I will be provided with a copy of my signed consent form.

Please tick the following if you understand and agree or disagree.

You agree that the interview will be audio-recorded by the researcher.

Yes No

As a research participant, you confirm that you understand that this study has no immediate benefit for you.

Yes No

You understand and confirm that you will receive no financial compensation for your participation in the study.

Yes No

You will participate of your own free will and can withdraw from participating at any given time without reason.

Yes No

_____ _____

Interviewee's signature **Date**

_____ _____

Researcher's signature **Date**

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ADDENDUM C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Humanities 100
Since 1919

03 August 2023

Dear Miss SP Shai

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

Researcher:	Miss SP Shai
Supervisor(s):	Mrs LC Jordaan
Department: Work and Criminology	Social
Reference number: (HUM007/0623)	16324367
Degree:	Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 03 August 2023. Please note that before research can commence all other approvals must have been received.

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 the 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 Karen Harris

Chair: Research Ethics Committee Faculty of Humanities UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof KL Harris (Chair); Mr A Bizos; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Dr P Gutura; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr D Krige; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Noomé, Dr J Okeke; Dr C Puttergill; Prof D Reyburn; Prof M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Ms D Mokalapa

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