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Social work as a scarce skill: exploring the views of social workers regarding the retention strategies used by the human resource managers to retain social workers within the Department of Social Development

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Depletion of national human resources is not a situation unique to social work. The pull of higher salaries, increased benefits, better working conditions and better career opportunities in other professions can result in social workers leaving the profession and pursuing other careers (White, 2003).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to the former Minister of Social Development, Dr. Zola Skweyiya, who has been instrumental in having the social work profession declared as a 'scarce skill', the serious shortage of social workers is one of the key reasons for under implementation of state welfare services in South Africa. This also contributes to the shortfalls in the delivery of services to large numbers of people living in communities impacted on by HIV and AIDS, domestic violence, child abuse, orphans and vulnerable children (Earle, 2008). In the State of the Nation Address of 2007, the former president of South Africa, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, highlighted the need to increase the training of family social workers at professional and auxiliary levels to ensure that identified vulnerable households are properly supported and monitored (Earle, 2008). According to Rautenbach & Maistry (2010), the social development approach to social welfare in SA was a result of the short comings in the service delivery in the past which included welfare services being geographically and structurally rendered, resulting in large parts of the population not being able to access social welfare services. The change to social development approach was necessary because the issues of poverty and underdevelopment needed to be addressed and alleviated in the country (Rautenbach & Maistry 2010). As part of the broader strategy to address the growing demand for social services and the shortage of social work professionals in South Africa, scholarships were initiated by Government. Minister of Social Development Bathabile Dlamini established a task team which had a mandate to look at possibilities that would enhance the relationship between the

Department of Social Development (DSD) and retired social workers. She proposed the use of veteran social workers in the Department (State Provincial address, 2013).

1.3. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The problem came to the attention of the researcher through observing that even though social work has been declared a scarce skill, newly qualified social workers are still leaving the DSD for employment opportunities not related to social work. The researcher was thus motivated to explore the views of both social workers working at DSD in the Germiston office and social workers who have left the DSD regarding the Human Resources strategies used at DSD to retain social workers. There has been research conducted on the scarcity of social workers includes a study conducted by Nicci Earl, titled "social work as a scarce and critical profession". However there is a paucity of research that explores the views of both social workers working in DSD and social workers who have left the DSD regarding the human resource strategies used to retain social workers at DSD.

This research is particularly relevant and timely given the growing need for social workers and social work services in the country and the rapid movement of social workers out of the profession of social work to work in other professions. It is perceived that the results from this study could influence policy in relation to the retention of social workers employed in the DSD or Non Profit Organizations or within other fields of social work practice.

1.4. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions of social workers regarding the effectiveness of the human resource strategies used to retain social workers at the Department of Social Development.

1.5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research involved an exploratory-descriptive qualitative approach. Purposive non-probability sampling was used to select 20 participants, comprising of ten social workers who had worked at DSD and have left the DSD for employment opportunities not related to social work and ten social workers who are currently working for the DSD in the Germiston office. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews and analyzed through thematic content analysis.

1.6. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Incentives- An incentive is an object, item of value, or desired action or event that spurs an interviewee to do more of whatever was encouraged by the employer through the chosen incentive (The International Society for Performance Improvement, 2002).

Retention- is an effort by employers to create and foster environment that encourages current employees to remain within the organisation (Recruitment and Employee Retention Strategy, 2008)

Job satisfaction- refers to the collection of positive feelings or an emotional state that the person perceives based on a variety of aspects of the work itself or of the work environment (Hansung & Stoner, 2008)

Burnout- is a state where employee energy or capacity to work diminishes over time when the work environment does not provide resources and is especially demanding (Korunka, Tements, Zdrehus & Borza, 2010)

Turnover- is the ratio of the employee of the organization who left in a particular period of time with the average number of employees in that organization during the same period of time (Abdali, 2011)

1.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study are:

The researcher is closer to the research participants (she is employed at the DSD Johannesburg office), therefore participants who are also employees of the Department were reluctant to participate. Thus, participants were employees of the DSD Germiston Office, which is outside that district where the researcher is working.
Also the presence of the researcher may have led to participants giving socially desirable answers.

Another weakness of the study was that the participants were employed in different Departments within the DSD, which meant that the working conditions and workload for participants were different. This then affected their experiences of satisfaction in their jobs and in turn affect their intentions to leave or remain in the Department.

Another weakness of the study was that interviewing participants was time consuming and costly because the researcher was required to travel to the participants' place of work to conduct the interview, especially those participants who have left the profession of social work and are working in other professions.

1.8. ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

Chapter One provides an introduction to the study, a statement of the problem and rationale for the research, the purpose and scope of the study, an overview of the research design and methodology, definition of key concepts, and the limitations of the study. Chapter Two presents an overview of the literature and theoretical framework underpinning the study. Chapter Three contains a detailed description of the research design and methodology. Chapter Four discusses the findings that emerged from the study. The final chapter, namely, Chapter Five summarises the main results, draws

conclusions and makes recommendations for government, social work practice and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Retaining the best employee is an essential for any company. The goal of organisations and businesses is to have and maintain a productive and happy workforce who is collectively focused on the organisations success. Retaining employees and reducing employee turnover is a strategic and vital issue which is beneficial to the company (Drake international).

2.2. SOCIAL WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

Social work in South Africa evolved in response to political processes that legitimised the profession as the chief provider of social welfare services (Gray & Lombard, 2008, p. 132). According to McKendrick, as cited in Gray & Lombard, 2008, p. 132, "the growth of the social work profession in South Africa was linked to the development of government social welfare service provision". During the apartheid era, social work enjoyed institutional support and played a dominant role in the provision of organised welfare services, both in government and in the private, voluntary welfare sector (Gray & Lombard, 2008). When the struggle against apartheid intensified, there was a growth in black community-based organisations (CBO's) and non-government organisations (NGO's), in which social workers played a crucial role in seeking to address the needs of the marginalised black communities (Gray & Lombard, 2008). "When the ANC government came to power in 1994, there were just over 2,000 subsidised social work

posts in the voluntary welfare sector, which constituted a quarter of all social work positions" (Gray & Lombard, 2008, p. 133).

As already stated, social work had played a dominant role in welfare and, since the profession had been supported by the apartheid government, it was the only occupational group that was professionally organised. It was regulated by a statutory Council for Social Work which had been established in terms of the National Welfare Act 100 of 1978 and later amended and renamed the Social Service Professions Act 100 of 1978 (Gray & Lombard, 2008, p. 134). In 1996 the South African Interim Council for Social Work was constituted and mandated by government to design legislation for a new Council to place greater emphasis on professional practice, democracy, transparency, equity, accountability and community involvement (Lombard, 2000). The Council for Social Workers protected the interests of social work by, inter alia, determining and maintaining standards of professional conduct and of education for social work. It also established a registration system, initially for social workers and later for 'social auxiliary workers', who were adjuncts to social workers and student social workers (Gray & Lombard, 2008, p. 134).

At the Welfare and Population Development Portfolio Committee on 15 March 2000, in reporting on the welfare Department, the then Director General, Angela Bester, said that there had been a high staff turnover over the last few years with resignations from 136 officials (Gray & Lombard, 2008). "Ms Bester, the Council for Social Service Professions voiced its concerns about the persistent and continued change in the leadership of the Department', which did not augur well for stability, sound management and development in the broader social services field, it ended with the statement that South Africa could not afford to have its social services undermined and compromised by an incompetent and unstable state Department for Social Development" (Gray & Lombard, 2008 , p 3).

2.3. SOCIAL WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA POST 1994

South Africa was the first country in Africa to begin formal social work education and training (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2007). Social work education and training varies considerably across Africa, both within and across countries, with some countries not offering any formal education and training in the discipline (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2007). At its inception, social work was primarily a white profession, which changed in 1959 through the Extension of University Education Act, when the National Party government created separate universities along racial lines. While this served to dramatically increase the number of social workers in the country, many problems arose from this, not least of which were major differences in standards for social work education and disunity amongst social work practitioners that culminated in a deeply divided profession (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2007, p 540).

As the social work profession developed, the Department appointed a Committee of Inquiry into Separate Legislation for the Social Work Profession, with a brief to examine the possible accreditation of training institutions (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2007). The Committee recommended the creation of a statutory Social Work Council, which would be responsible for the regulation of the profession, and for the accreditation of training institutions. The Council had the power to regulate all aspects of the social work profession, and particularly to determine minimum standards for social work education and training (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2007). The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) paved the way to align social work education and training with national goals and to position social work within a democratic society (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2007). Social work education maintains a balance with emphases on theory and research, practice skills, and values and ethics (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2007).

The South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP), serves as an umbrella body for the various categories of personnel in the welfare field and makes provision for the establishment of Professional Boards. The main function of the Professional Boards is to determine minimum standards for each of the disciplines (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2007). The SACSSP is a statutory body which regulates social

work education, training and practice. Social workers and social work students are required to abide by the SACSSP's code of conduct and failure to do so may result in disciplinary proceedings (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2007). The social work qualifications were developed within a developmental paradigm and in accordance with national development priorities. This includes the need for social workers to: act as advocates and watchdogs for the poorest and most marginalised members of society; help people identify the impact of structural forces of oppression and exclusion; engage people in social action to alter socio-economic structures and to improve their life circumstances (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2007). The social work qualifications attempt to reflect a balance between therapeutic and developmental intervention strategies (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2007).

2.4. SOCIAL WORK, GENDER AND RETENTION

Social work, amongst other professions has been traditionally viewed as feminine and as a result fewer men enter into this profession as opposed to women (Khunou, Pillay & Nethononda, 2012). "The training, recruitment and retention strategies of social workers by government and institutions of higher learning also fail to express these efforts fully and thus the low numbers of men in the social work profession" (Khunou et. al, 2012, p 121). According to Earle as cited in Khunou et. al, 2012 , the issue of gender within the profession is closely linked to issues of low salaries, poor working conditions and the cultural constructs of masculinity and femininity. Another factor impacting on the low numbers of men in social work practice is the poor public image and lack of respect shown to the profession (Khunou et. al, 2012). According to Khunou et. al, (2012), gender is not the only factor that influences most prospective students' decision to study social work, they are also influenced by a variety of fact ors which range from the influence of parents, their experiences of caring in their families, their need to care for others, lack of other career options, the availability of the DSD bursaries and their socio-economic backgrounds.

Nevertheless, the introduction of the DSD Bursary scheme for social workers is gradually increasing the numbers of men entering the social work profession (Khunou et. al, 2012). In 2007 the Department of Social Development initiated a bursary for social workers as part of their drive to address the shortage of social workers in the country (Khunou et. al, 2012). Although this initiative by the Department has been viewed as significant and timely, it has, however, been seen to have created unforeseen challenges for the profession. The results from a study conducted by Khunou et. al, (2012), suggest that the availability of a bursary, the inability to qualify for one's first choice in other faculties and the availability of a secure job after studying result in more prospective students choosing social work (Khunou et. al, 2012). Consequently, this leads to people using this degree as a stepping stone to get to their desired destination. In an attempt to address some of the problems that arise as a result of the DSD bursary scheme for social workers, Khunou et. al, (2012), suggest that, in order to maintain the much needed diversity in the recruitment and retention of social workers, there is a need for the improvement of salaries, working conditions and the general status of the profession. In addition to that, the values used for recruitment should not only focus on increasing numbers in the profession but rather an effort should be made to develop a recruitment plan that attracts both women and men who have a high regard for the profession (Khunou et. al, 2012).

2.5. RETENTION

2.5.1. OVERVIEW OF RETENTION

Employee turnover is expensive, and organisations and their managers need to become better informed about retention in order for them to be effective in reducing employee turnover. Retention needs to be elevated to a strategic initiative and be managed as carefully as profitability. This means collecting and paying attention to retention measures, setting realistic goals for retention, and getting smart about why people leave and why they stay in organisations (The Ken Blanchard Companies, 2005). While some turnover can be expected, poor management can cause the normal turnover to climb to an excessive level. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, turnover can cost an

organisation 33 percent of an employee's total compensation, including wages and benefits (Smith, 2009). The impact is not only financial but it also adversely affects employee morale. Nevertheless to reduce these rates, organisation must first understand the main reasons employees leave for other positions (Smith, 2009). Good people don't leave good organisations, they leave poor managers. Employees may leave the organisation for many reasons which may include harsh treatment from managers i.e. rudeness, assigning blame, back-biting, playing favourites and retaliations are among reasons that aggravate employee turnover . Feeling resentful and mistreated is not an enticement for a good work environment (Smith, 2009).

Another factor that affects turnover is work-life imbalance. Increasing with economic pressures, organisations continue to demand that one person do the work of two or more people (Smith, 2009). This is especially true when an organisation downsizes or restructures, resulting in longer hours and weekend work for the employees that are left. Employees are likely to leave the organisation when they feel that they are being forced to choose between their personal life and work life (Smith, 2009). Another factor that contributes to employees leaving their job is when they feel they are not valued. Employees want to be recognized and rewarded for a job well done. Recognition does not always have to be monetary (Smith, 2009). The most effective recognition is sincere appreciation. Recognizing employees is not simply a nice thing to do but an effective way to communicate appreciation for positive effort, while also reinforcing those actions and behaviours (Smith, 2009).

Lack of feedback and coaching can also result in employee turnover. Effective managers know how to help employees improve their performance and consistently give coaching and feedback to all employees (Smith, 2009). Ineffective managers put off giving feedback to employees even though they instinctively know that giving and getting honest feedback is essential for growth and building successful teams and organisations. Another factor that contributes to employee turnover is the lack of decision-making ability (Smith, 2009). Most managers have a tendency to micromanage to the level of minutia. Micromanagers appear insecure regarding their employees' ability to perform

their jobs without the manager directing every move. Organisations need to be aware that employees have to develop a sense of ownership in the work they do and to be empowered in the process. Employees in turn accept that responsibility and embrace that trust with enthusiasm and pride of ownership (Smith, 2009).

Employees are more likely to leave the organisation if they perceive the organisation to be unstable. Management's constant reorganisation, organisation changing direction and shuffling people around disconnects employees from the organisation's purpose (Smith, 2009). Employees don't know what's going on, what the priorities are or what they should be doing. This causes frustration leading to confusion and inefficiencies. Employees are also likely to leave the organisation if they are no monetary incentives or promotions offered (Smith, 2009). However, over the years, studies have shown that money isn't usually the primary reason people leave an organisation, but it does rank high when an employee can find a job earning 20 to 25 percent more elsewhere. Salary increases and promotions are often frozen for economic reasons but are slow to be resumed after the crisis has passed. Organisations may not have a goal to offer the best compensation in their area, but if they don't, they should pay competitive wages and benefits while making their employees feel valued (Smith, 2009).

Employees are also likely to leave the organisation if they perceive it not to offer opportunities for growth and development. A lot of good talent can be lost if the employees feel trapped in dead-end positions (Smith, 2009). Often talented individuals are forced to job-hop from one company to another in order to grow in status and compensation. The most successful organisation find ways to help employees develop new skills and responsibilities in their current positions and position them for future advancement within the enterprise. Employees who can see a potential for growth and comparable compensation are more inclined to stay with an organisation (Smith, 2009).

According to Batty (cited in White, 2003) the shortage of social workers in the UK has created a wave of immigration of social workers from around the world. Recruiting agencies hire social workers around the world including the USA, Canada, Nigeria and

Zimbabwe. This aggressive recruitment by the British social work agencies has had some negative side effects on the countries of origin (White, 2003).

2.5.2. SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON RETENTION

Staff retention is about finding the best employee for the job and finding ways of keeping these employees within the Department (Eastern Cape DSD, 2008). It involves a range of activities and human resource practices that should all be seen as interlinked such as both attracting employees to join the organisation through focusing on recruitment strategies and keeping those who are already employed, especially those who possess scarce skills that are difficult to obtain from the labour market and are crucial to the organisation (Eastern Cape DSD, 2008). Staff retention is directly influenced by the quality of six components of the human resource management system: human resource planning, recruitment and selection, optimal human resource utilization, human resource development, compensation and benefits, employee and labour relations, safety and health (Eastern Cape DSD, 2008). Best practice studies show that the first few weeks of employment are important for establishing employee commitment to employment. It is therefore essential that line managers and human resource practitioners lay the foundation for future commitment by being part of the induction process (Eastern Cape DSD, 2008).

The Department must provide employees with ongoing access to training that should support their work performance and career development. Where appropriate, developmental initiates in respect of scarce skills should be accompanied by contractual binding to serve after completion of the relevant developmental activity (Eastern Cape DSD, 2008). South Africa is considered to be facing challenges in retaining workers in the country (Marquis, 2011). Social workers leave the country to seek better opportunities in overseas countries i.e. better salaries, better working conditions, respect for one's profession, opportunities to study further abroad, political situations and lower crime rates (Interview with Human Resources Managers in the Department of Social Development in Gauteng, 2012).

According to the South African Institute of Race Relations as cited in Moloi, 2012, there is a shortage of social workers working in the government and non-profit sectors. The total number of social workers registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions in 2012 was 16 740 and 40% of these are employed by the Government, 16% are employed by NPOs and 45% registered social workers that are either employed in the private sector or are not practicing (Moloi,2012). According to the DSD, some 16 504 social workers are required to provide the social welfare needs of children in terms of the Children's Act of 2005 (Moloi, 2012).

2.5.3. RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Human resource management is the back bone of the organisation (Interview with H.R. Managers at the DSD in Gauteng, 2012). It offers strategic support to all the other subdivisions within the organisation and is responsible for the recruitment and retention of employees, the remuneration of employees and the training and development of staff members (Interview with H.R. Managers at the DSD in Gauteng, 2012). The H.R managers at DSD described retention as an effort by the employer to retain skilled employees, knowledge and institutional memory. According to HR managers, some of the retention strategies used at DSD include government benefits (housing and danger allowance, car subsidy and medical aid), performance bonus and OSD (Occupation Specific Dispensation) (Interview with H.R. Managers at the DSD in Gauteng, 2012).

2.6. IMPORTANCE OF RETENTION

In an interview conducted with HR managers at DSD , they claimed it is important to retain employees in order to prevent the loss of skills and knowledge. Retention helps to reduce the costs of recruiting and training new employees. It is important to retain scarce skills or the skills that are integral to the core functioning of the organisation (i.e. the Department of Social Development will not function without social workers) (Interview

with H.R. Managers at the DSD in Gauteng, 2012). It therefore crucial that employers identify and prioritize skills that need to be retained. This involves the prevention of the loss of some employees that have critical and scarce skills because their loss could hamper the service delivery (Eastern Cape Department of Social Development, 2008).

2.7. SKILLS TO BE RETAINED

The first group of skills that need to be retained are scarce skills. These include skills that are needed to realize the organisation's goals and objectives, but are difficult to recruit and expensive to replace. The second groups of skills that need to be retained are those that are valued. Valued skills are not regarded as scarce skills, but are those skills that are possessed by employees who contribute positively to the organisation and whose loss would have a negative impact on the organisation's ability to meet its goals (Eastern Cape DSD, 2008). The third group of skills to be retained are the high-risk skills. These are skills possessed by employees who have indicated intentions of leaving (Eastern Cape DSD, 2008). The last group of skills to be retained is those skills that are stipulated in terms of company or national policy in order to reduce discrimination and exclusion of certain groups of people from the work place. For instance, women and people with disabilities (Eastern Cape DSD, 2008).

2.8. RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

In many developed countries, child welfare agencies are reported as having difficulty recruiting and retaining social workers (Tham & Meagher, 2009). Social workers have expressed the strains of the job and call upon employers to promote working conditions that offer more support, and to recognize and value social workers for their work. Social work was reported to be the most demanding among human service professions on several measures of workload, complexity of tasks and quality of management. Tham & Meagher (2009), suggest that public social service work is becoming a low status entrance and early exit area of work and that, among public social workers, those in child welfare had the least job experience and were least satisfied with their working

conditions. Although these findings cannot be generalized, they show a vulnerable occupational group suffering from relatively high recruitment and retention problems.

In Swedan, social workers were reported to be working under increasingly tough conditions, doing a demanding job, often in work groups in which many are newly recruited, while many others are on their way to finding new jobs (Tham & Meagher, 2009). “Like all the human service professions surveyed, child welfare social workers described a highly encouraging, supportive, relaxed and comfortable social climate at work, but they were the least likely to find their workplace innovative and most likely to find it unequal” (Tham & Meagher, 2009, p. 813). “Social workers in child welfare were also more likely to describe their work as negatively influencing their private life than any other study group” (Tham & Meagher, 2009, p. 815). Stress may also arise through role conflict and ambiguity, which has characterized the social work profession throughout its history. Research finds that it is the particular combination of high work pressures, with a lack of control over decision making and resources needed to do the work, that are detrimental to job satisfaction (Tham & Meagher, 2009).

2.9. CHALLENGES IN RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The declaration of social work as a scarce skill led to the development of the government Draft Scarce Skills Policy Framework of 2003, which proposed that Human Resources Strategies must be developed to facilitate the recruitment and retention of such scarce skills (South Africa Department of Social Development, & Kela, N et al. (2006). The desired outcome of the recruitment and retention strategy is to determine conditions that impact negatively on social work services as well as to provide guidelines and measures that will ensure the recruitment and retention of social workers within the profession. However, there seems to be a critical problem with the recruitment and retention of social workers to the profession. This can be attributed to the availability of more lucrative offers either in other sectors or internationally, lack of support from the employer and the poor working conditions that social workers are subjected to, and the fact that social

workers are multi-skilled and, therefore, are easily absorbed into other fields (South Africa DSD, & Kela, N et al. (2006).

Failure to retain social workers can lead to a number of social problems facing the country, as social workers are viewed as key strategic resources in addressing social problems in society. They are considered crucial towards helping the social development sector to deal effectively with various social problems ranging from services to vulnerable groups, substance abuse, HIV and AIDS, chronic poverty, food insecurity and other related social conditions (South Africa DSD, & Kela, N et al. (2006). The implications of failing to retain employees were seen as the loss of highly skilled employees, the loss of knowledge and expertise, replacement costs which may involve the training and development of new employees and the appointment of new employees (Hansung & Stoner, 2008). Failure to retain employees was also seen as resulting in a weaker organisation as the outputs will be low because of staff shortage. Worker turnover causes psychological distress in remaining staff members and in new and inexperienced workers who fill vacated positions. It also leads to client mistrust of the system and financial problems for the organisation (Hansung & Stoner, 2008).

2.10. FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTES TO OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

2.10.1. BURNOUT

Most writers suggest that social work is a highly stressful occupation, with stress deriving in particular from role conflict between client advocacy and meeting agency needs (Lloyd, King & Chenoweth, 2002). Empirical research also suggests that social workers may experience higher levels of stress and resulting burnout than comparable occupational groups (Lloyd et al., 2002). Factors identified as contributing to stress and burnout included the nature of social work practice, especially tension between philosophy and work demands and the organisation of the work environment (Lloyd et al., 2002). Burnout is a particularly serious feature of chronic stress and one that can impair the human service worker's effectiveness (Lloyd et al., 2002). Burnout is a

syndrome with dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment (Lloyd et al., 2002).

Burnout is characterized by a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job (Woodhead, Northrop & Edelstein, 2014). According to Lloyd, King & Chenoweth, 2002, p. 256,

1. “An important factor in burnout syndrome is the increased feelings of emotional exhaustion where workers feel they are no longer able to give of themselves at a psychological level.
2. “A second dimension is depersonalisation, meaning that workers respond to persistent stress by developing negative, cynical attitudes and feelings about their clients”.
3. “The third dimension is reduced personal accomplishment, meaning the worker views their work negatively and feels dissatisfied with their work accomplishments” (Lloyd, King & Chenoweth, 2002, p. 256).

Burnout, as it applies to human-service workers, is experienced by individuals whose occupations require intense interactions with persons for whom they are responsible in some way e.g. their patients, clients, or students (Woodhead, Northrop & Edelstein, 2014). According to Hansung & Stoner (2008), social workers are more likely to feel burned out when they perceive higher levels of role-related stress, which is characterized by a worker’s high role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload.

2.10.2. JOB SATISFACTION

Job dissatisfaction is another factor that contributes to the challenges in the retention of social workers. Job satisfaction is defined as a collection of positive feelings or an emotional state that the person perceives based on a variety of aspects of the work itself or of the work environment (Hansung & Stoner, 2008). Job satisfaction is more of an attitude, an internal state, which could also be associated with personal feelings of achievement (Gupta, Kaur, Gupta, Jain & Sharma, 2012). “The level of job satisfaction is

affected by a wide range of variables relating to individual (personality, education, abilities, age), social (relationships with co-workers, group working, opportunities for interaction), cultural (nature, attitudes, beliefs and values), organisational (nature and size, formal structures, policies, supervision, leadership style) and environmental factors (economic, social, technical and government influences)" (Gupta, et. al, 2012, p. 90). The satisfied workers will be more productive and stay with the organisation longer, while dissatisfied workers will be less productive and will have more tendency to quit their job (Hansung & Stoner, 2008). The demands of the social work job can result in social workers leaving. Job demands included increasing paperwork, unmanageable caseloads, and problems with difficult clients, as well as staff shortages and reduced availability of adequate supervision (Hansung & Stoner, 2008). At the same time, confusing legislation and concomitant guidelines have increased the conflicting and incompatible demands on social workers (Hansung & Stoner, 2008). Furthermore job satisfaction can be enhanced if the job offers opportunities for growth and development, through offering in-service and out-service trainings

2.10.3. POOR WORKING CONDITIONS

Stress resulting from organisational factors is a concern to many employers owing to the substantial human and economic costs it incurs (Lloyd**,** King & Chenoweth, 2002). Stressors related to the organisation of work include lack of funding, personnel shortages, high worker turnover rates, lack of linkages to other work units, attitudes of other health professionals, and working in a bureaucratic environment (Lloyd, King & Chenoweth, 2002). Stress arising from unclear goals or objectives can ultimately lead to job dissatisfaction, lack of self-confidence, a lowered sense of self-esteem, low motivation to work, and intention to leave the job (Lloyd**,** King & Chenoweth, 2002).

Organisational factors that have been identified as contributing to the burnout process for social workers include role ambiguity, role conflict, the challenge of the job, and job autonomy (Lloyd, King & Chenoweth, 2002). From the literature it appears evident that social workers experience a high degree of role ambiguity and role conflict. With changes to organisational structures, it would seem that social workers are unable to use the skills

they have learnt as others have conflicting role expectations of them (Lloyd, King & Chenoweth, 2002). Their professional values have been undermined and they have been confronted with ethical dilemmas about how to best meet client needs within a framework of reform and regulation (Lloyd, King & Chenoweth, 2002).

Social workers have been expected to deal with the plight of clients with reduced autonomy and reduced resources. It is not surprising then to find a high degree of burnout on the dimension that measures feelings of personal accomplishment (Lloyd, King & Chenoweth, 2002). Organisational factors such as work pressure, work load, role ambiguity, and relationship with supervisors have been identified as primary predictors of the feelings of burnout. Risk factors associated with burnout appeared to include the lack of challenge on the job, low work autonomy, role ambiguity, difficulties in providing services to clients, and low professional self-esteem (Lloyd**,** King & Chenoweth, 2002).The stressful working conditions that social workers work in, contributes to the problem with retention of social workers.

2.11. OCCUATIONAL STRESS

Occupational stress is an ongoing stress related to the workplace. It occurs when there is a discrepancy between the demands of the environment or workplace and an individual's ability to carry out and complete these demands. One of the causes of occupational stress is work overload and under load (Schultz & Schultz, 2010). Interpersonal conflicts within the workplace and uncertainty about job security are also causes of occupational stress. For example, an increase in workload, a hostile work environment, downsizing, and shift work can result in occupational stress (Chen, 2008). When downsizing occurs, employees are laid off, and those who still have their jobs often have to worry about whether they will be next on the list of employees to be laid off. If employers are not supportive, discriminate in favour of some employees at the expense of others, do not offer encouragement, or create a hostile work environment, this can cause stress for employees (Chen, 2008). Occupational stress is a serious threat to the health of individual workers, their families and the community at large (Noblet, 2003). It is also costly to employers as

it is reflected in lower productivity, reduced motivation, increased errors and accidents. High stress is related to absenteeism and counterproductive behaviour such as theft and drug and alcohol abuse and an increase in intentions to leave the job (Schultz & Schultz, 2010).

2.12. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

2.12.1 PERSON-IN-ENVIRONMENT

The research study will be based on the Person-In-Environment Perspective, which emphasizes looking at a person holistically. This implies looking at the person within their social environment (immediate family, work environment and community in which the person resides), how the social environment impacts on the person and how the person impacts on the environment (Kemp, Whittaker & Tracy, 2007). In the current study the social worker is situated in an environment which has the potential to impact on his/her physical, mental and psychological well-being. But the social worker can also impact on the social environment through service delivery. For instance, if social workers are not happy with the current state of their work environment (salaries and benefits, working conditions and nature of the workload), then they are more likely to be demotivated, suffer from occupational stress and burn out and the service delivery will most likely be affected as well. Whereas if social workers are happy with their current work environment, then they are more likely to be motivated, perform at their best and deliver efficient services to clients.

2.12.2. VAN BREDA'S MODEL OF OCCUPATIONAL SOCIAL WORK

Occupational social work is a field of social work practice that is concerned about meeting the needs of a work community (Van Breda, 2009). According to Kruger & Van Breda 2001 as cited in Van Breda, 2009, Occupational Social Workers may experience tension in rendering services on a micro and macro level, especially with regards to the loyalty towards employees and their families while on the other hand rendering services to management. To address this tension Van Breda introduces the metaphor of binocular

vision. This refers to the social work principle of person- in-environment, which is committed to the interface between people and their environment (Van Breda, 2009). Furthermore Van Breda argued that a comprehensive occupational social work practice requires an integrative approach to the four clientele systems, which consists of "the employee as a person", "person as an employee", "organisation as a client" and "employee as a citizen" (Van Breda, 2009). In the current study, the focus will be given to the employee as a person, where the focus is on the personal needs of employees as individuals, parents, or community members. Secondly attention will be given to the person as employee, where the focus is on the occupational needs of employees, such as their ability to cope with work-related stress, interpersonal conflict in the workplace and the negative spill over of work stress into their family (Van Breda, 2009). In addressing these needs, employees will be assisted to adapt to the work environment and to cope with work related challenges and structures in the workplace can also be adapted so as to cater for the needs of workers. This could mean modifying or developing Human Resource strategies or policies to retain social workers in the DSD.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a detailed explication of the research design and methodology underpinning the study including the objectives, the research strategy, the sampling approach, the research tools, the method of data collection and analysis as well as ethical issues that were taken into consideration.

3.2. RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the perspectives of social workers regarding the Human Resource strategies used to retain social workers within the DSD?

3.3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The Primary Aim:

- To explore the views of social workers regarding the H.R. strategies used to retain social workers at the DSD.

The Secondary Objectives:

- To ascertain views of current and former DSD employees on the H.R. strategies that are used to retain social workers at the DSD

- To elicit the views of current and former DSD employees on the effectiveness of the HR strategies that are used to retain social workers at the DSD

- To understand the views of current and former DSD employees on the social worker's salary

- To establish the views of current and former DSD employees on the possible retention strategies that can be used to retain social workers at the Department of social development,

- To explore the views of current and former DSD employees on job quality and job satisfaction

- To articulate the views of current and former DSD employees on workplace support

- To establish the views of current and former DSD employees on the opportunities for growth and development at the DSD

- To understand the views of current and former DSD employees on the potential reasons why social workers leave the DSD and the profession of social work to work in other professions.

3.4. RESEARCH STRATEGY:

Research design is a plan or blue print of how the researcher intends to conduct the study. The study will take a qualitative research approach. Welman, Kruger & Mitchel (2005, p.3) define qualitative methodology as a way to "emphasize meaning and experiences related to the phenomena". The advantage of using the qualitative method is that it allows the researcher to obtain thick and rich descriptions and in-depth understanding of actions and events (Bryman, 2004). The limitation of the qualitative research approach, on the other hand, is that it is highly reliant on the participant's subjective view and is therefore prone to bias.

The study was exploratory-descriptive in nature. Exploratory research is undertaken when there is limited research on the topic (Welman & Kruger, 2001). The research was exploratory because efforts were made to explore the topic fully and to obtain rich description of the phenomenon. However, a criticism that can be levelled against exploratory research studies is that they seldom provide satisfactory answers to research questions, though they can hint at the answers. The study was also descriptive in nature. Descriptive research provides detailed descriptions of phenomena with participants that are carefully selected (Welman et. al, 2001). The study was descriptive because it endeavored to describe the views of social workers regarding the effectiveness of DSD retention strategies for social workers within the Department in the Gauteng Province.

3.5. SAMPLING OF PARTICIPANTS

The study employed non-probability purposive sampling. The advantage of using this type of sampling lies in the feasibility or availability of participants (Babbie, 1998). A purposive sample is one in which participants are purposely chosen on the basis of their knowledge of the subject (Steward, 1998). Participants were approached individually and asked to participate in the study. In the study the sample consisted of ten social workers who worked at DSD and have left the DSD for employment opportunities not related to social work and ten social workers who are currently working at the DSD in the Germiston office. The disadvantage of using a non-probability sampling strategy is that the sample is likely to be biased and not necessarily representative (Steward, 1998). The participant selection criteria were based on the accessibility of participants to the researcher. Employees who are working at the DSD were approached and were informed about the study and encouraged to participate. The first ten social workers who volunteered to participate formed part of the study. The researcher also liaised with the HR Department and requested the names and possibly the contact details of social workers who had left the DSD for employment opportunities not related to social work. These employees were contacted, informed about the study and encouraged to participate

in the study. The first ten social workers who volunteered to participate formed part of the study.

3.6 PARTICIPANT INCLUSION CRITERIA

- Participants had to be social workers.
- Participants were selected on the basis of their availability and willingness to participate in the study.
- Participants were divided into two groups, which included ten social workers who had left the profession of social work to work in other professions and ten social workers who are currently working for the DSD in the Germiston office.

3.7. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTATION

The research tools that were used to gather information were two separate semi-structured interview schedules. According to Babbie & Mouton (2001), a semi-structured interview involves a list of issues to be addressed and answered and also allows flexibility. The researcher used both open-ended questions and close-ended questions. Open ended questions allowed participants to elaborate on their responses, while close-ended questions focused on the specific issues that required a short answer (Hepworth & Larsen, 2002). The advantage of using a semi-structured interview schedule is that it allows the researcher to probe further into the participant's responses. As she proceeds, the interviewer adapts and formulates additional questions on the given topic of discussion.

While the majority of questions were open-ended, closed-ended items were used for the biographical information. Closed-ended questions are popular because they provide a greater uniformity of responses and are more easily processed when analysing data (Babbie & Mouton, 2001) as they can be transferred directly into a computer format. However, the weakness of closed-ended questions lies in the researcher's structuring of responses as the latter may overlook some important responses (Babbie & Mouton,

2001). In contrast, open-ended questions allow one to obtain more information on the situation as they do not restrict the respondents to one-word answers (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2008). The limitation of open-ended questions is that they need to be coded first before they can be processed for computer analysis. This requires that the researcher interprets the meaning of responses thereby opening up the possibility of misunderstanding and researcher bias (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

3.8. PRE-TESTING THE RESEARCH TOOL

Pilot studies refers to mini versions of a full scale study, as well as specific pretesting of a particular research instrument such as a questionnaire or interview schedule (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). Pre-testing is a method of checking the validity and reliability of a research instrument before it is used in the study. This allows the researcher to explore whether questions are ambiguous to participants, unclear or insensitive to participants feelings or irrelevant to the study (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). In order to enhance the validity and reliability of the study two pre-tests were conducted for the two interview schedules with two participants who did not form part of the actual study. The pretest showed that the questions were clear and understandable. However, there was also a suggestion that social workers views on their salary should also be considered.

3.9. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport (2005, p.293), define semi-structured interviews as "interviews organized around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the sample consisting of ten social workers who worked at DSD and have left the DSD for employment opportunities not related to social work and ten social workers who are currently working at the DSD in the Germiston office. Participants' answers were recorded using a voice trace recorder and consent was given for recording (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). A face-to-face interview allows the researcher to listen to

verbal communication while observing the non-verbal communication (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The limitation of face-to face interviews is that the presence of a researcher may lead participants to give socially desirable answers.

3.10. DATA ANALYSIS

Data gathered was analyzed through thematic content analysis. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:108) define thematic content analysis as "a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material". The disadvantage of using thematic content analysis is that it is highly dependent on the researcher's views and therefore researcher bias is likely to occur (Bryman, 2004). To counter the limitation of researcher bias, correspondence checking was conducted. Correspondence checking can be defined as "the use of a colleague and other researchers to analyze the data independently and this is then compared with the analysis of the researcher to check for correspondence" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

In qualitative research, the "trustworthiness" of results is crucial and will determine whether the study will be accepted as scientific or not. The concept of trustworthiness is made up of four elements, namely credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability (Padget, 1998).

CREDIBILITY

According to Leininger (1994 cited in Maxwell & Satake, 2006), credibility refers to the truthfulness, believability and value of the researcher's findings in representing the "real world" as perceived by participants. In order to enhance the credibility of the study, the qualitative researcher should describe the setting, population and theoretical framework, thereby placing boundaries around the study. The proposed study involved social workers who previously worked for DSD and had left the Department and social workers who are currently working at the DSD Germiston office.

DEPENDABILITY

Dependability is a process whereby the research can be replicated in a way that produces the same findings for the same study over and over again, even when the study is conducted by different people (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). To enhance dependability of the of the study, the same semi-structured interview schedule was used for all the participants who left the Department to work in other Departments and the second interview schedule was used for participants who are currently working at DSD Germiston office.

TRANSFERABILITY

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The findings from this study cannot be generalized to the entire population of social workers working at DSD and social workers who have left DSD.

CONFIRMABILITY

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of the enquiry and not of the biases of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Correspondence checking was done to enhance conformability. In the study the researcher's supervisor checked for correspondence in the categorization of themes.

3.11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

BIENG CLOSER TO THE RESEARCH SUBJECTS

The researcher is employed at the Department of Social Development in the Johannesburg office, which create a dilemma as participants were also employees of the Department. To counter this limitation, participants were social workers who worked at DSD and have left the DSD for employment opportunities not related to social work and social workers who are currently working at the DSD in the Germiston office.

INFORMED CONSENT

Participants were informed about the study and the purpose of the research and they were asked to participate in the study. Participants were given a participant's information sheet and they were asked to voluntarily participate in the study based on all the relevant information they were given about the study. Participants were required to give consent in writing. Participants were also required to give consent for tape recording of the interviews.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in the study was voluntary and there were no negative consequences for withdrawal from the study. The researcher informed participants that participation is voluntary and that they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences to them or fear of being victimized. Participants gave consent in writing by signing a consent form that was provided to them prior to participation in the study (Bailey, 2007).

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality refers to the security of personal information (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Participants were informed about the principle of confidentiality and their right to privacy (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Participants were also informed about the limitations to confidentiality and situations that may necessitate a breach of confidentiality. Participants were asked to discuss only the information that is relevant to the study. Also to maintain participants confidentiality, the names used in this study are not the participants real names use was made of pseudonymous.

NON- MALEFICENCE

Participants should not be harmed or injured as a result of their participation in the study. Social research should never injure people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study or not (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The researcher ensured that participants were not exposed to physical or psychological harm. Participants were also

informed that should they experience emotional distress as a result of participating in the study, counselling was arranged for them to attend as per request.

EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

The researcher ensured that participants were not harmed by participating in the study. Arrangements were made for participants who experienced emotional difficulties as a result of their participation in the study to receive support and counselling services from an Occupational Social Worker Tsholofelo Glodia Matema, who is employed at the DSD Johannesburg office.

STORAGE OF DATA

The data collected will be kept in a safe storage for a period of 6 years after the completion of the study or for the period of 2 years should any publication arise from the study.

3.12. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter provided a detailed description of the aim and objectives of this study, the research strategy, the sampling of participants, the research tool, advantages and disadvantages of using both open-ended and close-ended questions, the pre-testing of the research tool, data collection and analysis and, finally, ethical considerations. The following chapter presents and discusses the findings based on this methodology.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The results are presented and discussed in accordance with the objectives of the study, which are to explore the views of current and former DSD interviewees on the effectiveness of the HR strategies that are used at DSD to retain social workers. Secondly, to explore the views of current and former DSD interviewee on the reasons why social workers leave DSD and the profession of social of social work to work in other professions. Lastly to ascertain the views of current and former DSD interviewees on other strategies that could be developed to retain social workers at DSD. Findings from 20 semi-structured interviews were analyzed in two ways. Closed-ended items were analyzed using descriptive statistics whereas open-ended were analyzed using thematic content analysis. This includes the systematic examination of forms of communication and identifying patterns emerging from data (Bryman, 2004). Findings in respect of the qualitative data were analyzed and complemented with verbatim quotes. In presenting the findings pseudonyms were used in order to respect participant's privacy.

4.2. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Table 4.1 Socio-Demographic Profile of participants (N=20)

Variable	Sub-category	DSD interviewees	Former DSD interviewees	Total
No. Of participants		**10**	**10**	**20**
Gender	**Male**	**1**	**5**	**6**
	Female	**9**	**5**	**14**
Age	**20-29 years**	**2**	**6**	**8**
	30-39 years	**5**	**3**	**8**
	40-49 years	**3**	**1**	**4**
Length of service at DSD	**0-11 Months**	**1**	**1**	**2**
	1-5 years	**3**	**9**	**12**
	6-10 years	**6**	**0**	**6**

According to Table 4.1, the total number of participants was 20 social workers, comprised of ten social workers who are currently working at DSD and ten social workers who had left DSD. The participants at DSD consisted of nine females and one male, whereas the participants who had left DSD consisted of five females and five males. In total, the gender of all participants consisted of fourteen females and six males. The demographics of the sample in this research was somewhat representative of the population of social workers in South African given the fact that there are more female social workers than male social workers (Khunou, Pillay and Nethononda, 2012). Gender is an important factor that influences the decision to study social work (Khunou, Pillay and Nethononda, 2012) and this study indicated that there are more females than males who enter into social work training. The results showed that eight participants were in the range of 20-29 years, another eight participants were in the range of 30-39 years and only four participants were in the range of 40-49 years. It was also established that both current and former DSD interviewees had work experience which ranged from 0-11 months, 1-5 years and 6-10 years at the Department of Social Development. The results also indicated that eight interviewees were between the age of 20-29 and eight interviewees were between the ages of 30-39 left the Department after service period ranging from 1-5 years. Only four interviewees were between the ages of 40-49. None of the interviewees reported having worked for more than ten years; six interviewees left the Department after a service period of between 6-10 years. From the small sample of the study it was seen that males were more likely to leave DSD to work in other Departments and the private sector. This was evident because out of the total of six male participants who participated in the study, five of them had left the Department.

4.3 UNDERSTANDING OF WORKPLACE INCENTIVES

An incentive could be either an object, item of value, or desired action or event that spurs an interviewee to do more of whatever was encouraged by the employer through the chosen incentive (The International Society for Performance Improvement, 2002). Incentives can be grouped into four categories such as compensation incentives,

recognition incentives, reward incentives and appreciation incentives. Seven out of the ten current DSD employees interviewed reported that they do not have an understanding of what workplace incentives are. Responses provided included this one by Sindi who said,

> …*Umm work place incentive-I just understand that it's…,[silence] what is it? I don't know* [Sindi, DSD interviewees, female]

A similar response from Karabo was that,

> …*The challenge is that I don't even understand what is that incentives* [Karabo, DSD interviewee, female]

Nevertheless, three DSD interviewees reported their understanding of workplace incentives as an object or an element that you are rewarded with for the work you do. *Thato* one of the current DSD interviewees, is quoted as correctly describing incentives as follows:

> …*I understand it as things that they* [the employer] *can do to encourage us to get into the profession and further our studies within the profession.* [Thato, DSD interviewee, female]

Similarly to Thato, five former DSD interviewees reported that their understanding of workplace incentives is that incentives are a form of reward from the company, what you get in exchange for your labour. The following extracts illustrate a more informed and clearer understanding on the term incentives by former DSD interviewees, when they described workplace incentives by listing the types of incentives.

…It covers finances and job satisfaction, benefits in general which one would have when working for a company [Thandeka, former DSD interviewee, female]

…..…Incentives I would say it's something that you get after you have done something- it is a benefit that you get after you have done something [Sabelo, former DSD interviewee, male]

While it was clear that former DSD interviewees had a better understanding of the term incentive, none of the participants were able to identify recognition incentives, reward incentives and appreciation incentives. The incentive that was most commented on by both groups was the compensation incentive. The government Departments collectively developed remuneration packages for social workers that keep pace with inflation (DPSA, 2008). The incentives that are used at DSD to retain social workers include a housing subsidy, a car subsidy, danger allowance, a medical aid scheme, Occupation Specific Dispensation (OSD) and Performance Management Development System (PMDS). These incentives will be considered next in terms of evaluating the views of current and former DSD interviewees on the effectiveness of these incentives in retaining social workers at DSD.

4.4. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE WORKPLACE INCENTIVES THAT ARE USED AT DSD TO RETAIN SOCIAL WORKERS

Table 4.2. Views of current and former DSD interviewees on housing subsidy

	Current DSD interviewees	**No:**	**Former DSD interviewees**	**No:**
N= 20	**- amount too small**	**4**	**- amount too small**	**1**

	-create houses for government employees **-never heard of housing subsidy**	**1** **1**	**-subsidy made a difference in one's salary**	**1**

4.4.1. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE HOUSING SUBSIDY

The purpose of a home-owner allowance is to assist the employees to pay home loans. An employee may qualify for a home-owner allowance if he or she is a full-time, permanent public servant under the age of 65 years and has a home registered in his or her name, whether singly or with his or her spouse. The government housing subsidy was increased from the 1st of July 2010, from R500.00 to R800.00 per month. However according to a key informant at DSD the current amount of the housing subsidy is R900.00 per month [Makola, Personal communication, 18 July 2014]. The housing subsidy is also given to home owners and employees who are renting residential property.

Four current DSD interviewees felt that the housing allowance amount is too small and it was not seen as effective due to the size of the allowance in comparison with the cost of buying or renting property. Sindi and Nonhlanhla, social workers from DSD, presented their views on the housing subsidy as follows:

> *…my view is that every social worker when they are employed just has to qualify for a full housing subsidy not just R800 or R500.…..* [Sindi, DSD interviewee, female].

Similarly to Sindi, Nonhlanhla was of the opinion that,

> …*The housing subsidy is R900 per month and it* [the subsidy] *doesn't make much difference when you are paying a bond of R4 500 per month* [Nonhlanhla, DSD interviewee, female].

This is understandable given the fact that the starting value of a one-bedroom house in Johannesburg is within the range of R500 000- R750 000 and the monthly bond repayment is approximately R5000 to R6000 per month [Terrence Kaizer , Yebo Hlanganani, telephonic interview, 2014]. It was concerning that one current DSD interviewee reported that she does not know if the DSD has any housing subsidy. Lerato, a social worker from DSD, expressed her views on the housing subsidy as follows:

> …*Housing subsidy? Oh? I have never heard about any housing subsidy-I am not sure if we have any* [Lerato, DSD interviewees, female].

Similarly to Nonhlanhla, one former DSD interviewee felt that the housing subsidy does not make a difference because it cannot be used to make a substantial contribution towards a bond payment. Sabelo reported that,

> …*I don't think it* [housing allowance] *is effective, the house allowance does not make a difference because you cannot use that money to pay for bond, or pay rent* [Sabelo, former DSD interviewee, male].

However, another one former DSD interviewee expressed a different view to that of Sabelo and reported that the housing subsidy was effective as it made a huge difference to one's salary. She verbalised that,

> …*in a sense yes because the amount made a huge difference in your salary, so I think it was kind of effective* [Thembi, former DSD interviewee, female].

An analysis of these responses seems to indicate a degree of dissatisfaction amongst DSD interviewees regarding the housing subsidy. Even though some of them felt the subsidy was making a difference, they still felt that it needed to be increased. While there were former DSD interviewees who shared the view that the subsidy is too small, there were two former interviewees who felt that the subsidy allowance made a difference in their salary. Former DSD interviewees seemed to indicate more positive sentiments regarding the housing subsidy compared to current DSD interviewees, even though the percentage was small.

4.4.2. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE CAR SUBSIDY

Table 4.3. Views of current and former DSD interviewees on car subsidy

	Current DSD interviewees	**No:**	**Former DSD interviewees**	**No:**
N=20	**-is a necessity but not easily accessible**	**7**	**Not easily accessible to all employees**	**2**
	-beneficial to those who have access to it	**2**		
	-accessing it depends on the job you are doing	**1**		

A car subsidy within DSD can be defined as the provision of a subsidized vehicle to an officer which enables them to undertake essential and approved official journeys in those cases where the use of the other available transport is neither practical nor economical (National Dept. of Transport, 2011). The DSD provides subsidized vehicles for employees who qualify for the subsidy under scheme A and scheme B. Under scheme A

the Department is committed to subsidizing a car for the qualifying employees; the employer contributes 75% towards the subsidy while the employee contributes 25 % towards the subsidized vehicle. The official must travel on 70% official trips and 30% private trips. Under scheme B, the subsidized car is paid off, however the employee is still contracted with the Department to use the car for official trips and claim the petrol money at the end of the month (National Dept. of Transport, 2011).

Seven DSD interviewees felt that the car subsidy is a necessity for social workers; however it is not easily accessible due to restrictions with regard to the kilometres that one needs to acquire in order to qualify for the subsidy. The DSD interviewees expressed their discontent with the car subsidy through expressions such as,

> *…Ah, I think the car subsidy they are just eliminating most of us to have it, because if they say 1500 kilometers in a month, you can't do that unless if otherwise you are always on the road…* [Boitumelo, DSD interviewee, female].

> Zoleka a female DSD interviewee shared a similar view as Boitumelo's and stated that, *….it's very difficult to get a car subsidy, as a canalization officer she goes out once in a while and so she won't be able to meet the required 1500km per month*….[Zoleka, DSD interviewee, female]

These verbatim quotes showed that the participants had a clear understanding of the requirements for the car subsidy and they were not happy about them. According to the transport circular no 5. of 2003, in order to qualify for the subsidized vehicle the official must complete the application form and provide all required documents and must be travelling at least 1500 kilometres per month on official trips (National Dept. of Transport, 2003).

On the other hand, the car subsidy was reported to have good benefits to those interviewees who have access to it, however it was seen as not beneficial to all interviewees especially those who did not qualify for the subsidy. Participants also felt that it was a lengthy process to apply and qualify for the subsidy. Boitumelo also indicated that qualifying for the subsidy is also dependent on the work that you are doing. She stated that,

> *...it depends on the job that you are doing, if you are a field worker you are more likely to qualify for the subsidy but if you are office bound, you chances of getting the subsidy are limited.* [Boitumelo, DSD interviewee, female].

In addition to that Lerato shared a view that,

> *…most people are benefitting and they see it as beneficial even though personally she has never benefited from it* [Lerato, DSD interviewee, female]

Former DSD interviewees agreed with Boitumelo and Lerato, that the car subsidy is not easily accessible to all employees and, as a result, those employees who didn't benefit from it did not see the allowance as beneficial. The following statements further illustrate this,

> *…I feel it[] is too tight and it [] is not accessible- if you do get that subsidy I think it is an advantage but it is better to get your own car than to get that subsidy…* [Sabelo, former DSD interviewee, male].

Thembi agreed with Sabelo that the subsidy is not accessible, she relates that,

> *…..when I got here I was not eligible for that and it's a long story now to get that car subsidy, so I did not benefit from that and I was not happy about that* [Thembi, former DSD interviewee, female].

Both current and former DSD interviewees felt that the car subsidy is a necessity for all social workers, however not all employees benefited from it due to restrictions in terms of its qualifying requirements. As a result, interviewees felt that the subsidy was not beneficial to all employees. Therefore there is a need for better transparency in the procedures to be followed in determining who qualifies for the subsidy and on what grounds they qualify or don't qualify. This information should be made available to employees so they can understand why they qualified or did not qualify for the subsidy.

4.4.3. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE DANGER ALLOWANCE

Table 4.4. Views of current and former DSD interviewees on danger allowance

	Current DSD interviewees	**No:**	**Former DSD interviewees**	**No:**
N=20	**-amount too small**	**5**	**-amount too small**	**2**
	-amount is okay	**2**	**-not competitive in the market**	**1**

Research conducted by Malese, revealed that social workers can be subjected to violent behaviour from the client's they are currently serving. Factors that contribute to social workers being subjected to violence were reported as including the lack of knowledge by the clients serviced by the social workers, frustration caused by unemployment, lack of resources in the organisation, age and gender (Malese, 2013). The employer may compensate an employee who risks his or her life in the course of carrying out specific duties or training. If an employee qualifies for the standard danger allowance on one or more grounds, she or he may receive R200 a month or the equivalent amount in daily terms (DPSA, 2008). However the danger allowance at DSD is currently R357.00 per month [Makola, Personal communication, 18 July 2014].

Five current DSD interviewees felt that the danger allowance amount is too small. Lerato stated that,

> *…I can say it is too little looking at the kind of job that we are doing. We deal with many clients everyday and our lives are exposed to danger…..* [Lerato, DSD interviewee, female].

> *…I think it's too small because you are going in community, where it's dangerous and working with client that are, what can in say that are violent* [Thato, DSD interviewee, female].

This statement by Thato is supported by Booysen and Steinman as cited in Malese (2013), who state that employees who are most likely to be subjected to workplace violence are those that are from different or minority ethnic groups, employees working in service delivery such as social work services, those who exchange money with the public, those who deliver passengers, goods and services, those who work alone or in small groups or community settings, those who work in high crime areas, or those with unusual working hours or conditions, amongst others.

Nevertheless, two DSD interviewees reported that the danger allowance is okay because it benefits employees who are sometimes exposed to dangerous working environments in carrying out their duties. It was noticeable from the responses that there was also a lack of awareness amongst the participants regarding the actual amount of danger allowance. This was evident in a statement from Karabo a social worker from DSD who stated that,

> *…The danger allowance is not enough 250- 270 something isn't enough.* [Karabo, DSD interviewee, female].

Two former DSD interviewees agreed with Thato and Karabo that the danger allowance amount is too small. Thembi further explained that the money being given for danger is too small and that the Department should give more money as a danger allowance. She indicated that,

> *…I think the danger allowance is a bit of an insult, I mean for the kind of work that we do, I think they should be giving out more money for danger, the money that they are giving is really just an insult to the profession.* [Thembi, former DSD interviewee, female].

Another former DSD interviewee felt that the government incentives are not competitive in the market and as a result they are not effective in retaining social workers. Gift narrates that,

> *…..I had what you call danger allowance but I still left, their retention strategies are not competitive, they are not market related, they are still far behind* [Gift, former DSD interviewee, male]

A danger allowance is a necessary incentive, given the evidence from Malese's study, which revealed that social workers are exposed to violence in the workplace and the violence is usually perpetrated by the clients they are servicing (Malese, 2013). However, there seemed to be little appreciation of this incentive from the interviewees as it was viewed as too small and needed to be increased.

Another incentive that is used at DSD to retain social workers is the government medical aid scheme. This incentive will be explored further in terms of its effectiveness in retaining social workers.

4.4.4. PARTICIPANTS VIEWS ON MEDICAL SUBSIDY

Table 4.5. Views of current and former DSD interviewees on the medical subsidy

	Current DSD interviewees	**No:**	**Former DSD interviewees**	**No:**
N=20	**-satisfied with subsidy**	**3**	**-has minimum benefits**	**1**

	-not satisfied with subsidy	**3**		

The state provides medical assistance in the form of subsidies for employees in the public service as well as to retired employees who belong to registered medical aid schemes and who are eligible in terms of the policy governing post-retirement medical treatment. Employees must be members of the Government employees medical aid scheme (GEMS) in order for them to qualify for the subsidy. The state pays 75% of the employee's total monthly medical contribution on any selected option and the employee pays 25%. The medical aid scheme was designed to improve the quality of life of employees and to ensure that employees have quick access to health care and private doctors in cases of emergencies. The medical scheme also has a comprehensive HIV cover including HIV treatment.

Three current DSD interviewees reported that they were happy with the medical aid and felt it was helping since the employer contributes more and the employees contribute a smaller amount. They related that the medical subsidy,

> …*It is ok also because it benefits us a lot based on the fact that the employer contributes more than the employee*…[Palesa, DSD interviewee, female].

Sindi added that,

> …*Ok the medical aid I don't see any problem with it, to me it's fair for everyone* [Sindi, DSD interviewee, female].

On the other hand three other DSD interviewees were not satisfied with the medical subsidy, stating that the medical aid was not beneficial to them. Boitumelo exclaimed in her response saying, "*Gems? It's a disaster! With us let me say for women it doesn't*

cover most of the procedures that women undergo, fertility clinic, whatever, some things you end up popping out your own money"[Boitumelo, DSD interviewee, female]. This shows that Boitumelo was not happy with the medical aid, she did not see it as beneficial to women employees and that it is limited in terms of the medical procedures it covers. Similarly to Boitumelo, one former DSD interviewee felt that the medical subsidy has minimum benefits. Sabelo a former DSD interviewee explained that,

> *….I did not take it when I got to the Department…….… you pay minimum amount and at the end of the day your benefits are also minimal…* [Sabelo, former DSD interviewee, male].

It seems like there is a lot of negativity and lack of appreciation from both current and former DSD interviewees regarding the incentives that are provided at DSD even though the Department is offering more incentives than NGO's. Interviewee's expressed their unhappiness with the car subsidy, housing allowance and danger allowance and interviewees were still not happy with the medical aid even though the employer contributes more than the employees. Another incentive that was considered was the OSD progression strategy.

4.4.5. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE (OSD)

Table 4.6. Views of current and former DSD interviewees on OSD

	Current DSD interviewees	**No:**	**Former DSD interviewees**	**No:**
N=20	**-not clear about OSD**	**4**	**-OSD played a crucial role in retaining social workers**	**2**
	-has irregularities	**1**		
			-Prevents social workers from growing	**2**

			-OSD is paradoxical (does the opposite of what its intended to do)	**1**

In order to enable the government to recruit and retain professionals, the wage agreement provides, amongst others, for the development of occupation specific dispensation. The OSD is underpinned by the following core principles: unique salary structures per occupation, salaries of occupational categories will, where necessary, be aligned to the market, centrally determined grading structures, broad job profiles and adequate career-pathing opportunities. This is a forward looking plan to systematically increase salaries of public servants after pre-determined periods based on specific criteria such as performance, qualifications, scope of work, experience and pay progression within the salary band and grade progression (DPSA, 2008/9).

None of the DSD interviewees that were interviewed reported to be happy and satisfied with the OSD. Four out of the 10 current DSD interviewees reported that they don't have a clear understanding of the ODS strategy. However, they did report having received hearsay information about OSD, suggesting that you have to have seven years of work experience to qualify for a supervisory post, while you need ten years of work experience to qualify as a senior social worker. This created confusion amongst interviewees as they felt that it should be the other way round, it should take seven years to be a senior social worker while one should have a minimum of years to qualify for a supervisory post. Interviewees also reported they were unhappy with the OSD as it seemed to be focusing more on the years of experience while disregarding higher qualification such as a Masters degree in social work. The feeling was that the OSD is discouraging employees from studying further because they feel their qualification will not be recognized in terms of the OSD grade progression and salary grading.

Tumisang stated that,

> *…. according to my knowledge they say it takes you seven years to apply for a senior post say a supervisor post….. But for you to be a senior social worker you must be ten years I mean it does not make sense, it takes me ten years to be a senior but I can apply for higher posts like to be a supervisor.* [Tumisang, DSD interviewee, male].

Furthermore Boitumelo express her confusion regarding the OSD when she reported that,

> *….I don't know whether it was a mistake or that a true reflection seven years to become a supervisor and ten years to become a senior social worker…… my understanding is that you become a senior social worker before you become a supervisor but with OSD you can be a supervisor whilst waiting to become a senior social worker.* [Boitumelo, DSD interviewee, female]

Thato also expressed her understanding of the OSD when she relates that,

> *…my understanding is that you have to have ten years of experience, which is unfair because someone with ten years' experience and no masters can qualify but someone with a master's degree but not having ten years' experience doesn't qualify……* [Thato, DSD interviewee, female].

Another DSD interviewee felt that the OSD has some irregularities and she wishes that the OSD had never been implemented because the strategy is unfair and it needs to be changed. This was evident in the statement by Palesa, when she argued that,

> *…I really feel like some of the things should be changed, especially when they are saying that before you can be promoted or go to a senior level*

> *you need to have certain years. I feel it's unfair and it needs to be changed* [Palesa, DSD interviewee, female].

Interestingly enough, in contrast to the current DSD interviewees who reported having a negative perception of the OSD, two of the former DSD interviewees felt that the introduction of OSD played a crucial role in retaining social workers. They expressed their views about the OSD in the following manner,

> …*the introduction of OSD played a crucial role in doing so* [Tshepo, former DSD interviewee, male]. In addition to that, Thandeka reported that, *"the salary was improved when OSD was introduced,* [Thandeka, former DSD interviewee, female].

Nevertheless, the OSD did not go unchallenged by a former DSD interviewee who felt that the OSD is paradoxical and it is doing the opposite of what it is intended to. Katlego articulated his view on the OSD when he strongly argued that,

> *….We had about the OSD, which was supposed to assist in attracting and retaining social workers but the reality is that it's very paradoxical that strategy never materialized….., the objectives and the preamble they very nice and they very promising but the actual application of it is actually contradictory and paradoxical to the preamble of the document itself* [Katlego, former DSD interviewee, male].

Katlego also complained about the lack of consistency in the application of the OSD grading system. He reported that,

> …*In certain instance the Department is actually unable to implement it because other posts get advertised at a particular OSD grade and post*

> *and people don't respond to them and then they decide to change the grade or the salary scale*…. [Katlego, former DSD interviewee, male].

Another former DSD interviewee reported that the OSD is unfair and it prevents people from growing. He felt that contrary to the purpose of the OSD, which is to ensure growth and progression in the workplace, it has done the complete opposite and inhibited growth. Thembi expressed the view that,

> …*OSD-I didn't even understand the whole OSD thing but I do feel that the OSD is in a way trying to keep people at a certain level and in a certain bracket. It's limiting people from growing*…[Thembi, former DSD interviewee, female].

Karabo expressed her views on the OSD by saying the following,

> …*Wow, OSD, hmmm I think the OSD in 2008/2009 was the downfall of the profession, because the OSD suggest that one has to work for a minimum of ten years before you can move from one level of social work to the next*….[Karabo, former DSD interviewee, female].

It seems like the OSD strategy has been received with negativity from both current and former DSD interviewees who expressed unhappiness with the OSD and argued that it needs to be reviewed. The OSD is also seen to be putting more focus on experience while paying little attention to higher qualifications. The suggestion is that these aspects need to be considered when reviewing the OSD strategy. Nevertheless there were two former DSD interviewees who felt that the OSD played a crucial role in retaining social workers because they have to remain within the Department for a certain number of years before they can be promoted to a senior position.

The research also explored the interviewees' views on the PMDS.

4.4.6. PARTICIPANTS VIEWS ON THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM (PMDS)

Table 4.7. Views of current and former DSD interviewees on PMDS

	Current DSD interviewees	No:	Former DSD interviewees	No:
N=20	**-not properly regulated**	**4**	**-fairly regulated**	**1**
	-used to punish employees	**2**	**-good tool used for development of employees**	**1**
	-unfairly administered	**1**		
			-makes employees lazy	**1**

Mullins (2005), states that one way in which to review the performance and potential of staff is through a system of performance appraisal. The Employee Performance Management and Development System (EPMDS), has been designed as a voluntary system to assist with performance management on salary levels 1 to 12 in government Departments and provinces that may choose to adopt the system (DPSA, 2007). The aim of performance management is to optimize every employee's output in terms of quality and quantity, thereby improving the Department's overall performance and service delivery (DPSA, 2007). In order to achieve individual excellence and achievement, the objectives for performance management are to: establish a performance and learning culture in the Public Service, improve service delivery, ensure that all job holders know and understand what is expected of them, promote interaction on performance between job holders and their supervisors, identify, manage and promote job holders' development needs, evaluate performance fairly and objectively, recognize categories of performance that are fully effective and better and manage categories of performance that are not fully effective and lower (DPSA, 2007).

Four out of ten current DSD interviewees were of the opinion that the PMDS is not properly regulated or applied fairly to all employees. This was evidenced in statements from Nonhlanhla and Zoleka who articulated that,

> *…Performance bonuses as I have said earlier that it depends on the management whether they get the performance bonus or not…* [Nonhlanhla, DSD interviewee, female].

Turkey cited in Mullins (2005), emphasizes the importance of eliminating bias in performance evaluation and management processes.

Zoleka also stated,

> *….That's another story, especially this year! I mean people were angry, they were very angry they were told you don't deserve a four you deserve a three and I mean people work*…[Zoleka. DSD interviewee, female].

Mullins (2005) argues that it is important that members of the organization know exactly what is expected of them and the yardsticks by which their performance and results will be measured.

Two DSD interviewees saw the PMDS as a tool that management uses to punish employees. This was evident in the following extracts from Boitumelo and Karabo, DSD interviewees,

> *…PMDS its used to sabotage some employees because if you working and you having a supervisor and a supervisor should understands what's happening but when it comes to evaluation, it's like someone is waiting, it's like they are trying to spite you, to say yah bring evidence, evidence is not enough* [Boitumelo, DSD interviewee, female].

In similar vein Karabo stated that,

> *…this one, they using it, some they using it to terrorize their supervisee, many of them maybe don't have the same vision of doing things, they do things according to whose opinion, like if you think you did something, they tell you, you didn't do this because of that we going to rate as a, but they don't take it as something that you have to view yourself to know if you are growing or not. They use it as something to punish you, some supervisors do that* [Karabo, DSD interviewee, female].

These statements contradict Mullins' (2005), argument that a formalized and systemic appraisal scheme will enable regular assessment of individual performance, highlight potential and identify training and development needs. It can identify an individual's strengths and areas of development and indicate how such strengths may be best utilized and weaknesses overcome (Mullins, 2005).

One current DSD interviewee felt that PMDS is unfair because the employer pays all employees an equal amount for the PMDS whereas the kind of jobs they do are not the same. She further argued that the PMDS money is taxed according to the employee's salary, which will mean social workers get taxed more compared to the social auxiliary workers and at the end the day social auxiliary workers end up receiving more money than social workers because of PMDS. Bongiwe relates that,

> *….Like last year, the employer said they were going to pay us across the board …..… the auxiliary social workers they got the same bonus….? And they tax according to your salary and at the end of the day the auxiliary workers get more than the social workers…* [Bongiwe, DSD interviewee, female]

Contrary to what the current DSD interviewees expressed about the poor administration of PMDS, one former DSD interviewee felt that the PMDS is regulated fairly even

though it's not easy to attain it. Thembi held a view that PMDS is fair in how it is regulated and it is an added benefit for interviewees, she communicates that,

> *…PMDS- I think that was fair, based on the fact that there was a 13th cheque already, the PMDS is a bonus and getting is a mission but I think that its fair how they facilitate the whole process* [Thembi, former DSD interviewee, female].

Another former DSD interviewee felt that PMDS is a good tool that is meant for the development of interviewees. Gift is of the opinion that,

> *… PMDS is a good tool. It was meant for my development as a social worker and the other social workers within the Department. But the concern with PMDS is that most people don't understand it, especially managers, they use it for their own personal gain and to settle their personal issues.…* [Gift, former DSD interviewee, male].

This statement is in line with Mullins' 2005 assertion that performance appraisal can provide feedback on performance and discussions about potential and it can encourage employees to perform better.

Contrary to the other participants Gift felt that PMDS is a good tool which can be used to improve people's performance in the workplace. However Sabelo highlighted that PMDS could also have unintended consequences and make people lazy. He based his argument on the fact that when employees doesn't get the performance bonus, they neglect their work as way of getting back at management for not awarding them the bonus, forgetting that they still get paid every month to do their job. Sabelo shared his view by asserting that,

> *…I feel there isn't clear in the Department how PMDS works. It makes people lazy and if you don't get it that year you going to strike, go slow*

> *because you didn't get the money. PMDS should be if you have performed over and above your duties but if you do your duties only that you don't qualify for bonus* [Sabelo, former DSD interviewee, male].

This statement by Gift can be supported by the research conducted by the International Society for Performance Improvement, which states, depending on what is incentivized, employers can either encourage teamwork and cooperation or damage it. If the criteria or the recognition process are secret, if they appear to only recognize pet employees, employers are running the risk of alienating and demoralizing employees (International Society for Performance Improvement, 2002).

There seems to be a lot of unhappiness amongst interviewees regarding how the PMDS is regulated. This calls for a more transparent process in terms of how performance is evaluated and for clear evaluation criteria (scale) to indicate at what level an employee's performance can be rated as above average and qualify for a bonus. This information should be made available to employees through training, so that they may know and evaluate whether their performance is average or above average and whether they qualify for a bonus or not. Interviewees were also asked about their views on the social workers salary at DSD.

4.4.7. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE SOCIAL WORKERS SALARY AT DSD

Drench, Thierry and de Wolff (as cited in Vermeulen, 2008), state that the individual receives a salary or wage to be compensated for the work that they do and has a meaning for a person such as self-worth and self-esteem. When an individual receive their pay it should fulfill their basic needs of food, shelter and security as suggested by Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Moreover it should reduce their anxiety and further motivate the individual's behavior, performance and job satisfaction (Vermeulen, 2008). Four current DSD interviewees reported they were not happy with their salaries; they felt that social workers are underpaid. They added that social workers are underpaid compared to other

human service professions like psychologists, nurses and doctors. Furthermore, interviewees expressed the view that the Department is not recognizing higher qualifications in terms of remuneration. Zoleka expressed her view in the following manner,

> …*Umm I think the way they pay us we don't deserve it. If you see the scale of the clinical psychologists they are earning better that the government social workers. Even the private social workers are even earning better than us* [Zoleka, DSD interviewee, female].

Zoleka further argued that,

> …*the gap between social workers and social auxiliary workers in terms of remuneration is not that much, I am not saying they didn't study but it's only a year module and social workers spent four years in varsity but still we are not satisfied about the way they are paying us* [Zoleka, DSD interviewee, female]

Current and former DSD interviewees did not seem to be happy with their salaries at DSD, even though the Department is offering better remuneration packages than NGO's. This could indicate that interviewees believe that the grass is always greener on the other side, as they argue that social workers in private companies or private practice earn more than social workers at DSD. However, in reality, it might not always be greener on the other side.

One of the objectives of this research was to understand the views of current and former DSD interviewees on the effectiveness of the HR strategies that are used to retain social workers at DSD. This objective was partially achieved because the research was able to obtain the views of current and former DSD interviewees on the effectiveness of the HR strategies that are used at DSD to retain social workers.

Another question posed to the participants was about their views on other incentives that might be introduced to retain social workers at DSD.

4.4.8. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON OTHER INCENTIVES THAT MAY BE INTRODUCED TO RETAIN SOCIAL WORKERS

Two former DSD interviewees felt that an increase in social workers salaries could help retain social workers. Furthermore they maintained that social workers' packages should be restructured. This was apparent in statements from Thandeka and Patience, who recount that,

> *…Hmmmm, remuneration. I think remuneration should be improved and then we should be rated the same way as nurses and psychologists.* [Thandeka, former DSD interviewee, female]

> *…Eeh maybe not incentives per say but the restructuring of social workers' packages, meaning that maybe from now the Department should be the one paying more than anyone else in the country instead of the other way round.…* [Patience, former DSD interviewee, female].

In addition to these statements, former DSD interviewees felt that in order to retain social workers, the Department of Social Development should recognize social workers, make funding for post-graduate studies available to interviewees, cancel the housing allowance and create houses for government interviewees.

> *…the Department to make available of funding for people who want to pursue post-graduate studies, I think that could also make this social work job enticing because it will be seen in the eyes of people as having a lot of*

> *potential in terms of development* … [Katlego, former DSD interviewee, male].

On the other hand, Dineo reported that it's not only about incentives but also about the recognition of social workers that could go a long way in retaining social workers. She verbalizes,

> *…I think it's not about the incentives itself but we just need, the Department I just feel it's not recognizing social workers the way it should be, because the thing is there is a lot that social workers do at the DSD but they just chosen to turn a blind eye on that…..but I feel that one incentive that they could introduce is upping the scale because i think that most people…most people leave the DSD because of the salary and nothing else.…* [Dineo, former DSD interviewee, female]

> *…Hhhmmm…. Interesting maybe I would say housing, I would add on the housing and cancel the money and create houses for government employees or just for social workers, that would make a difference and it is going to ease the burden of social workers financially*…[Sabelo, former DSD interviewee, male].

When asked about their views on other incentives that may be used to retain social workers, current and former DSD interviewees reported that salary increment and recognition of social workers could go a long way in retaining social workers. The purpose of asking this question was that the researcher was aiming to find ways to foster optimal adaptation between the employees and the work environment at DSD. The findings from the study fit in with the scope of occupational social work practice as defined by Van Breda (2009), when he argued that Occupational Social Work (OSW), "is a specialized field of social work practice which addressed the human and social needs of the work community through a variety of interventions which aim to foster optimal adaptation between individuals and their environments". When looking at the issue of

retention of social workers within the DSD, one needs to consider the four clientele systems in the workplace (Van Breda, 2009). This includes looking at an employee-as-person, person-as-employee, organisation-as-client and employee-as-citizen Van Breda (2009). For instance interviewees in the study described a number of work-environment factors that were not conducive to work (i.e. shortage of office space, inadequate resources and poor resource allocation, inadequate remuneration). However, one cannot exclude the individual factors which emanate from the findings (.i.e. employees personal needs and preferences, lack of motivation and apathy from interviewees). Also societal standards of what work should be and what work should provide influenced how interviewees perceived and responded to their work and work environment.

4.5. JOB QUALITY AND JOB SATISFACTION

4.5.1. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON JOB QUALITY AND JOB SATISFACTION

It has been hypothesized that contextual factors in the work environments can influence an individual's creative behaviour. Studies also found that perceptions of the work environments do influence creative performance (Shalley, Gilson & Blum, 2000). Consistently, certain aspects of work environments have been found to have positive or negative effects on an individual's creativity. For instance, characteristics that have been shown to enhance employees' creativity include having a sense of control or autonomy on the job, viewing the work as important, challenging, and urgent, and receiving encouragement from supervisors (Shalley, Gilson & Blum, 2000). On the other hand, characteristics that have been found to diminish employees' creativity include the existence of rigid procedures, use of surveillance, lack of resources, and restricted control over work procedures (Shalley, Gilson & Blum, 2000).

The working conditions at DSD were reported to be unsatisfactory. Nine out of the ten current DSD interviewees reported that the working conditions at DSD are poor. They complained about lack of resources and staff shortages as well as inadequate office space as a result of which they are forced to share offices which then impacts on the client's right to privacy and confidentiality.

Palesa Nonhlanhla and Tumisang expressed their dissatisfaction with the working conditions at DSD by stating the following:

> *…Hmm, the condition is very bad, we don't have office space, lack of resource, there are people who have been acting on a position for like forever, and they are not filling the posts like things are not ok yeah…* [Palesa, DSD interviewee, female]

> *...the work space is not right, even the furniture is old, no windows its cold, they don't provide any heaters, they put the air cons last year but even today they are not working...* [Nonhlanhla, DSD interviewees, female].

> *… Computers are not there but sometimes we have to type reports and there are no laptops, no cell phones it makes your work even more difficult here. There is shortage of cars, like there is just shortage of everything here…….. So the working environment for me is not nice.* [Tumisang, DSD interviewee, male].

In similar vein former DSD interviewees also felt that lack of office space was a major problem at DSD. Sabelo stated that,

> *… I feel like social development doesn't know how to plan…, they know that they will be taking more social workers and when you get there, it's as if you are crushing, there is no space for you, you have to share an office with one or two people, there is no privacy and also there isn't enough cars…..* [Sabelo, former DSD interviewee, male].

Contrary to the view of current DSD interviewees who felt that office was inadequate, three former DSD interviewees felt that office space was adequate at DSD. This was expressed in statements like,

> *…Well, I was privileged I had an office so, and it was in a conducive place….* [Noluthando, former DSD interviewee, female].

> *…I'll say the working conditions was good considering that I had a nice office, I had privacy, hmmm the resources as well, even though some of the resources like internet were not there, so but generally the working conditions was better…* [Tshepo, former DSD interviewee, male]

> *…No really when I was at DSD there wasn't much that I could complain about, I was kind of a satisfied employee, even though everything wasn't perfected supposedly but anyway, there wasn't much room, for me to see flaws in terms of how the Department is runned….* [Katlego, former DSD interviewee, male].

Two former DSD interviewees felt that there was no proper work structure at DSD. This was captured in statements from Patience who reported that,

> *…..I find that there is a lot of? there is not structure. You are doing statutory there are a lot of things that you are going to be dealing with, enquiries from the HOD, some are food parcel related…...* [Patience, former DSD interviewee, female].

Thembi also agreed with Patience, she reported that,

> *…You know what I was not happy with the way we were structured, I felt the lack of resources that we sometimes had and to think that I was*

actually at the regional office it's scary when you realize that you don't have many resources that you should have, I mean being in the main office, yah I just feel that they really need to work on that because the environment affects the way you work… [Thembi, former DSD interviewee, female].

The most commonly expressed reasons by current DSD interviewees for not being satisfied with their jobs at DSD were due to the poor work environment and the lack of resources. Though there were former DSD interviewees who shared this view and reported that there wasn't a proper structure at DSD, there were three other former interviewees who felt happy and satisfied with their jobs at DSD.

4.5.2. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE WORK LOAD AT DSD

The demands of the social work job can result in social workers leaving. Job demands included increasing paperwork, unmanageable caseloads, and problems with difficult clients, as well as staff shortages and reduced availability of adequate supervision (Hansung & Stoner, 2008). Four current DSD interviewees felt that their workload was too much. This was captured in statements like,

…Current work load umm we have got a high case load we have got a very high case load especially foster care because people are throwing their children away [Bongiwe, DSD interviewee, female]

…Yoh we have lots of work load, but because the Department does not hire you end up with a high work load and at the end of the day you cannot satisfy each and every client and… you cannot complete your work satisfactorily with the client because you need to push… [Nonhlanhla, DSD interviewee, female].

Nonetheless, there were four current DSD interviewees who felt that their workload was manageable. The following extracts illustrate this,

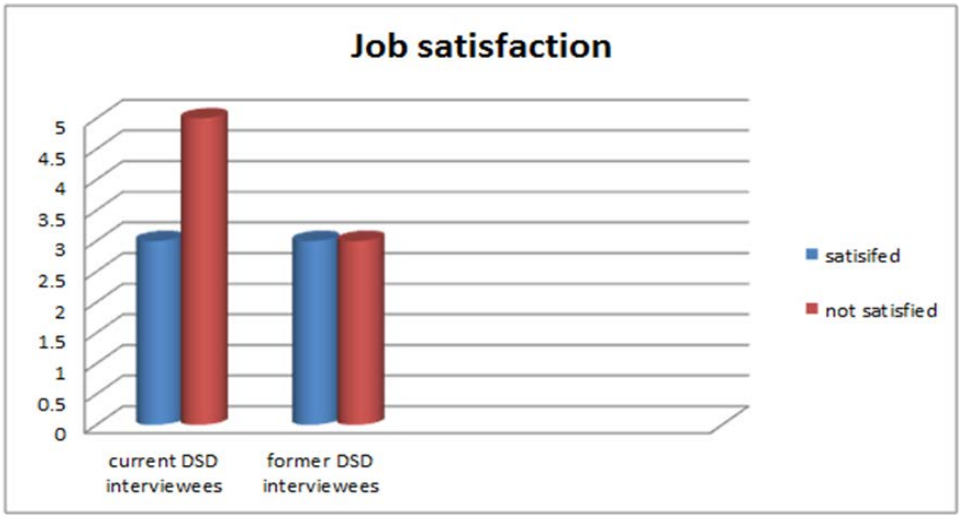
> *…Umm currently I am at welfare planning now-the work load that I have is I have 14 organisations that I am managing… so I would say its a manageable workload….* [Sindi, DSD interviewee, female].

> *…I believe presently it's normal, even though there are more influx with regards to the parenting plans but overall it's okay*….[Biotumelo, DSD interviewee,female].

Hansung & Stoner, (2008), suggest that demanding job conditions are significant antecedents of social worker burnout. This could suggest that interviewees, who perceived their workload as too much, may feel burnout and may have intentions to leave work, as opposed to those employees who perceived their workload as manageable. When stress levels among employees are high, this can have an adverse effect on absenteeism, staff retention rates and general work performance (Noblet, 2003).

4.5.3. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON JOB SATISFACTION

4.1. Chart



Job dissatisfaction is another factor that contributes to the challenges in the retention of social workers. Job satisfaction is defined as a collection of positive feelings or emotional states that a person perceived based on a variety of aspects of the work itself or of the

work environment (Hansung & Stoner, 2008). The satisfied workers will be more productive and stay with the organisation longer, while dissatisfied workers will be less productive and will have more tendency to quit their job (Hansung & Stoner, 2008). Three current DSD interviewees reported to be satisfied in their job. Palesa reported that

> …*Partly yes and partly no-there are some things that I feel like I am satisfied and then there are some things that I feel that really no they are not ok*… [Palesa, DSD interviewee, female].

There were also five current SDS interviewees who reported that they were not satisfied in their work. This theme was articulated in statemenst such as,

> …*No, I am not, number 1 the work space is not conducive, the salary is not right and the communication between management and the staff is not ok*…. [Nonhlanhla, DSD interviewee, female].

> ...*it seems as if we are not treated as professionals as it is supposed to be because some would say it's a scarce skill but with regards to the remuneration it doesn't show that it is a scarce skill*…. [Boitumelo, DSD interviewee, female].

On the other hand three former DSD interviewees reported that they were satisfied in their jobs. This was captured in statements like that one from Tshepo and Katlego, who verbalized that, *"I can say that I was, I was satisfied because there was no control, I was free, I was able to play around my time" [Tshepo, former DSD interviewee, male]*. This statement by Tshepo was interesting and it agreed with Gibson's argument that social work professional practice requires high levels of autonomy and independence whereas the hierarchical, bureaucratic organisational structures which characterize statutory social services may undermine autonomy (Gibson et. al, 1989).

Similarly to Tshepo, Katlego also reported that he was satisfied with his job at DSD. He verbalized that,

> …*I was very much satisfied in that but yes coming to the issue of personal growth, one has to grow, you can't be a junior social worker forever, and if there is an opportunity out there where you can grow go for it….* [Katlego, former DSD interviewee, male].

Contrary to this view of Tshepo and Katlego, three former DSD interviewees felt that they were not satisfied with their job at DSD. This was articulated in statements like,

> … *I didn't feel like I was doing my actual job description, I felt like I was trying to be a leader to people who were discriminating in terms of gender and ageism*…[Noluthando, former DSD interviewee, female]. In addition Sabelo stated that, *"No I was not, hence I decided to leave, I was not satisfied*….. [Sabelo, former DSD interviewee, male].

There wasn't a distinct difference between the views of former and current DSD interviewees in terms of their experiences of job satisfaction, as there were interviewees from both categories who reported to be satisfied, while other interviewees reported dissatisfaction with their jobs. Experience of job satisfaction amongst interviewees seemed to be dependent on where the interviewee was working in the Department and whether they had access to resources and proper office space. Job satisfaction was also dependent on how the interviewee felt about his or her salary.

4.5.4. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON HOW TO IMPROVE JOB QUALITY AND INCREASE JOB SATISFACTION

Research reveals that at a combination of high work pressure, lack of control over decision making and a lack of resources needed to do the work are detrimental to job satisfaction (Wilbertforce et. al, 2012). This could suggest that an improvement of any of these factors can improve the employees' experience of job satisfaction. Three current DSD interviewees reported that their satisfaction would be improved if the working conditions were improved by creating more office space, filling vacant posts, improving resource allocation, providing supervision for social workers and reviewing the OSD policy. Zoleka stated:

> *…Umm, I think if every social worker if she can have her own office, make resources are available ….that will improve our conditions of working. And review the OSD strategy*…..[Zoleka, DSD interviewee, female].

In addition to that, Tumisang a current DSD interviewee reported that he would be satisfied in his job if remuneration was increased. He stated that,

> *… They should just start with money….I mean if they could increase the money then maybe more and more young people would be attracted to the field.…* [Tumisang, DSD interviewee, male].

On the other hand former DSD interviewees reported that in order to improve employees' satisfaction at DSD, working conditions must be improved; there needs to be adequate support and consultation between management and employees in order to discuss the working conditions and what needs to be improved and how to implement proper structures. Patience argued that,

> *… if there was enough support from the management, there was a lot of reaching from the social workers what could be done,…., A person up doesn't really know what the person down, which when you set a policy*

> *up, you just setting a policy based on your ideas but not based on social workers' experiences.*…. [patience, former DSD interviewee, female].

> *…I think that …had the structure been a bit different in a sense that you don't so the same thing every year,… I feel like they should spice things up a bit and change what NPO does, add on people, because the whole idea of community development is funding them to uplift them so that they can become sustainable.*….. [Thembi, former DSD interviewee, female].

Current and former DSD interviewees agreed that an improvement in working conditions, salary increment and a review of OSD strategy could help to improve the employees' satisfaction in their jobs at DSD. The focus was on changing the work environment in order to increase job satisfaction, while little attention was paid to the individual factors that contribute to an employee's experience of job satisfaction.

An objective of this study was to explore the views of current and former DSD employees on job quality and job satisfaction. This objective was achieved because the researcher was able to gather the views of participants regarding their experiences of job satisfaction. Participants related whether they felt satisfied in their jobs and what contributes to their satisfaction or lack of satisfaction in their jobs. Participants also shared their views on what could be done to improve the quality of their work and increase their satisfaction in their jobs.

4.6. WORKPLACE SUPPORT

4.6.1. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR COLLEAGUES AND FORMER COLLEAGUES AT DSD

All participants from DSD reported having a good working relationship with their colleagues. They have become a source of support for each other. None of the participants reported experiencing problems in their relationship with their colleagues. This contrasts with a study conducted by Gibson et. al, (1989), on occupational stress, which revealed that ten percent of social workers felt that colleagues caused them more stress than clients with a further thirty-nine per cent feeling that this was true of some colleagues but not of others. The following extracts further illustrate the relationship between interviewees and their colleagues at DSD. Palesa reported that,

> …*I do have a good relationship with my colleagues. Maybe because of what is happening including the lack of resources and that and that but we understand it and then we are trying to sort of support each other yeah, we do have a good relationship with each other*…[Palesa, DSD interviewee, female].

> …*Umm the relationship with my colleagues I mean its ok so far I haven't had problems and I mean it's good*…[Tumisang, DSD interviewee, male].

> …*I don't have a problem with anyone (laughs), I think we working okay I would say, even though because we are individuals you having you own personality and I have my own personality but at the end of the day we have to work together for the benefit of our clients*… [Boitumelo, DSD interviewee, female].

Nine former DSD interviewees reported to have had a good relationship with their former colleagues at DSD. They reported that their colleagues were supportive of each other, assisted each other and shared information with one another and they reported having worked well as a team. However, there was one former DSD interviewee who described her relationship with her former colleagues at DSD as bitter sweet. She stated that,

> …*Relationship would describe it as bitter sweet, I think because of the environment that we were in, doesn't allow for good working relationship most of the time. Hmmm but some of the time you can…* [Thembi, former DSD interviewee, female].

Both current and former DSD interviewees reported that their colleagues were supportive. None of the participants reported experiencing problems or having conflict with their colleagues at DSD. It seems as if interviewees and their colleagues have became a source of support for each other.

4.6.2. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR SUPERVISORS AT DSD

Four current DSD interviewees reported that they have a good relationship with their supervisor at DSD. This was found in statements such as,

> …*It is good, she is open, even though nowadays we no longer have that one on one supervision with the supervisor, but her doors are always open for us to go and consult with her*….[Boitumelo, DSD interviewee, female].

Thato agree with Boitumelo when she expressed that:

> …*my relationship with my supervisor is very good. She's very supportive, every time when you go to her with a problem, like she's very supportive* [Thato, DSD interviewee, female].

In addition, seven former DSD interviewees felt that they had a good relationship with their supervisors at DSD, however, the manager (the supervisors' boss) was never visible. In addition to that interviewees felt that their supervisors conducted themselves in a professional manner and were supportive and provided guidance to their subordinates. This was shown in statements such as this,

> *…I had an excellent supervisor, wow that woman, she was very strict and professional, disciplined*…. [Katlego, former DSD interviewee, male].

> *…It was very good, in such a way I could tell the supervisor and they could give me advice on what to do, I think it was good and very supportive and very professional, it was a good professional relationship*… [Ntokozo, former DSD interviewee, male].

Nevertheless, there was one former DSD interviewee who reported that her relationship with her supervisor was one of conflict. She stated

> *…I don't think I even gave her the chance to tell her that, I saw she celebrated other people's problems, so I didn't want to tell her my problems (jah) so I, I would talk to my colleagues but particular her* [Noluthando, former DSD interviewee, female].

Current and former interviewees reported they had good relationships with their supervisors at DSD. But one former DSD interviewee reported that her relationship with her supervisor at DSD contained conflict. This finding could imply that generally interviewees have good relationships with their supervisors or that the interviewees fashioned socially desirable answers.

4.6.3. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR MANAGER AND FORMER MANAGER AT DSD

Three current DSD interviewees reported that they don't have a close relationship with their manager as they don't interact often with the manager. When asked about her relationship with her manager at DSD Lerato responded by saying,

> …*The one straight managing now, umm I cannot say much, I don't know her that well but from what I, but from the few months that I have been here, she seems very supportive*…..[lerato, DSD interviewee, female].

In addition, Tumisang reported that,

> … *They are in the 4th floor, I only see a manager once in a while…..* [Tumisang, DSD interviewee, male].

Similar to DSD interviewees, one former DSD interviewee reported that there was minimal contact between her and the manager. She reported,

> …*Manager- I've never have contact with the manager. I don't deal with them directly*…[Patience, former DSD interviewee, female].

Contrary to that, there were two former DSD interviewees who reported they had a good manager. This was shown in statements such as,

> …*It was very good as well, because if you come with an idea she would think about the idea and try to accommodate your ideas, she was a very good manager* [Ntokozo, former DSD interviewee, male].

Thandeka also reported having had a good relationship with her former manager at DSD. She stated,

> …*No problems as well, we were interacting well and we were doing the best given the shortfalls and problems that we were having then* [Thandeka, former DSD interviewee, female].

One former DSD interviewee felt that her relationship with her manager was not good; it was full of empty promises. This was shown in this statement:

> …*With the management it was not good at all, aah i think the management are not implementers you know, they make a lot of promises that they could not fulfill*…[Gift, former DSD interviewee, male].

Both current and former DSD interviewees reported to that they never had problems with their managers at DSD. However, they were critical of the fact that they had minimal contact with the manager, the managers are not visible or accessible to employees and that their communication with the manager was through the supervisor. It was interesting to note that none of the participants reported having conflict or any difficulties in their relationships with their managers at DSD.

4.6.4. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON WHAT COULD BE DONE TO ENSURE THAT THEY GET ALL THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO DO THEIR WORK.

Three current DSD interviewees felt improvements in communication between management and staff could help to improve their work performance. They reported that management needs to have meetings and proper communication with the social workers in order to improve service delivery. In addition to that two social workers reported that work performance might improve if more training could be provided, social workers' salaries could be increased and resources made available to employees. Thato reported that group supervision could be used as a means to improving work performance. She stated,

> …*I think I would like group supervision, like if we can have something like that.*… [Thato, DSD interviewee, female].

DSD interviewees reported that an improvement in communication between the managers and employees could help eliminate problems and ensure that employees get enough support to do their work. According to Keefe (2004), employees have as much responsibility as the management team for speaking up, setting expectations and requirements, and communicating barriers and opportunities. Encouraging employees to communicate with the senior team helps each group understand the other's duties and what can be done given the budget and expectations (Keefe, 2004). Employees should proactively tell the management team what they are struggling with and how managers can help. Reinforce the company's vision and state how current objectives contribute to it, then explain that the employees' input is needed to make attaining the vision a reality (Keefe, 2004).

One of the objectives of the study was to articulate the views of current and former DSD employees on workplace support. This objective was partially achieved as participants were asked questions about workplace support. However, it seemed like interviewees tended to give socially desirable answers when asked about their relationship with their colleagues, supervisors and managers at DSD.

4.7. OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

4.7.1. PARTICIPANTS VIEWS ON THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT AT DSD

One major area of the Human Resources Management function of particular relevance to the effective management and use of people, is training and development. Training is necessary to ensure an adequate supply of staff who are technically and socially competent and capable of career advancement into specialist Departments or management positions (Mullins, 2005). The purpose of training is to improve knowledge

and skills and to change attitudes. It is one of the most important potential motivators and can lead to possible benefits for individual and organisation. Training is therefore a key element of improved organisational performance; it increases the level of individual and organisational competence (Mullins, 2005). Training has to be relevant to the needs and requirements of the organisation and there is increasing emphasis placed on the value of vocational education (Mullins, 2005).

Four current DSD interviewees felt that their job at DSD does not offer opportunities for growth and development. Interviewees reported that the environment at DSD does not encourage people to study and develop further. They also complained that supervisors will choose the same people to go for training and those people don't give feedback to the rest of the staff members when they come back from the training. Interviewees feel that they are being excluded from attending training based on the supervisor's selection criteria. When asked if her job at DSD offers opportunities for growth and development, Zoleka responded by saying,

> …*Personal umm I don't think so, at this point no I don't think so…,our environment, the Department it's not encouraging us to study….* [Zoleka, DSD interviewee, female].

Another DSD interviewee is of the opinion that the OSD is hindering social workers growth and development at DSD. She argued,

> …*No, I mean just check now with this OSD you have to wait for 10 years to be a senior….* [Tumisang, DSD interviewee, male].

Nevertheless there were three current DSD interviewees who felt that their job at DSD does offer opportunities for growth and development. Palesa stated that,

> …*It does, yeah it does, both sides personal and professional* [Palesa, DSD interviewee, female]

In agreement with some of the current DSD employees, five former DSD interviewees felt that their jobs at DSD did not offer them any opportunity for growth and development. They based their argument on the fact that some of the interviewees at DSD have been there for more than ten years but are still in junior positions. Participants felt that there are no proper growth structures at DSD. This can be further clarified by an extract from Sabelo who said that,

> …*Professionally no, reason being in the Department if you a social worker you will always be a social worker, there isn't anything you can do*…. [Sabelo, former DSD interviewee, male].

However, not all former DSD interviewees were of the opinion that their jobs at DSD did not offer opportunities for growth and development. Five former DSD interviewees reported that their job did offer opportunities for growth and development. This was shown in statements such as this one by Katlego,

> …*Yah I think yes, certainly hmm one thing I also liked about DSD was that they used to organize quite a lot of trainings…. At DSD they exposed us to a lot of area which are applicable to the profession itself and that added value and it also enticed my appetite to enquire more*….. [Katlego, former DSD interviewee, male].

The views of interviewees on this aspect was divided, with some feeling that their jobs offered enough opportunities for growth and development while others felt that their jobs did not offer opportunities for growth and development. Five current DSD interviewees and five former DSD interviewees did not see their jobs at DSD as offering equal opportunities for growth and development for all employees. Even though they mention

that there was training at DSD, they felt that such training benefited a selected few and not all employees. Nevertheless there were three current DSD interviewees and five former DSD interviewees who felt that their jobs at DSD did offer enough opportunities for growth and development.

4.7.2. WORKPLACE TRAINING

Current DSD interviewees reported having attended a number of training programmes, on topics such as the Children's Act, HIV and AIDS, risk management, induction training, labor relations training, Ke moja training and supa tsela. Seven current DSD interviewees felt that the training programmes that they have attended were effective and beneficial to them. Palesa reported that,

> …*It is helping; it is making us grow professionally to understand the Act more, better Yeah* [Palesa, DSD interviewees, female].

However there were three other DSD interviewees who felt that the training programmes they attended were not beneficial to them. Thato reported,

> …*no it was not relevant to what we are doing* [Thato, DSD interviewee, female].

Karabo agreed with Thato, when she claimed,

> …*they are not social work related* [Karabo, DSD interviewee, female].

Participants also reported that the training courses they attended were not the training that they had requested, but was training identified by management as necessary for the employees. This inability to self-select training programmes was seen as unfair by employees and as a result they did not see the trainings provided to them by management

as beneficial to them. This can be further explained by an extract from an interview with Gift, who stressed,

> *….But those are not the trainings that I have requested, remember there is a training that you request when you do PMDS Portfolio, those were never done. So those were trainings that were imposed on you by management*… [Gift, former DSD interviewee, male].

Nonetheless, there were five former DSD interviewees who reported that the training programmes they attended were beneficial to them. This position was articulated in the next quotes

> *…They were both beneficial because some of the things that I've learned then, like there was a course I did and it actually helped me a lot when I moved to the Department of Health. It was something that I needed more, so they were both yah both personal and professional* [Dineo, former DSD interviewee, female].

> *…They were very good; especially the forensic report writing was very good. It improved the quality of my reports, so that one was very good*… [Gift, former DSD interviewee, male].

Both current and former DSD interviewees reported having attended different types of training programmes. While some felt that this training was effective and informative others felt that these training courses were not beneficial to them as the trainings were imposed on them. This shows that there is a need for proper integration between the training that the staff needs and what training management can provide with consideration to the budget costs and the benefits that those training programmes have for employees and the benefits to the organisation as a whole.

4.7.3 PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON WHAT COULD BE DONE TO PROVIDE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRWOTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Nine current DSD interviewees felt that more training should be provided in order to ensure that employees have opportunities for growth and development. The interviewees suggested training such as adoption training, computer literacy, training on Departmental policies, induction training, and management skills and monitoring and evaluation training. This position was articulated in the next quote sentences such as:

> …*Yeah, there are trainings that I feel they will provide growth to me like computer literacy, and also I can just to be taught about policies in the Department know what is it that is expected of me as an interviewee, because if those policies if they maybe can be transferable to us* [Palesa, DSD interviewee, female].

Two former DSD interviewees felt that more training should be provided in order to ensure that employees have opportunities for growth and development. They suggested training on sign language and six months training programmes where employees can get certificates that they can use outside DSD. This was shown in statements such as,

> …. *to have more specified training where sign language is concerned… I think every social worker needs to have some knowledge as far as sign language is concerned* [Ntokozo, former DSD interviewee, male].

> …*Yes…intensive training where you could go for 6 months and then come out with an certificate that you can use outside the Department or even within the Department, where you can create projects or use the information you learned on training to improve thing happening in the Department.*…. [Sabelo, former DSD interviewee, male].

Another former DSD interviewee felt that research can be instrumental in ensuring that employees are provided with enough opportunities for growth and development. He verbalized that,

> *…I think a research of this nature can help to look into the current crop of social workers, where they are and where would they want to be……and also the Department should do something in as far as re-positioning social workers is concern* [Gift, former DSD interviewee, male].

When asked what could be done to ensure that employees have adequate opportunities for growth and development, interviewees made reference to the different training programmes they need and that have potential value to them. Interviewees also expressed the need for more intensive training courses that could take six months and for which you can get a certificate.

Another objective of this study was to establish the views of current and former DSD employees about the opportunities for growth and development at the DSD. This objective was achieved as participants were asked if their job at DSD offered them opportunities for growth and development. Participants also reported having attended a number of training programmes which were beneficial to them and their training needs.

4.8. TURNOVER

4.8.1. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE STRATEGIES THAT ARE USED AT DSD TO RETAIN SOCIAL WORKERS

Five current DSD interviewees felt that the HR strategies that are currently used to retain social workers are not retaining them and actually are doing the opposite of that as they are making social workers leave the Department. Other DSD interviewees felt that the

HR strategies that are used to retain social workers need to be improved. This can be further explained by the extract from Bongiwe's statement,

> …*The strategies that are implemented to retain social workers is doing the opposite of what they think they are doing, those strategies according to me…make social workers run away from the profession.…* [Bongiwe, DSD interviewee, female].

Another current DSD interviewee felt that social workers would be retained if remuneration was increased. She reported that,

> …..*I really believe that salary increase is the only way that can retain the social workers, I really believe that* [Palesa, DSD interviewee, female].

A former DSD interviewee felt that the HR strategies that are currently used to retain social workers are not retaining them. Two former DSD interviewees felt that social workers could be retained if remuneration was increased. Another interviewee reported that the strategy that was introduced in 2007, the car subsidy, was effective but now they need to develop more HR strategies that can retain social workers. Two former DSD interviewees reported that social workers might be retained if the Department provided a rural allowance and reworked the OSD strategy. Gift was of the opinion that social workers would be retained in the Department if social work could be repositioned as a profession. He elaborated by saying,

> ….. *I think there is a need especially by the Department and the SACSSP; they need to re-position social worker. Social work needs to be repositioned as a profession.…its one of those professions that are undermined by society, especially the professional community, mostly because of the remuneration of social workers and the conduct of social workers themselves*…[Gift, former DSD interviewees, male].

The HR strategies that are used at DSD to retain social workers were seen as contributory factors to social workers leaving the Department. Interviewees reported that an increase in remuneration and repositioning of social workers can help retain social workers within the Department. However, they failed to elaborate on how social work can be repositioned as a profession.

4.8.2. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON SOCIAL WORKERS LEAVING DSD

Satisfied workers will be more productive and stay with the organisation longer, while dissatisfied workers will be less productive and will have more tendency to quit their job (Hansung & Stoner, 2008). Four current DSD interviewees felt that social workers leave DSD because of low salaries. Other participants felt that social workers leave DSD because of the high workload and lack of support from supervisors and the poor working conditions.

Others felt that social workers leave DSD because they have found greener pastures elsewhere. One DSD interviewee reported that she feels that social workers leave the Department because of the retention strategies that are used to retain social workers, such as the OSD and social work salaries. She stated that,

> *…I think if, the reasons for social workers leaving this Department is because of those strategies that they implement to retain social workers especially OSD and the salary…..* [Bongiwe, DSD interviewee, female].

Similarly to the DSD interviewees, some former DSD interviewees reported that social workers leave the Department because they are underpaid while others reported that social workers leave the Department because they find better offers elsewhere. In addition to that, three former DSD interviewees felt that social workers leave the Department for personal growth reasons. Dineo stated that,

> *…I would say i think people would leave the DSD for many reasons and it's merely for personal growth and a lot of obviously it's their choice to as to why they would leave DSD…* [Dineo, former DSD interviewee, female].

The most commonly expressed reasons for leaving DSD amongst interviewees included the inadequate remuneration of social workers, because they found greener pastures or for personal growth reasons.

4.8.3. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL WORKERS LEAVING THE PROFESSION TO WORK IN OTHER PROFESSIONS

Three current DSD interviewees felt that if social workers leave the profession of social work to work in other professions that will cause a brain drain in the profession. Tumisang reported that,

> *…The implication for the profession, umm obviously there is going to be a shortage as more and more young people will be attracted to the field but once they are on the floor they are going to leave the field so I don't know if I have stated it nicely* [Tumisang, DSD interviewee, female].

Other DSD interviewees are of the opinion that if social workers leave the profession of social work to work in other professions, it will create a backlog for the social workers who are left in the Department and it will have a negative effect on service delivery. This finding is in line with Hansung & Stoner's (2008), argument where they stated that worker turnover causes psychological distress in remaining staff members and in new and inexperienced workers who fill vacated positions. It also leads to client mistrust of the system and financial problems for the organisation.

An interesting point was raised by one former DSD interviewee who reported that it is good for social workers to leave the profession if they are not passionate about it and that it will cause more damage for them to remain in the profession of social work when they are passionate about being a music DJ or doing something else rather than social work. Similarly, four former DSD interviewees felt that if social workers leave the profession of social work to work in other professions that will have a negative impact and create gaps in the profession. An example of that is an extract from an interview with Tshepo, who reported that,

> *…Hmmmm, yes it creates a gap, a serious gap because if you see those who are leaving are experienced, so those new ones who are coming they need few years of experience to be able to close that gap. So it creates gap and that gap takes forever to be filled…* [Tshepo, former DSD interviewee, male].

In addition to that Sabelo stated that,

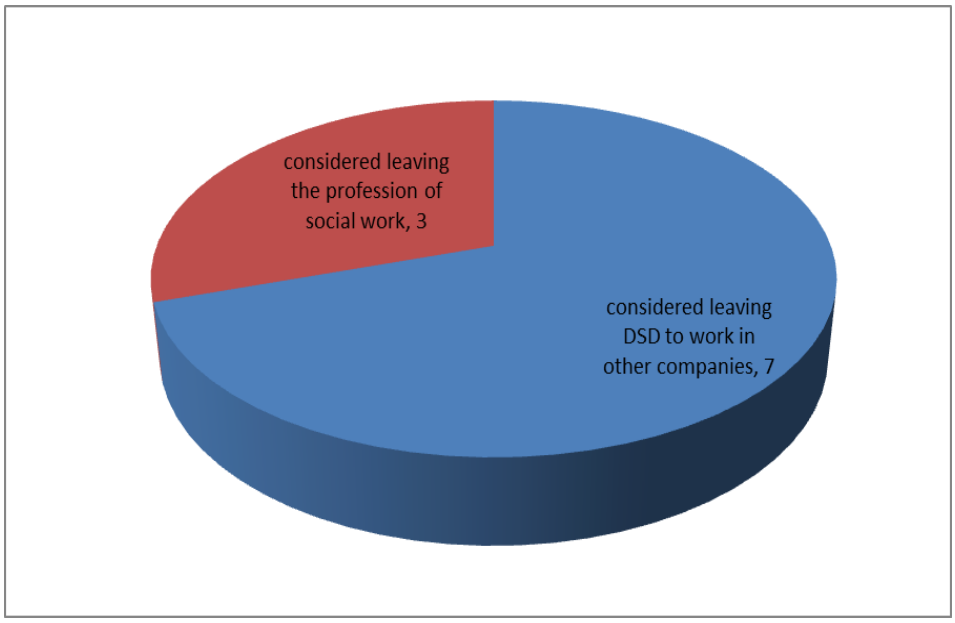
> *…I feel a lot of people are not going to be motivated to do social work, even those that are in universities also there is going to be a huge gap in the field because a lot of social workers are leaving, many new social workers are coming so there is going to be a huge gap of experience where a lot of people are inexperience are in the profession.…* [Sabelo, former DSD interviewee, male].

Interviewees expressed the concern that if social workers leave the profession it will create a gap in skills and knowledge and it will also lead to work overload and burnout for those social workers who are still left in the profession. The interviewees raise an important point when they mention that it is okay for social workers to leave the profession if they are not passionate about it and that keeping them in the profession

while they are not passionate about it can cause more damage than good. This is interesting to note as literature often focuses on the brain drain which is caused by professionals leaving the profession to work in other professions.

4.8.4 PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON WHETHER THEY HAVE CONSIDERED LEAVING DSD TO WORK IN OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Chart 4.2. Current DSD interviewees views on possibility to leave DSD to work in other companies



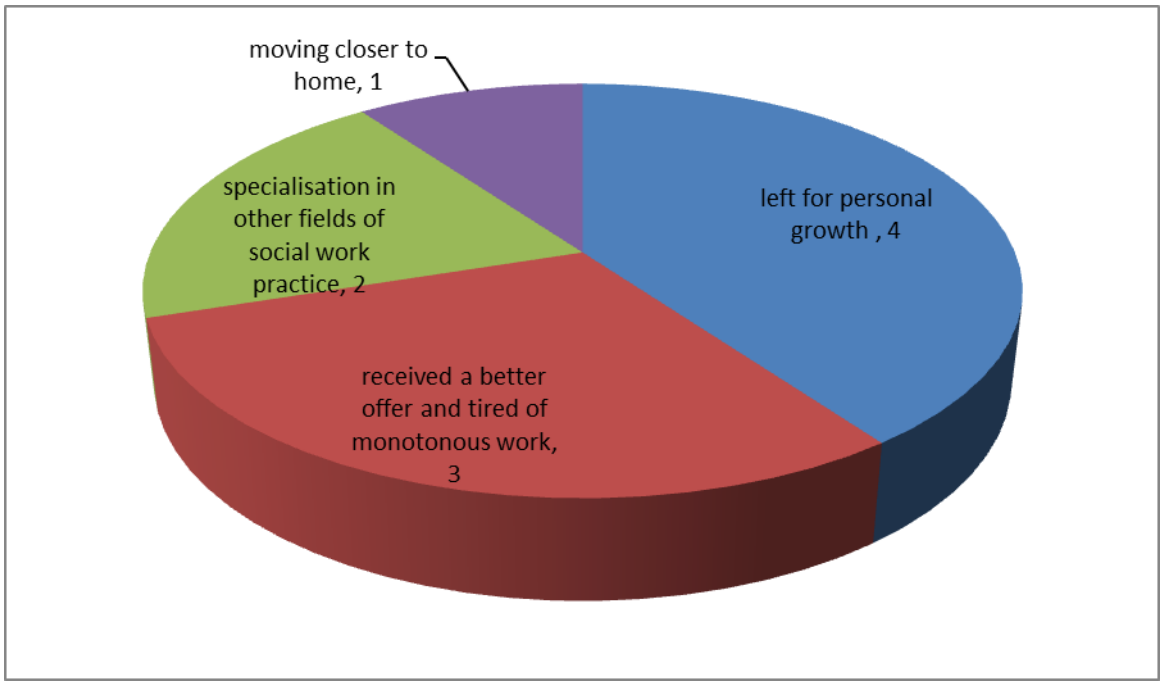
Seven out of ten current DSD interviewees reported that they have considered leaving the DSD to work in other Departments or the private sector. While the three other participants reported that they considering leaving the profession of social work and not just the Department. This theme was articulated in the following expressions,

> *…For now no, but I am planning to study further, I am planning to do educational psychology then so at least I can leave the social work"[Nonhlanhla, DSD interviewee, female]*. In addition to that Karabo

verbalized that, *"I have considered leaving social work, not leaving the Department* [Karabo, DSD interviewee, female].

White (2003), argues that the pull of higher salaries, increased benefits, better working conditions and better career opportunities in other professions can result in social workers leaving the profession and pursuing other careers.

Chart 4.3 former DSD interviewee's views on why they left DSD



Two former DSD interviewees reported that they left the DSD for personal growth reasons. Others reported that they left the DSD because they had received a better job offer elsewhere, they were tired of doing monotonous work and one said she was working far from home and she wanted to move closer to home. Two former DSD interviewees reported that they left the Department because they wanted to specialize in

the field of Occupational Social Work and Empoyee Assistance programme which were not offered by the Department of Social Development. This was shown in statements such as,

> *…I wanted to go into occupational social work, and I wasn't that happy because initially from finishing my degree the first thing I wanted to do was go into occupational social work and then one of my lectures advise me against leaving work…..and said rather go get experience and come back*…[Noluthando, former DSD interviewee, female].

This statement form Noluthando was supported by Gift who stated that,

> *…I was more passionate about EAP, which is not done by DSD, so the Department of Infrastructure Development offered me that opportunity* [Gift, former DSD interviewee, male].

It was interesting to see that seven DSD interviewees reported having intentions to leave the DSD while three DSD interviewees reported having intentions to leave the profession of social work to work in other professions. Meanwhile former DSD interviewees reported having left DSD for greener pastures, personal growth and specialization in other fields of practice.

Another objective of the study was to understand the views of current and former DSD employees on the potential reasons for social workers to leave the DSD and the profession of social work to work in other professions. This objective was achieved as participants shared their views with the researcher on the potential reasons for social workers leaving the DSD and the profession of social work for other professions.

4.8.5. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON OTHER STRATEGIES THAT COULD BE DEVELOPED TO RETAIN SOCIAL WORKERS AT DSD

Four current DSD interviewees felt more social workers would be retained in the Department if the remuneration packages of social workers could be increased. Three current DSD interviewees felt more social workers might be retained in the Department if the OSD strategy was cancelled. Other participants reported that social workers could be retained in the Department if resource allocation is improved (cellphones, housing and car subsidy), social workers receive recognition, training courses where social workers can go for six months and get certificates are provided, all retention strategies and policies are reviewed, communication between management and interviewees are improved and communication barriers in their relationship are removed. This was expressed in the following statement,

> *…reducing communication barriers, if they can have at least give themselves once a week a time to listen to your cases, what you are experiencing with the client and assisting. Because I believe they were once social workers before they became management or directors. So at least if they can be able to sit down with them and share our experiences that could work for us and at the end of the day we would have one common goal….* [Nonhlanhla, DSD interviewee, female].

Four former DSD interviewees reported that more social workers could be retained if the salary is increased, more incentives are introduced and resource allocation is improved. On the other hand, two former DSD interviewees reported that social workers could be retained if the OSD policy is reviewed. This was captured in the following statement,

> *…I think that if they can maybe try to re-address the OSD…..* [Tshepo, former DSD interviewee, male].

Similarly Gift reported that,

> *…I would stick with the OSD part, rework it, the preamble is fine, if everything else that they do can be guided by the preamble.…* [Gift, former DSD interviewee, male].

An improvement in the remuneration packages of social workers, improved resource allocation and the review of the OSD strategy were seen by both current and former DSD interviewees as a possible method that can be used to retain social workers at the DSD.

CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the analysis of the data generated via semi-structured interviews. Results were presented and discussed in accordance with the objectives of the study. Findings from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed in two ways. Closed-ended items were analyzed using descriptive statistics whereas open-ended were analyzed using thematic content analysis.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMEMDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters have provided an overview of the research study, looked at the methodology that was followed and analysed the data that was collected, as well as presented the limitations of the study. The aspects discussed in the chapters included an overview of workplace incentives, strategies that are used to retain social workers at DSD, the social workers' remuneration, other incentives that could be used to retain social workers, job quality and job satisfaction, workplace support, opportunities for growth and development and social worker's turnover. This chapter will summarize the research report by discussing the main findings of the overall research study.

In addition to the primary aim of the study, there were eight secondary objectives that the study set out to investigate. A summary will be provided with reference to each of these secondary objectives and will be informed by the data gathered from the qualitative study conducted. It will also discuss the conclusions that were reached by the researcher as a result of the findings of the study which were discussed in chapter four. Lastly, the chapter will discuss the recommendations of social workers and social work supervisors and policy makers and the possibilities for future research.

5.2. MAIN FINDINGS

The overall aim of this research study was to explore the views of social workers regarding the HR strategies used to retain social workers at the DSD. It also aimed to explore other strategies that could be established to retain social workers. Other factors that were discussed included job quality and job satisfaction, opportunities for growth and development and reasons for social workers leaving the DSD and the profession of social work to work in other professions.

5. 3. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Interviewees were aware of the existence of the HR strategies used to retain social workers, however there was also lack information regarding these strategies. It is speculated that this lack of information could be the result of a lack of initiative from the employees to enquire and gather information in this regard or could be a result of lack of proper communication of these strategies by management. Interviewees were happy that the department is offering the danger allowance; however, the amount that is being paid out for the danger allowance was seen as too small as it does not cover the medical bills. Interviewees were also not happy about their salaries and it was reported that the DSD does not recognise higher qualifications such as a Master's degree in terms of remuneration. Interviewees reported that social workers can be retained at DSD if high qualifications can be recognised in terms of remuneration and funding for post graduate studies can be provided. Interviewees were of the opinion that there was inadequate office space, poor resource allocation (stationary, cell phones, computers and cars), staff shortages and inappropriate work structures. The one area that interviewees reported positively on was having a good relationship with their colleagues, supervisors and Managers (though contact with manager was minimal) at DSD. Trainings were not linked to the personal growth needs of interviewees and as a result this was another area of dissatisfaction.

Interviewees reported having left the Department due to personal growth reasons, having received a better offer, being tired of monotonous work and wanting to specialise. Interviewees reported that social workers could be retained in the Department if the remuneration packages for social workers were improved, the OSD and all other government policies were reviewed, a rural allowance was provided, resource allocation was improved, social workers were recognised as professionals, communication between management and employees was improved and new retention strategies that can retain social workers were introduced.

5.4. CONCLUSION

The dissatisfaction was expressed regarding the strategies that are used to retain social workers at DSD and they felt that the strategies need to be reviewed and new strategies need to be developed. This was the result of lack of proper communication of the strategies by management as well the lack of initiatives by interviewees to independently obtain more information regarding the HR strategies.

5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations here are directed to social workers and social work supervisors, policy makers and future research.

5.4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DPSA

With regard to the policy makers, the researcher recommends that policy formulation regarding the strategies that are used at DSD to retain social workers should take into account the work-environment circumstances that affect employees' satisfaction and dissatisfaction at work, employee performance and employee turnover. Social workers need to be consulted and need to be involved in the formulation of the retention strategies that will be developed to retain social workers. Retention strategies need to be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in retaining social workers and they need to be modified,

taking into account the changing work environment and they also need to be aligned with the job market.

5.4.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HR MANAGERS

It is recommended that HR managers should provide information to the employees regarding the strategies that are used to retain social workers at DSD. HR managers should provide training to the staff regarding the strategies that are used to retain social workers at DSD. HR managers should also conduct an annual evaluation of the retention strategies and review these strategies when necessary and also take into consideration the patterns of tenure and turnover in the Department.

5.4.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS AND SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS

With regards to social workers and social work supervisors, the researcher recommends that there should be improved communication between social workers and supervisors. Social workers and supervisors must work closely with each other and supervisors must give social support and guidance to social workers, more especially the newly qualified social workers, with regard to the difficult cases they receive. Supervisors must provide monthly supervision to all the staff in their span of control. There is a need for clarity on the selection criteria used to select employees who will attend a particular training course and also a need to ensure all employees get equal chances to attend training courses. Supervisors also need to be trained on how to conduct performance evaluations in a fair and objective manner and the importance of avoiding an unfair and biased evaluation process. Lastly, there is a need for greater transparency in the performance evaluation process and employees should be made aware of what level of performance qualifies for a bonus and what does not. The process of evaluation should be a joint effort between the supervisor and the employees and they should both mutually agree on the scores given to the employee for their performance, which affects whether the employee qualifies or does not qualify for a bonus.

5.4.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

With regards to future research, the researcher recommends that future research should be conducted focusing on social workers in one field of practice i.e. foster care and it should be aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of one retention strategy, i.e. OSD or PMDS. Future research should also be conducted focusing on getting the views of supervisors, managers regarding the effectiveness of the strategies used at DSD to retain social workers.

5.6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

It is crucial to understand the characteristics of the current crop of social workers in the Department and to use this data to build and maintain a healthy work environment. Understanding the views of employees is fundamental to retaining social workers in the Department and reducing the movement of social workers out of the profession. Retaining the number of social workers within the profession and preventing the loss of skills (experienced social workers), is crucial in ensuring the growth and preservation of the profession of social work especially in South Africa at this moment in time (Wermeling, 2009).

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APPENDIX A

“Social work as a scarce skill: Exploring the perspectives of social workers regarding the retention strategies used to retain social workers within the Department of Social Development”.

Participant’s information sheet

Good day

My name is Jabulile Mavimbela and I am currently enrolled for a Master’s Degree in Occupational Social Work at the University of Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for the degree, I am conducting research on “Social work as a scarce skill: Exploring the perspectives of social workers regarding the retention strategies used to retain social workers within the Department of Social Development”. It is hoped that this study could inform decision making processes in relation to the recruitment and retention strategies for social workers in government Departments and in the country.

I therefore wish to invite you to participate in my study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and refusal to participate will not be held against you in any way. If you agree to participate, you required to sit for a 45 minutes interview at a convenient time for. You may withdraw from the study or refuse to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable with answering. With your permission, the interview may be recorded as evidence of information gathering process. No one other than the researcher and researcher's supervisor will have access to the tapes. Please be assured that your name and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report. However you will be require to include your job title, no. of years you have been in the profession, gender and age.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions regarding the study. I shall answer them to the best of my ability. Should you wish to receive a summary of the results of the study; an abstract will be made available on request. For more information regarding the study I can be contacted at 078 138 6314 or via email: jabu2l@yahoo.com. Or alternatively you can contact my research supervisor Roshini Pillay on this number 011 717 4486 or via email: roshini.pillay@wits.ac.za.

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

Yours sincerely
Jabulile Mavimbela
…….
Masters student at the University of Witwatersrand

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS WHO ARE CURRENTLY WORKING AT THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Section A: Biographical Details

Job title :
No. of years in the profession :
Gender :
Age :

Section B: Financial aspect

What is you understanding of incentives?
Discuss some of the incentives used to retain social workers?

What are your views on the effectiveness of these incentives?

Are there other suitable incentives that maybe introduced?

Section C: Job Quality and Job Satisfaction

Describe the current working conditions of social workers at DSD?

What are the requirements of your job?

Would you say you are satisfied in your job?

What could be done to improve the quality of your job and increase your satisfaction at work?

Section D: Workplace Support

Describe your relationship with our colleagues?

Would you say your colleagues are supportive?

Describe your relationship with your manager?

Would you say your manager is supportive?

What do you think should be done to ensure that you get the support you need?

Section E: Opportunities for Growth and Development

Does your job offer you opportunities for growth and development?

Both personally and professionally?

What could be done to ensure that you get adequate opportunities for growth and development?

Section F: Turnover

What are your views regarding the strategies that are used to retain social workers in the DSD?

Why are your views regarding social workers leaving the DSD?

What are your views regarding the implications of social workers leaving the profession for other professions?

When given the opportunity, would you consider leaving DSD to work in other Departments?

What are your views regarding other strategies that can be employed to retain social workers in the DSD?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS WHO HAVE LEFT THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION TO WORK IN OTHER PROFESSIONS

Section A: Biographical Details

Job title at DSD :

No. of years employed at DSD :

Current employer :

Number of years in the company :

Gender :

Age group :

Section B: Financial aspect

What is you understanding of incentives in general?

Discuss some of the incentives that were used to retain social workers in the DSD?

What are your views on effectiveness of these incentives?

Are there other suitable incentives that maybe introduced to retain social workers in the DSD?

Section C: Job Quality and Job Satisfaction

Describe the working conditions of social workers during your employment at DSD?

What were the requirements of your job?

Were you satisfied in your job?

What could have been done to improve the quality of your job and increase your satisfaction at work?

Section D: Workplace Support

Describe your relationship with your former colleagues at DSD?

Were they supportive?

Describe your relationship with your former manager in DSD?

Was he or she supportive?

What do you think should have been done to ensure that you had the support you needed?

Section E: Opportunities for Growth and Development

Did your job at DSD offered you opportunities for growth and development?

Both personally and professionally?

What could have been done to ensure that you had opportunities for growth and development?

Section F: Turnover

What are your views regarding the strategies that were used to retain social workers in the DSD?

Why are your views regarding social workers leaving the DSD?

What are your views regarding the implications of social workers leaving the profession for other professions?

What made you decide to leave the DSD to work in another Department?

What strategies could have been used to retain social workers in the DSD?

APPENDIX D

Consent Forms for participation in the study

I hereby consent to participate in the proposed research. I have fully understood the purpose and the procedures of the study that have been explained to me. I was also given an opportunity to ask questions and received satisfactory answers to all my questions. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I have a right to refuse to participate in the study or withdraw participation at any point with no negative consequences to me. I also understand that I have a right to privacy and to have my responses kept confidential unless I give permission for disclosure.

Participant's name : _____

Date : _____

Signature : _____

Researcher's name : _____

Date : _____

Signature : _____

APPENDIX E

Consent form for audio-taping of the interview

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

Participant's name : _____

Date : _____

Signature : _____

Researcher's name : _____

Date : _____

Signature : _____