

**INTER-ORGANISATIONAL COLLABORATION:
SOCIAL WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING COLLABORATION
IN CHILD AND FAMILY WELFARE**

MADODA SITSHANGE

**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND,
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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Social Work by coursework and research report in Industrial Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination purposes in any other university.

_____: Mr.

MADODA SITSHANGE

_____:

DATE

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research report was to explore and describe social workers' perceptions of the concept of inter-organisational collaboration. This was done by delineating their understanding of the nature of collaborations, its purposes, specific hindering as well as its facilitating factors, and by analysing the impact of collaboration on the delivery of welfare services. Twenty-five social workers working in Child and Family Welfare were interviewed by the researcher using a specially designed interview schedule with closed-ended and open-ended questions. The research design was exploratory-descriptive using descriptive statistics and thematic content analyses to process and analyse the data. The research findings revealed that while some social workers actively participated in, and understood the importance of partnerships, their practice experiences tended not to be closely aligned with theory, a gap requiring more investigation. A number of researchers extrapolate specific elements in order to distinguish different forms of partnerships, i.e. networking, co-ordination, collaboration etc., something the research participants tended not to do. The implications for service delivery would match different types of partnerships with the nature of social problems social workers need to deal with, in order to enhance the quality of welfare services. Less intense forms of partnerships, for instance networking and co-ordination which does not require the integration of services, might not match or present an adequate strategy to impact long term on social problems; while collaborations, the chief characteristic of which is the integration of services, would be an adequate option to impact on social problems that one agency can not solve in a unilateral approach. Exploring and describing different forms may be a significant step in the application of service delivery strategies that would ultimately have a sustainable impact on the quality of welfare services.

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