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The Provision of School Social Work Intervention Services: A Case Study of Schools in Johannesburg

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UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

The Provision of School Social Work Intervention Services: A Case Study of Schools in Johannesburg

A report on a research study presented to

**The Department of Social Work
School of Human and Community Development
Faculty of Humanities
University of the Witwatersrand**

**In partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Arts in School Social Work by**

LERELLE SMITH

Supervisor: Dr Motlalepule Nathane-Taulela

May 2024

DECLARATION

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

School of Human and Community Development

SENATE PLAGIARISM POLICY

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Signature:  **Date:** 14 May 2024

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First, to GOD be the glory! HE has never forsaken me, and HIS mercy endures forever!

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GOD Bless!

ABSTRACT

School Social Work has been practised for decades in countries such as the United States of America, Australia, and the United Kingdom. However, in South Africa although social work is widely practised, not many of these professionals are placed in schools. School social work intervention is described as the first experience of psychological support that most children receive. However, many schools in South Africa are without access to school social workers. Hence, they rely on one regional social worker who services multiple schools. Wealthy schools have access to multiple professionals such as educational psychologists and social workers, to provide learner support. The use of non-probability purposeful sampling was applied in this qualitative study, 10 social workers, who were placed in: public schools, governing-body schools, and private schools, which represent different socio-economic communities in Johannesburg. Data were collected through interviews and the use of a semi-structured interview schedule and thematic coding was utilised for data analysis. Findings reveal the complex and ununified state of school social work. They also shed light that there is a need to train more school social workers, especially those rendering services to learners with special needs. Additionally, there is a need for more resources, and staff to be made available, especially in public schools totally dependent on the government for funding to ensure the provision of high-quality school social work services. The main findings also indicate that many school learners occasionally experience some form of psychosocial challenges, which requires support from a social worker. However, many schools' social workers are inundated with high caseloads. Therefore, the study concludes that there is a need for more school social work services. This is because many children in public-schools are more disadvantaged due to inaccessibility of school social workers. Thus, the burden is placed on teachers to teach while they also identify learners' need and support them.

Keywords: resources, school social worker, independent schools, public schools, interventions

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Introduction

South Africa has suffered deeply entrenched inequalities. These inequalities are also affecting children. The children from wealthy families have better opportunities to access learning compared to those from low-income families (Czerniewicz, 2020; Sikhangezile & Modise, 2020). These inequalities are often linked to the complex history of South Africa and are marked along class, race, geographical location, and urban-rural divide, which characterises the landscape of the country. Jones and Muller (2016) discuss various advances that South Africa has made to become one of the strongest economies in Africa. Despite the economic achievements, there are remnants of inequalities within South Africa's schools and broader society. The inequality has been established by various forms of racism, discrimination, historical slavery, and various colonial settlement conquests (Jones & Muller, 2016).

In South Africa, school social work services are limited. According to statistics cited in Vergottini and Weyers (2020), the country's provinces have respectively appointed the following numbers of school social workers: Limpopo (180), Western Cape (166), Free State (32), Gauteng (27), KwaZulu-Natal (25), however this only represent some provinces. Kemp (2014) and NACOSWEPP (2015, cited in Vergottini & Weyers, 2020), explain that many provincial government departments are still not employing social workers. These figures are very low compared to the number of school social workers that are needed in South Africa, which has more than 22 740 public schools and 2 154 independent schools (Department of Basic Education, 2022).

The shortage of school social workers has a profound impact on the delivery of social services to learners in schools. Moreover, school social work in South Africa is complicated owing to how different provincial departments choose to employ and deploy social workers. Currently some social workers are hired at provincial level, while others are hired at district level. Most social workers are deployed to Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) and/or mainstream schools. It is important to note that individual school governing bodies (SGBs) of mainstream and special schools often employ social workers to non-subsidised posts and pay them from their own budgets (Kemp, 2014, as cited in Vergottini & Weyers, 2020).

Currently, there are three main types of schools in South Africa, namely: public/government funded schools (Section 20), governing body-funded schools (Section 21) – formerly known as Model C schools, and private schools. Public schools are operated and financed by the provincial government. They are often low resourced schools due to limited funding. Model C schools are partially funded by the government, and most funds are obtained through the paid fees as well as other fundraising initiatives. These schools are reported to offer better standards of education. Lastly, private schools are independently owned and run by a selected board. These schools are well resourced and rely on fees paid by parents and other funding sources. According to Cowling (2024), 5% of children in South Africa attend private schools, whilst 95% attend government schools. The government schools are classified according to five quantiles. Quantiles 1-3 are the lower income schools that are non-fee-paying and receive 100% funding from the government. Quantiles 4 and 5 are fee paying schools that receive partial funding from the government (WCED, 2013).

Most public schools do not have social workers and rely on School Based Support Teams (SBST) for psychosocial support. Teachers who are part of the SBST are tasked with identifying learners' needs (Department of Basic Education, 2014) and report urgent cases to a social worker who services multiple schools. However, teachers are often tasked with addressing the socio-emotional needs of learners. Often, learners with socio-emotional needs come from communities that face several socio-economic and psycho-social challenges that affect their behaviour in the classroom. Learners' behaviours may lead to disruption in the classroom, and negatively affects the rest of the learners' learning process. Yet, educators are not equipped to deal with these problems. Therefore, there is a need for social services to be made available in schools (Reyneke, 2018).

On another hand, independent schools make use of school social workers, psychologists, or educational psychologists to provide counselling services. Furthermore, Pretorius (2020) views psychosocial support in schools for learners as urgently needed. Pretorius (2020) argues that, although policies on psychosocial support have been developed, the implementation and needed collaboration between various government departments such as Social Development and Education, are not progressing as fast as required. Pretorius (2020) further states that, although a memorandum was signed between the Department of Education and Department of Social Development, regarding the provision of social services in schools, there appears to be varying provincial commitments in South Africa, where some have employed fewer social workers than others. There also appears to be confusion regarding the roles of different departments as well as the approaches to service delivery. With the existing historical service delivery inequality in South Africa, one can only

wonder if the psychological needs of all children are being met. The current study's aim was to explore and compare the experiences of service delivery for school social workers in private versus those in public schools.

1.2. Statement of the problem and rationale for the study

South Africa does not have a holistic framework for school counselling. Most social workers who are employed in schools are guided by social work policies and the specific needs of the provincial department in which they are employed. Vergotinni and Weyers (2020) explain that although there has been a growth in the number of social workers appointed to work in South Africa's schools, this has not been common across the provinces. Moreover, there is no uniformity in the roles that social workers are expected to undertake. Furthermore, in different provinces social workers are employed at district and provincial level and they provide services to children who are referred to them by the SBST. The problem with this is that children must wait for a long period before they receive a response from government deployed social workers. Whereas independent or private schools employ various kinds of counsellors, such as therapists, psychologists, educational psychologists, and social workers, to provide school counselling services. Moreover, such schools tend to also have more than one counsellor, such as an educational psychologist, to provide counselling and educational assessments as well as a social worker for counselling and child protection services. Yet, in public schools and schools that are in lower socio-economic areas, there is one school counsellor or social worker per district, due to limited resources and funding to hire more staff.

The inequality that still exists between historically Black and White schools, stretches far back as the 1930's. During this period, psychological services were only provided in White/affluent schools and were only made available in Black/low-income schools in the 1960's (Muribwathoho, 2003). Muribwathoho (2003) goes on to argue that such service provision inequality is still ongoing, where wealthier schools can secure multiple professionals to assist their learners, compared to low-income or government schools who cannot afford to do so (Muribwathoho, 2003). Even after many years of democracy, understanding the nature and impact of contextual disadvantages, social problems is a difficult but integral part in the process of creating a society that will maintain human rights regarding education and social welfare, for people from various social contexts. (Pretorius, 2016)

Therefore, this study explored the experiences of social workers in providing school social work services in the different types of schools. The study also investigated the types of resources and support that is available to school social workers for them to conduct their work. Additionally, the study highlights the strengths and weaknesses in school social work within Gauteng regional schools, in hopes of starting the conversation of change and policy development that will enhance access to resources and services.

1.3. Problem formulation

1.3.1. Research question.

What are the forms of interventions provided by school social workers in Johannesburg, South Africa and are they able to provide quality services to school-going children and their families?

Aim of the Study

The main of the study is understanding the different of interventions offered by school social workers in Johannesburg to identify the quality of those services to school-going children and their families.

1.3.2. Objectives

- To identify psychosocial issues learners face based on the perspectives of school social workers.
- To explore the experiences of the school social workers in providing interventions to the learners.
- To understand the challenges faced by school social workers.
- To explore the nature of support available to social workers for them to support the learners.
- To discover if the socio-economic environment has an impact on the social workers ability to provide services to learners based on the perspectives of school social workers.

1.4. Definition of concepts

1.4.1. School social worker

According to the National Association of Social Workers (2010), social workers working within school systems provide services to students to enhance their emotional well-being and improve their academic performance.

1.4.2. *Independent schools*

They are also known as private schools. They are privately owned and governed, with no government or state involvement (School Guide, 2023).

1.4.3. *Section 21 school*

Is a school which receives funding from the government which is managed by the School Governing Body (SGB). It can charge school fees as decided by the SGB in consultation with parents to top-up the funding received by the government (Matlhale & Erasmus, 2015). According to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 section 4 further explains that SGB is responsible for the supplementing funds and resources provided by government to ensure quality education provision. (South Africa, School Act, 1996, s 4)

1.4.4. *Section 20 school*

Is a school whose funding is managed by their Provincial Department of Education. These schools are divided into five quantiles based on areas and state-funding which determine if fees are paid or not, also taking into consideration the family income. Section 20 schools are mainly in low-income communities (Matlhale & Erasmus, 2015).

1.4.5. *School Based Support Team (SBST)*

Are teams that were established by schools in general and further education, as a school-level support mechanism. SBST's primary function is to put in place co-ordinated school, learner, and teacher support services. This team is composed of a representative from management, teachers and other staff who have a specific skill to assist in learner support (DBE, 2014).

1.4.6. *District Based Support Team*

These are groups of departmental professionals whose responsibility is to promote inclusive education through training, curriculum delivery, distribution of resources, identifying, assessing, and addressing barriers to learning, leadership as well as general management (DBE, 2014).

1.5. Conclusion

This chapter introduced the context, rationale, and objectives of the study. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework that underpins this study, and reviews literature on school social work within the South African context. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4 and the in-depth discussion as well as main findings are in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The provision of social services in South African schools is indeed complex and impacted by various factors, such as financial resources, availability of social workers and the government's deployment of social workers per district. This chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks that underpin the current study. The chapter also reviews the literature and legislative frameworks that are relevant to the studied topic.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

Systems theory was originally developed in the 1940's by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, who theorised that an organism or system is whole and that it interacts with other whole systems. It is through systems' interactions that change, and development can occur (Brandell, 2011). Lastly Von Bertalanffy argued that the larger or more complex system is greater than its small parts but to understand the whole system one would have to consider all the parts that it is composed of.

2.2. Ecological Systems theory

The action of providing social services is not singular; it requires the involvement of various role players and systems. Therefore, systems theory is the most adequate framework for the current study because it facilitates the exploration of various systems that play a role in service provision to meet the clients' needs within and outside the school. The study draws from Bronfenbrenner's (1917-2005) ecological systems theory to explain how individual development cannot be seen in isolation from the environment. The environment is divided into subsystems which the person is part of and is impacted by. Some of the systems interact with each other which in turn influences the individual.

The Ecological Systems theory is made up of five systems, namely: 1) microsystem, which is made up of all people and aspects or organisations such as parents, siblings, teachers, and schools, that have direct interaction with the client. The relationships in the microsystem are seen as personal and vital to development, hence they have the most impact on an individual. 2) is the mesosystem, which is described as the interaction of individual microsystems. An example of the microsystem is how learners' families may interact with the school and how this interaction may impact the child. 3) is the exosystem which refers to social settings or structures which may have an impact on the

individual although the person does not form part of them. These may include the community in which they reside. 4) is the macrosystem which are cultural factors that influence how a person will develop. Examples of the macrosystem include factors such as socio-economic status, race, location, and ethnicity. An illustration of the macrosystem is how the school's policies and structures, as instructed by the provincial government, may impact the learner. 5) is the chronosystem. Chronosystem refers to the major events, cultural changes, and environmental events, which have an impact on the individual over the course of their lifetime, examples include divorce, loss, or a pandemic (Hayes, O'Toole & Halpenny, 2017).

Add in significance of school social work and the

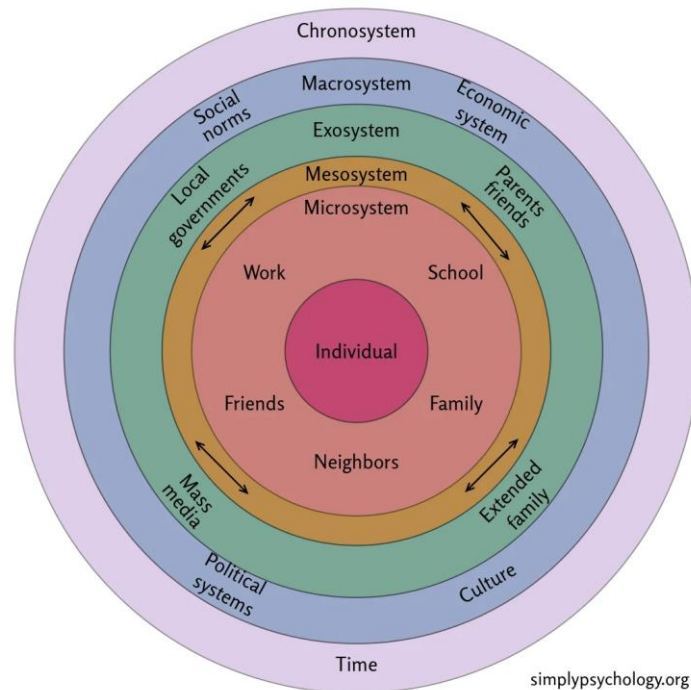


Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

2.3. Social justice theory

Social justice for all is about ensuring equity not equality. Although equality is important, for all people, it often concerns uniformity, which will still be limiting for previously disadvantaged groups. However, if society strives for equity, those that are previously disadvantaged will experience fair treatment and impartial opportunities (Badat & Sayed, 2014). In South Africa's schooling systems and provision of services, inequality cannot be ignored. It has an impact on the quality of school social work services. Therefore, the social justice theory is also relevant to the

current study. Charmaz (2005) states that social justice theory draws our attention to issues regarding equality, equity, human rights, and democracy. Moreover, the theory encourages a study of complex issues such as poverty, inclusion, exclusion, and barriers to access resources. This would help researchers to understand and take a stance towards action that will address and improve society.

Thompson (2002) argues that all people should have equal access to opportunities and be treated fairly. This is informed by the right-based element of the Framework for Social Welfare Services (2013). Operating from a right-based perspective means that South Africa's school social workers have a responsibility to discern injustices that exist to promote social justice and human rights. After the end of apartheid, the New South African government sought to establish equal rights for all by introducing the new constitution, hoping that everyone would have access to better healthcare, education, and social services.

However, the state of many South African children remains dire. Children continue to be one of the groups that is mostly exposed to poverty. From the 2014/2015 living conditions survey 85.4% of children who were subjected to poverty in South Africa, were African (Pretorius, 2020). Overall, the children who were living in poverty in 2014/2015 were 19.7 million and aged 0 and 17 years (Pretorius, 2020). According to Statistics South Africa (2018; 2019 as cited in Pretorius, 2020), 33.3% of children were living below the Food Poverty Line (FPL). The provinces that had the highest number of children who were affected by poverty included Eastern Cape, Limpopo, and KwaZulu-Natal. Based on these statistics one could argue that social injustice and inequity is still ongoing in South Africa.

Badat and Sayed (2014) discuss the reality of education in South Africa after apartheid, and how it remains a challenge to achieve social justice for all. Badat and Sayed (2014) explain that under the apartheid regime, Black learners were denied access to equal educational opportunities and growth as well as how this previous regime still affects the quality of education, which is provided to learners in the disadvantaged communities, post-apartheid. In relation to education, social justice is paramount. Quality education and social services would empower those who were previously disadvantaged to develop their intellectual capabilities. Thus, opening doors of opportunities that were previously unavailable to them is essential. Badat and Sayed (2014) explain that if quality education and social services are made available, they will allow individuals who are from disadvantaged communities to become economically and socially predictive.

According to Richard and Sosa (2014), to address poverty, marginalisation and any other forms of social injustices, one has to be sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity. Social work is often riddled by challenges such as limited resources and shortages of staff because of lack of funding. This injustice is further clear by the reality that wealthy schools can provide psychosocial services whereas low-income schools cannot or rely on scarce services. School social workers should participate in policy advocacy, at the local, provincial, and national level. In these levels, school social workers can advocate for policies that eliminate social injustices and demonstrate the importance of social work services in schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.4. Introduction

The social justice perspective argues that civilians must have equal opportunities, the right to be part of the decision-making process, access to information, and services as well as resources. Social workers have a duty to pursue social justice for all, with an emphasised focus on the disadvantaged and vulnerable population (SACSSP, 2013). However, one wonders if this is being achieved through social services and various initiatives that are put in place by the Department of Basic Education and Department of Social Development, in addressing barriers to learning.

School social work in South Africa remains as a much-needed service for school learners (Reyneke, 2018), yet there are not many social workers employed at schools. This leaves many children exposed to the ills of society without receiving necessary support. Poverty, substance abuse, and exposure to violence are some of the challenges that are faced by learners. Available literature discusses the existence of policies that have been developed for the care and support of school going children. Nonetheless, there seems to be a lack of implementation of these policies because there is limited funding, lack of training, and poor collaboration between various government departments. (Pretorius, 2020)

2.5. South African realities

Pretorius (2016) describes the current context of learners in South Africa as devastating, because for many children there remains a vast amount of societal and systemic barriers to learning. Even after many years into democracy the country is still plagued by inequality, unequal distribution of resources, and poor-quality public services. Naidoo's and Cartwright's (2020) study brings to light vast inequalities that are experienced by students across South Africa, due to apartheid. Naidoo and

Cartwright (2020) show that the legacy of apartheid includes differences between historical White and Black schools. In the beginning of the COVID-19 induced lockdowns, schools were forced to implement online learning and support services.

However, several schools were unable to implement the online learning due to limited resources such as finances, devices, and internet access. Black students, who were already disadvantaged prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, were worse impacted and had to prioritise their basic needs over technological advancements. Counselling services in higher education institutions had to broaden their scope of service from only intervention to social justice, advocacy, and collaborative efforts with other service providers. The aim for the broadening was to meet the growing needs of their students, which included psychological support, food provision, dealing with gender-based violence, and fund raising so that all students had the necessary tools to learn (Naidoo & Cartwright, 2020).

2.6. Challenges faced by learners.

Often, learners' experiences in their communities or homes affect their functioning and ability to adequately perform or progress at school (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020). Van Wyk (1989, cited in Vergottini & Weyers, 2020) argues that schools are often a reflection of the broader community in which they are located. South African learners are affected by many societal ills, including violence, poverty, child-headed homes, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy.

2.6.1. Violence

South Africa is often known as a violent society, Burton and Leoschut (2013, as cited in Pretorius, 2020) states that there is a correlation between the violence that learners are exposed to in their community and their behaviours at school. Resultantly, many learners also become perpetrators, enablers, and bystanders of violence in school. Haupt (2010) argued that a school is the microcosm of the community, thus, it reflects the social, political, and economic atmosphere of the surrounding locality. Children experience and witness violence of various forms including bullying, abuse, robbery, and gender-based violence. This exposure and experience of violence have a negative impact on the learner's development and daily functioning, resulting in prolonged trauma, poor concentration, anxiety, and low school attendance (Pretorius, 2020). According to Donald et al. (2010, cited in Pretorius, 2020) the prevalence of violence in low-income communities is often perpetuated by the desperation to meet basic needs and the existence of substance abuse.

2.6.2. *Poverty*

The existence of poverty in South Africa results in the scarcity of resources such as adequate shelter, non-existence of or limited basic physical infrastructure, the absence or shortage of sufficient nutritional food resources, limited or no access to healthcare services, as well as the lack of adequate safety and protection measures and unemployment (Barkan, 2020). According to Pretorius (2020), many children from disadvantaged communities will join the vicious cycle of poverty that their parents experienced. This is because children from marginalised communities are often subjected to limited or no access to services, which hinders them from meeting their basic needs. Issues such as malnutrition are rife and affect their cognitive as well as socio-emotional development. Hungry children perform poorly in school, which limits their job opportunities and increases their dependency on state support. This reality often repeats itself from generation to generation, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment of many impoverished communities (UNICEF, 2019 as cited in Pretorius, 2020).

2.6.3. *Child-headed homes*

Child-headed homes are common in many South African communities, and they result from poverty, high levels of crime, high prevalence of HIV, and substance abuse. Many children are left living in situations where they are forced to run a home, seek employment, take care of their younger siblings, provide for their basic needs, and care for their parents who are ill or dependent on substances (Pretorius, 2020). This phenomenon has led to the parentification of children, which refers to the reliance of parents on children to provide emotional and or practical support to run the home (Lewis, 2021).

2.6.4. *Substance abuse*

Some of South Africa's children and youth are involved in the consumption of various illicit drugs as well as alcohol. Some also suffer the consequences of living in homes where their parents and/or family members abuse substances. According to Simbayi et al. (2006, cited in Pretorius, 2020), factors such as peer pressure, unemployment, poverty, organised crime, and gangsterism, add to the growing problem of substance abuse among school going children. Moreover, these substances are often marketed among peers, readily accessible, low costing, and made appealing to draw attention. Some of the implications of substance abuse among children are poor school attendance, dropping out, maladaptive behaviour, and engaging in risky sexual behaviours which can lead to unplanned

pregnancies or the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and HIV (Jeffreys, 2007; Seggie, 2012, cited in Pretorius, 2020).

2.6.5. *Teenage pregnancy*

UNESCO (2019, cited in CAMFED, 2020) reports that, in South Africa, during the COVID-19 pandemic, teen pregnancy rose by 60%. Historically, South Africa fought to address the implications that arise from teen pregnancy for girls from impoverished communities. Pregnant girls tend to drop out of school, which perpetuates the cycle of poverty and dependency on social grants. This has a long-term effect on the future of the girl child who is not able to access tertiary education, the freedom to decide her future, career goals or the opportunity of competing in the high paying jobs with their male peers. UNESCO (2019, cited in CAMFED, 2020), shows that girl children across African and other developing countries had already been disadvantaged in accessing education. Almost 52 million girl children in sub-Saharan Africa were not attending school because of poverty, early pregnancy and forced early marriage (UNESCO, 2019, cited in CAMFED, 2020).

2.6.6. *School dropouts*

South Africa also has a high level of school dropouts, resulting from negative personal issues such as abuse, family dysfunction, and anxiety (Hajane, 2006, cited in Vergottini & Weyers, 2020). Pretorius (2016) explains that many South African children are unable to regularly attend school due to factors such as malnutrition, which impairs their ability to learn and effectively concentrate. Moreover, elevated levels of absenteeism are the result of child labour to support their families. In some cases, children with cognitive disabilities as a result of HIV and childhood disorders spend most of their time away from school. This is further argued by UNESCO (2005, cited in Pretorius, 2016) which report that disabled learners make up the largest group of learners who are excluded and marginalised from quality education in the world today. Pretorius (2020) goes on to say that impoverished children do not enjoy the full experience of learning due to lack of resources such as stationary, uniforms, and transportation. Many of these children are often faced with various obstacles such as a lack of electricity or running water, which negatively impacts their studying time.

2.7. *Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on learners*

In recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic period, there has been an increase in learners who experience physical abuse and/or exposure to domestic violence, as a result of long periods of being at home with the perpetrator (Sosa Lovera, et al., 2022). Some children were also exposed to

family members who had COVID-19, which was a risk for them to also contract the virus. Various studies concluded that the most common emotional conditions that were experienced by children during the COVID-19 pandemic, included a rise in anxiety, depression, suicidal behaviour, sleep problems, self-harm, and substance abuse (Coetzee et al., 2022; Connor, 2022; Ierardi et al., 2022; Sosa Lovera et al., 2022).

Coetzee et al.'s, (2022) study, which was conducted in the Western Cape, found that children's anxieties and concerns were exacerbated by their parent's anxiety. Studies have shown that parental mental illness and health issues can have an adverse impact on their children. Sosa Lovera et al, (2022) reported that learners complained about the isolation and not being able to interact with their peers and extended family. This could be particularly difficult with adolescents who identify mostly with their peers as described by Erikson (1998). Furthermore, learners and families from low-economic communities experience destitution as a result of the loss of employment, and limited resources (Naidoo & Cartwright, 2020). Czerniewicz (2020) as well as Sikhangezile and Modise (2020) show that the inequality that existed in the South African context during the COVID-19 pandemic, was primarily that, children, learners, and students from wealthy homes had better opportunities in accessing learning compared to those from low-income homes yet they were already disadvantaged.

2.8. Current state of support in South African schools

As discussed in chapter one, the number of appointed school social workers per province were as follows: Limpopo (180), Western Cape (166), Free State (32), Gauteng (27), KwaZulu-Natal (25) (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020). These numbers are too low compared to the number of professionals who are needed by South Africa, which has more than 22 740 public schools and 2 154 independent schools. (Department of Basic education, 2022). A small number of social workers that are based in public schools such as the LSEN, are employed by the school governing body (Kemp, 2014, cited in Vergottini & Weyers, 2020).

Currently, most public schools implement the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy because they do not have social workers on the premises. Thus, they rely on School Based Support Teams (SBST) for psychosocial support. Teachers who are part of the SBST are tasked with identifying the needs of the learners and report urgent cases to a social worker who services multiple schools (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Mncube and Lepoba's (2019) study outlines the challenges that are faced by teachers, to implement the SIAS policy, since they

are the frontline of this framework and engage the learners on a daily basis. The reported challenges include limited training for teachers, and the difficulty for them to teach the normal curriculum while they incorporate ideas of SIAS policy. Teachers also reported receiving limited support from the school management and the Department of Education.

Mncube and Lepoba (2019) suggest that more training should be provided at a tertiary level, so that teachers are well equipped to deal with diverse needs for learners. However, independent schools use school social workers, psychologists, or educational psychologists to provide counselling services. This is an apparent inequality that exists between public schools and independent schools and is a clear indication of the inequality that still exists in South African schools. One can argue that the aim of social justice for all is not yet fully achieved. Reyneke (2018) states that social services in schools remain non-priority for government departments, given the low numbers of professionals that are employed in schools.

2.9. School social workers

In countries such as the United States of America, school social work has been in existence for a century (Pretorius, 2016). School counselling or school social work is seen as the first place that most young people receive formal mental health intervention (Farmer et al., 2003, cited in O'Connor, 2022). Jackson-Cherry and Erford (2018 p. 409, cited in Pincus, et al., 2020) explain that school counsellors have a vital role of providing services during and post crisis. Moreover, to be effective school counsellors should involve all role players and coordinate services. Karaman et al. (2021) state that the demand for counselling will increase during pandemics, natural disasters, and illnesses. Furthermore, learners who receive support are able to deal with their problems in a more adaptive way. The roles of a school social worker, as described by Richard and Sosa (2014), are to address violence in schools, provide emotional support, advocate for marginalised learners, and those with disabilities, as well as encourage school policy reform.

2.10. Social work in South African schools

Social work in schools has been identified as a much-needed service. However, it still has a long way to go to be fully immersed in the schooling system. According to Pretorius (2016) it was only in 2009 when the South African Council for Social Services Professions (SACSSP) acknowledged the need for the specialisation in school social work. Nonetheless, many schools are still without social services. Pretorius (2016) advocates for the increase of social workers in schools. They explain that learners in South Africa are exposed to various social issues and receive average

education quality. Therefore, more effort must be put on social services to meet learners' psychosocial needs, so that teachers can focus on providing quality education. Moreover, many school social workers are employed to provide services to mainly special and at-risk schools.

Kemp (2014), The role or position of school social workers is determined by the institution in which they are employed. At national level social workers are responsible for monitoring as well as evaluating, policy development and strategy. Whereas social workers at provincial level deal with management and training as well as supporting those at district level, district level school social workers support SBST, learners and parents. Social workers are based at a district level and are referred to a school after which they conduct school visits when required. The role of the school social worker is often determined by the needs of the school (Kemp, 2014, cited in Vergottini & Weyers, 2020). School deployed social workers are employed by the government at district and provincial levels. They are then deployed to various schools within their specific jurisdiction or court specific allocation (Kemp, 2014, cited in Vergottini & Weyers, 2020).

Some schools make use of school based social workers, who may be provincial or school governing body appointees. Some of these social workers' responsibilities include working with all members of the school community, such as parents, teachers, and management. They also identify learners' needs, administer interventions, and promote parents as well as community involvement. School social workers should keep excellent records and collaborate with various other professionals in a multidisciplinary team (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020, cited in Ntombela et al., 2022). According to Reyneke (2018), there is a great discrepancy between the number of social workers who work in schools and the number of schools in South Africa. Based on the statistics that were released by DBE in 2015, there were only 148 government employed social workers compared to 23 179 schools. This makes the service of school social work extremely limited and leaves many children unsupported.

2.11. Challenges faced by social workers and school social workers.

At a macro level, there are various challenges that affect effective collaboration and implementation of the existing policies (Pretorius, 2016). Moreover, political interference and decisions concerning funding hinder the employment and training of more school social workers. Skhosana et al. (2014, cited in Koketso et al., 2021) explain that due to a great shortage of social workers in South Africa, those that are employed are often overworked and experience burnout. Furthermore, resources to provide public assistance are, in many instances, limited due to sparse

funding. Pretorius (2016) also argues that there is a need to specialise the field of school social work, and that more tertiary institutions must provide content that will fully prepare students to become effective school social workers. At a mezzo level, school social work needs to be fully integrated into the school and its local community. This will require that school social work is supported and respected as a profession, by the School Governing Body, teachers, community members, parents, and other stakeholders. Pincus et al. (2020), with reference to work by Wilder (2018), postulate that, several school social workers are unable to sufficiently serve their learners as well as the school community, because they are tasked with performing non-counselling duties. These include test coordination, substitute teaching, bus duty or following up on why the child is not attending school. Koketso et al. (2021) speaks of the need for collaboration between school social workers and other stakeholders such as educational psychologists, nurses and government which is often lacking but much needed because the benefit of collaborating is its ability to, “eradicate barriers among professions, combine skills and expertise from different professions that could assist in early, effective intervention strategies” (Glaser & Suter, 2016, cited in Koketso et al., 2021).

Micro level challenges include concerns related to training. According to Pretorius (2016) all social workers that, at least until 2016, were employed in South African schools did not possess a specialised degree in school social work. Therefore, when dealing with learners' needs, they worked from a crisis intervention perspective.

One of the biggest challenges that school social workers face is role ambiguity. Often, they are given tasks such as administrative work or monitoring classes. Richard and Sosa (2014) state that, often, school social workers' role is determined by the employment setting, which is predominantly predetermined in social workers' training. Vagueness about work roles can lead to work frustration, which ultimately affects workers' performance. According to Steinberg, et al. (2011), lack of support and communication from school management is also another challenge faced by school social workers. The example presented is how often teachers do not communicate well with social workers or support the initiatives put in place to help the learners. The lack of multidisciplinary teamwork hinders social workers' ability to effectively provide quality services.

Furthermore, most school social workers who are deployed in schools that are within poorer communities, are not provided with sufficient resources, which limits the type and quality of programmes or initiatives that can be implemented in the schools (Salman, 2021). An example can be drawn from social workers' experiences when dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, which required them to provide online interventions. Social workers found it challenging to maintain

confidentiality when conducting online interventions (Coetzee et al., 2022; O'Connor, 2022). In these studies, counsellors reported that providing sessions, while maintaining client's anonymity and privacy was difficult because children do not have personal space at home. Furthermore, children often feel uncomfortable to talk online and seem disconnected from the session. Counsellors reported that their contact with the children felt as check-in sessions, rather than being interactive (Coetzee., et al, 2022).

2.12. Legislative framework: Guiding principles and policies for school social work

According to the Bill of Rights, Children's Act 38 of 2005, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child has the right to quality education, housing, healthcare, nutrition, and safety. For this right to be realised, there is need for collaboration of various stakeholders, such as the government, teachers, parents, and social workers – to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children. According to the South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996, it is mandatory for children aged seven to 15 years (thus, at the age of the completion of Grade 9), to attend school. Pretorius (2020) highlights the need for social workers to be based at schools, because this allows the prevention and early detection of psychosocial challenges that are experienced by learners. In South Africa, school social work does not have one umbrella policy. Instead, it draws the guidance and instruction from legislations such as the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005, which speaks of all that is necessary to ensure the best interest of the child.

Other important policies include the South African council for social services professions handbook, the framework social services (2013), the screening identification assessment and support (SIAS) policy, as well as the framework on care and support for teaching and learning (CSTL) (2010). The school-based support teams (SBST) initiative forms part of the SIAS policy which was developed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). SBST is aimed at identifying the needs of learners as well as the possible barriers to learning. Teachers are expected to identify children who are in need and then refer them to the district-based support teams for assessment, intervention, or implementation of an action plan to meet the learners' needs (DBE, 2014). The CSTL (2010) is a SADAC initiative, from which an information pack was developed to utilise in South African schools in order to implement the CSTL principles (Pretorius, 2020).

CSTL's goals are to create multi-sectoral endeavours to deal with barriers for learning, to guide all role-players in the implementation of support to learners and teaching, to ensure that the

rights of all children are achieved. These initiatives or frameworks rely on collaboration between the Department of Education, Social Development, and other government departments, to effectively provide support to learners at school (Pretorius, 2020). Based on the goals of various policies, children need to be provided with necessary support to address all their learning barriers. However, many challenges affect the delivery of quality education and social services.

2.13. Social justice and school social work

Historically, education, health, and social welfare policies were determined by the colonial system (the apartheid) that was established by the Nationalist government between 1948 and 1994 (Pretorius, 2016). The quality and type of services were rendered based on one or the community's racial group. However, in the post-1994 era, there was an expectation that the education system would be fundamentally transformed through dismantling the apartheid's determined order (Badat & Sayed, 2014). However, it is argued that despite many years of democracy, the remnant of inequality remains. Pretorius (2016) explains that the apartheid-coined inequalities should be understood and taken into consideration because they are relevant in children's learning barriers, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

Social Justice is an important part of social work. It emphasises the role of the social worker to advocate for the needs of all people, mostly those who are disadvantaged (SACSSP, 2015). This can be achieved through advocating for policy change at all levels of governance, to eradicate policies that continue to oppress people. The Framework for Social Services (2013) explains that social justice concerns working from a right-based perspective to meet all South Africans' basic needs. This would allow the maintenance of human rights and dignity, which will include involving members of society in decision-making and ensuring access to services. Reyneke (2018) outlines various legislations that suggest that the rights of children are not only for them to receive quality education. Instead, they are a comprehensive learning experience or approach, which involves educators, social services, and other stakeholders that ensures that children develop holistically. This implies that all services for children who are in a school setting must meet their physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and cultural developments.

Reyneke (2018) states that some of the legislations that advocate for the best interest of children include: the Children's Act 38 of 2005, Child Justice Act, South African Schools Act, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Therefore, it is argued that for the rights of children in schools to be fully realised, one cannot only focus on education excluding aspects of

child development. Thus, fully realising children's rights requires additional support, which can be provided by school social workers to protect learners and address social issues that affect their ability to learn. Reyneke (2020) also states that the continued lack of school social workers means that many children's needs are not addressed, which gives them the impression that they are not important. In a broader policy scope, the human rights for dignity and access to social services are not met.

2.14. Conclusion

The literature review suggests that school social work is a young profession in South Africa, and requires more research, policy development, and framework conceptualisation, to be fully immersed in the schooling system. Furthermore, there is a need to accumulate necessary tools and formalisation of the roles of school social workers. There is then a need for more social workers to be employed as school social workers. In addition, the current social work services that are offered in schools do not seem to be sufficiently effective. Thus, the needs of many learners remain unmet, leaving them at a disadvantage. As such, South Africa's quest to achieve social justice would seem to be in the distant future.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology that was used in the current study. The chapter consists of the following: research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, research instrument, as well as methods for data collection and analysis. The chapter also discusses trustworthiness, ethical considerations, limitations, and delimitations of the study.

3.2. Research Approach

The researcher operated from the interpretive paradigm, also referred to as constructivism, to understand the meaning that the participant gives to their lived experiences, in order to gain more knowledge and understanding (Creswell, 2014). Alharashah & Pius (2020 as cited in Keong, Husin & Kamarudin, 2023) explain that in this philosophical paradigm, the researcher has to draw on the richness of the research context and the subjective meaning that human beings bring to the phenomena being studied.

Qualitative research approach facilitates the study of perceptions, feelings, behaviours, and socio-cultural phenomena that are found in educational settings. Creswell and Poth (2017) describe qualitative research as complex, because it focuses on studying phenomena that are both multidimensional and have various complex aspects. Moreover, qualitative research examines the occurrences in the real world. Its hope is to encapsulate the intricacy of the occurrence.

In the current study, a qualitative approach was used to gain knowledge and understanding on a particular phenomenon, which allowed the researcher to gather rich and in-depth data on the subject matter. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, with an attempt to make sense of or to interpret phenomena based on the meanings that people bring to them. In most cases, qualitative research does not evaluate a theory, instead, through research will a theory emerge. Qualitative researchers would view participants as experts of knowledge, regarding their experiences.

In the current study, the researcher's constant reflection of her own knowledge was important for understanding and ensuring trustworthiness. Furthermore, the researcher took a stance of being an, “inside researcher” because she is also a school social worker. According to Farmer and Farmer

(2021), insider researcher refers to being similar or sharing a similar context as the participants. Hence, the researcher may better understand the participants' experiences and perspectives. However, being an insider researcher may limit the researcher's objectivity. Litchman (2014) explains that qualitative research is not just about gathering data, it also concerns exploring the reasoning and impact of social factors. Furthermore, it examines the opinions and attitudes of the participants rather than measurable data. These qualitative research qualities allow the researcher to gain an extensive understanding of human behaviour and social occurrences.

3.3. Research Design

The researcher used a case study design to understand the experiences of diverse groups (school social workers from: independent schools, government schools, and governing body schools). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), a case study is used to understand social phenomena by studying an event, person, documents, or program in-depth and over time, to develop an understanding and postulate theory based on the findings of the study. Creswell and Poth (2017, pp.96-97) define a case study as follows:

“A case study research design is defined as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case themes.”

To understand the meanings that the participants associate with their lived experiences, the researcher conducted a case study to gain more knowledge and understanding. This study had features of both an instrumental and intrinsic case study. The aspects of instrumental case study were employed because the design aims to provide information about a specific social issue. Features of the intrinsic case study were employed to highlight the issues that are faced by school social workers from various socio-economic environments (De Vos et al, 2011).

3.4. Population, sample, and sampling procedures

The population of this study was made up of ten social workers who work in schools, in Johannesburg's North and West Districts. The participants' work experience varied from two to 24 years, as social workers in schools. Most participants were employed at a school. However, others were employed at district level, but deployed to multiple schools within their jurisdiction. Participants rendered social work services in independent schools, public mainstream schools,

Model C schools, and LSEN schools. The sample consisted of 10 school social workers who represent different races, gender, and were placed in schools in varying socio-economic contexts. The inclusion criteria for the selection of participants was that they had to be:

- English-speaking.
- Employed as social workers in schools, in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- Two years and above employed as a social worker in the school.
- Registered with SACSSP as a social worker.
- Willing to voluntarily participate in the study.

Exclusion criteria:

- Participants could not be statutory social workers.
- Could not be employed outside Johannesburg.
- Participants could not be in management at a school or district level.

Non-probability, purposive sampling was used to identify professionals who work within a school context, where they provided psycho-social support to learners, teachers, families, and the school community. Farmer and Farmer (2021) describe purposive sampling as the act of choosing participants from the target population that are suitable for the purpose of the study. Initially the researcher sought permission to interview social workers who were employed by the Department of Education. However, most social workers in the Department of Education are deployed to Early Child Development centres for monitoring. Therefore, the researcher directly contacted individual school social workers from various schools in Johannesburg. Those who agreed to participate during the initial phone call, were contacted again via email to schedule a suitable time for the interview.

3.5. Data collection method

For the purpose of this case study, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with most of the participants, at their respective schools. In-person interviews helped the researcher to gather extensive information through interviews and observation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Frey (2018) states that to obtain quality interview data, a researcher must be open to multiple perspectives because when dealing with people in their natural context, there is no one universal truth, but various subjective perspectives. Leedy & Ormrod (2015) mention that the benefits of face-to-face interviews are not only the opportunity to gather rich data but also being able to experience the context in which the participant is positioned.

3.6. Research Instrument

The researcher employed a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix C) for data collection. The schedule consisted of open-ended questions that helped the researcher to yield detailed and rich data from participants, compared to the use of closed-ended questions. Furthermore, having a list of questions and cues facilitated a more focussed discussion. Prior to the commencement of the main data collection interviews, the researcher implemented one pre-test interview. This was necessary for establishing the effectiveness of the interview structure, relevance of questions, and if they are clear. After the pre-test, the researcher made necessary amendments before the main data-collection. Upon participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded for later transcription, the researcher also accumulated written notes to enrich the interviews data (De Vos et al, 2011).

3.7. Data analysis

Thematic coding was employed for data analysis. Gibbs (2007) describes thematic coding as the process of identifying common themes that exist in a body of text or information that can then be indexed into categories, which will allow the researcher to draw inferences. Durdella (2019, p.269) explains that the patterns that emerge from an in-depth exploration of individual cases in the sample size are used to analyse raw data and formulate findings. Grgich (2007) and Miles and Huberman (1994, cited in Durdella, 2019). As such the research made use of this process as outlined below:

3.7.1. Preliminary data analysis

Preliminary data analysis, which Durdella (2019) also describes as a data simplification process, occurs immediately after data-collection. In this stage, the researcher begins sorting through large sums of information, reviewing the data in consultation with the literature to begin identifying possible themes and gain a sense of direction for further analysis. This process also involves transcribing, creating codes, and identifying concepts.

3.7.2. Thematic data analysis

This is a process of reducing substantial amounts of data into smaller, and more manageable pockets of data. The smaller pockets are then categorised by themes and sub-themes. Some of the themes may already have been identified during the literature review. Other themes will emerge from the information that would be shared by participants. This is information which will be new and not had been initially considered by the researcher at the beginning of the research process (Miles & Huberman, 1994, cited in Durdella, 2019).

3.7.3. Interpretation

Involves describing patterns and drawing conclusions about emerging themes from the data analysis (Grbich, 2007, cited in Durdella, 2019). This is where the researcher discusses their findings in a structured way, to highlight various themes that would have emerged from the thematic analysis process, in a way that is understandable to the reader.

3.8. Trustworthiness of the study

According to Golafshani (2003), in qualitative research, validity and reliability of a study, are referred to as trustworthiness. There are four criteria that should be applied to verify a qualitative study and ensure its trustworthiness. The four criteria were introduced by Lincoln and Guba in 1985 and in 1994 they introduced the fifth criteria, authenticity. Authenticity refers to the researcher's ability to adequately demonstrate the lived experiences shared by the participants. It is achieved by gathering generously descriptive information that is then presented in the study (Polit & Beck, 2014, cited in Farmer & Farmer, 2021). Transferability concerns the provision of rich details about the study, to increase the degree to which its findings can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other participants (Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004, cited in Anney, 2014).

In the current study, for the researcher to achieve transferability, a thick description of the context was provided moreover she selected participants from various types of schools, from which she identified participants who represented different demographic groups that exist in South Africa. Dependability concerns the stability of the study. Thus, whether the findings of the phenomenon being studied will change if the environment or method of research is replaced. Farmer and Farmer (2021) recommend the use of a dependability audit trail or reflexive journal outlining the decisions made in the research process. The researcher conducted the audit trail by describing the research process from the beginning, implementation and reporting the findings. Confirmability is about assuring that the findings reported were indeed obtained through the data collection process thus the importance of keeping a detailed trail or journal.

In the current study, the process of data collection followed a clear process to ensure the accuracy of the findings. Each interview followed the same process, only varying slightly, based on the probing questions, to gather rich data. Credibility is, whether the study is believable and that indeed the research has been able to capture the participant's understanding and experience of the phenomenon. This can be achieved by spending long periods with the participants to check and re-check their understanding or employing an external party to conduct debriefing of the research

process. (Golafshani, 2003), For the current study, the researcher spent much time interviewing each participant, to ensure that their perspectives could be understood and appropriately captured for the study. Moreover the researcher interviewed social workers from different types of schools to gather much rich data and enhance the credibility of the study.

3.9. Ethical considerations

When conducting research, the researcher has to adhere to certain ethical considerations. Based on several scholars' views (Babbie & Mouton, 2008; Farmer & Farmer, 2021; Forzano & Gravetter, 2009), the flowing ethics were most important and relevant to consider in the current study:

3.9.1. *Informed consent:*

The current study involved obtaining the written consent of participants and informing participants of the procedures, goals, as well as possible dangers for their participation in the study. This was important so that participants were well-informed and comfortable with participating. The researcher provided all the information about the study to all participants. All participants signed the consent form and there were no objections to participation. The researcher also provided the participants with the consent form and participant information sheet ahead of the interviews, so that participants had sufficient time to read and understand what was being asked of them.

3.9.2. *Anonymity:*

Anonymity is about ensuring that the identity of the participants in the study was not disclosed. Using anonymity, the researcher also protected participants from any undue discrimination in the workplace, for discussing the efficacy of their job or institution. To hide the participants' identities, in this final dissertation, the researcher used pseudonyms.

3.9.3. *No harm:*

No physical harm or psychological harm was caused by or reported during the data collection process for the current study. As a researcher one should ensure that when dealing with sensitive issues, they are aware of the effects that it may have on participants. The study is low risk and did not cause major discomfort for the participants. To prevent exhaustion or discomfort, over too long interviews, the current study's interviews were kept at a time shorter than an hour.

3.9.4. Confidentiality:

All that was shared by respondents was used for this study only and all efforts were made to maintain confidentiality. None of the participants' personal information was or will be shared with the public. The participants were informed that the information that they shared will be kept confidential and will be known only between the researcher and the research supervisor. Moreover, all information would be stored for five years on a password-protected computer.

3.9.5. Competence of the researcher:

This ethical consideration refers to the researcher's skills to conduct research in an objective manner. The study must be not harmful, and the researcher should not place judgements or impose their own biases. For the current study, the researcher worked hard to not allow any of her own experiences of being a school social worker to interfere with the quality of the study's findings. She remained objective and did not share her own opinions of the subject matter. Before any applications for permission to conduct the study, the researcher completed a training on research ethics. Prior to the commencement of data collection, the permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee (Non-HREC) (Appendix E). The required approval to conduct the study was also obtained from the Gauteng Department of Basic Education (GDE), (Appendix G) Further approval was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education Central District (Appendix D).

3.9.6. Voluntary participation:

Participant's involvement in a study should always be voluntary (Babbie & Mouton, 2008; Farmer & Farmer, 2021; Forzano & Gravetter, 2009). All the participants voluntarily agreed to be part of the study. None of them was coerced or manipulated into participating.

3.10. Limitations and delimitations

This study focuses on understating participants' subjective views and experiences. This requires the researcher to spend an extensive amount of time with the participants, to gather rich data. Simon (2011) defines limitations as the shortcomings of a study, whereas delimitations refer to the aspects that define the boundaries of the study. In the current study, the researcher was not able to secure participants from the Department of Education. However, this was overcome by directly contacting school social workers to invite them to participate in the study, although this process was time

consuming. There is also limited local research on school social work, hence the researcher had to rely more on international papers. The study was limited to a specific geographical area and had specific criteria for the selection of participant which had to be adhered to.

3.11. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodology of the study. It included the research methods, research approach, and design. The chapter also outlined the sampling procedures, population and introduced the sample. Additionally, the method of data collection and method of data of analysis was discussed. Lastly the chapter discussed the ethical considerations, limitations, and delimitations as well as the trustworthiness of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This study explored the perceptions and experiences of school social workers when providing services in Johannesburg schools. The study focused on 10 participants who were sampled from various schools in the North and West districts of Johannesburg. Participants worked in areas that represent different South Africa's socio-economic contexts. The current chapter thematically discusses the findings of the study. The chapter will begin by describing participants' demographic characteristics.

Below, Table 1 presents participant's profiles, and Figure 2 shows the demographic information of the school social workers who participated in the study this includes their gender and race only. No other identifiable information was included to maintain participants' anonymity. Figure 3 shows the types of schools in which participants were employed. The schools are a combination of private, public, and LSEN schools. Table 2 shows the number of social workers with a comparison between those who were school based social workers and those who were school deployed. Figure 4 describes the level of resources that are available to each school social worker. Table 3 summarises the themes and subthemes that emerged from the study.

Table 1:

Participants' profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Position	Years working as a school social worker
B	Female	School social worker	12 years
C	Female	School social worker	5 years
D	Female	School social worker	12 years
H	Female	School social worker	3 and half years
J	Female	School social worker	3 years
K	Male	School deployed social worker	4 years

L	Female	School social worker	5 years
L2	Female	School social worker	24 years
NKA	Male	School social worker	9 years
NK	Female	School social worker	4 years

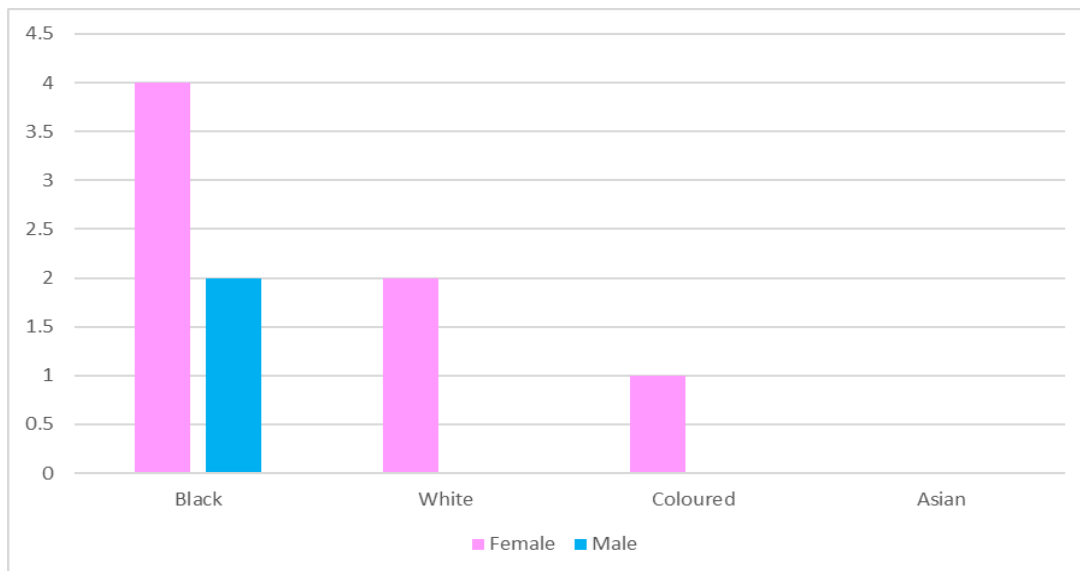


Figure 2: Participants' demographics

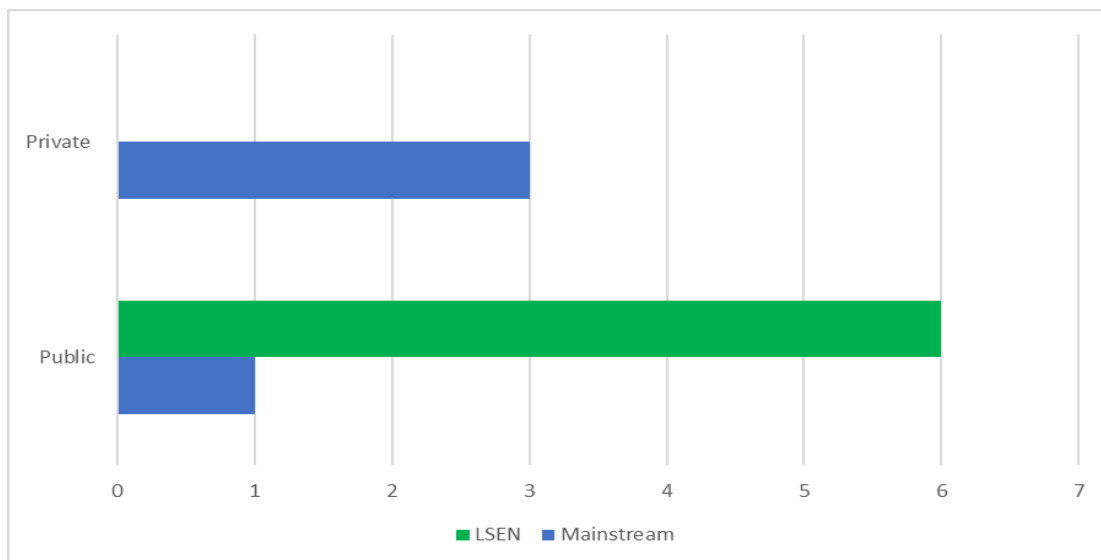


Figure 3: Type of school to which participants were employed.

Table 2: School based social workers vs school deployed social workers.

Type of Social	Number of Social	Number of schools responsible for
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Worker	workers	
School Based- social workers that are employed by the SGB and are located fulltime at one school	9	1 each
School Deployed- social workers employed by district or provisional government offices. They are sent out to various schools on the request of the SBST and service more than one school	1	16

Table 3: Level of resources accessible to participants.

Criteria:

Extremely resourced: (Well set up Office, phone, computer, toys and therapy items, access to internet, more than one social worker and budget allocated to them)

Good resources: (well set up office, phone, computer, limited toys and some therapy items, access to internet, only one social worker and limited budget allocated to them.

Moderately resourced: (average set up office, phone, computer, access to internet, one social worker and no budget allocated to them only use of school materials)

Poorly resourced: (poorly set up office or no office, phone, limited access to internet, one social worker)

Diagram of resources accessible to participants

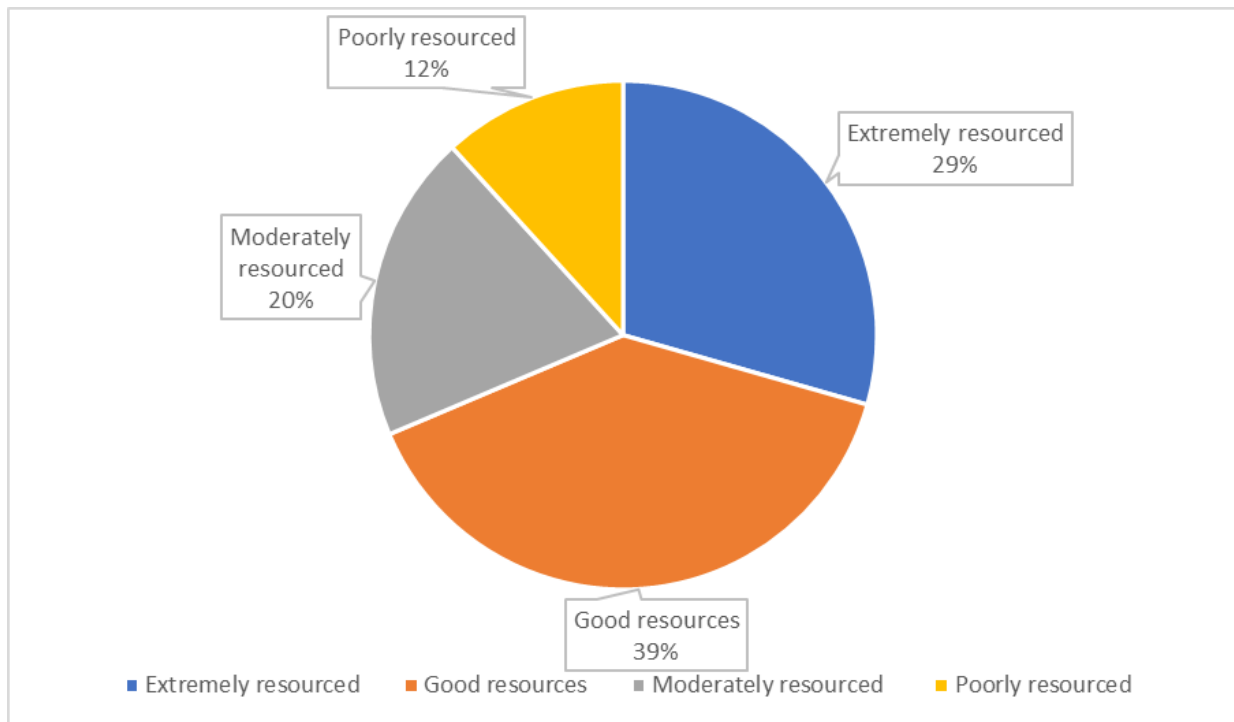


Table 4: Themes and sub-themes emanating from the study

Objectives	Sub-Themes
Psychosocial issues faced by learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physiological • Safety • Social • Esteem • Self-actualization
Experiences of school social workers in providing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of a social worker in a school. • Working with learners • Working parents and families • Working with teachers • Non-social work roles • Caseload • Structure of support for learners
Challenges faced by school social workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being alone • Lack of supervision • Limited training • Varying services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School social workers not knowing their scope of practice.
Support available to school social workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support from management. ● Support from DBST
If economic environment has an impact school social workers ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Types of schools ● Creativity to provide services. ● Access to community resources ● Education VS school social work
Improving school social work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy reform ● Clarity of roles

4.2. Psychosocial issues faced by learners.

This study's findings show that there are various challenges that are faced by learners who receive services from the school social workers. Donald et al. (2010, cited in Pretorius, 2020), explain that a child's development, and learning is influenced by the context and social environment in which they come from. The challenge that is often in their context is to ensure that children's needs are met so that learners can function optimally. Therefore, this theme is divided according to Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, to discuss the children's needs that the study found. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, speak of five levels of needs that an individual will requires to be met to survive and succeed in life. The first and most important are the physiological needs or more commonly known as basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and health care. The second level on the hierarchy refers to the need for safety and protection from harm. The third level outline the need for socialisation, being able to establish and maintain healthy and meaningful connections in and outside the home. The next level of speaks to the individual need for a positive self-esteem, to feel capable and status in society. The last level in the hierarchy refers to an individuals need for self-actualization, being able to fulfil one's talent and potential.

4.2.1. *Physiological needs*

Most of the schools where participants were deployed or based, were in communities of higher socio-economic status. However, participants reported that many of the learners in the LSEN schools came from low-income communities. Therefore, these learners have limited access to their basic needs such as proper accommodation, healthy nutrition, and school uniforms. Some social workers in these schools have initiated feeding schemes and clothing programs to meet children's needs. Participants explained that these initiatives were needed because children often come to school hungry, which affects their ability to concentrate in class and their overall development owing to malnutrition. Participant H reported, "...so, we have a feeding scheme because they are from poor communities" (H, female). Participant K also spoke about the sheer devastation of the schools that they service, as, "*Is extremely poor, extremely neglected and lacks resources*".

There were only three private schools in which some participants were employed. The rest of the schools had many disadvantaged learners. This difference in schools' socio-economic status is a true reflection of South Africa's inequality, where the majority of people live in poverty. Donald et al. (2010, cited in Pretorius, 2020), states that the ongoing inequality and poverty endanger the development of children and contribute to their barriers to learning.

4.2.2. *Safety needs*

Child safety is the largest and important part of social work. Many children seek social services because of instability, danger, or harm. Based on participants' accounts, many learners report experiencing neglect, physical or sexual abuse, exposure to domestic violence, single parent households, and parents' divorce. Pretorius (2020) has similar findings she reports on common challenges that are faced by school-going children to be: exposure to violence, abuse, and dysfunctional family dynamics. These challenges are likely to result in trauma, which affects the child's concentration in class, leading to poor school performance. Participants from LSEN schools also mentioned that much instability exists in homes, because parents struggle to cope with their children. Parents' struggle may result in frustration, and violence towards child. Participant J explained below:

"So, there's a lot of abuse, um, different abuses not only physical but sexual abuse from, because our kids are so vulnerable, people take advantage, and sometimes it's always close family... Abuse is one of the main things. Due to the conditions, parents struggle to cope. So obviously when you struggle to cope as a parent and there's no support from outside or from

family, you get frustrated as well. So, you take it out on the child. And sometimes it's only one parent, single parenting parents don't have support from outside” (J, female).

Participant K, below, further reported that many social ills that exist in the community tend to spill over into the school environment and have a profound impact on the development of the child: *“They are fully dependent on the government and the notion of a dependency syndrome, and they - there are high crime rates within the school and high dropout rates, high pregnancy rates. It's basically a chronic dysfunction within the community that boils to the schools” (K, male).*

4.2.3. Social needs

Interestingly, participants from more affluent schools reported relatively less physiological needs for learners. Instead, they reported mostly on the presence of higher levels of social needs such as: parental involvement, feeling more loved, and accepted. According to Ludwig and Rostain (2009, pp.103-118), emotional neglect can lead to consequences such as: developmental delays, aggression, depression, low sense of self, substance abuse, and other emotional disorders. Participant L emphasised: *“...most of my learners are from well off families, which sometimes means the parents are working twenty-four, seven and learners are left to be on their gadgets they are on their own. Um, in terms of them developing, sometimes it's a problem. At times when parents are not around, they feel that they provide everything for their children. So why should they complain sometimes when their parents do not understand...” (L, female).* Whereas learners from low-income communities, who had special needs, were reported to often engage in activities such as substance abuse, to fit in and be accepted by their peers who do not have special needs. Thus, as discussed earlier in this dissertation, children often mimic what they have seen in their society, for example, becoming violent when exposed to violence or engaging in undesirable activities to have a sense of belonging. Participant C reported below:

“.....our world here and where the children come from are totally two hugely different worlds. Totally, totally different worlds. Because if you, if you look at the school, you can see, um, it, it's not like, you know, a struggling school, but most of our learners come from extremely disadvantaged communities. So now having to balance because, um, you would teach them here, don't smoke, but the child is going to an environment where everyone

around them is smoking. So, how's that child expected, you know, to be like, I'm not going to smoke..." (C, female).

Within the South African context, many children are not raised by their biological parents. Owing to various adverse circumstances, including biological parents not having enough financial resources, being jailed, or deceased, most caregivers are aunts, uncles, or grandparents. Children's healthy attachment to their biological parents may be negatively affected by a combination of being raised by non-biological caregivers, and the traumatising circumstances that their biological parents may face (Windell, 2024). Participant B (female), elaborated, *"... attachment problems, limited bonding moving from home to home ..."* Participant L2 (female) added that, *"A lot of very complex family structures is an issue where students are getting raised by granny, aunts, uncles, not their biological parents..."*

4.2.4. Esteem and status needs.

Participants reported that learners often consult with school social workers, for support in dealing with anxiety, school performance anxiety, stress, self-worth, and self-esteem. Participants spoke about the need to address behavioural issues, bullying, sexual misconduct, peer pressure, and emotional regulation. Their aim was to encourage respect for others, and to develop socially healthy individuals.

Participant H shared an interesting perspective concerning the self-image of learners with special needs. Participant H explained that learners with special needs are also aware of their differences, which affects how they see themselves. The participant had implemented several strategies to develop healthy self-images among learners. The strategies to enhance healthy self-images among learners with special needs is crucial, as van den Bosch (2011) shows, there is a correlation between peer acceptance and self-concept. Thus, students with learning disabilities who are rejected by their peers will likely develop a negative sense of self. This is demonstrated in the following quotations:

".... incredible stress to achieve, which comes both from the school and from the families..."
(B, female).

"...anxiety is massive, especially after COVID (-19), because of the nature of the school, this is a very high performing academic school, your school must be sitting with the same sort of thing. And the kids put a lot of pressure on themselves to do well, especially from

about grade six upwards um, so we get a lot of performance anxiety type things. A lot of “am I choosing the right subject type things” (L2, female).

“I think the link to the learning difficulties is a lot of self-images. Um, and in the communities, especially our teenagers, our older learners are very aware that they're different, and even at the school they attend is different, and they get dropped off by school transport, which is a very visible thing. The name of the school is on the bus, and you get off and you're seventeen, but you don't really have a book bag, and you got it. And what's in your bookbag might be a grade three or four curriculum book, which other people in the community recognized from their children from when they were much younger, and just little things like that.” (H, female)

4.2.5. Self-actualization needs

Aiding learners to achieve their full potential can be more challenging for school social workers based in LSEN schools. There are not many resources that are available to special needs children once they complete their education. The few resources that exist often require funds that many families cannot afford. Moreover, the presence of many barriers to learning such as: poverty, difficult home circumstances, exposure to violence, and learning difficulties or disability, may affect learners from developing their dreams or achieving those that they may have. The below quotations show how the challenging nature of the children's context, and how this could affect them:

“...children's abilities and what is available, and there is a lack of resources out there. It feels a bit hopeless actually. In school now for ten years, when they are eighteen, what? What fills that, that almost void then? Um, you know, it's a big thing. Many of our families, just because of being financially very strained, don't have funds to have a learner enrolled in an adult education centre or adult employment centre.” (H, female)

“...when the learners get to a point where they have to exit the school because a lot of them, they struggle in reading and writing, and then they get to the end and it's like, you know, they've not progressed that much and exit plan, if I may put it so to say that you know, where do we take them, where do they go.” (J, female)

4.3. Experiences of school social workers in providing services

This theme discusses the experiences of school social workers in their respective schools. It sheds light on their roles and responsibility, as well as how they can engage with the learners, their families, and school staff, to provide social work services. The culmination of these findings adds to untangling many complex issues that exist for school social workers. (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020)

4.3.1. *The role of a social worker in a school*

School-based social workers reported diverse ways in which they provided interventions at schools. Contrary, the school deployed social workers were not primarily based in school hence they had limited interactions with learners. A social worker's role in addressing their clients' needs, can be described as multifaceted. Vergottini and Weyers (2020) explain that school social workers should be able to engage with all members of the school community, such as parents, teachers, and management.

Social workers also assess learners' needs, provide intervention, promote community and parent involvement, as well as collaborate with other organisations to develop multi-disciplinary teams and meet learners' needs. Furthermore, social workers ensure excellent record keeping and maintain a suitable administrative practice. (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020) The study's findings reveal that social workers' roles in a school include individual counselling, group work, awareness programs, working with parents, staff, statutory work, home visits, and being a safeguarding officer at the school. The below participants described their roles:

"...So, for me, I do a lot of counselling work and support work, a lot of emotional regulation and then things like grief counselling helping children..." (H, female).

".... primarily the counselling of the children and the intervention with children when there are psychosocial problems. Um, but it becomes bigger than that because that in turn necessitates working with parents, working with teachers, working with people in the community. So, it is a lot of psycho education. Um, I do a lot of parent counselling and parent work, individual counselling, play therapy with the small children, because I am covering grade one to grade twelve. So, I use different modalities..." (B, female).

"...when I started, it was better because we had a clinical psychologist and counselling psychologist. So, they used to do, you know, the counselling and I would help mostly in the discipline, family matters, home visits. But now the two left and I think financially the school

can't afford it so I kind of like to do the counselling, however, it's not in-depth. If we feel that the child needs in-depth counselling, then we will refer out” (J, female).

“...you do counselling, and you also do child protection at those schools. You also do - um, what's early prevention and intervention and prevention. You also do statutory, you also do after care...” (K, male).

4.3.2. Working with learners.

The findings show that there are various interventions that are used to support learners, and these include individual counselling and group work. Most of the participants explained that educators allowed them to access learners on condition that the children's safety was maintained. Moreover, learners could easily access social workers' services through booking an appointment or walk-in to the office (mostly for school-based social workers). Social workers reported that, although there were a few learners who do not wish for others to know that they attended counselling, most of them were eager to openly attend the sessions. Participant D elaborated below:

“The educators obviously would identify if a learner needed to be referred or the parents would come or even walk-ins in so the children can come to them. Yeah, they, they just come in. We would have an open-door policy, because others, you see, my office is isolated from the classrooms so it's like there's a stigma when you go to that office, you've got problems. We've got issues. So, some of the learners don't want to just say, yeah, to be seen coming here” (D, female).

While the open-door policy was only applicable for school-based social workers, children in schools that relied on deployed social workers often had to wait long periods for services to be rendered. Reyeneke (2018) also identified that it is the government's responsibility to provide learners with access to social services, yet this is a limited service. There are a few government social workers, but too many learners require their service.

4.3.3. Working parents and families

This study found conflicting realities about the working relationship between school social workers and parents/caregivers, largely based on the socio-economic circumstances of the child's family. Participants reported that parents in stable socio-economic circumstances were more involved with the school and likely to present themselves when requested. Participant L demonstrated:

“...so, we've got a number of parents who are actively involved in different activities, from the bursary, to sports, too. There are a lot. We've got those who donate who just donate financially...” (L, female).

Whereas parents from low-income homes often did not attend meetings or functions, due to financial constraints or being in jobs that they could not easily take time off. Participant H and Participant J reported on this saying:

“...many, most of our parents, if they have a job, it's a full-time job, it's not a job they can easily leave just to come to school, for whichever reason” (H, female).

“...parents that are struggling, that live in the conditions that, you know, you don't always have money on you to just jump on a taxi and get here” (J, female).

Massat et al. (2016) frames a school as a community of families and argues that the role of a school social worker is to navigate and build partnerships between caregivers, the school, and the child. This partnership is important for the establishment of a strong school community that can socially and academically support learners.

4.3.4. Working with the teachers

According to Pretorius (2020), there is no strong working relationship between social workers and educators in South Africa, compared to other global countries that have well-operating systems. Moreover, this study's findings suggest that teachers are unaware of the scope of social work in schools. Resultantly, teachers often have unrealistic expectations on the type of work that is provided by the school social worker. Interestingly, Ozkan et al.'s (2019) study indicates that 64.3% of their participants, who comprised of school counsellors and staff, had a limited understanding of what is school social work. Participant B explained the following:

“Historically there has always been tension between educational staff and social work, which is typical, because though we should have the same goal and vision. We have diverse ways of seeing it, achieving it and getting there. There can be a lot of conflict where I can be perceived as being soft, taking the child's side or indulging the child not looking at discipline, then I will counter argue and say, well, you need to have appropriate discipline. We cannot have these humiliating punishment type situations. So, then tension arises around discipline” (B, female).

“Yeah, like I said before, um, sometimes teachers send a child here and then they expect you to fix the child immediately. I'm not a fixer, um, they expect the child to go back to class and be okay, it's a process ...” (C, female).

Contrary, some participants described their working relationship with teachers as being pleasant and improving overtime, Participant L (female) said, *“...[it] is a challenge, but across time we've developed a good system here...”*, while Participant D (female) also reported, *“...would say it's good, because we can, up to so far, have not experienced any problems...”*

4.3.5. Non-social work roles they are required to fulfil.

School counsellors are often assigned non-counselling duties and support tasks such as clerical, or administrative tasks, that takes away the time that they could have spent on counselling duties (Astramovich et al., 2000, cited in Chandler et al, 2018). The below findings suggest that school social workers often have to engage in non-social work activities at the school, which takes away their time to fulfil their main role. Pincus et al. (2020), with reference to work by Wilder (2018), postulate that many school counsellors have times that they may not be able to sufficiently serve their learners and school community because they would be tasked with performing non-counselling duties. These include test coordination, substitute teaching, bus duty, or following up on why the child is not attending school, as described below:

“I will always help if I'm asked to be at an event, or of course I do. So, I take part in the school functions...” (B, female).

“I do break duty once a week for our learners in wheelchairs and I assist in some of the classes with other activities, especially if there's anything the school arranges like a school concert or parents evening information evening...” (H, female).

4.3.6. Caseload

In South Africa, there is a great shortage of social workers, those who are hired are often overworked and experience burnout (Skhosana et al., 2014, cited in Koketso et al., 2021). Many social workers have high caseloads and although they are in a school context, intervention is brief. Social workers are also often burdened with other non-social work tasks. The below findings indicate the type of workload that the participants experienced. Compared to the caseloads experienced by social workers abroad, the below would be considered extremely high. For example in the United Kingdom's Durham County council (2022) a social worker's caseload should be no higher than 22

cases, this is considered a very enticing reality. Which has led to many South African social workers are leaving to other countries where a caseload would be 15 rather than as high as 160 (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2023). Some participants reported that heavy caseloads result in elevated levels of stress and not being able to manage their work. Participant K reported that, *“I had sixteen schools that I was responsible for, unlike when you are based in one school.”* Furthermore, Participant H reported, *“...is a hundred and thirty-two, so that's roughly a third of the school, if you think we - three hundred and sixty”* (H, female). Participant NKA (male) also said:

“...We have two social workers. Each of us has a caseload so we can say around a hundred and fifty learners are on our caseload ... It's not easy to manage. Like, as we say, in most cases, we respond to A-Z, because today they'll come in reporting about this and then. Tomorrow is something else. And then you forget to look at your case load or your program.”

4.3.7. Structure of the support services at the school for learners: SBST/Multidisciplinary team

Findings show that the support services in schools vary. Some private schools in the current study had a multidisciplinary team that did not report to the DBST. Two of the private schools were reported by participants to have an entire wellness/counselling department, which is dedicated to learners' psychosocial wellbeing. On the other hand, public schools have SBSTs that can comprise various role players such as management, teachers, therapists, and the school social worker. In support of the above, literature shows that school social workers often must collaborate with other professionals in order to address barriers of learning (Van Sittert, 2016). However, based on the current study's findings, there appears to be a lack of uniformity of services among school support services and who forms part of the support system team. This is demonstrated in the below participants' quotations:

“We are a wellness centre. I am not working alone. We've got our head of department as a psychologist, we've got two other educational psychologists and myself, and then we've got the father, because this is a catholic school” (L, female).

“So, we've got a SBST referral system. So, what happens is, if a teacher realises there is a problem with the child, they will fill in the form. The form will go through the SBST coordinator. So, which is my HOD and then after she reserves the SBST, we meet on Tuesdays um, she'll come. I'm part of the psychologist team. Yes, the department. So, we meet every Tuesday for case management. So, she will dish out the cases accordingly” (NK,

female).

4.4. Challenges faced by school social workers

Participants presented several challenges that they experienced as school social workers. The challenges include a sense of loneliness and other professionals not understanding social workers in school's scope of practice has resulted in unrealistic expectations. Other challenges include not having a working framework, limited knowledge about school social work and lack of supervision.

4.4.1. Being alone

This finding was interesting and unexpected, because social workers in a school often work with various professionals, yet some participants reported feeling isolated. Several participants explained that although they were part of a multidisciplinary team, they felt "alone," partly because they were often the only social worker among other teams of professionals that did not fully comprehend the social workers' scope of practice. This resulted in poor supervision, not being understood, or feeling unsupported (Van Sittert & Wilson, 2018, cited in Reyneke, 2020). Resultantly, some participants made use of local social work forums to secure support and information from other school social workers who were in similar situations. Participant C (female) said, *"Mostly because me, being by myself, I can't get to all of them..."* Participant L added:

"I'm the only social worker here working with three educational psychologists although our head of department does not take on many cases, but her background is that of one of the psychologists as well. Yes, I'm. Sometimes I feel like I'm, on my own in that, in that regard" (L, female).

Participant NK (female) also added:

Sometimes it's better, sometimes it's just overwhelming, yeah, it's just a lot. And there's nothing that my department could help me with because there are some things that they cannot do. It's out of their work scope ..."

4.4.2. Lack of supervision

According to Van Sittert and Wilson (2018, cited in Reyneke, 2020), some school social workers do not receive any ongoing supervision, nor is there general support from the DBE. This can result in impaired work competence. The NASW (2013) stipulates the importance of supervision in that it protects clients, supports practitioners, and ensures that quality services are provided by qualified

and competent social workers who uphold professional standards. Most participants reported having limited or no supervision and where supervision was provided it often was not by someone with school social work experience. Participant K (male) reported, “...*you don't have a designated school social work supervisor, you have a supervisor for statutory, and you have to share with other officials.*” In addition, Participant NK, below, said:

“No, only my HOD and she's a psychologist she doesn't really understand my scope of practice. So, for me, if there's something that I don't understand or I need help with, I will have to find someone outside the school who's got social work experience” (NK, female).

4.4.3. Limited training

Most participants for this study reported feeling as though they were not fully equipped for their roles. All social workers are trained in many aspects of their roles. However, not many are aware of the specific challenges that may arise in schools. One participant explained that she did not often deal with children’s learning problems but felt that it would be better if she could understand more about learning difficulties such as dyslexia, to better support the child and family. Vergottini and Weyers (2022) corroborate this by stating the need for more training because there is a gap in the existing knowledge for school social workers to efficiently operate.

Furthermore, participants working in LSEN schools reported that they were not provided with any additional training on working with children who have disabilities. One social worker reported not being able to effectively communicate with the children because she did not know sign language. According to the National Association of Social Work in the United States of America, appropriate qualifications and ongoing training is required for the approval to practise school social work. (NASW, 2012) Therefore school social work which requires specialised knowledge and understanding of education systems, which should be provided by social work education programs and continuous development training. The below participants reported:

“...it is very challenging because we don't use sign language, especially those who have a speech problem, it becomes very difficult. It's just that you need to observe the child...” (NKA, male).

“...So, if we can get training, I think you will be able to improve what we are doing at school level, because at the moment we don't have any formal structure...” (NK, female).

“...because if they're saying we are referring a dyslexic learner to you, now I know at least what to say or what to recommend whereas before I didn't even know what that is...” (L, female).

“Because we didn't have an educational training, bridging the thing about learning, how children learn and what, how the barriers of learning affect them in the classroom, I suppose. Um, a little bit of that. And then just because I am now landed in a special needs school, would it be nice to know just a blueprint of what is a neurotypical learner what is a learner with a learning disability? What is a slow learner? Why? What is a MID learner...” (H, female).

4.4.4. Varying services

Although there are several overlaps in the roles of school social workers, there are also many differences, which causes confusions and the sense that there is a lack of uniformity in the field. For example, some social workers participate in admissions of students while others do not. Some participants also reported being involved in disciplinary processes whilst others refused to be involved, because they believe it will destroy the therapeutic relationship between the social worker and the child. In Van Sittert's (2016) study, school social workers reported concerns about the lack of uniformity in their job descriptions and that it had occurred that their roles differed from social workers in other schools. The issue of varying services appears to exist in every province of South Africa (Pretorius, 2020; Reyneke, 2020). Vergottini and Weyers' (2022) article also provides evidence which shows the inconsistency in the way that schoolwork services are provided in different provinces. It further states that unequal services exist, where not all learners have access to services. The findings highlighted the need for homogeneity of school social work services. Below, the participants described the difference and their confusions:

“...social work in the department, for instance, in Gauteng there are four, I think, four or five ways of doing school social work, which is the most confusing. We don't have a uniform way...” (K, male).

“...there's very few schools with social workers. Yes, I think that's where sometimes people feel like there's not much clarity about what we're supposed to be doing at the school” (D, female).

4.4.5. School social workers not knowing the full scope of practice.

Many participants of the current study did not know their scope of practice. This is further perpetuated by the fact that, there is no school social work framework. Reyneke (2020) states that there is not sufficient discussion on the roles and tasks of the school social workers within the education system. The lack of information has led to much confusion for social workers, school management and the DBE. Most of the participants spoke about the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support policy, which focuses on addressing barriers to learning. However, they were not able to fully articulate the full extent of their responsibility, nor did they have a similar understanding. Most participants reported having experience in statutory social work and then having, to “figure out,” their roles and tasks when they started working in schools. The narratives that show this finding are below:

“I was the first social worker, so I had to literally start from scratch and not knowing what school social work all is about, um, I just had to scuttle and study all. But management has been a great support” (J, female).

“As you literally learn everything on the go, there is no job description. Or somebody's showing you your KPI'S no, you literally get in, you sign your contract, then you get designated to an office. You get to that office. If you're lucky, you have someone who's gonna show you how they used to do” (K, male).

4.4.6 Support from School Management

The current study cumulated contrary findings from those of van Sittert (2016) article, that many school social workers reported having no support or guidance from school management and district management. Most of participants reported that they had positive support from their school management. Although they had occasional disagreements, they were able to find mutual ground in order to work towards the best interest of the child concerned. One participant spoke highly of the school management and their support of her initiatives. However, a few participants described their working relationship with management as difficult and lacking in support. Resultantly, when they received backlash from the teachers, they often did not receive support from the management. Participant L2 reported:

“The role of management, across time I had different heads, across time they have been

phenomenally supportive of learning new ideas. They include this department in terms of strategic restructuring and will include the team in terms of what will work for the team. And when I go to them about an idea, they are very open to it” (L2, female).

Further, to Participant L2, Participant B also said, “...more buy-in from management and more support, more visual or obvious support from management...” (B, female).

4.4.7 From District Support Based Team and the Department of Social Development

The findings show that school social workers experienced lack of supervision or oversight, most of them had ever been visited or in contact with representatives from the district offices, be it the DSD or the Department of Education. Some participants explained that when cases had to be referred to the district, it was done by the principal. Only one participant mentioned having a supervisor at provincial level. However, the participant only met the supervisor if there was a crisis or ministerial enquiry. The below participants reported:

“At our district level, we don't have much support, instead, we are hearing from the provincial government instead of the district. The head office can listen to us when we talk but, our district there is a missing link. That is because we don't have social workers based at our district level. So, our supervisors are at a provincial level” (NKA, male).

“Nothing at all. I don't even know who a contact person at the district is and then with the Department of Social Development also not so there's nobody providing me, unless I seek for it of my own accord” (H, female).

4.5. Economic environment and the impact this has on school social workers' ability to deliver services.

4.5.1. Types of schools

The study found that schools that are serviced by the participants could be categorised into three groups. This would allow the researcher to best understand how the socio-economic environment influences school social work servicers. The schools' categories are discussed in the following subthemes.

4.5.1.1. Wealthy schools

These are schools that have access to many resources in the community. Most learners in these schools come from families with high-income communities. Although the schools support some

learners from low-income communities this does not affect their ability to provide high-quality education and social services. Some wealthy schools have more than one social worker or psychologist, who has an allocated budget to run their department. These schools are well supported by parents through fees and initiatives to raise further funds. Participant L2 (female) reported, *“...very privileged you saw as you walked through with me. In a very busy part of the northern suburbs...quite a range of pupils are here, but the school physically happens to just be in quite a privileged base”* (L2, female). In addition, Participant L (female) said:

“There are a lot. We have got those who donate who just donate financially, we've got those who advertise for the school and recruit and get funds for bursaries. We have got those who coordinate events like matric dance and get funds that are given to the school” (L, female).

4.5.1.2. Moderately resourced schools

These are the governing body schools that are partially funded by the government. They are situated in well-off communities. However, most of the learners come from low-income communities. Most parents apply for financial exemptions and the school must fundraise to provide additional services such as social work and transport. The School Governing Body employs the social worker. Thus, the social worker would be at risk of unemployment if the school's finances change. Participant C reported:

“So, the community around it's a well-off community. But the learners and the children that we have, most of them are from disadvantaged communities...It is a fee-paying school, but we are a public school. So, they have the right to apply for exemption so those parents that cannot afford fees, they apply for exemption” (C, female).

Additionally, Participant H said, *“So yes, we do have to do fundraising activities and other supplement to school income”* (H, female).

4.5.1.3. Low-income schools

These schools are situated in low-income communities, they are funded by the government. The schools do not have school based social workers but rely on a school deployed social worker. There are limited community resources, and this affects the quality of social work intervention, due to high caseloads and limited resources. The following participant said:

“I forgot which quantile to place them in, because there are no fee schools, four of them are

former farm schools. So, you have parents who are not involved... the inner community that lacks resources to the max. They are fully dependent on the government and the notion of a dependency syndrome, and they - there high crime rates within the school and high dropout rates, high pregnancy rates. It is basically a chronic dysfunction within the community that boils to the schools. Then you have the ones that are placed in the townships are those okay they are placed in a coloured township. So those ones - I would not say that the socio economics are similar to the ones in the rural, with the farms. The difference with them is that there is structure, there are resources, but there's a lack of use of resources on that side..." (K, male).

Participant K went on to provide a practical example of how in some of the schools where they are deployed, there is no office for them to work so interviews and interventions are provided to the learners in the government issued car. They further stated how this lack of working space has had an impact on the quality of work that they can provide:

"...you can't actually face the person, you cannot read the, the cues, all the prompts or you can do a prompt and see the expressions that the learner has that challenging because in interviewing in a car, you can't really assess a child holistically" (K, male).

4.5.2. Creativity to provide services.

Burgess and Jackson (2005) explain that in social work, creativity means finding imaginative, new ways of collaborating with the referred clients or those who come for help. Often, social workers must think outside of the limitations of sparse resources, a lack of funding and political constraints, to best support their clients. Participants shared how they too had to be creative, to secure their own resources, establishing social projects that did not cost too much and finding ways to see their clients in the most difficult situations. This was reported by Participant B as, *"Yeah, I've never had an issue with. I use my own stuff..."* Participant L2 also reported:

"...in terms of finances but we are given a budget, and we must work within the budget. We do our best to not add to the financial burden of the parents, so we get the children to make things in their community work, to share with others instead of buying. We strongly encourage recycling to cut costs and teach the kids to make things with their hands..." (L2, female).

Furthermore, Participant K said, *"I do get an office, at some schools, those that don't have a place*

that is conducive for counselling then I opted to use the government car” (K, male).

4.5.3. Access to community services and resources

One of the roles of a school social worker, as outlined by Pretorius (2020), is the ability to collaborate with other stakeholders and make use of resources within the community. Almost all participants spoke about their extensive networks with other organisations that they worked with to address the needs of their clients. This exists for many reasons such as, due to high caseloads one social worker is not able to see clients for a long term. Thus, eventually, clients are referred elsewhere. Another reason is the need for specialised services for child protection, substance abuse treatments, or family counselling. It is important to note that, schools in more well-off communities have access to more services which include, NGOs, government services and private practitioners, whereas the schools in low-income areas have far more limited community services at their disposal:

“...we work a lot with NGOs that are around us, like you, SANCA for instance, if they are smoking, they would send them for testing at SANCA and if they are positive, then they go through a behaviour modification that is offered by, by SANCA and at the school, because currently I’m the only social worker So it’s a whole lot of caseloads. It is, it’s too much. But you would support those learners that are maybe going for behaviour modification” (D, female).

“...we try to start here, but when we see we can’t because there’s no psychologists here. We usually refer outside to Teddy Bear clinic or Kids clinic where they can actually do intense therapy, which I’m not. I’m the only one. So usually when it gets too much, we just refer to the appropriate stakeholders and then they help us...” (C, female).

4.5.4. Education versus School social work

Within the context of the school, education is often seen as the central goal to be achieved. However, Pretorius (2020) argues that the education system should work collaboratively to develop the whole child. Thus, not only providing education and addressing educational needs but all other social factors that may result in barriers to learning. Participants expressed notion of feeling secondary, and as if their role was not valued. Moreover, some psychosocial needs of the learners were dismissed to focus on learning, as described below:

“As I say, I think a very real challenge for every counselling department in a school is we are secondary service, education is the primary service. So, we are not a mental health

priority, although, I mean, that sounds wrong, but the mental health needs of the pupil are important, but education comes first, and that's the function of the school. So, if a school is struggling and you can't afford to have a mental health team, you have to rely on the community services for that” (L2, female).

Furthermore, Participant H reported that, *“Sometimes I do find I say I’m definitely at the bottom of the food chain. I see it in the school as educators and teaching, then the real therapists.”*

4.6. Improving the school social work services

In discussing the experiences of social work services at school, a new theme emerged, based on what participants believed would improve school social work as a profession. Recommendations included the need for policy reform and clarity on the roles and responsibilities of school social workers. Furthermore, there is a great need for more school social workers to be employed and more resources to be made available. Participants also felt that the specialisation of this field of social work should be concluded. Below are the quotations from the participants:

I do think we should all have departmental positions where you are employed and immediately, you'll have a better standing, almost, if I can call it that, in your school. As to the importance of your role, and, and in most cases, I think with even the cases where there are social workers, you might need more than one, you know, to practically be able to reach out and to put the things in place that are necessary to address the barriers to learning that many of the learners’ experience (H, female).

Participant K said, *“That they should finalise the specialisation of school social work”.*

Furthermore, Participant B reported, *“...understanding of what social work does and why it's important. And in relation to the kind of child we're dealing with today and the stresses today, and to try and see the whole system is more integrated” (B, female).*

4.7. Conclusion

Taking into consideration the objectives set out at the start of this study, data analysis has provided rich findings. The findings have discussed several challenges that are faced by learners. It is apparent that the learning and development of children depends on the economic and socio-emotional environment in which they are raised. Moreover, the context in which social workers are placed will

determine their roles but also the types of services that they can provide to their clients. Findings indicate a correlation between the resources available in a school to the quality of service being provided. Although much has been achieved to provide some services to learners, there is still room for improvement within the profession. The following chapter summarises the main findings, provides recommendations, and concludes the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS, CONTRIBUTION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The study is an in-depth exploration of the social workers' experiences, challenges, availability of support and resources, as well as what social workers recommend for the improvement of their services. The current chapter synthesises the main findings and discusses how the study has contributed to existing literature in the field of social work. Lastly the chapter provides recommendations for future research and improvement of school social work.

5.2. Main findings

The synthesis of the main findings is presented using the themes that emerged from the study.

5.2.1. The psychosocial issues learners face based on the perspectives of school social workers

The findings suggest that social workers in schools deal with issues such as: poverty, various forms of abuse, family dysfunction, exposure to violence, parental neglect and peer conflict, which are affecting children. This finding could be because the issues that are faced by children in South Africa are ingrained in the makeup of our society.

Additionally, although there were slight differences on what was reported by participants as challenges that were faced by learners, perhaps due to their socio-economic status. However, many social ills affect all children regardless of where they reside, or if they are below or above the poverty line.

Previous studies have shown that schools are microcosms of the broader community in which they are located. South African learners are affected by many ills of the society, including violence, poverty, child-headed homes, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020). Pretorius (2016) states that even after many years of democracy South Africa is still plagued by oppression, inequality, and exclusion of the Black population. All these challenges affect learners' ability to learn. Yet, schools are often not adequately equipped to support and address the issues faced by its learners. Hence, there is a need for school social workers and a multidisciplinary team that can operate collectively to address all the barriers to learning.

5.2.2. The experiences of the school social workers in providing interventions to the learners

The study's findings illustrate the complex reality of school social work. The role of school social workers is diverse and often requires them to diversify their involvement, including taking up work that is outside of their scope of service – to ensure that they are fully involved in the school environment. School social workers' participation in non-social roles is met with much contention. In the current study, participants had no consensus on the social workers' involvement in non-social roles. Some believed that it was necessary while others argued that it takes away from the time to fulfil their social work roles. This notion is corroborated by literature which states that, many school counsellors, often do not have sufficient time to appropriately serve their clients because they are tasked with performing non counselling duties (Pincus et al, 2020).

School social work requires practitioners to be able to work with various stakeholders in the school community. This would consist of learners, parents, teachers, and the school management. Each of these relations has its own unique dynamics and contribution. Based on the study's findings, most social workers have collaborated well with the teachers. However, there have been challenges related to teachers not understanding the scope of social work practice in schools, which has led to unrealistic expectations as well as tensions between teachers and social workers. Similarly, there are different perspectives on collaborating with parents. Collaborations in this regard refers to parental involvement and their ability to avail themselves to support their children's learning and wellbeing while in school. Findings suggest that parents from poorer communities often struggle to be involved in matters concerning their children in school. This study's findings highlight some existing tensions between teachers and school social workers, the driver of the tension between teachers and social workers is the misunderstanding by the teachers of what a school social worker's role is in the school. Özkan et al. (2019) attributed a lack of other professionals' understanding of the role of social workers in schools to a lack of advocacy around the profession compared to allied professions such as psychology.

Most of the current study's participants reported, with concern, on high caseloads. However, this finding is not entirely new in the social work practice within South Africa. According to the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (2023), social workers in South Africa have as much as 5 times higher caseloads than that of social workers in other countries. High caseloads lead to shorter sessions with clients, the reliance on other organisations for additional services, and more

preventative work rather than individual work. High caseloads have contributed to high stress levels and mismanagement of cases in some instances.

The current study's findings also suggest that most participants, except one, described working in a multidisciplinary team as part of the goal of providing support to learners and addressing barriers to learning. The composition of these teams varies. In some schools the team is made of just a school social worker and an educational psychologist, whilst in other schools the support system involves a teacher, member of management, the school social worker, the school nurses, physiotherapist, and occupational therapists. Such support makeups in the findings, they are referred to as School Based Support Teams (SBSTs) and are more prevalent in the governing-body schools.

5.2.3 The challenges faced by school social workers.

The study conducted by Koketso et al. (2021) discusses various challenges that are faced by social workers. In South Africa, there is a great shortage of social workers. Resultantly, employed social workers are often overworked and experience burnout. Furthermore, resources to provide public assistance are often limited, due to sparse funding (Skhosana et al., 2014, cited in Koketso et al., 2021).

According to the current study's findings, predominant challenges include lack of supervision, which has left school social workers unsupported and without necessary input for professional development. The current study's participants also reported having experienced a sense of isolation, partly because of being the only social worker in the school, and because of limited support available to them. Many participants reported of the current study were experienced in statutory work. They previously worked with groups of other social workers, while also supported by supervisors.

The study's findings suggest that there is a need for enhanced training of school social workers. Throughout this study, most participants felt that they were ill-equipped. Although they were qualified social workers, they felt that they still could not fully understand various barriers to learning and how to address them. A lack of sufficient knowledge is particularly challenging for social workers who work in LSEN schools, where they are unable to communicate with the learners since they have no prior training for working with learners that have special needs.

Findings indicate the need for more training on various areas of school social work for practitioners to provide effective services. Participants also reported on the reality of varying services and role confusion. They reported that it is not clear what social workers are expected of in

the school setting. Based on the study there is an irregularity in the way that schoolwork services are provided in various provinces, moreover learners do not have equal access to services. The findings suggest the need for homogeneity of school social work services.

This study's findings discussed several concerns that relate to school social workers' support. Many participants reported that there is limited or no existence of social work supervision. However, because they were part of a school community there is a divided view on the support received from school management and the district offices. Some participants reported positive support from their school management whilst others felt that they would benefit from more support with validating their role in the school because teachers often challenge them.

As part of the study, the researcher sought to determine the level of support provided to school social workers from the DBST. However, it appears that all school social workers' interaction with the DBSTs vary, for different reasons including, how they are employed, that they are in independent schools, and misunderstood protocol. Social workers in independent schools do not engage with nor receive oversight from DBSTs. Some participants in governing-body schools reported that they did not personally interact with DBSTs, and that if a case had to be referred, it was done by the school principal. Overall, it appears that what has been outlined in the SIAS policy regarding how the SBSTs should interact with the DBSTs is different to what is occurring.

5.2.4. How the socio-economic environment has an impact on the social workers ability to provide services to learners.

Limited financial resources, and staff shortages are challenges in the implementation of school social services and inclusive education. The socio-economic standing of any country or institution will indeed affect the ability for quality services to be provided, be it because of limited resources or limited human capital. This notion has weaved itself throughout the current study. Most participants reported on how the financial standing of the school has affected their work, be it by having limited resources or having to be creative in providing their services on a limited budget.

Moreover, many participants reported having high caseloads. High caseloads have been hard to manage, without additional staff. It is only in the well-resourced schools where there is a team of counsellors to service learners. Moreover, there is a great need for services to support students who originate from low-income communities. The services may include counselling, as well as initiatives such as feeding programs, clothing drives, and transport. However, most schools do not have a budget for this required support. Therefore, there is a need for additional funding, which could be

sought through fundraising. Many of the schools have learners who cannot afford the school fees, which has an implication on how schools must decide where to utilise most of the resources. In such decisions, psychosocial services receive minimal resources because the school is regarded as having to prioritise providing education (Gherardi & Whittlesey-Jerome, 2018, cited in Tan et al., 2020).

The current study's findings indicate that school social work relies much on the services rendered by external organisations, for additional support to children such as long-term therapy, psychiatric treatments, and addiction programmes – support that social workers cannot provide. The organisations are community resources. However, the resources' availability varies per community. Based on the current study's findings, high-income communities are more well-resourced than low-income communities. This finding confirms the inequalities that exist in South Africa. Low-income communities have high populations, yet they depend on sparse resources.

5.2.5. How school social workers believe the service and profession can be improved upon

This study's findings show that there is a need for more school social workers to be employed, to address the needs for children in schools. This finding endorses Pretorius' (2016) argument that there is a need for more social workers in schools to address the barriers to learning and that educators and social workers should work together and support each other to achieve this. Moreover, as discussed earlier in the current chapter there is a need for uniformity as well as recognition of the contribution that school social workers make in the school community. There is also a sense that more specialised training needs to be rendered to school social workers so that they are adequately prepared to work with barriers to learning. Pretorius (2016) states that across the world, school social work is considered a specialised field. Thus, it has necessary training accreditation.

Vergottini and Weyers (2022) state that there is an ongoing struggle to legitimise school social work by the South African Council for Social Services. Moreover, the role and responsibilities of school social work have not been standardised. Thus, contributing varying services and role confusion about social workers from the various provinces (NACOSSWEP, 2015, cited in Vergottini & Weyers, 2022). According to Tan et al. (2020) school social work is as valuable as any other helping profession, and it is the responsibility of social workers to advocate for the field. Historically, social work was considered a philanthropic endeavour rather than a professional career. However, much work has been done by scholars to address this misconception. Greenwood (1957, cited in Tan et al., 2020) identified five critical attributes that social work has in common with other disciplines. Firstly, it has a systematic body of theory, secondly it is recognised for its professional

authority and receives the sanction of the community, moreover it is being regulated by a code of ethics. Tan et al. (2020), further argue that if social workers today use the five attributes discussed by Greenwood to advocate for the profession in schools, it can be legitimised.

What has also become apparent in the current study's findings is limited social services in mainstream government schools. An effort to secure participants from government schools proved challenging because, most of the school-based social workers operated in independent schools and LSEN schools. There were no school social workers based at mainstream schools or low-income schools. Instead, school workers from the DSD would only be deployed to these schools at the request of the school when the need arose. The researcher found this interesting because there is a great need for social services across the country as argued by Reyneke (2018). This then leaves many schools at a disadvantage to receive urgent social services.

5.3. Contribution of the study

The current study's findings contribute to broadening literature in the field of school social work. Other researchers can use these findings to better understand the realities of school social work. Findings can also be used to elaborate the role of school social workers and how the profession contributes to the holistic development of a child within a school setting. Other professionals can better comprehend the role of school social workers within education, thus allowing for better collaboration with the various professionals that work within the education environment. The study also raises awareness on the challenges that are faced by school social workers and the need for policy review, on how more resources can be made available for social work services in schools.

5.4. Recommendations

It is recommended that the DBE and the DSD work together to formulate policies concerning the appointment of school social workers in schools, and the development of guidelines about their roles.

Many schools' social workers do not receive supervision or support. Thus, it is recommended that supervision be made a mandatory aspect for improving the professional development of school social workers.

Training at university level that is specific for the field to school social work would prove to be most beneficial to better develop and equip the professionals in the field.

Moreover, more must be done to educate and advocate for the profession to ensure uniformity and understanding of the scope of practice not only by the social workers but all other stake holders.

Inequality still exists in the provision of school social work services to all. Therefore, more needs to be done to bridge this gap. What can be considered is: establishing the profession, providing more resources to schools, to have the services, and conducting further research because literature regarding school social work in South Africa is limited.

Exploration into how technology can improve social services could prove beneficial. There is currently work that is conducted by Dr Leila Patel on tracking children in need of social services, using technology, which can indeed bridge the gap of issues such as shortages of social workers.

5.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study confirmed the inequality that still exists in South Africa, and in the quality of services that are provided. The aim of the study was to explore the perception of school social workers in providing services within schools. There is a complex reality regarding the provision of school social work services. The complexities are that services differ per school. There are also complexities on the impact that the school social work services have on school policies and budgets. Currently there are various policies such as the SIAS policy, Framework for Social Services, as well as the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning, which are all geared at addressing the needs of children and barriers to learning. However, the current study shows that the existing policies are not well implemented. There are also poor stakeholder collaborations to support the policies and improve learners' outcomes. Despite the need for the required more professional development work, school social workers in South Africa continue their solidifying as valuable and well operating professionals.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (PIS)



SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Research topic: **The Provision of School Social Work Interventions: A Case Study of Schools in Johannesburg.**

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Lerelle Smith, and I am a master's student in School Social Work, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr Motlalepule Nathane-Taulela.

I am conducting a research study about the experiences of School social workers in providing social services and how the socioeconomic environment may have an impact on this. I would like to invite you to participate in this study and share your most valuable insights. The interview will take place at (this place), at this (time) and will take between 45 minutes to an hour.

With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview. This data will be stored for 5 years and/or deleted after 5 years. Only the researcher will have access to the data.

During the research activity, I will need to ask for some personal information about you, including your experiences and feelings about your work. The interview will be confidential and anonymous. If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you decided not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study.

The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life. OR Some of the questions asked may make you feel sad or upset. If this happens, I will stop the interview and continue another time. If you need some support or counselling services following the interview, these can be arranged.

This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact.

me or my supervisor on the details listed below.

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University.

Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher: Lerelle Smith, 813043@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr Motlalepule Nathane-Taulela, motlalepule.nathane-taulela@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

The Provision of School Social Work Interventions: A Case Study of Schools in Johannesburg.

Researcher: Lerelle Smith

I,, agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.

YES NO

I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study.

YES NO

I agree that the interview/focus group/other activity may be audio recorded.

YES NO

I agree that direct quotations from my interview/focus group/other activity may be used by the researcher in their research report/ manuscript/book chapter.

YES NO

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report/manuscript/book chapter)

YES NO

I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview/focus group/other activity (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.

YES NO

..... (signature)

..... (name of participant)

..... (date)

..... (signature)

..... (name of researcher/person seeking consent)

..... (date)

APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introduction: who I am, what I am studying, reason for the research (to better understand and hopefully push for change), thank you for participating.

Section A

Age:

Gender:

Number of years in practice as a School Social Worker:

Community which you work:

Section B

Context:

Please tell me about the school where you work,

How would you describe the surrounding community?

How would you describe the socio-economic environment of the surrounding community?
Probe?

Role:

What is your role/roles at the school?

Please share some information about your daily tasks.

Learners:

Presenting problems of the learners,

What interventions were used to address the above-mentioned presenting challenges.

Have learners been able to access services from you, how so?

Have you had access to learners and how so?

Where did you work from? Home or school, head office?

How often do you go to the schools in your district?

How often do you see your clients?

How did you communicate with learners?

Are learners able to access services from you? and how?

What were the challenges in providing intervention?

What resources were you provided with?

How would you describe or evaluate the quality of the services you were providing?

Do you work well with the other staff e.g. Teachers?

Do you think you were supported by your superiors, SGB, department? Please explain more.

Thank you for your great contribution.

APPENDIX D: PERMISSION LETTER – JOHANNESBURG DISTRICT CENTRAL



University of the Witwatersrand,
School of Human and Community Development
Social Work
0117174472

To: District Director
Johannesburg Central District
Gauteng Department of Education
Corner Modjadji and Old Potch Road, Soweto College, Pimville

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Permission to conduct research at the Johannesburg Central District.

My name is Lerelle Smith

I am studying for a MA in School Social Work in the School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am seeking permission to do research at the Johannesburg Central District.

I am conducting research on the provision of school social work interventions in schools based in Johannesburg through the perspective of social workers.

The research will entail collecting data from social workers who have been employed by the Gauteng Department of Education to provide services in the schools. The participants, if they agree, will be asked to sit for an hour-long interview, which will be audio recorded.

Participants will be asked to give their written or verbal consent before the research begins. Their responses will be treated confidentially, and identities (their names and the name of the organisation) will be anonymous unless otherwise expressly indicated. Individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

The results will be communicated in an academic research report as required for the completion of my master's programme.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

All research data will be preserved for 5 years and thereafter destroyed.

I have applied for and received permission from the Office of the Director for Education Research and Knowledge Management. I therefore request permission in writing to conduct my research at your organisation.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as it is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Lerelle Smith
0840179413
813043@students.wits.ac.za

Dr Motlalepule Nathane-Tualela
Supervisor
0117174471
Motlalepule.Nathane@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX E: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: SW23/03/02

PROJECT TITLE

The Provision of School Social Work Interventions: A Case Study of Schools in Johannesburg

INVESTIGATOR

L SMITH

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR

SOCIAL WORK

DATE CONSIDERED

17 July 2023

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved unconditionally

RISK LEVEL

MINIMAL RISK

EXPIRY DATE

8 August 2026

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE

8 August 2023

CHAIRPERSON

(DR L PETERSEN)

cc: Supervisor: DR M NATHANE

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature _____

Date _____

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX F: TRAINING CERTIFICATE

	<h1>Zertifikat Certificat</h1>	<h1>Certificado Certificate</h1>
<p>Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants</p>		
<h3>Certificat de formation - Training Certificate</h3>		
<p>Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that</p>		
	<h2>Lerelle Smith</h2>	
<p>a complété avec succès - has successfully completed</p>		
<h3>Introduction to Research Ethics</h3>		
<p>du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation</p>		
<p>Release Date: 2023/03/23 CSD : dChen.Yu@hku.hk</p>	 Professeur Dominique Sprumont Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator	
<p>APPROVED BY  Programme de formation continue (2 crédits) Continuing Education Program (2 credits)</p>	<p>Federatio Pharmaceutica Helvetica</p>	<p>FPH Programmes de formation postgraduate education</p>
<p>Ce programme est soutenu par - This program is supported by : European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) (www.edctp.org/) - Swiss National Science Foundation (www.snf.ch/) - Canadian Institutes of Health Research (http://www.cihr-irac.gc.ca/2011.html) - Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS/ASME/ASMW) (www.sams.ch/) - Consortium for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.crdp.ch/)</p>		

APPENDIX G: RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER – GAUTENG PROVINCE



GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department of Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	04 September 2023
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2023 – 30 September 2023 2023/233A
Name of Researcher:	Smith LK
Address of Researcher:	No 87 Ferero Avenue Randpark Ridge
Telephone Number:	084 017 9413
Email address:	813043@students.wits.ac.za
Research Topic:	The Provision of School Social Work Interventions: A Case Study of Schools in Johannesburg
Name of University:	Wits
Type of qualification	Masters
Number and type of schools:	2 Districts
Districts/HQ	Johannesburg North, Johannesburg East

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 359 0466
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@education.gov.za
Website: www.education.gov.za

APPENDIX H: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RESEARCH APPROVAL – GAUTENG PROVINCE



GAUTENG PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Executive: Mrs M. Chirwa
Tel: 011 800 2125 / 011 832 8005
Email: MrsM.Chirwa@gauteng.gov.za
Chief Directorate: Education Planning and Research

MS L SMITH
87 FERERO AVE
RANDPARK RIDGE

By email: 813043@stuents.wits.ac.za

Dear Ms Smith

SUBJECT: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RESEARCH APPROVAL

Correspondence received from you on 18 August 2023 titled: *Permission to Conduct Research at the Johannesburg Central District refers.*

Thank you for informing the Johannesburg Central District Office of your intended research with social workers who service schools.

The following attachments are acknowledged and received:

1. GDE Research Approval letter from the Knowledge Management and Research Directorate at GDE Head Office – 24 July 2023
2. Letter to the District Director
3. Ethics clearance letter
4. Research Proposal

You are welcome to proceed with your research however, in the execution thereof, kindly be reminded to heed the non-negotiable of being mindful of protecting contact time. In the interest of protecting the safety and well-being of staff, please be mindful of conditions 3 and 4 of the GDE Research Approval letter.

The District Office wishes you great success with your research and reminds you to comply with the terms and conditions against which approval has been granted by the Knowledge Management and Research Directorate.

Kind regards

MS B.L. SEATE
DISTRICT DIRECTOR
DATE: 25/08/23

APPENDIX I: PROOF OF LANGUAGE EDITING



**ONCE'S
RESEARCH
SOLUTIONS**
COPY EDITING & COACHING

The tenacity and innovation in our clients' research work keeps us humble and strongly dedicated to excellence as well as professionalism!

03/02/2024

To Whom it May Concern

RE: Confirmation of editing

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited a master's dissertation for **Lerelle Smith**.

The title of the dissertation is: *The Provision of School Social Work Interventions (services): A Case Study of Schools in Johannesburg*. Presented to the Department of Social Work, School of Human and Community Development, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand. In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree Master's of Arts in School Social Work.

In dissertation, I conducted language and structure editing.

Note: The author/s made further inputs after my editing.

If there are any questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Kindest Regards
Oncemore Mbeve

Founder & Research Consultant, Once's Research Solutions: Copy Editing & Coaching (ORS)
Researcher, Wits, African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS)
MA Psychology Research and Coursework, Wits University BSW, Wits University
Email: oncemore.mbeve@onces.online / oncemore.mbeve@gmail.com
Cell/WhatsApp: +27622028278
Web: <https://onces.online/>

<https://onces.online/>

CE09/24MD

APPENDIX J: TURNITIN REPORT



Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author: Lerelle Smith
Assignment title: Draft submission (all, regardless of course/programme)
Submission title: Lerelle Smith 813043 M A Research Report March 2024.docx
File name: Lerelle_Smith_813043_M_A_Research_Report_March_2024.do...
File size: 1.78M
Page count: 84
Word count: 24,943
Character count: 139,712
Submission date: 11-Mar-2024 08:19AM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID: 2317456509

