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Perceptions of newly qualified social workers regarding supervision within the Department of Social Development in the Limpopo province, South Africa

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CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings are discussed in terms of themes extracted from the data. The themes were derived in response to the objectives of the study. The empirical data was gathered using a semi-structured interview schedule from the newly qualified social workers and their supervisors employed at Department of Social Development, from two municipalities in the Waterberg district of Limpopo Province. The study explored the perceptions of newly qualified social workers regarding supervision within the DSD. The findings were analysed using thematic content analysis. In developing this section, *non de plumes* were used for participants to respect their anonymity.

4.2 Demographic information

This section includes the gender, age, year of qualification and year of commencing work within DSD, of the participants in the study, which is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 - Profile of social workers (N=20)

Demographic Factor	Sub-Category	No
Gender	Male	4
	Female	16
Age	23-25 years	5
	26-29 years	9
	30-34 years	3
	35-39 years	3

Year of qualifying as a social worker	2011	12
	2012	8
Year of commencing work at DSD	2012	12
	2013	8

To understand the results presented in Table 1, it is important to note that the study was conducted for the purpose of exploring perceptions of newly qualified social workers working for the government DSD in the Waterberg district of Limpopo Province regarding supervision, as set out in the Supervision Framework of the Department (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). It may be surprising that 16 of 20 participants in this study were females as is presented in Table 1, but it should be noted that the majority of social workers in South Africa and elsewhere in the world are females (Engelbrecht, 2010; Maslach, 1982).

The next demographic category considered was the age range: fourteen (14) participants were between 25 and 29 years of age which is generally regarded as the age of entry for professional practice in South Africa and elsewhere in the world, considering that learners finish high school at age 18 to 20 years, and spend a further four years at university pursuing a social work professional qualification (Liang, Fisher & Lombard, 2007; Case & Deaton, 1999; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). The eldest participant in the study was 39 years of age, as some people work before studying or study part-time through correspondence, while the youngest participant was 23 years old. Age as a demographic factor is significant in the study because it determines the age group within social work profession. According to Engelbrencht (2014) most social workers in South Africa are in their early adulthood life

phase. Twelve of twenty participants qualified as social workers in the year 2012, while 8 participants qualified as social workers in 2013. The study was conducted in August 2014 at which time the participants had between 12 to 24 months of work experience.

4.3 Strengths of the DSD Supervision Framework

The first objective in this study was to elicit the views of newly qualified social workersregarding the strengths of the DSD Supervision Framework. The National Department of Social Development (DSD) and the South African Council for Social Service Profession (SACSSP) have stipulated the rationale for supervision of social workers within the Supervision Framework as to "improve quality social services offered to the users" (DSD & SACSSP, 2012, p.13). The need to regulate the practice of supervision stems from the desire to ensure better service delivery and improve the effectiveness of the individuals who enter social work profession.

Johannes highlighted the need to ensure compliance with the ethical code that governs the profession of social work as one of the main strengths of the Supervision Framework. He said that *" I think the Framework regulates that the social workers must only be supervised by the person who is the social worker by profession and must be registered with the SACSSP"* (M, 27). This aspect of supervisor competence is supported by the Supervision Framework, which states that the social work supervisor should have experience in social work practice and be registered with the South African Social Service Profession Council (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). This is particularly important because social work supervisors have knowledge on social work theories, skills and practice. Furthermore, the code of ethics (SACSSP, 2007) maintains that the supervisor will be held accountable in the instances where a complaint is

lodged against the social worker. This will assist both the social worker and the social worker supervisor to be accountable to the services they provide to clients.

Seven participants have identified professional development as another area of strength of the Framework. Temosho highlighted that *"supervisors should identify the training needs of the supervisees and implement professional development".* Educational supervision plays an important role in the professional development of the supervisees, as areas for the supervisee to develop further are highlighted for remedial support. The Framework makes provision for educational supervision "concerned with teaching the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for the performance of the Social Work task through detailed analysis of the worker's interaction with the client" (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002, p. 129).

The other area of strength of the Framework highlighted by three participants was formal structured supervision between the supervisor and the supervisees. George responded by saying that *"the Framework makes reference to an agreement that should be done between the supervisor and the supervisees" (M, 25).* According to Beverley and Worsley (2007, p.25), a supervision contract is "an agreement between the supervisor and the supervisee about the nature and function of supervision". This may suggest that a supervision contract should be discussed and agreed upon by the supervisor and the supervisee. Also, Potgieter (1998) suggests that a supervision contract should be understood and accepted by all role players.

Furthermore, compliance to the stipulations of the Framework was highlighted as strength by three participants. For example, Zacharia maintains that *"the Framework compels the social workers, supervisors including the employer to ensure that supervision is conducted in line*

with the Framework". According to the Supervision Framework, non-compliance to it may result in the social worker being found guilty of unprofessional conduct (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Therefore it is incumbent on the employing organisation and the early career social worker to ensure that regular and mandated supervision occurs, and that the sessions are documented. In summary, the following have be identified as strengths of the Supervision Framework: to ensure compliance to the values and ethics of the profession and the employing organisation, to ensure professional development, to provide formal supervision between the supervisor and the supervisees and to regulates compliance with the stipulated Framework.

4.4 Understanding of supervision

All 20 participants described supervision according to their own individual understanding of the concept. The Supervision Framework describes supervision as a procedural and imparting way of mentoring and sharing knowledge based on social work theories; this is described as undertaken by practitioners with five years and more working experience, to newly graduatedsocial workers through prescribed methodologies, in order to promote professional growth and improve the quality of services to the users (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).Whilst the Framework highlights theories, models and perspectives of supervision as underpinning the core process of supervision, none of the participants included these aspects in their descriptions of their understanding of supervision. Bateman, Henderson and Hill (2012) add that the theories of supervision include Person-centered Supervision, the Integrated Model and the Hawkins and Shohet Model of Supervision. Supervisees' understandings of the supervisor's role are presented below and included mainly work coordination and support.

4.4.1 Work coordination

One of the social workers, Johannes, linked supervision to the improvement of service delivery. He said that "*according to my understanding supervision is process of overseeing and coordinating the work that is done by supervisees in order to improve quality of services rendered to clients"* (M, 27).

Coordinating and overseeing the work of supervisees only, however, may not improve the quality of services rendered to clients. This is because newly qualified social workers need to be capacitated with skills and knowledge to assist them to deal with difficult cases. However, the participant's view does correlate with the Supervision Framework, as the Framework emphasises the empowerment of the supervisees to intervene at different levels for betterment of service delivery. The Supervision Framework seeks to promote the professional growth and development of social workers, while ensuring the quality of services rendered to clients. This may suggest that supervision should provide a learning environment for the supervisees, which is further supported by the social constructivist theory, as learning is regarded as occurring through social interaction with others wherein knowledge is obtained, shared and constructed (Truran & Truran, 2010).

4.4.2 Supervision as support

Another theme which emerged from supervisees regarding supervision was that of support. Support at work is associated with increased job satisfaction as a result of teamwork or between employees of the same department who give assistance to each other (Parasuraman et al., 1992). In the case of this study, a supervisor is the one giving support to a supervisee who is seen as a relatively junior employee. Supportive supervision is aimed at helping social

workers to cope with their stresses (Engelbrecht, 2006). This type of supervision is required, as the social work occupation may cause stress and burnout.

Five participants were of the opinion that supervision is a support service provided to supervisees to assist them in executing their duties. For example, George said that *"the supervisor should provide support; perform administrative duties and education towards supervisees*" (M, 25). George's comment seems to suggest that supervision may be may be administrative, educational and supportive as argued by Kadushin and Harkness (2002). Furthermore, in the guidelines of the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), the three key functions of supervision are administrative, educational and supportive. Rendering the support function is regarded as reducing the job-related tensions and stresses, which may be detrimental to delivering quality services to clients.

Furthermore, a participant with the pseudonym of Ellen described the assistance provided by a supervisor when a supervisee encounters difficulty by saying that "*supervision is when the supervisor assist supervisees with their duties especially when they are faced with challenges*" (F, 27).

This comment seems to suggest that the supervisor should assist in conducting duties for the supervisee when challenges are experienced, which is an incorrect perception by the participant, as supervision does not entail doing work on the part of supervisee but rather giving advice and guidance (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). Support assistance from the supervisor is particularly significant for early careersocial workerswho still need assistance because of their lack of working experience.

It was interesting to find out that the participants and key informants locate supervision strongly with the support function. James, a key informant, said that *"supervision provides support to social workers and it makes sure that the resources are available"* (M, 43).This view was supported by literature which identified supervision with the support function. Jenkison (2010) argues that supervision provides a safe environment for superviseesand also supports the supervisees in relation to their work. Because of the nature of services that social workers render to their clients, supervisor support will benefit them by helping them to deal with stress (Engelbrecht, 2006). The study conducted by Malesa (2014) revealed that social work in the Waterberg District DSD is a stressful occupation because of the lack of capital resources, poor management and lack of safety and security for social workers.

4.4.3 Knowledge and experience of the supervisor

According to the Supervision Framework, the supervisor must have a minimum of five years of working experience as a social worker (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). It is believed that working experience may contribute positively toward professional growth and development and thus equip supervisors to assist others in improving service delivery. According to the Systems Approach to supervision, supervision occurs within the work context, where the supervisor has the responsibility to empower the supervisees with the knowledge and skills of the Social Work profession, for the improvement of service delivery (Holloway, 1995a). Three participants concurred that supervision is a process whereby a person with more professional job experience assists the one with no or limited working experience. For example, Ngwakwana highlighted the issue of supervisor work experience as being important, a point which is also highlighted within the Supervision Framework.

She said that "*supervision means that a person with more work experience in the field of professional practice, check whether the supervisees are doing their work accordingly, and to assist them to adhere to their job description"* (F, 26).

This view is supported by Robinson cited in Shulman (1993), who maintains that supervision in social work is the process whereby a person with more knowledge and skills assists or takes responsibility for supervising a person with less knowledge.

4.4.4 Lack of regular supervision

Regular supervisionis said to assist newly qualified social workers to manage their caseload and enables them to be independent and provide effective and efficient services to clients.Furthermore "supervision helps to prepare the supervisee to deliver effective, efficient services to clients, consistent with the agency's mandate and professional practice" (Kadushin, Harkness & Tsui cited in Kadushin, Berger, Gilbert & De StAubin, 2009, p.180). In addition, supervision provides an opportunity for newly qualified social workers to learn through either interaction with the supervisor or other supervisees. This view is supported by Vygotsky's theory, which emphasises that learning occurs through discussing the contents of lessons with one another (Lechmann & Chamberlin, 2009). Lack of supervision may be detrimental to the professional growth and development of the supervisees.

Some of the participants, while knowing the importance of supervision, indicated lack of supervision. For example, Lebogang noted:

> *"Since I am still new in the department, I have not received guidance from my supervisor. I should be able to access the supervisor in order to avoid making mistakes. Supervisor should orientate me in order to know what is expected of me. At the University, we are only taught theory and we lack practical experience. For*

example, at work we are doing foster care which is different from what we have been taught at the University" (F, 27).

This may suggest that even though the DSD has introduced the Supervision Framework, there are still challenges in the actual provision of regular contracted supervision sessions to early career social workers. This may mean that the Framework looks good on paper but has not been implemented in practice. The other participant who identified lack of regular supervision was Ngoakoana. She responded by saying: "*My supervisor once came to my office to check on foster care files. What I have observed in this Department is that when they provide supervision, they only focus on foster care and they neglect other fields of Social Work"*(F, 26).

Ngoakoana's comment suggests that this district department is giving priority to foster care. However, the social workers at the DSD render services in terms of the Integrated Service Delivery Model (DSD, 2009) towards the improvement of service delivery. This model provides guidance on the nature, scope and the levels of intervention in developmental service delivery (DSD, 2009). According to the model, the social workers render the services under the following programmes: children, youth and family; older persons and disability; people infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS; crime; violence and substance abuse; poverty alleviation and skills development. The model does not single out foster care as the priority in terms of services delivery.

The growing human population, increase in aging adults, social problems as a result of unemployment and lack of formal education calls for trained and supervised social workers to be employed in government departments. However, lack of regular supervision suggests that

society could have social workers with limited skills during their initial years of employment. Engelbrecht (2010) reported that the Recruitment and Retention Strategy of the Department of Social Development (2009, p. 23) postulates that there is a "lack of structured supervision and poor quality supervisors, who themselves also lack capacity to conduct professional supervision in South Africa".

The need for regular supervision of newly qualified social workers is critical because, Social Work involves entering into people's liveswho are in distress, conflict or troubled; to do so requires knowledge and skills (Lishman cited by Lishman, 2009).

4.4.5 Structured supervision

Structured supervision has also been identified when defining supervision. Tumelo expresses a rather different view, as she identified the persons who are of significant to the supervision system. She said that:

> *"Supervision means there should be hierarchy, where there should be a supervisee and the supervisor. This two people should meet in order to have effective service delivery. Supervisor should not only wait for me to go to her when I need to consult, he or she must in turn come to me and check the challenges I am confronted with and also to check if I am coping with the scope of work. If possible, he or she should forward our challenges to management at the district level"* (F, 25).

The said participant, Tumelo highlighted elements of the supervision process, namely supervisor, supervisee, management and clients as beneficiaries to services. Tumelo's view is further supported by Holloway (1995a), who introduced the Systems Approach to supervision. According to the Systems Approach to supervision, the supervisor empowers

supervisees by imparting knowledge and skills to assist them to provide effective services to the clients, where supervision is guided by the professional code of ethics and organisational policies (Holloway, 1995a).

4.5 Frequency of supervision

According to the Supervision Framework, "the newly qualified social workers must at least have three years of supervision on a fortnightly basis before they advance to the consultative level" (DSD & SACSSP, 2012, p.32) . Therefore the researcher included a question to determine how often they receive supervision. The findings are that no participants receive supervision every two weeks. This is supported by a key informant who indicated that it would not be possible to see superviseesfortnightly, as mandated by the Supervision Framework. This is because of the workload they have, the high number of newly qualified social workers they are currently supervising and a shortage of transport at their offices for accessingsupervisees' offices.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, seven participants mentioned that they receive supervision once a month. One participant mentioned that shehas received supervision once in three months.When they were asked about the frequency of supervision, Temosho saw the need for regular supervision but therefore found the question difficult to answer because she does not receive supervision.She responded by saying:

> "*that question is very difficult to answer and I don't know what to say because since I was employed in this Department in 2012, I never received supervision. I once had a meeting with my supervisor where we were discussing certain issues, but I don't know whether we had supervision or a meeting"*(F, 30).

Although the Supervision Framework requires regular supervision within the Department, it seems to be a challenge for participants to receive regular supervision. The challenge Temosho is articulating may be caused by the high number of social workers the supervisors are presently supervising. It may be difficult for supervisors to give attention to all the supervisees on a regular basis.The lack of regular supervision was confirmed by James who is one of the key informants, as he indicated that he is supervising 23 social workers, which is a much higher ratio than the guidelinesof the Supervision Framework which is 1:10. When asked about how often he provides supervision per month, he responded by saying that,

> "*According to the norms and standards of supervision within the Department, the ratio is one supervisor to ten social workers, so we are having a shortage of supervisors within our Department. We don't have a formal structure of supervision due to workload and the number of social workers. I only attend to social workers who need urgent attention"*(M,43).

The current ratio of the supervisor and supervisee in the Waterberg District may deprive the supervisees of an opportunity to learn. Learning occurs through interaction with one another. The researcher believes that the interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee has impact on the development of new skills, as the supervisee could be exposed to new knowledge. This is supported by Vygotsky's theories which maintain that social interaction is an integral part of learning (Powell & Kalina, 2009). In his theory, Vygotsky highlights learning as it takes place between the student and a more expert person (Jarvis, 2005). It is through this sort of learning process that the newly qualified social workers will be able to construct their knowledge from experiences of their supervisors and peers.

Lack of supervision amongst the newly qualified social workers will also affect the quality of services provided to the clients. According to the systems approach to supervision, supervision does not exist in isolation, as it encompasses the supervisee, supervisor, the client system and the work context (Holloway, 1995a). It is a joint efforts in which a supervisee with the help of the supervisor, attends to the client, and by doing so, it improves the quality of their work, transforms their clients relationships, continually developing themselves, their practice and the wider profession (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012).

Supervision is important especially when the social worker begins practice. Johannes who has been working for two years noted that he is confused about the actual role of a supervisor as he has not received any structured one-to-one supervision. The following quotation contains his views on the matter of poor supervision. When responding to the question asked, he said:

> *"I do not receive supervision but I do have a supervisor. As I am still a newly qualified social worker, I am confused about the duties of the supervisor within the Department because I am not receiving supervision. My supervisor only comes to me when he wants the monthly reports but he never came to supervise me. My colleagues are the ones who assist me when I come across difficult cases"*(M, 27).

This position is supported by Dinny, who is a key informant; she indicated challenges with regard to supervision, saying that:

> "*According to supervision contract, we must supervise newly qualified social workers bi-weekly however due to workload, I end up supervising them once per quarter. Mostly, I do group supervision because there is no enough time to conduct individual supervision"*(F, 47).

Bateman and Henderson (2012) argue that the problem to accessing supervision may be alleviated by the use of video stream technology such as computer camera through Skype. This method of supervision may be beneficial to supervisees working far away from their supervisors. In this scenario, electronic technology is used to assist in supervision and the supervisor and the supervisees do not need to be in the same physical location (Baird cited in Aasheim, 2012). Using Skype, the supervisor is able to observe the supervisees' feelings and responses during supervision. Furthermore, telephone supervision has also been identified as alleviating challenges of accessing supervision (Bateman & Henderson, 2012). Although there are no geographical limits to telephone supervision, the supervisor will not be able to observe the supervisees' experience and feelings during supervision.

The other participant that reported challenges in receiving supervision was Jeremia who indicated some of the challenges he encountered regarding regular supervision.
He said, *"to tell the truth, I don't receive supervision. In our sub-office, we are 15 social workers and we have only one supervisor. This makes it difficult to us to receive supervision"* (M, 29).

The findings suggest that lack of supervisors within the Department has had a negative impact on the frequency ofsupervision.While there are a few supervisors in the district of Waterberg in the Limpopo Province, supervisors have commitments other than supervision, such as management meetings and workshops. This is one of the factors that contributed to lack of supervision. It is a concern that when supervision is not offered, service delivery is going to be affected.One of the excuses for not having time to supervise entry level social

workerswas that supervisors attend management meetings; however, Tepper (2007) reported that lack of supervisory service signifies poor leadership and management.

Literature has shown that supervision plays an important role in helping the social workers to grow and develop professionally to a level where they will be able to perform independently without supervision (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). However, structured supervision within the Department is not conducted regularly as stipulated in the Supervision Framework. In terms of the strengths highlighted inthe Supervision Framework, the newly qualified social workers must at least receive supervision on a fortnightly basis for a period of three years. Based on the results of this study, this has not been adhered to.

4.6 Method of supervision

The Supervision Framework highlighted a range of methods of supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The participants were asked about the method of supervision they receive. All twenty participants responded to the question. This question had five answers from which the participants had to choose, namely: individual supervision, group supervision, peer supervision, no supervision, and ad hoc or irregular supervision. According to DSD and SACSSP (2012), supervision maybe conducted using three methods namely individual supervision, group supervision and peer supervision. The results are recorded below.

Table 3 - Method of supervision, N=20

Method of supervision	No
Individual supervision	9
Group supervision	0
Peer supervision	5

No supervision	5
Irregular or ad hoc supervision	1

Table 3 illustrate the methods of supervision used and depicts that 15 participants of the 20 actually receive supervision. Based on the findings of this study, the most frequent method of supervision conducted with newly qualified social workers is individual supervision which was rendered to nine of the participants. Individual supervision is seen assuitable because the full attention can be given to an individual supervisee on the challenges they are experiencing at the workplace. Although none of the participants received supervision according to the criteria of the Supervision Framework, some do receive guidance when they have problems or challenges. Although, the Supervision Framework identified three acceptable methods of supervision, individual supervision was the one mostly conducted.

4.7 Factors affecting the quality of supervision

There are factors that may affect the quality of supervision amongst the newly qualified social workers. Such factors arewell documented in the literature, and the participants in this study also identified factors or challenges theyhave experienced in receiving supervision. The Systems Approach to supervision suggests that supervision takes places within the context of the professional relationship: this suggests that if one system of the supervision process is affected, then the whole system of supervision will be affected. The following are the themes extracted from supervisees' responses - lack of resources, supervisors' workload, geographical location and lack of supervisor training.

4.7.1 Lack of resources

Lack of resources was amongst challenges identified by newly qualified social workers in receiving supervision. Ten social workers highlighted the challenges of transport within their sub-district offices, as it hinders supervision. For example, Lebogang said *"lack of resources can limit supervision. I am currently working at the clinic and my supervisor is far from me. So transport is a challenge and that's why in most cases, the supervisor cannot reach our office"* (F, 27).

This view was supported by Ngoakoana who said that *"our supervisor does not have transport to travel from one place to another"*(F, 26).

The above mentioned comments were also confirmed by one of the key informants, Dinny, who said that:

> *"I think not having enough time to supervise social workers and the high number of social workers that we are supervising can affect supervision. Also, some of the social workers that we are supervising are far from our offices. It is very difficult to reach them as we don't have transport"* (F, 47).

Lack of transport within the DSD is a challenge for both newly qualifiedsocial workers and their supervisors and it has direct impact on supervision.The availability of resources plays a vital role in assisting employees to enjoy their work (Kang'ethe & Manomano, 2014). The unavailability of resources within the DSD may demotivate newly qualifiedsocial workers and supervisors to execute the process of supervision. Furthermore, a study conducted in DSD, Waterberg District in 2014, revealed that the lack of capital resources hinders service delivery (Malesa, 2014).

4.7.2 Supervisor's workload

The workload of supervisors was identified as one of the challenges hampering supervision within the DSD. Participants expressed the view that supervisors do not have time for supervision, as they are always away at meetings and workshops. For example,

Jeremia said, *"to tell the truth, our supervisor was given a lot of work: they are doing supervision and at the same time they have to attend meetings and workshops"* (M, 29).

Furthermore, Kgotso said that *"supervision can be limited by the meetings that our supervisor is attending. My supervisor is always going to district office to attend meetings"*(F, 39). This comment was also confirmed by Dinny, who is one of the key informants. She expressed that *"as supervisor we don't not have time to supervise as we are performing dual roles, which is being a manager and a supervisor at the same time"*(F, 47). She felt that the workload of supervisors hinders the process of supervision within the DSD. This may suggest that maybe the DSD should review the workload of supervisors, in order to allow them to render supervision as expected in the Supervision Framework.

4.7.3 Geographical location

Geographical location has also been identified as one of the challenges in supervision in this context which is predominantly rural (Nhemachena, Chakwizira, Mashiri&Dube, 2011). Most of the participants highlighted that they are not working within the same office as their supervisors.

Manare highlighted that *"area demarcation is a challenge in supervision. We are working far from our supervisors and our offices are scattered and we are many.We need more supervisors because currently, we are about 21 social workers and we are supervised by one person"*(F, 27).

Manare's view was supported by Lebogang. She expressed that *"I am working here at the clinic, being a social worker alone, far from my supervisor and it becomes a challenge to reach her due to transport problems. When I am having difficult cases, I use my cell phone and my airtime to call her. If I don't have enough airtime, I won't be able to reach her*"(F, 27).

The challenge of the geographic location was also mentioned by one of the key informants. Dinny said *"My supervisees are far from my offices and it is difficult to reach them"* (F, 47). Dinny's view was also confirmed by James who is also a key informant said that "*I am working far from my supervisees and I can only reach them if I have transport that will assist me to visit their offices".* Schmidt (2008) argues that aspects such as geographical distance between the supervisor and the supervisee may have an impact on the process of supervision. The Waterberg district is mostly rural and the social workers' places are scattered and often far from their supervisors.The danger associated with lack of supervision is that, in South Africa, social work services are strongly relied on, by people in rural communities where the majority of dwellers are Black African. They require assistance on critical matters such child support grants, child support maintenance, family feuds and above all, they need counselling.

4.7.4 Lack of training of supervisors

Other social workers mentioned lack of training for supervisors as another factor that could negatively impact supervision. Tumelo expressed her view that,

> *"I think lack of training of supervisors, because from my observation, I have seen that our supervisors are not well trained. The other thing that could negatively affect supervision is the 'acting' supervisors. Our Department makes social workers with*

years of working experience to act as supervisors for a long time. Then they give them posts based on the years of experience and I think it affect supervision" (F, 25).

Furthermore, Temosho said, *"I think our supervisors are not well equipped on how to supervise, but I don't know why because they are having enough working experience. I think they lack skills on how to conduct supervision"* (F, 35).

These comments were also confirmed by the recent study, conducted within the DSD, Western Cape Province, which shows that lack of formal training for supervisors in Social Work supervision has had a negative impact on the execution of the supervision process (Cloete, 2012). Also, a study conducted in Hong Kong shows that many social work supervisors had no training in social work supervision (Tsui, 2004a). The position of supervision in South Africa is regarded as a promotional level, wherein the supervisors are selected based on their knowledge, expertise and the number of years in direct Social Work practice (Botha, 2002).

However, training of supervisors has also been advocated by the Supervision Framework. According to the Framework, supervisors are expected to, among others; attend a supervision course presented by an accredited service provider recognised by the SACSSP and to be listed on the data base of supervisors of the SACSSP (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). However, the Supervision Framework is silent about the frequency of attendance and sanctions in terms of non-compliance by the supervisor. Furthermore, the supervision framework does not mention the service providers who render training of supervisors; however, the supervisors are the one who identify the accredited service providers who renders supervision training (Engelbrecht,

2013). The quality of supervision is dependent upon these challenges identified amongst others, and their improvement should be prioritised.

4.8 Supervisees' view of supervision

It was the view of supervisees that supervisors need to have adequate knowledge and sufficient experience in social work practice in order to be able to transfer knowledge and experience to others (Botha, 2012, p.11). In order to achieve this, the participants were asked to describe the attributes of a good supervisor, their relationship of such a supervisor with their supervisees; they were also asked to cite examples of the assistance they received from their supervisors and to give their own perceptions of how supervision could be done. The participants identified four attributes of a good supervisor and they will be discussed below.

Support has been identified as one of the attributes of a good supervisor. For example, George maintains that *"for me a supervisor should be a person who can lead you, who can provide leadership skills, who will assist you with solution in difficult situation. Also, a good supervisor provide support not only on work-related issues but also when supervisees are experiencing personal problem, he/she should encourage you and show you light even when you are about to give up" (M, 25).* Support is necessary as the newly qualified social workers are inexperienced in dealing with different and complex cases. The supervisor should also create the best possible working environment for the supervisees. Botha (2002) argues that the supervisor should take positive steps to create an organisational environment that is conducive, and acknowledges professional attributes and values.

Communication skills were highlighted as attributes of a good supervisor. Mahlatse is one of the participants who identified communication skills as one of the attribute of a good

supervisor. When asked she responded that *"a good supervisor should be understanding to supervisees. She should have a good communication skill"* (F, 23).This view was supported by Singh and Sachdeva (2012) who maintain that a good supervisor should have the ability to communicate effectively with their supervisees. Communication plays an important role in building the supervisory relationship. It assists the supervisor and the supervisees in having a clear direction and goal for supervision. Supervision means a way of communication and cooperation between the supervisor and the supervisees (Damian, Necula, Caras, Sandu, 2012). Rue and Byars (1996) highlight that a good supervisor must be able to make good decisions, have communication skills, and be able to praise the performance of the employees.

Listening skills has been highlighted as significant within the supervision relationship.Three participants highlighted listening skills as one of the attributes of a good supervisor. Sara made the following remarks: *"a good supervisor should be a good listener. He should have knowledge on the policies, and a background on the departmental needs. He should be able to differentiate between personal and professional gesture. Also, he should be patient" (25, F).* Listening skills is important in order for supervisors to understand concerns and challenges experienced by newly qualified social workers; hence, good communication and listeningskills are crucial for supervisors (Shah et al., 2010).

Leadership skills as one of the attributes of a good supervisor have also been identified in the literature. Johannes indicated that *"a good supervisor should be a leader, he should have support, be willing to assist his supervisees and should regularly check supervisees if they are doing their job (M, 27).* According to Shah et al. (2010), a supervisor should have leadership skills and give support and guidance to the supervisees.

Although, the participants highlighted the attributes of a good supervisor, there are other attributes that they did not mention during the interviews which are documented in the literature. These include skills in instructing and administrative ability (Shah et al., 2010; Singh & Sachdeva, 2012). Furthermore, the supervisor should be familiar with the organisation, its procedures, rules and regulations and the various labour laws that affect the organisation (Shah et al., 2010). A supervisor should be open to learn from supervisees and from new situations that emerge (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). Supervisors should give answers when the situation demands it (Munson, 2002). A good supervisor should be approachable so that the supervisee can seek advice and help from him or her (Jacob, 2009).

The researcher believes that supervisor should have relevant knowledge on Social work practice. Knowledge was also identified by Vygotsky as playing a crucial part in learning. According to Vygotsky, learning takes place between a learner and more experienced peer or adult instructor (Jarvis, 2005). This showed that knowledge within the supervision process play a role, as it will assist the supervisees to grow professionally. The supervisees' perceptions matters because they play a significant role on how the view supervision in DSD. Perception is how one interprets the environment towards them (Brossman, 2003). The supervisees' perception to supervision are influenced by workplace demand and resources such as job security, supervisors support, support group and flexible working hours (Valcour, Ollier-Malaterre, Matz-Costa, Pitt-Catsauphes & Brown, 2001)

4.9 Supervisor-supervisee relationships

According to Munson (2002), the supervisor should not engage in dual or multiple relationships in which there is a risk of potential harm to the supervisees. The supervisor and

the supervisees should understand the boundary of supervision (Hawkins &Shohet, 2012). The question was asked of participants to describe their relationship with their supervisors. According to the information gathered, many social workers reported having good and professional relationships with their supervisors.

Jeremia said that *"so far, my relationship with my supervisor is good. I don't have a problem with her. The challenge that we are having is that sometimes during monthly reporting, she will need some documents from us not knowing they are needed at the district office"* (M, 29).

The above comment suggests that there is a good working relationship between the supervisor and the supervisees. However, the two key informants did not agree with the above comments. The following are their responses; Dinny, who is a key informant, said that,

> *"I would say the relationship with my supervisees is fair, I won't say is good, because some are not satisfied because they feel that we don't have time for them as they are not supervised as expected. Some supervisees have voiced out their dissatisfaction in terms of how supervision has been rendered within the department"* (F, 47).

Furthermore, James, who is also a key informant, confirmed this view and said that "*I have a good relationship but sometimes it not good as I am supervising large number of social workers and I'm unable to meet all their needs. But I'm offering them support*" (M, 43).

A good relationship will allow supervisees to discuss progress on their cases and will also assist in improving the quality of service rendered to the clients. Although all participants indicated that they have a good relationship with their supervisors, one can conclude that when there is no supervision provided, then the relationship that participants were referring to

was a personal, and not professional. Maybe there is a need to define or differentiate between a professional relationship in a workplace and a personal relationship on a social level.

4.10 Examples of assistance from the supervisor

The participants were asked to cite an example of the assistance they received from their supervisor. For example, Latoya said that,*"in most cases, I receive assistance from my colleagues not supervisor"*(F, 26).

This may mean that even though the supervisor is not available, work is done and a crisis is managed, through consultation with colleagues. The Supervision Framework makes provision for peer supervision to be rendered within the workplace. However, the researcher believes that peer supervision may not been good for newly qualified social workers, unless asocial worker with sufficient working experience is involved during peer supervision.

The other participant who expressed her views was Ellen, who said that she does not receive assistance from her supervisor. She said, *"I would not say the supervisor assisted me. I once reported a case to him which was very tricky and I wanted him to assist me. It was child abuse case. He never came back to me to give guidance and check on the progress of the case"*(M, 27).

In terms of ethics in supervision, the supervisor should be available in case of emergency or at any time when crisis decisions need to be taken (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). However, three key informants highlighted that they provide assistance to supervisees when facing difficult cases. The researcher is of the opinion that, even though the key informants highlighted their assistance to supervisees when needed, because of the high number of social

workers they are supervising; they may not reach all who need assistance. Supervisors need to be available to newly qualified social workers to assist them to make informed decisions on cases that they are attending. Furthermore, assistance to the supervisee is required as learning does not exist in isolation. According to Lechmann cited in Lechmann and Chamberlin (2009), learning requires discussions and interactions amongst the supervisor and the supervisees.

4.11 Recommendations for improvement

The participants were asked to imagine themselves as social work supervisors who are about to retire, and hand on advice to a new supervisor about conducting supervision. The participants highlighted that they will advise the supervisors to have regular meetings and visit their supervisees once a month. However, supervision goes beyond regular meetings between the supervisor and the supervisees, it involves set of agenda with goals, based on the supervisees' personal development plan (Engelbrecht, 2014).

The participants emphasised regular contact between the supervisor and the supervisees. This, they noted, would assist the newly qualified social workers to get clarity from the supervisors on difficult cases. This view is supported by Lomax, Jones, Leigh and Gay (2010) who contends that supervision of newly qualified social workers should happen on a regular basis, either weekly or fortnightly. Regular supervision amongst supervisees, it is argued, will assist them to develop the necessary knowledge and skills required within the profession. This supports Vygotsky's theory that learning occurs when people engage in discussion with others because it causes supervisees to challenge others' understandings and beliefs which promotes learning (Lechmann & Chamberlin, 2009, p. 21).

4.12 Chapter summary

Thischapter reported the findings on the views of participants of the strengths and weakness of the Supervision Framework. Furthermore, the findings revealed that supervision within DSD is not conducted according to the Supervision Framework. In addition participants indicated a number of challenges encountered with regard to supervision including: a lack of resources, high supervisor workloads, substantial geographical distances between where the supervisee and supervisor are located and lack of training of supervisors on the process of supervision. While these challenges are significant, the participants provided some recommendations for improvement of supervision, which include conducting regular supervision, and regular meetings with supervisees.The next chapter will discuss the main findings, conclusion and recommendations.