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Experiences of probation officers working at Department of Social Development, Gauteng, JHB Metro Region on occupational stress and their coping mechanisms

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EXPERIENCES OF PROBATION OFFICERS WORKING AT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, GAUTENG, JHB METRO REGION ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND THEIR COPING MECHANISMS

A research report presented to

The Department of Social Work

School of Human and Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Social Work by Coursework and Research Report

by

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August 2022

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Signed: Olebogeng Monnye **Date: August 2022**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BSW	-Bachelor of Social Work
DSD	-Department of Social Development
EAP/EWPs	-Employee assistance programs/employee wellness programs
JHB	-Johannesburg
P-E fit theory	-Person-environment fit theory
PO	-Probation officer
RAR	-receive, assess and refer
SACSSP	-South African Council for Social Service Professions
UNICEF	-United Nations Children's Fund

ABSTRACT

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) states that the majority of children in conflict with the law have committed petty crimes such as alcohol abuse, begging, absenteeism from school and vagrancy. Probation officers have an important role to play in the lives of people in conflict with the law. Some of their responsibilities include conducting thorough investigations to assess the offenders who have committed crimes. It can be understood that the nature of their job can at times cause occupational stress. The aim of the study was to explore the occupational stressors and coping mechanisms adopted by probation officers working at the Department of Social Development (DSD), Johannesburg (Jhb) Metro Region in the Gauteng province of South Africa. A qualitative approach was used to conduct the study. Fifteen participants were selected using non-probability purposive sampling. Face to face in-depth interviews were conducted to collect the data. The interviews were audio-recorded and the data was analysed using thematic analysis. It was anticipated that insights into the occupational stressors and coping strategies adopted by probation officers would be revealed. This study revealed that probation officers have high caseloads, but have good coping mechanisms to curb occupational stress in that they confide in their supervisors and their colleagues. The significance of the study for social work was that it may help probation officers to determine how they can better deal with occupational stress. Little research has been conducted in South Africa regarding probation officers' occupational stressors. Therefore, this study contributed to literature on the matter.

Key words: probation officer, occupational stress, coping mechanisms, person-environment theory, Lazarus and Folkman's theory of stress, Department of Social Development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress refers to the ongoing or progressive stressors an employee encounters due to the responsibilities, circumstances, environment or other pressures of the work environment (Lopez, Soares, Devos, Luiz, Graziele, Rafaela & Magnago, 2020). Acute and chronic work stress exposure can alter perceptions and have an impact on one's capacity to solve problems (Gutshall. Hampton Jr, Ismail, Sebetan, Stein & Broxtermann, 2017)). Probation officers provide a variety of social services to children in conflict with the law. These include counselling, family services and supervision (Muntuwenkosi & Warria, 2020). Probation officers counsel and supervise young children in conflict with the law who have been sentenced to do community work and also those who have been detained or imprisoned (Muntuwenkosi & Warria, 2020). Probation work comes with a lot of challenges. Probation officers frequently interact with highly dangerous people in society, namely high-risk offenders; some of whom have committed murder, rape etc. (Stephenson, 2020). The number of cases on probation has increased, and the types of offenders are more varied than ever (Stephenson, 2020). Probation officers may also be a target for the offender's family, as the recommendation they make to court may result in custodial sentences, and this can make family members of offenders angry, and they may seek to harm the probation officer (Slate, Wells & Johnson, 2003). Thus, probation work can be dangerous at times. Probation officers may also find it challenging to meet deadlines on time, with the heavy caseloads that they have (O'Donnell & Stephens, 2001). All these factors can cause stress.

Probation work is the part of the criminal justice system that provides the court with information on offenders, and supervision of offenders that are placed on probation (O'Donnell & Stephens, 2001). Its primary focus is on the preparation of pre-sentence investigations on offenders and providing them with supervision (O'Donnell & Stephens, 2001). The work environment of probation officers is characterised by heavy caseloads, limited resources, violent probationers, typing of pre-sentence reports, meeting deadlines on time, (Hsieh, Hafoka, Woo, Wormer, Stohr, Hemmens, 2015) as well as protection of public safety and assisting offenders through treatment and rehabilitation (Grattet, Nguyen, Bird & Goss, 2018). According to O'Donnell and Stephens (2001), stress factors for probation officers include work overload, deadline pressures, office visits and intrusions and dealing with unpredictable and aggressive clients.

The researcher studied the experiences of probation officers working at Department of Social Development (DSD), Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region to better understand their occupational stressors and coping mechanisms. This study was exploratory in nature, because little information was known about probation officers' occupational stressors at the department in question. The study was designed to explore the lived experiences of the probation officers. Studies to date have focused on police officer stress, mostly from a western perspective. In Galanis, Fragkou and Katsoulas' (2021) study, they focused on the risk factors for stress among police officers in Greece. In Oginska-Bulik and Juczynski's (2021) study, their main focus was on burnout and posttraumatic stress symptoms in police officers exposed to traumatic events. This study was done in Poland. Gutshall. Hampton Jr, Ismail, Sebetan, Stein and Broxtermann's (2017) study, focused on occupational stress among police officers from South Florida and how this affects their working memory and cognitive performance. According to Slate, Wells and Johnson (2003), more stressed probation officers are substantially more likely to be unsatisfied with their professions and show a strong desire to leave their positions. It has been discovered that this tendency for turnover is more likely to be reflected in minority officers (Slate, Wells & Johnson, 2003).

The researcher's study sought to create knowledge based on local experiences. The study also sought to establish what strategies DSD employs to help probation officers cope with occupational stress. Furthermore, the researcher documented suggestions and recommendations from probation officers to develop knowledge on strategies implemented by the DSD to aid probation officers' coping mechanisms.

According to Xiao, Dong, Shi, Zeng, Shao, Xie and Li (2021), the person-environment fit theory (P-E fit theory) is broadly defined as the compatibility of an employee and their work environment. This has to do with the employee's ability, skills and knowledge to match the demand of work allocated to the employee (Xiao, Dong, Shi, Zeng, Shao, Xie and Li, 2021). It also has to do with the congruence between the employee and the work environment (Xiao, Dong, Shi, Zeng, Shao, Xie and Li, 2021). In other words, it answers the question, whether the environment is conducive for the employee to work efficiently, as well as the employee's attitude towards the organisation.

The researcher's study revealed that the majority of the participants had positive coping mechanisms, because they had resources at their disposal, in the form of social support from colleagues and supervisors. The researcher adopted a qualitative methodological approach

with the aim of gaining information from an insider-perspective. Interviews were conducted in order to create detailed accounts and a richer experience-based content from the perspectives of participating probation officers (Babbie, 2007).

The advantages of using a case study design are that it allows for intensive study of a unit (Starman, 2013). In disciplines that focus on practical application, like social work and education the case study design is very beneficial (Frederiksen, Ridder & Pedersen, 2021). Therefore, rich and substantive data were included, with the intention of investigating the phenomenon in-depth and in context (Kekeya, 2021). Case studies examine a single case or a number of cases (Frederiksen, Ridder & Pedersen, 2021). It is therefore an exploration of a single unit of analysis, a group or event (Starman, 2013). The structures and ordering of interaction amongst the actors in a situation are determined using a case study (Andrade, 2009). Case studies are typically centered around or are about the context (Kekeya, 2021). In the researcher's case she was looking into the context in which probation officers work and their experiences regarding occupational stress. The fact that case studies allow for conceptual growth with a higher level of validity over a limited number of cases is another benefit of using them (Kekeya, 2021). Case studies can analyse qualitatively complex events and take into consideration a wide variety of variables, because they don't necessitate many cases or a limited number of variables (Kekeya, 2021).

There are certain disadvantages to case studies. Due to the fact that one cannot generalise on the basis of an individual case, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that case studies, therefore, do not make a contribution to scientific development. Another disadvantage of adopting a case study design is that it is difficult to generalise the findings, because there is a limited representation (small number of participants) (Starman, 2013). However Stake (2005) argues that what should be noted is that case study is concerned more with particularisation rather than generalisation. Noor (2008 p. 1603) also makes the argument that "using multiple cases in case study design can lead to some form of replication." The case study design may cause selection-bias which is the influence of a researcher's previous knowledge of the case, on case selection (Starman, 2013). The researcher mitigated researcher bias by writing a rich description of the data collection processes (Starman, 2013). The purpose of a case study design is to gain a holistic view of the subject under investigation, and this particular design allowed the researcher to derive at such (Noor, 2008).

The first chapter of the research study highlights the problem statement and rationale of the study (which gives an in-depth account of the importance of the study). Relevant theoretical frameworks and reviewed literature review are also discussed in the chapter.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The role of probation officers is challenging. They are on the frontline of dealing with some of the most troubled members of society (Muntuwenkosi & Warria, 2020). Their duties involve extensive interaction with offenders of some of the most heinous crimes imaginable. The stress of supervising this group of people can affect the officer's health, their job performance and their ability to provide effective supervision (Giovannoni et al., 2015). They themselves require services to help them cope with the secondary trauma (the psychological and cognitive effects of hearing accounts of one or more traumatic events (Margaret & Carrie, 2013), that can arise from their vocational interactions (Giovannoni, McCoy, Mays & Watson, 2015).

Absence of employees is also a major concern in some instances (Oginska-Bulik, 2005). If many employees go off sick due to stress, there will be less productivity which can ultimately result in the institution losing money. However, in the researcher's study there were no findings to support this claim. According to Muntukenkosi and Warria's (2020) study, the probation officers work with violent clients and sometimes victims of rape; which can be traumatic. According to surveys in four states of the United States of America, between 39% and 55% of officers have fallen victim to work-related violence, or threats made to them by probationers (National Institute of Justice, 2007). According to Masuku (2004), internationally, violent crimes are committed by young people. He added that similar patterns are seen in South Africa, where young people commit crimes such as rape, murder, robbery and assault (Masuku, 2004). The findings of Roestenburg & Oliphant's (2012 as cited in Muntuwenkosi & Warria, 2020) in relation to crimes perpetrated by young people in South Africa were consistent with those of Masuku (2004). They found that most respondents were arrested for housebreaking (11.3%), rape (11.3%) and theft (11.3%) (Roestenburg & Oliphant (2012) as cited in Muntuwenkosi & Warria (2020). According to Masuku's (2004) study, children commit housebreaking offences at a rate of 11.3% and assault with aggravating circumstances at a rate of 10.0%, both of which have poverty as a contributing factor. Participant 10 in the researcher's study made mention of the fact that some of the children committing these crimes is largely due to poverty as well as the behaviours they witness in their homes (gender-based violence and abuse).

According to Muntuwenkosi & Warria (2020), in 2012, 25 949 drug-related offences were reported in Gauteng alone, and that the majority of users of nyaope were between the ages of 13 and 19. This is problematic, as research has found that children who commit crimes are sometimes children who battle with substance abuse as well (Munutwenkosi & Warria, 2020), and sometimes these are the very people who are supervised by probation officers.

Prior to the researcher's study there was no documented evidence about how probation officers in the DSD, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region were coping with stressful situations, so the researcher sought to find out. The researcher also sought to establish coping mechanisms based on probation officers' experiences. The participants in the researcher's study indicated that they have heavy caseloads and sometimes they are unable to meet deadlines on time. In order to mitigate this, they resort to having to work late hours of the night during the week, and work on the weekends to ensure that they submit their reports to court timeously. Most of the participants mentioned that in dealing with stressful situations, they normally speak to their supervisor for guidance or their fellow colleagues for advice on how to handle a particular case. Whilst there were a few who indicated negative coping mechanisms, positive coping mechanisms were observed.

This study not only broadened the existing knowledge about probation officers experiencing occupational stress, but more particularly, it focused on the context of South Africa. Government departments can undertake similar studies, in an effort to create effective strategies for coping with occupational stress.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Occupational stress has been linked to lower productivity, absenteeism, and higher rates of work-related accidents (Fei, Kuan, Yang, Hing & Yaw, 2017). The researcher's study was carried out in Gauteng, Johannesburg. The City of Johannesburg is one of eight metropolitan municipalities in South Africa (statssa.gov.za). Johannesburg, Gauteng consists of urban/suburb and township areas (statssa.gov.za). According to 2011 census City of Johannesburg Municipality has a total population of 4.4 million, of whom 76.4% are black African, 12.3% are white, 5.6% are coloured and 4.9% are Indian/Asian (City of Johannesburg, 2011). Of those who are 20 years and older, 3.4% have completed primary school, 32.4% have secondary education, 34.9% have completed matric, 19.2% have some higher education and 2.9% have no form of schooling (statssa.gov.za).

There are 2 261 490 economically active (employed or unemployed, but looking for work) people in the City of Johannesburg. Of the 2 261 490 economically active youth in the area, 31.5% of people between the ages of 15 to 35 are unemployed (statssa.gov.za). According to reports, violence is the top cause of non-natural mortality in Gauteng where there are 34.3 violent fatalities for every 100 000 people (MRC-UNISA Safety and Peace Promotion Research Unit, 2013).

Johannesburg is home to the largest share of South Africa's urban population (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Despite being the centre of the nation's economy, the City of Johannesburg is nonetheless plagued by issues of urban poverty and under-development (City of Johannesburg, 2011). High levels of crime and violence are a result of historical social, geographic and economic imbalances as well as current social and economic issues (City of Johannesburg, 2011). It can be seen that the need for social and economic intervention arose as a result of the above issues. It can also be stressful for the social service practitioners working with people affected by these socio-economic issues. The researcher's study focused on the occupational stressors of probation officers, as well as coping mechanisms in dealing with occupational stress. Little research has been done on South African probation officers' experiences with occupational stress and associated coping mechanisms. Therefore this was identified as a research gap in the literature. There is a need to learn more about probation, given that probation officers interact with criminals more frequently than the majority of other justice professionals (Slate, Wells & Johnson, 2003) and that probation caseloads have continued to rise to record highs (Slate, Wells & Johnson, 2003).

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the experiences of probation officers working at the Department of Social Development, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region on occupational stress and their coping mechanisms?

Research questions

- What are the experiences of probation officers working at DSD, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region?
- What are the occupational stressors faced by probation officers?
- What coping mechanisms are adopted by probation officers when they are experiencing occupational stress?

- What strategies are employed by DSD to help probation officers deal with occupational stress?
- What suggestions and recommendations can probation officers provide DSD to implement in order to aid probation officers to cope with occupational stress?

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study is to explore the occupational stressors and coping mechanisms of Probation Officers working at the Department of Social Development (DSD), in Gauteng's, Johannesburg (Jhb) Metro Region.

The objectives are as follows:

- To explore occupational stressors of probation officers at the Department of Social Development, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region
- To identify coping mechanisms adopted by probation officers in managing occupational stress
- To find out what strategies are employed by DSD to help probation officers cope with occupational stress
- To explore suggestions and recommendations from probation officers on strategies that DSD may implement to aid coping mechanisms of probation officers

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was used to conduct the study, in order to understand the realities that are constructed by probation officers working at the DSD, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region. Purposive sampling was used in order to select participants for the study. The researcher used availability sampling. Fifteen participants volunteered to participate in the study. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect data. The instrument allowed the researcher to probe, with a view to ensuring that the data addressed the aims and objectives of the study. Audio-recorded face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted and transcribed. Field notes were used to assist the researcher in interpretations. The data was analysed using thematic content analysis. The researcher followed the standardised steps adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006) which consist of familiarising oneself with the data, then developing initial codes, thirdly identifying themes, then making sure that the themes were compatible with the coded excerpts, defining the themes and finally producing the report.

KEY CONCEPTS:

This section provides a definition of the key concepts applied in this study, namely: probation officer, occupational stress, coping mechanisms, P-E theory, Lazarus and Folkman's theory of stress, Department of Social Development

Probation officer:

The Probation Services Act (1991) defines probation officers as social workers who conduct work in the fields of crime prevention, treatment and care of offenders, victims of crime and providing services to families and communities.

Occupational stress:

Occupational stress is the ongoing stress anemployee experiences due to the responsibilities, conditions and pressures of the workplace (Lopez, Soares, Devos, Luiz, Graziele, Rafaela & Magnago, 2020).

Coping mechanisms: Based on Lazarus (1993), coping is the ways in which people manage stress that exceeds personal resources.

P-E theory (Person-Environment theory):

The person-environment fit theory (P-E fit theory) is broadly defined as the compatibility of an employee and their work environment (Xiao, Dong, Shi, Zeng, Shao, Xie and Li, 2021).

Lazarus and Folkman's theory of stress:

The Lazarus theory is similar to the P-E fit theory, as it views stress as a relationship between the individual and the environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Department of Social Development:

Department of Social Development is a government department in South Africa tasked with duties to provide social and community development, welfare services and protection to the public (www.dsd.gov.za).

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter introduced the research problem and the purpose of the study. The chapter outlined the research question including the objectives of the study. A brief discussion of the research methods that were used in the study was highlighted. This chapter provided definitions of key concepts of the study. The chapter provided a description of the theoretical framework which was used for the study. The P-E theory was used to illustrate the relationship between the person and the environment and how there should be congruence between the two in order to manage stress (Bohndick, Rosman, Kohlmeyer & Buhl, 2017). With regards to stress, it can be seen how the environment and the individual can both influence each other and contribute to stress (Mackey, Perrewe & McAllister, 2017). If there is no congruence between the two, it can cause disruption and possibly lead to stress (Bohndick, Rosman, Kohlmeyer & Buhl, 2017). If the environment is conducive, however, the individual can flourish within that environment (Quick, Nelson, Quick & Orman, 2001). It can also be seen that if the individual perceives that they have resources within that environment at their disposal, they can deal with stress more effectively (Edwards & Billsberry, 2020). Furthermore the chapter provided an overview of the structure of the research report.

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study. It discussed the problem statement and rationale for the study. It included a discussion of the theoretical frameworks which guided the study.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework and literature review; an overview of the person-environment theory and the Lazarus and Folkman's theory of stress, of what occupational stress is and the roles and the responsibilities of a probation officer are provided. It further discusses coping mechanisms to manage occupational stress.

Chapter 3 defines the research methodology adopted for the study, notes on data collection and thematic analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the findings and discusses the results.

Chapter 5 discusses conclusions and recommendations

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework and literature reviewed for the study. This chapter discusses the person-environment theory, the Lazarus and Folkman's theory of stress, and roles and responsibilities of probation officers. It discusses the dangers faced by probation officers when dealing with convicted individuals. It also provides information on the training of probation officers. The chapter also discusses experiences of burnout. It furthermore discusses occupational stress and the effects of stress in general. It also speaks about the coping mechanisms that individuals can develop to deal with stress, and finally it discusses the modifiers of stress

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

P-E THEORY (PERSON-ENVIRONMENT THEORY)

The person-environment fit theory is a framework that has been used to understand thinking and behaviour in organisations and employees (Trevor, 2009). According to Van Vianen (2018), the basic tenets of person-environment fit theory are that human behaviour can be predicted by the individual and the environment together, more effectively than each of them does separately, and that the outcomes are most optimal when personal attributes (values, needs, attitudes) and environmental attributes (culture, values) are compatible. Both the individual and the environment have an impact on behaviour, attitudes and general well-being (Bohndick, Rosman, Kohlmeyer & Buhl, 2017).

There is a relationship between the organisation and employee (Van Vianen, 2018). The person influences the environment and vice versa (Van Vianen, 2018). Person-environment links the person and the environment, suggesting that goodness of fit has the potential to reduce stress (Quick, Nelson, Quick & Orman, 2001). The fit between the individual and the environment has the potential to affect physical and mental health (Quick, Nelson, Quick & Orman, 2001). Participant 2 stated that due to the stress of her work, she has developed certain illnesses that she never used to have before working in probation. The participant however, was not at liberty to disclose the kind of illnesses she had.

According to (Quick, Nelson, Quick & Orman, 2001) goodness-of-fit reduces strain and stress, by adaptation of the individual or modification of the environment to accommodate the individual, or both. In other words, the employee can either adapt to the working environment

(using the tools at their disposal-being flexible in how they get work done, attending training to be more efficient in the work), or management can do something to accommodate the employees (hire more staff to reduce workload burden, offer incentives such as promotions to encourage the employees etc.), or do both. The participants in the researcher's study applied the goodness-of-fit in that they chose to adapt to the work environment in an attempt to reduce strain and meet the job requirements. They chose to work during weekends and late hours at night, to meet deadlines. Although, this shows an adaptation to the work environment, it can affect other areas of probation officers' lives, such as participant one mentioned that her bringing work home takes away time spent with family, because she is trying to meet deadlines.

According to (Quick, Nelson, Quick & Orman, 2001), an adaptation stress perspective (similar to goodness-of-fit) is one in which the individual adapts to the environment to reduce strain. In other words, the individual will make adjustments and adapt to stressful environments. The participants in the researcher's study stated that their work is stressful, especially because they have heavy caseloads. However, it would seem that the positive aspects inspire a semblance of balance; cited challenges did not negatively affect their ability to perform their duties, in that the participants in the study stated that they work late hours during the week, and work on weekends, so that they can submit their work on time. These are the kind of adjustments that they have to make in order to adapt to the stressful environment. They have also learnt to be resilient to the challenges that they experience with regards to probation work. They are a good fit for a job that involves uncertainty, because of their adaptability in dealing with an unpredictable environment (where the offenders can react and behave in unpredictable ways) (Quick, Nelson, Quick & Orman, 2001).

People and the environments they occupy are multidimensional (Edwards & Billsberry, 2020). These dimensions include internal and external factors; where internal factors refer to personality, attitudes, skills and values, and external factors refer to expected behaviour, job requirements and remuneration, as well as opportunities for promotions (Edwards & Billsberry, 2020). Edwards and Billsberry (2020) mention "perceived fit" and state that it relates to an individual's sense of overall fit to the organisation. For instance, it answers the question of whether or not the employee feels that their values are aligned to that of the organisation. If this is the case, the employee might view it as they are compatible with the organisation (Edwards & Billsberry, 2020). According to (Quick, Neslon, Quick & Orman, 2001) flexibility may be a useful concept in achieving goodness-of-fit. This is evident with

the participants in this study. The participants' willingness to work long hours and on weekends just to ensure that they get their work on time shows that they are trying to be flexible with an environment that is not that flexible to accommodate them.

According to (Quick, Neslon, Quick & Orman, 2001), social support may help a person develop in self-reliance. The participants in this study mentioned that when they have difficult cases, they ask advice from other colleagues and ask guidance from their supervisor when unsure of how to deal with a particular case. This will give them confidence that when faced with a similar issue in future, they will know how to handle it. This will help them develop their self-reliance.

According to Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert and Shipp (2006), P-E fit has been studied in reference to multiple person and environment constructs such as employee abilities and job demands, employee needs and work-related incentives, personal and organisational values, and furthermore, the character of the employee and other co-workers within the organisation. According to Bohndick, Rosman, Kohlmeyer & Buhl, 2017), there are three types of P-E fit theory. The first is person-organisation fit which simply describes the individual's values and that of the organisation (Bohndick, Rosman, Kohleyer & Buhl, 2017). The second is needs-supplies fit which refers to the balance between an individual's needs and the supplies an organisation provide to meet these needs (Bohndick, Rosman, Kohlmeyer & Buhl, 2017). Finally, the third is demands-abilities fit, which refers to the skills of the individual and the job requirements (Bohndick, Rosman, Kohlmeyer & Buhl, 2017.

The first type of P-E fit theory describes the values that the employee has, and that of the organisation. If the employee's values are in line with that of the organisation, there is congruence between the two. According to (Bohndick, Rosman & Kohlmeyer, 2017), the employee is more likely to perform better, because he/she has a positive attitude towards the organisation.

The second type of P-E fit theory describes the needs of the employee, and the organisation's ability to meet those needs, to ensure that the employee works efficiently. This can refer to such things as the organisation providing training for the employee, so that they become more efficient and competent in their job (Bohndick, Rosman & Kohlmeyer, 2017). An employee that has job know-how will be more confident when conducting their duties.

The third type of P-E fit theory describes the skills of the employee and the job requirements of the organisation. This refers to the employee's familiarity with or knowledge of the job requirements and their ability to meet those requirements. It refers to the employee's understanding of what their job entails, and their ability to carry out those job requirements.

The P-E fit theory was used as a way to understand the relationship between the person and the environment and how the environment is capable of influencing job strain (Mackey, Perrewe & McAllister, 2017), and how employees perceive and respond to stressors in the working environment. The P-E fit theory enables one to understand stress with regards to the working environment and how that affects an employee and vice versa.

LAZARUS AND FOLKMAN'S THEORY OF STRESS

The Lazarus theory is similar to the P-E fit theory, because it views stress as a result of the relationship between the individual and the environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress is a result of a complicated interaction between the environment and the person, not either one alone (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theory, individuals are constantly assessing or evaluating the stimuli within their environment. This evaluation process produces feelings, and when stimuli are perceived as harmful or difficult, the ensuing distress sparks coping mechanisms to control feelings or attempts to deal with the stressor directly (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For instance, when doing home visits and when the probation officer perceives the situation as dangerous, a course of action the probation officer might choose to take is to remove themselves from that situation by leaving or getting a police escort next time they need to do home visits, for their own safety and security.

Positive emotions are evoked when stressors are successfully resolved, whereas distress is evoked when they are not successfully resolved, leading the person to consider additional coping mechanisms in an effort to successfully resolve the stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Participant 6 revealed that she often stays with the stress, when he si stressed because of work, but eventually takes it out on her children, and then quickly realises that it is not the right way to deal with stress and will look for alternative coping mechanisms such as speaking to her supervisor.

Coping processes produce an outcome (ie. change to the person-environment relationship) which is reassessed as favourable, unfavourable or unresolved (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Participant 5 had a negative coping mechanism where he chose to drink alcohol to try and

reduce stress, but he was also aware that this did not yield any positive results, or alter his situation for the positive. He then mentioned that he will speak to his supervisor and colleagues when he is at his wits end.

The idea (Lazarus & Folkman's theory) contends that whether coping mechanisms are used and whether the stressor is finally addressed depends more on how stressful the event is perceived to be than on how it actually occurs (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When a person perceives a situation as stressful, they engage in coping, which is process-oriented, dynamic, and involves deliberate, intentional activity (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). There is always some action taken to try and deal with the stressful situation, and when Lazarus & Folkman speak about perception, there is an assumption that a cognitive process takes place when an individual is faced with a stressful situation. Therefore, it is about perception and the individual evaluating whether or not they have the tools at their disposal to be able to effectively deal with the particular stressful situation.

According to Lazarus and Folkman's theory, the goal of coping mechanisms is to either control the stressor directly or manage the emotions that result from the stressful situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The researcher sought to find out how probation officers in her study dealt with occupational stress, as well as to find out what measures they used for coping.

Some engaged in problem-focused coping such as relaxation excercises or speaking to their supervisor for guidance and support. Others chose to spend time with family; others taking vacations. Then there were those that had a negative coping mechanism such as drinking alcohol or taking out their frustrations on their loved ones.

The researcher felt that Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) study was useful, because it explains the relationship between the person and their environment with regards to stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROBATION OFFICERS

According to Wirkus (2015) court probation officers are responsible for difficult tasks such as participating in taking a child away from their family, in cases of abuse or neglect, or if the child's circumstances are not conducive to their well-being. They also enter into a personal relationship with those implicated within the criminal justice system, in that they have to

work with and supervise them (Newman & Ugwudike, 2013). The probation officers are required to spend time with probationers. They are also expected to provide support to address the probationers' needs and ensure that they do not re-offend (Epperson, Thompson, Lurigio & Kim, 2017). Lutze, (as cited in Hafoka, Hsieh, Woo, Wormer, Stohr and Hemmens, 2015, p.330) states that probation officers are "faced with challenges such as large caseloads, limited resources, offender management difficulties, criticism of high recidivism rates, and threats to public safety."

Clear and Latessa (1993) state that probation officers have law enforcement and rehabilitation directives which can be challenging to reconcile. Griffin and Torbet (2002) state that probation officers strive to promote youth compliance to probation conditions. Law enforcement probation officers however, control the probationer so that the community is protected, placing emphasis on compliance and punishment (Abadinsky, 2006). According to Rudes, Viglione and Taxman (2011) social service probation officers use services to help youth to prevent them from going further into the system (being incarcerated or ending up in foster care). Adamaki and Moutsopoulou (2018) state that, probation officers also provide counselling services to offenders so that they prevent recidivism and encourage social inclusion of the offender(s).

The probation officers' main responsibilities include making recommendations for the courts, especially with regards to children and people who are in conflict with the law (Dlamalala, 2018). Probation officers have a huge role to play in the lives of children in conflict with the law, because the recommendations they make to courts could determine a child's future. The officers also inform decisions on processes of diversion of the child where applicable (Dlamalala, 2018). According to Gxubane (2008), appropriate punishments must be carefully examined, because they will have a long-term impact on the perpetrator, victim and society as a whole. The probation officer is required to do thorough investigations in order to assess the nature of the crime committed by the offender (Dlamalala, 2018). According to Gxubane (2008), through their pre-sentence investigations, probation officers have a responsibility to guide the court towards alternative sentencing options. According to Hsieh et al. (2015), probation officers are not limited to functions such as supervision and restitution collection; their roles include case adjustment and investigations, record keeping, compiling recommendations regarding sentencing, complaint screening and performing court duties.

The stressful nature of their jobs can have a negative impact on probation officers. Epperson et al. (2017) state that probation officers are responsible for monitoring probationers' court-mandated conditions. The officers may be subjected to intense interactions or conflict with the probationers while trying to enforce these conditions (Epperson et al., 2017). Their duties involve extensive interaction with offenders and they also require support services to help them cope with the secondary trauma that can arise from such interactions (Epperson et al., 2017).

According to Steiner, Purkiss, Kifer, Roberts and Hemmens (2004) the most frequently stipulated tasks for adult probation officers were supervision, record-keeping and surveillance. For probation officers, stipulated tasks include assessing and investigating cases, writing social history reports and supervision. According to Gxubane (2008) the goal of the assessment is to guide and inform therapeutic interventions that will assist the young offenders to avoid re-entering the criminal court system again. Pettway and VanDine (2000) in their research found that paperwork was the most commonly performed task. Probation officers perform many tasks which include "arranging placements, screening cases and explaining rights- all of which are not performed by adult officers" (Steiner et al., 2004, p.63).

Taxman (2008) states that the role of the probation officer is to combine rehabilitation and law enforcement roles as a means to control and treat large scale community offenders. According to Storm (1997) probation officers must have strong oral and writing communication skills, as well as a broad understanding of the criminal justice system. Probation officers must be able to work with a varied demographic as well as a wide range of government and community institutions (Storm, 1997). Whetzel, Paparozzi, Alexander and Lowenkamp (as cited in Hafoka et al., 2015) state that the abovementioned improves the effectiveness of supervision, reduces recidivism and provides effective mechanisms for offenders.

Some of the roles of the probation officer include: law enforcement officer, social service practitioner, and resource broker (Abadinsky, 2006). Under law enforcement, the probation officer focuses on controlling the probationer in order to safe-guard the community (Abadinsky, 2006). So there is a strong emphasis on compliance and punishment (Abadinsky, 2006). Social service entails transforming the offender into a upstanding citizen through community resources and services (Rudes et al., 2011). Finally as resource broker, the

probation officer addresses the needs of the probationer and equips the probationer with the necessary services and resources to meet those needs (Rudes et al., 2011).

In his study, Wirkus (2015) found that court probation officers experienced an increased level of felt occupational stress due to their occupational responsibilities. Wirkus (2015) suggests that in order to curb occupational stress, employees need to make decisions with regards to their work, and companies should give career counselling with the intention of assisting the employees with job-related stress. He furthermore states that there should be prevention campaigns dedicated to occupational stress and creating a conducive working environment (Wirkus, 2015). Wirkus (2015) further states that organisations should create and motivate employees to engage in relaxation training exercises to reduce occupational stress. Anjali (2014) argues that the job of a probation officer is isolating, as they deal with complicated individuals and make difficult decisions by themselves. The researcher feels that this is where the job of the supervisor comes in whereby he/she guides the probation officer. Granted, for the most part the probation officer needs to make the decisions on her own, but if the probation officer has guidance from the supervisor and has been trained efficiently, he/she will have confidence in conducting his/her duties.

The Probation Services Act (1991) defines probation officers as social workers who conduct work in the fields of crime prevention, treatment and care of offenders, victims of crime and with families and communities (Probation Services Act 116 of 1991). The responsibilities of probation officers are outlined in the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008. The Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 is a legislative structure which addresses crime in South Africa (Child Justice Act 75 of 2008). In terms of the Probation Services Act (1991) the probation officer has multiple responsibilities, namely: prevention, early intervention, rehabilitation and statutory intervention (Probation Services Act, 1991). They also reintegrate offenders and crime victims back to the community (Probation Services Act, 1991). Probation officers do not only provide services to children in conflict with the law (Skelton & Tshehla as cited in Muntuwenkosi & Warria, 2020). They also produce pre-sentence reports for children and adults and compile pre-trial reports for children (Skelton & Tshehla as cited in Muntuwenkosi & Warria, 2020). According to Gxubane (2008) it is important for a probation officer who compiles a pre-sentence report to know the legislative structures and principles guiding the sentencing of offenders. Officers who create pre-sentence reports must be able to gather, organise and analyse data (Storm, 1997).

According to Muntuwenkosi and Warria (2020), when probation officers intervene, they should not only focus on the child in conflict with the law, but the environment that the child comes from, in order to understand how these children are impacted by environmental systems. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 seeks to offer care and protection to children, even those in conflict with the law (Children's Act 38 of 2005). The Act states that children in conflict with the law who are waiting for trial and sentencing may stay in child and youth care centres and residential care centres, where they will receive therapeutic support (Children's Act 38 of 2005). It is the responsibility of the probation officer to render such programmes to children in these care facilities (Children's Act 38 of 2005).

The Child Justice Act (2008) in South Africa highlights that probation officers should assess all children purported to have committed an offence before appearing in the initial inquiry (Child Justice Act, 2008). The purpose of the assessment is to ascertain whether the child is in need of care and protection, to establish the child's age in order for proper measures to be taken and to determine the possibility of diversion of the matter, if the child declares responsibility for their actions (Muntuwenkosi & Warria, 2020). Mallouchou and Moutsopoulou (2016) state that, the child may have the opportunity to attend short-term programs such as anger management/conflict-resolving programs, as part of the probation service. According to Adamaki and Moutsoupoulo (2018) the probation officer may refer the child if in need, to appropriate agencies (drug rehab centres, mental care programs etc).
According to the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008, "restorative justice means an approach to justice that aims to involve the child offender, the victim, the families concerned and community members to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations through accepting responsibility, making restitution, taking measures to prevent a recurrence of the incident and promoting reconciliation." According to Skelton and Batley (2006), in assessing whether a case is suitable for restorative justice options, one should not only focus on the seriousness of the offence, but also on the circumstances surrounding the offence.

As probation officers, their role is to assess the impact of the crime and effect of victimization (Gxubane, 2008). The probation officer facilitates the restorative justice process (Gxubane, 2008). As probation officers, their role in restorative justice is to monitor the child's compliance with the sentence according to the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008. The role of the probation officer is to conduct victim empowerment programmes such as victim-offender mediation (Gxubane, 2008). The probation officer's role is furthermore, to be a

support structure to all parties during legal proceedings, particularly the victim (Gxubane, 2008).

The researcher is of the opinion that the probation officers have a very important job to do, in that, the recommendations they provide to court determine the future of offenders (Dlamala, 2018). The researcher is of the opinion that the probation officers have to be really objective when recommending appropriate actions to be taken against the offender, as these will have a lasting impact on not just the offender, but the victim and society as well. Epperson et al (2017) speaks about the secondary trauma that comes from the probation officer's interactions with offenders. The researcher is of the opinion that it is important for probation officers to get debriefing or counselling after the interactions that they have with offenders, as this can be traumatising to listen to offender's stories and how they committed the crimes.

POSSIBLE DANGERS TO PROBATION OFFICERS WHEN DEALING WITH CONVICTED INDIVIDUALS

Probation is an alternative to incarceration of convicted persons who have committed some of the most heinous crimes (Lindner & Bon, 1996). According to Stephenson (2020), the number of cases on probation has increased, and the types of offenders are more varied than ever. These conditions can cause stress for the probation officer. Some convicted persons have threatened probation officers and attempted to assault the officers during home visits (DeMichele & Payne, 2007). Probation officers engaged in fieldwork are at risk of being victimised by offenders or persons frequenting the neighbourhood in cases whereby probation officers do home visits (Abadinsky, 2006). Another factor in probation fieldwork is the proliferation of guns on the streets, which is another factor affecting officer safety (Rand as cited in Lindner & Bonn, 1996). Some family members of the offender may act out against the probation officer in fear that he/she might send the offender to prison (DeMichele & Payne, 2007). If there is a threat of the probation officer possibly recommending prison sentence or reporting an illegal activity committed by the offender, offenders may try to remove the threat by harming the officer (DeMichele & Payne, 2007). Frequent travel and field-work in high-crime neighbourhoods, isolated rural areas and institutions often puts probation officers at risk (DeMichele & Payne, 2007). According to the Justice Departments' report, between 39 and 55% of probation officers surveyed have been victims of work-related violence (King, 1964).

In Muntuwenkosi and Warria's (2020) study, one-third of the survey participants stated that they had been assaulted at work at some point in their careers. Some offenders have drug addiction problems and are very aggressive (Muntuwenkosi & Warria, 2020). Probation officers visit families that are angry, emotionally unstable or criminals themselves (Muntuwenkosi & Warria, 2020). As a result probation officers find it difficult to carry out their duties (Muntuwenkosi & Warria, 2020). According to Thomas (1988) the probation officers stated that two potential stressors of the job include the dangers inherent to the job and having to make recommendations that might ultimately lead to the offender being held in custody. This means that sometimes the recommendations that probation officers make to court, can lead probationers to incarceration, and some offenders (or their families) may threaten the probation officer's safety.

The researcher is of the opinion that probation officers should be accompanied by a police officer when conducting home visits to offenders or their families, to ensure their safety.

TRAINING OF PROBATION OFFICERS

Reddington and Kreisel (2000) wanted to find out if organisations were preparing their probation officers to face challenges linked to their current caseloads. They further checked to ascertain whether probation officer's training was effective, given the challenges of their occupation (Reddington & Kreisel, 2000). However, there is little information about the current training practices of probation officers in the US (Reddington & Kreisel, 2000). The American Bar Association recommends that probation officers get 40 hours of training before they are given their job assignments (Reddington & Kriesel, 2000). This training will make sure that they familiarise themselves with their work as well as increase their knowledge of the skills that are needed to do their job (Reddington & Kriesel, 2000). According to Gxubane (2008) in South Africa, any individual who is registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions as a social worker can be hired to work as a probation officer (PO). Training in social work by itself does not qualify a person to act as a PO, as probation work is a specialist subject that requires expertise in criminal law and procedures, criminology, offender treatment, punishment objectives, and the organisation, operation of the criminal justice system (Gxubane, 2008).

Torbet (as cited in Reddington and Kriesel, 2000) recommends that training for probation officers should be monitored to see how often training is provided and to establish criteria for judging its effectiveness. It is important to check if the current training enhances the tools that

they need to do their jobs. According to Muntuwenkosi and Warria's (2020) study there is a lack of training of probation officers with regards to the Child Justice Act in South Africa, thus resulting in failure to implement the Act efficiently. The quality of their pre-sentence reports is often not good, and this makes one question their own work and competency, especially when they have to testify in court (Muntuwenkosi & Warria's, 2020). Gxubane (2008) stated that magistrates in South Africa routinely expressed dissatisfaction with the quality and inadequacies in probation officers' reports. Graser and de Smidt (2007) concluded that this is inherently related to social workers' lack of sufficient training in probation work.

The researcher is of the opinion that there should be more training for probation officers in South Africa in order to prepare them for their duties. Training in social work alone is limited, as Gxubane (2008) has stated that probation work is a specialist skill which needs knowledge in criminal law and the operation of the criminal justice system. There should also be time management workshops to educate the probation officers on how to manage their time efficiently (typing their reports, meeting deadlines etc), as well as capacity building workshops to familiarise the probation officers on the legislation that governs probation work and other practices.

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND THE EFFECTS OF STRESS

Occupational stress is a term used to describe situations in which people are under strain as a result of work-related conditions (Frester, 2016). Occupational stress (probation officer stress) among probation and parole officers has gotten significantly less attention from researchers than the stressors experienced by the police and jail officials (Frester, 2016). Organisational stressors are cited as the key stressors for probation officers, as they are in police and correctional literature (Frester, 2016). An evaluation of the criminal justice stress literature reveals that probation and parole officials face similar stressors including: heavy caseloads, loads of paperwork, lack of opportunity for promotions, poor salaries, the forgiving nature of judges/courts, lack of participation in decision making, expectations to do too much within a limited timeframe, lack of recognition for good work, insufficient support from management, lack of community resources for offenders, role ambiguity, and role conflict (Frester, 2016). According to Thomas (1988) the most frequently reported cause of stress amongst probation officers was that they were given too little time to complete tasks.

According to Finney, Stergiopoules, Hensel, Bonato and Deva (as cited in Raphadi, 2017) occupational stress occurs when stressed workers are affected by stressors in their personal and work environment. According to Oginska-Bulik (as cited in Wirkus, 2015, p.216) "occupational stress is experienced within the space in which work is performed." According to Suleman, Hussain, Shehzad, Syed and Rajah (2018, p. 3), "stress contributes to problems such as unsatisfactory performance (at the workplace), family issues, poor social relationships, health problems and unproductive organisation." "Stress associated with working environment has harmful effects on an employee's behaviour, which ultimately affects personal and organisational productivity negatively" (Suleman, et al. 2018, p. 3). The worker might not be able to perform their duties if they have chronic stress (Wirkus, 2015).

Oginska-Bulik (2005) states that it is the profession that is involved with investing time and energy to helping human beings with their problems which causes a considerable emotional burden. In other words, there are certain professions which contribute to stress more than others due to the fact that by nature they involve dealing with people's complex problems (Oginska-Bulik, 2005). Probation services are an example of burdensome professions (Oginska-Bulik, 2005). According to Wirkus (2015, p. 220) "professional court probation officers manifest the strongest feelings of stress in their contacts with wards, the structure of management of court probation officers, organisational encumbrances and collaboration with the court of law." According to Wirkus (2015) the collaboration with the court of law can be stress-inducing.

According to (DeLude, Mitchell & Barber, 2012), many of the issues that frustrate probation officers have less to do with their probationers and more to do with factors like caseload size and agency politics. In the researcher's study, three participants mentioned the issue of dealing with the offenders themselves that sometimes cause stress, indicating that sometimes the offender during an interview can give wrong information; thereby, jeopardising the integrity of the report. However, most of the participants expressed that stress was not related to the probationer, but rather the workload itself.

In a survey of 257 POs, it was revealed that their desire to assist offenders and their enjoyment of working with people were the main motivations for choosing the profession (DeLude, Mitchell & Barber, 2012). Significantly, a lack of one-on-one interaction with offenders was identified as a major source of job dissatisfaction (DeLude, Mitchell & Barber, 2012). According to (DeLude, Mitchell & Barber, 2012), the above findings suggest that POs

are interested in building positive working connections with probationers and are aware of the significance of having the skill set necessary to do so, but are dissatisfied when opportunities to do so are not provided. This suggests that there is an inclination to foster change in the probationer's life.

According to Giovannoni et al. (2015) stress is frequently caused by exposure to information and behaviour that is disturbing during probation officers' sessions with offenders. Wells and Johnson (as cited in Giovannoni et al., 2015) state that stress and burnout can take place when employees do not feel valued and when their working circumstances do not allow them to make decisions which affect their job. Wirkus (2015) concurs with the above statement when he states in his study that when probation officers have more control over their work that they do, it decreases their stress levels. A study by Oginska-Bulik (2005) showed that workers being overloaded with work, lack of rewards and minimal social interactions were the most stressful work-related factors which contributed to stress.

According to Schmidt (2007) what is more frequently emphasised is the importance of organisational factors with regards to research into occupational stress. Situations connected to work are felt to be stressful when the employee has low control over their work and where there is insufficient support at the workplace (Wirkus, 2015). "Occupational stress may be caused by extraordinary or too little work, time pressure, deadlines and physical strain created by the working place and its conditions" (Suleman et al., 2018, p. 3). Ben (as cited in Tolaj, Havolli and Beqiri, 2019, p.115) states that "higher levels of job demands also increased occupational stress."

Garcia-Bueno, Caso and Leza (2008) state that stress can lead to negative physiological effects such as high blood pressure, inflammation, depression, sensitivity, clotting of the blood, irritability and indifference. According to Oginska-Bulik (2005) it becomes costly to the organisation; the influence exerted by stress, affects both, employees and their employer, as well as the organisation, due to increasing absenteeism and stress-related medical conditions. Tolaj, Havolli and Beqiri (2019) state that in their study, stress led to negative organisational outcomes such as a reduction in performance, lack of motivation, dissatisfaction with the job and an increase in absenteeism at work and low turnover. This means that companies might lose money as a result of low productivity due to absenteeism.

According to Suleman et al., (2018) research shows that there is high turnover when the level of occupational stress increases.

According to Suleman et al., (2018, p. 3), the stressors that are common in the literature are "workload, time pressure, educational change, investigation, leadership styles, innovation, re-organisation and insufficient resources." Loboda (as cited in Wirkus, 2015) concentrated on stressors related to professional development and in his study he paid attention to court probation officers who had less opportunities for promotion, and persistent organisational changes. In his study, he found that restricted opportunities for promotion at work had a potential to be stressful for court probation officers as well as the conditions they worked in at the workplace (Wirkus, 2015). According to Widerszal-Bazyl (as cited in Wirkus, 2015) requirements at the workplace also play a role in determining the level of stress felt by employees. According to Tolaj, Havolli and Beqiri (2019), employees who have less work experience show excessive levels of stress than employees with more work experience.

Some of the job frustrations according to Torbet, (as cited in Reddington and Kriesel, 2000, p.12) include "the attitudes of the clients and their families, probation officers not being able to really impact the lives of the youth that they supervise and not being able to define and measure success." According to a study conducted by Czapinski, it was noted that "females experience a greater number of somatic symptoms of stress; whereas stress afflicts males to a greater degree" (Czapinski & Panek, 2011 as cited in Wirkus, 2015, p.217). Thus, it is important to protect the probation officers from the detrimental effects of stress.

The researcher is of the opinion that employers should make the working conditions of probation officers more conducive, so that they can perform optimally. If there are also opportunities for promotion, it can provide an incentive for probation officers to remain in their profession.

According to Mushwana, Govender and Nel (2019), among the workplace stressors in the South African Police Service (SAPS) include a lack of managerial support, perceived unfair promotion possibilities, bad working conditions, alleged unjust disciplinary procedures, poor interpersonal interactions with co-workers, and low remuneration. According to (Galanis, Fragkou & Katsoulas, 2020) police officer stressors include violence, work injuries, lack of support, long working hours, burnout, fatigue, physical threats in the field, and job pressure and demand. Galanis, Fragkou & Katsoulas (2020 state that these stressors makes police officers susceptible to poor mental health. According to Mushwana, Govender and Nel

(2019) culture and race also have an impact on police officers' experience with stress. Mushwana, Govender and Nel (2019) state that police officers in South Africa feel that their contribution to the organisation is valueless, but they cannot speak about this to their supervisor, because they are of a different gender or ethnic group. Female numbers in the SAPS have increased, but they are still under-presented (Mushwana, Govender & Nel, 2019). Due to confidentiality, police officers in South African townships cannot share their work issues with family or friends, so this sometimes leads to feelings of isolation, coupled with the high divorce rates amongst police officers, this can create a heightened stress level for police officers (Mushwana, Govender & Nel, 2019).

According to Mushwana, Govender and Nel (2019), female officers generally adopt more positive coping mechanisms such as relying on their faith or speaking to their partners when they have stress, whereas male police officers suffer in silence, because culturally, it is expected of men to be tough and not show any emotion, even if they encounter a crisis situation on duty; otherwise, they will be alienated by their colleagues or be judged as weak. Officers who feel more supported (by their family and at work) are more likely to have resilience (Mushwana, Govender & Nel, 2019). In Slate, Wells and Johnson's (2003) study, they found that amongst probation officers, it was the female probation officers who exhibited more stress. They state that some stressors are unique to females, and further stated that unlike men, in addition to work stress, women are also inundated with the responsibility of taking care of the house and child-rearing, which can also be stressful (Slate, Wells & Johnson, 2003) Whereas, in Mushwana, Govender & Nel's (2019) study, male police officers where the ones who exhibited more stress, rather than their female counterparts. This is because, (as stated by Mushwana, Govender & Nel, 2019) men are expected culturally to be "strong" and have control over their emotions (or not show any emotion), so they suffer in silence when they are stressed, and it can also be difficult for them to seek help from professionals, because of the above stereotype.

In Galanis, Fragkou and Katsoulas' (2020) study, they found that police officers who work in large cities experienced more stress. This is due to their frequent exposure to extremely stressor incidents such as rape, murder and robbery (Galanis, Fragkou and Katsoulas, 2020). These situations may predispose police officers to post-traumatic stress disorder, because they are normally the first ones on the scene when there is a murder, robbery, sexual abuse and traffic incidents (Galanis, Fragkou and Katsoulas, 2020). Galanis, Fragkou and Katsoulas (2020) state that police officers who have neurotic (anxiety, worrying etc.) and psychotic

(taking risks, disregard for common sense etc.) personality traits are more vulnerable to experience stress when faced with challenges that come with the job.

There should be intervention for introspection and awareness of police officers about mental disorders, particularly, posttraumatic stress disorder (Galanis, Fragkou & Katsoulas, 2020). There should also be assessment of mental health of police officers and screening for mental health disorders to promote health and well-being (Galanis, Fragkou & Katsoulas, 2020).

It can be seen that probation officers and police officers have similar stressors, however, police officer's job is characterised by frequent exposure to dangerous situations. The other difference is that police officers have a responsibility to protect the lives of citizens, and at times this means them risking their lives. Rates of femicide and suicide as a result of stress are higher in police officers (Galanis, Fragkou & Katsoulas, 2020). Thus, intervention to deal with mental health disorders as a result of recurrent stress should be prioritised.

BURNOUT

Wirkus (2015) states that the high level of felt stress by court probation officers yields negative consequences such as occupational burnout syndrome. In a study about probation officers' experience of burnout, self-reported burnout was common where burnout was described as a feeling of emotional exhaustion, the inability to continue caring or connecting to others and not making a difference in the job (Salyers et al., 2015). It was found that probation officers experiencing burnout would be more directive and intolerant towards clients, they had a tendency to withdraw from their clients, affecting the successful outcome among juvenile justice involved youth (Salyers et al., 2015). In the above study, despite workers being stressed out, they tried to hide these feelings from their work with clients (Salyers et al., 2015). However, burnout did have an influence, more so on worker's relationships with clients (Salyers et al., 2015).

Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) found that many participants said that social support from co-workers and supervisors reduced burnout. Nine participants in the study stated that distancing themselves from work (taking time off from work) and having social support also helped to reduce burnout (Salyers et al., 2015). Many participants also mentioned the importance of separating work life from home life, as a good way to distance oneself from work to reduce burnout (Salyers et al., 2015). Burnout interventions identified by the researchers to reduce stress included relaxation exercises, cognitive strategies (such as

cognitive-behavioural therapy), physical health and nutrition (Awa, Plaumann & Walter, 2010). According to the study above, it was recognised that social support is an efficient way of reducing burnout (Salyers et al., 2015). The study encouraged the adoption of interventions which could help supervisors to exercise efficient strategies to support workers in their departments (Salyers et al., 2015).

Burnout is real and employers and employees should work together to prevent burnout of probation officers.

If the probation officers feel they are not handling the workload, they should be able to disclose to their supervisor, who should then refer them to the necessary programs, to assist them.

COPING MECHANISMS

Based on Lazarus (1993), coping is the way people manage stressful life circumstances that surpass the person's resources. According to Lazarus' (1993) theory there are two ways of coping. The first is style is concentrated on a task to alter the existing stress-inducing event and; the second is the style of focusing on emotions, which is the case for people who prefer wishful thinking rather than taking efficient actions to deal with stress. A third way of coping was added, which is the style focusing on avoidance, which is to avoid dealing with (thinking about or experiencing) stress-inducing situations (Lazarus, 1993). However, Wirkus (2015) states that suppressing one's emotions is connected with negative health. According to Giovannoni et al. (2015) mindfulness activities have also been demonstrated to be useful in reducing stress in some studies.

According to Agbonluae et al. (2017), there are three approaches to coping with stress. These are: avoidance approach, stress management approach and ideal stress coping approach (Agbonluae et al., 2017). The avoidance approach is associated with individuals who use alcohol and other substances or anything else to deal with the symptoms of stress temporarily (Agbonluae et al., 2017). These strategies may work temporarily, but will have harmful long-term effects (Agbonluae et al., 2017). The stress management approach is linked to the use of exercise, diet, medication and biofeedback or other relaxation methods to deal with stress (Agbonluae et al., 2017). Agbonluae et al. (2017) state that the advantage of this approach is that, it focuses on dealing with symptoms of the problems. Then there is the ideal stress coping approach, which makes stress disappear swiftly and naturally, by altering the

underlying cause of stress (Agbonluae et al., 2017). However, they state that many people fail to do this, because they cannot identify the cause of their stress (Agbonluae et al., 2017).

Agbonluae et al. (2017) also provide positive approaches to deal with occupational stress. The first approach is to remove the stress (Agbonluae et al., 2017).. This refers to avoiding and dealing with avoidable stress situations (Agbonluae et al., 2017). It involves locating and eliminating the source of stress (Agbonluae et al., 2017). The second approach is cognitive coping which deals with how one thinks, perceives and interprets life events (Agbonluae et al., 2017). It is believed that reaction to stress is linked to cognition (Agbonluae et al., 2017). So, the ability of the individual to react to and interpret the stressful situation in a positive light, will determine how they deal with that stressful situation (Agbonluae et al., 2017). The third approach is the management of stress reaction which is similar to the second approach. It refers to how one manages one's psychological reactions to stress (Agbonluae et al., 2017). So, this may include going for counselling or psychotherapy (Agbonluae et al., 2017). The fourth approach is social support (Agbonluae et al., 2017). Individuals who have social support from friends, family, colleagues, etc. have a lesser degree of stress (or rather, their magnitude of reaction to stress) than those with limited social support (Agbonluae et al., 2017). The fifth approach is medication and medication compliance (Agbonluae et al., 2017). Stress can cause issues such as ulcers, and high blood pressure, and medication can be used to reduce the severity of these illnesses (Agbonluae et al., 2017).

The sixth approach is relaxation (Agbonluae et al., 2017). Relaxation has been found to be effective treatment for tension or stress-related problems (Agbonluae et al., 2017). The seventh approach is regular aerobic exercise (Agbonluae et al., 2017). This exercise is good for cardiovascular disease, an increase in blood pressure and coronary heart disease- all of which are often caused by occupational stress (Agbonluae et al., 2017). The eighth approach is biofeedback which involves the use of technology and other instruments and machines to reduce stress and its consequences on individuals (Agbonluae et al., 2017). The ninth approach is emotional self-regulation (Agbonluae et al., 2017). This includes active steps taken to avoid stress such, as suppression of anger and engaging in voluntary efforts to manage one's emotions (Agbonluae et al., 2017). The tenth and final approach is attending psychotherapy and counselling (Agbonluae et al., 2017). This refers to a process whereby trained professionals use psychological approaches to assist individuals with stress (Agbonluae et al., 2017).

The researcher is of the opinion that employers should normalise probation officers going for counselling or debriefing after their interactions with offenders. This will help probation officers to be in a better mental state once they have sought help and actually speak about how they feel after they have met with offenders.

MODIFIERS OF STRESS

According to Wirkus (2015) the modifiers of stress depend on two things: the attributes of an individual and social support. Being young in age, having worked for a short period of time, low levels of occupational experience, competing against other people, and striving to be successful at work are all traits that warrant a higher level of susceptibility to occupational stress (OIP as cited in Wirkus, 2015). Positive ways of dealing with stress can reduce stress; whereas bad coping mechanisms can lead to increased levels of felt stress, mental health disorders and improper attitudes and motivations (Wirkus, 2015). The more social support an individual has, the more they will be able to better cope with stress (Wirkus, 2015). In their study, O'Donell and Stephens (2001) found that organisational stressors experienced by the individual affected psychological and physical well-being. According to Cheek (1984) improving the work environment will decrease workers' stressors and this endeavour must come from managers and supervisors, as they commit to reducing stress in the workplace. Thus, if there is social support at work, such initiatives will help reduce stress.

Wirkus (2015) states that research has proved that effective coping (through steady adjustments of requirements and competencies) lead to a reduced experience of stress. However, ineffectual coping in stress-reducing situations leads to the continuation or advancement of stress. Giovannoni et al. (2015) state that in order to reduce stress, probation officers must engage in self-care before helping others, so that they can be efficient helpers themselves. Those who do not engage in self-care practices are vulnerable to stress which may result in restlessness, inflexibility with clients and colleagues (Giovannoni et al., 2015).

In an effort to alleviate stress, Giovannoni et al. (2015) noted that some probation officers have tried to distance themselves from the probationers. However, this just results in detached interactions (Giovannoni et al., 2015). A lack of caring leads to the objectification of the probationer (Giovannoni et al., 2015). Furthermore, it mirrors the same objectification the probationer has/had towards their victims (Giovannoni et al., 2015). Finn and Kuck (2003) found that self-care strategies to alleviate stress reduced conflict in inter-personal

relationships, improves health, improves staff turnover by reducing absences, and increases public safety.

The importance of self-care (of the employee) cannot be stressed enough. If the practitioner is well, they will be able to be of assistance to their clients. The researcher is of the opinion that it is important for the probation officers to take part in relaxation excercises, to de-stress, and also have access to debriefing sessions to deal with the secondary trauma from interacting with their clients.

CONCLUSION

The literature review section highlighted the different roles and responsibilities of probation officers. One of their core responsibilities is to make recommendations for court with regards to children and people who are in conflict with the law (Dlamalala, 2018). It is evident that the work of a probation officer can be difficult and dangerous, because they work with people who have committed some of the most heinous crimes such as rape and murder (Lindner & Bon, 1996). Their duties involve extensive interaction with offenders (Epperson et al., 2017). Their work can also be dangerous, because they can also get threatened by probationers (some can even assault probation officers) (DeMichele & Payne, 2007).

Occupational stress is then identified as situations in which people are under strain as a result of conditions in their workplace (Frester, 2016). The effects of occupational stress were described in the foregoing sections. They include: physiological effects such as increased blood pressure, inflammation, depression, blood clotting, irritability and apathy, as well as negative emotionality (Garcia-Bueno et al., 2008). Stress can cause negative organisational outcomes such as lack of motivation, dissatisfaction and an increase in absenteeism and turnover, and decline in performance (Tolaj et al., 2019).

Finally the literature review section indicated that stress can be dealt with in three different ways (coping mechanisms). The avoidance approach (things used to temporarily deal with the symptoms of stress such drugs and alcohol) (Agbonluae et al., 2017), stress management approach (relaxation exercises to deal with stress) (Agbonluae et al., 2017) and ideal stress coping approach (makes stress disappear swiftly and naturally, by altering the underlying cause of stress) (Agbonluae et al., 2017). It also highlighted the modifiers of stress.

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter discusses the research approach that was used in this study. The research design used will be explored. This chapter discusses the study population and sampling procedures used. It also discusses the research instruments used. The chapter also explores the data collection and data analysis processes adopted by the researcher. The section also reflects on the trustworthiness of qualitative data, and discusses the ethical considerations associated with the study. Finally, the chapter ends of with a reflection on the limitations and delimitations of the study.

RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach applied in this study was qualitative in nature, in order to understand the occupational stressors of probation officers working at the Department of Social Development (DSD), Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region and their coping mechanisms. The intention of qualitative research is to understand a specific social situation, circumstance, group, role or interaction (Schurink, Fouche, & De Vos, 2011**)**). According to Babbie (2007) in qualitative research, the researcher attempts to understand participants in terms of their experiences of the world. The focus was based on understanding the experiences of probation officers, thus, providing insight into their world (Babbie, 2007). The thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012) was used in this study. This approach was useful, because the study was concerned with the behaviour and experiences of people as they engage, encounter and live through circumstances (Babbie, 2007). Using a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to note the similarities and differences derived from each participant during interviews (Babbie, 2007). This approach helped the researcher to obtain rich data from the participants' experiences in their work with adults and children in conflict with the law. The qualitative approach helped, because it allowed for them to describe what they feel is happening in their lives as probation officers. This approach allowed the participants to express sentiments about their experiences with occupational stress. They were also able to discuss what in their opinion could be considered as coping mechanisms that they use to curb occupational stress. By using qualitative research, the researcher was able to thoroughly examine the research problem.

The study was exploratory in nature, because little information was known about the occupational stressors experienced by probation officers working at the DSD, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region. Thus, in order to elicit this information a qualitative approach was used. According to Guest et al. (2012) the final result of a thematic analysis is frequently a

recommendation for a policy or program, rather than a theoretical model. The aim of this particular study is to hopefully inform the adopting change programs within DSD to allow for probation officers to be given debriefing as well as to consider addressing the negative effects of the heavy caseloads that probation officers currently experience. Caseload reduction and adding more officials, to reduce the burden of heavy caseloads on present probation officers, should be part of solutions to the problems identified in the study.

Using the qualitative approach was useful. However, there are certain disadvantages of using qualitative research. Firstly, the replies provided are not measured, because qualitative research is a perspective-based type of inquiry (Rahman, 2017). Due to qualitative research being based on individual experiences, it is not easy to duplicate the results (Rahman, 2017). Data can be difficult to verify, because people's perspectives change daily (Rahman, 2017). The findings in qualitative research cannot be expanded to wider populations with the same degree of reliability (confidence) that quantitative analysis can (Atieno, 2009). Qualitative research can be influenced by researcher bias (Rahman, 2017). It can also be time-consuming, having to collect data, transcribe and analyse and make sense of the data (Rahman, 2017). The data gathered in qualitative research is highly subjective (Rahman, 2017). However, for the purposes of this study, the qualitative approach was found to be useful nonetheless.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design that was used for this particular study was an exploratory single case study research design. Case studies are in-depth examinations of individuals or groups of people (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011). According to De Vos et al. (2011), the researcher must be interested in the meanings that participants attach to their experiences, as opposed to generalising the results to other groups of people. Thematic analysis is used in assessing the data from case studies (De Vos et al., 2011). Case study sample sizes are generally small (De Vos et al., 2011), which is why the researcher interviewed only fifteen participants for the study. Enquiry into case studies focuses largely on the differences which each participant reveals compared to other people or group of people/events in the larger population (De Vos et al., 2011). The data collected for case studies is generally a lot richer and deeper than what can be found through other experimental designs (De Vos et al., 2011). The biggest advantage of case studies is that they allow the researcher to probe further into the responses of the participants in order to get more detailed descriptions and explanations of beliefs, experiences and behaviours (De Vos et al., 2011). The reason for this design was that

it was focused on a specific group of people in the DSD, which have their own characteristics.

The disadvantages of case studies though are that they are time-consuming (collecting the data, transcribing and analysing the data) (De Vos et al., 2011). Subject dropout may occur during the research process (De Vos et al., 2011). In a case study a small sample size is used for it to yield an effective amount of data to be analysed (De Vos et al., 2011). If there are different demographics involved with the entity, it (case study) may become inefficient (De Vos et al., 2011). The other disadvantage is that the data collected may not always be generalisable to the wider population (De Vos et al., 2011). It is also difficult to produce a definitive cause/effect from case studies (De Vos et al., 2011). It is also difficult to detect or prevent researcher bias in case study design (De Vos et al., 2011). However, this design seemed to best fit this study.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

A semi-structured interview guide was used as the tool to conduct the interviews. A semi-structured interview schedule was used in order to obtain participants' views based on the questions the researcher asked (Creswell, 2014). A semi-structured interview schedule is a list of semi-structured questions that have been prepared to guide the researcher in collecting information or data about a particular subject (Creswell, 2014). According to Greef (2005) this method is more flexible, because it allows the researcher to probe further and also follow up on responses that may not have been clear, so that participants may give a clearer picture or explanation. The researcher adopted the use of used semi-structured questions to allow for greater flexibility and probing into the experiences of the probation officers (Greef, 2005). The researcher asked open-ended questions to get more elaborate answers, and in order to explore their experiences. Open-ended questions allow for the participant to elaborate further when asked a question in the interview (Greef, 2005). They allow for expression of deeper, subjective information (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2012). Open-ended questions allow for unlimited responses and provide more detail, so the researcher can obtain a clearer picture of what is discussed (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2012). The disadvantages of open-ended questions are that they are time-consuming, because one is listening to elaborate, long answers (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2012). Thus, there may also be irrelevant information provided in the interview (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2012). It can be difficult to analyse (Starman, 2013). Some may feel that one is prying into their lives, and may therefore feel uncomfortable to answer questions more

elaborately. However, for the purposes of this study, open-ended questions made information provided by participants much clearer to understand for the researcher.

Pre-testing

According to Creswell (2014) a pre-test involves administering the interview schedule to a group of people that have similar characteristics to the target group. Pre-testing of the interview assisted the researcher to improve the dependability of the research tool, and to ascertain if there were any potential problems with the interview schedule (Creswell, 2014). The researcher conducted pre-tests of the interview with two people from the target population, but they were not included as participants for the study. This was done in order to assess the length of the interview and the appropriateness of the questions in meeting the aims and objectives of the study (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, the outcome of the pre-test gave the researcher an opportunity to alter or change where there may have been possible problems identified in the interview schedule.

The first participant that the researcher interviewed for the pilot test spoke about her experiences working as a probation officer. She stated that there are different cases that they receive every day. She mentioned the importance of not having a judgemental attitude towards the offender. She stated that she is empathetic towards the offenders, because it is due to circumstances that sometimes one finds oneself in that may lead to committing the crime (unintentional). When asked why she chose probation, she stated that she always knew she wanted to be a probation officer and she wanted to advocate for people.

In answering a question about whether her educational training prepared her for her work, she stated that it prepared her in terms of admin (typing of reports) and record-keeping of admin. She emphasised that they (as probation officers) do not provide counselling, but rather, they refer their clients to therapy. In answering a question about what aspects about her role cause stress, she stated that dealing with a case of a child causes stress, because the child may return to seek services from them, and this might be because, they have re-offended. She also indicated that there are not enough resources in her unit. This is contrary to what participant 8 said, when she stated that the issue of resources has been resolved, stating that in the past year they haven't had issues with resources. In answering a question about how she deals with stress, she stated that she turns to her friends/colleagues. She admitted that she could talk to her supervisor, but she would prefer to speak to someone whom she shares similar experiences with regarding her work or work challenges.

In answering a question about what she does not like about her job, she re-iterated that admin and paper work, is what she dislikes the most, but she loves everything about her job. In answering a question about what she would change about her job, she stated that she would change giving her report to the supervisor, because she feels she is competent to provide her report to court without it being canalised (or being checked for conciseness and quality of the report) by the supervisor, because of her experience in the field. When asked if she had support in her work environment, she indicated she didn't have support; she has never had debriefing in all the five years of working in probation. She stated some of the dangers of the job, indicating that some of them have been followed by offenders or their families. She stated that their lives are in danger, because people know them (offenders or offender's families). She stated that there are no programs in the department to assist with stress. She stated however, that she heard about team-buildings, but she hasn't ever attended since she started working. When asked if there is value in EAPs, she stated that there is value in EAPs when they offer wellness like testing of different diseases. When asked how EAPs can be improved, she stated that they should accommodate them, and it shouldn't be once a year and they must tell them in advance when they come to the department to offer their services. When asked if she was the head of DSD, how would she address the issue of occupational stress among probation officers, she stated that it must be compulsory to have a group discussion and speak and share experiences. She made an example of ICAS, stating that she doesn't want to make an appointment, but as and when she experiences trauma or stress, she wants to talk immediately. She further stated that she would prefer a supervisor who will not be a dictator, instead will be easy to speak with.

The second participant the researcher interviewed for the pilot test expressed her experiences of being a probation officer. She stated that it is both challenging and rewarding working as a probation officer. She stated that the fact that she is able to influence the outcome of a person's life, thereby determining their future is a huge responsibility. She added that she had a dual responsibility, to rehabilitate the offender (ensure that they do not commit the crime again through programmes) and ensure the safety of the community, and/ or restitution of the victim. In answering why she chose probation, she stated that she did not choose probation; she was allocated to the unit. When asked if her educational training prepared her for her job, she stated that her educational training prepared her in terms of report-writing, but actually implementing the probation practice, it was limited. In answering a question about what aspects about her role causes stress, she said it is heavy caseloads and also when the same

children she worked with come back from programmes and they have to assess them again, because they repeated an offence or re-offended. It makes her feel like she has not done enough in the child's life. In answering how she deals with stress, this participant stated that she deals with stress, by talking to her colleagues, because they can provide a perspective on how she can deal with difficult cases.

When asked if there was anything she did not like about her job, she said that she did not like it when children re-offend, because it makes her doubt the social work intervention, and also the cases that deal with children, because they require immediate intervention and they are given limited time to assess or do investigations and compile reports, as well as heavy caseloads. In answering a question about what she would change about the way she conducts her job if she could, she stated, she would be able to monitor the children placed in programmes, because it is evident that there is a gap in those services, since children end up coming back to them, because they have re-offended. When asked if she has support at work in cases where she may have occupational stress, she felt that she has support in the form of her colleagues and supervisor. When asked if there are programs at work that offer support for occupational stress, she stated that she is not sure whether EAP is still being offered in the department. When asked if there is value in EAP services, she stated that she does not see their value, because they are hardly visible in the department and if they are, they come only once in a year. In answering a question about how EAP services could improve, she stated that their services should accommodate the probation officers and they should be more visible, as well as offer their services more than once a year. When asked if she was the Head of DSD, what she would do to address the issue of occupational stress, she would ensure that probation officers get debriefing every so often (maybe twice a month) or even schedule time during the probation officers' busy schedule to allow for them to attend debriefing sessions.

STUDY POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

A research population is a large collection of people or objects that is the main focus of a scientific query (Durrheim, 2006). In other words, the population is comprised of elements that contain the most representative features or characteristics of the population, which serve the purpose of the study well (De Vos et al., 2011). What compromised the population were all probation officers who were working in Gauteng. The unit of analysis used were probation officers working at Department of Social Development, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region. Durrheim (2006) stated that in qualitative research, a small sample can be effective in providing rich descriptions of data. The researcher used a small sample of fifteen participants,

to allow for a detailed examination of similarities and differences across participants' responses. Probation officers working at the Department of Social Development, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region come from diverse backgrounds, different cultures and places in Johannesburg, and it was of particular interest to the researcher to find out their experiences working as probation officers. The researcher prioritised fifteen participants. It did matter when it came to gender, because the researcher would have liked to have both the male and female perspective on occupational stress. However, the researcher anticipated that there were going to be more female participants than male, because social work is seen as a "caring" profession which is mostly female-dominated. With regards to age, the researcher wanted to find out if being a particular age mattered when it came to how one experiences and deals with stress, so a diverse age range would be able to allow the researcher to explore this.

According to De Vos et al. (2011) purposive sampling is when the researcher uses his/her own judgements in selecting participants who might be useful for the study. The researcher used purposive sampling to obtain participants for the study. This is because the researcher wanted to select a specific set or category of people for the exploration of a particular interest and will allow the researcher to answer his/her research question (De Vos et al., 2011).

SELECTION CRITERIA

The researcher used fifteen participants for face-to-face interviews. The participants were all probation officers; male (4) and female (11) probation officers who were working at DSD, Gauteng Jhb Metro Region. The number of participants was deemed adequate to gather comprehensive thoughts, feelings and experiences. The researcher also used two participants (probation officers working at DSD, Jhb Metro Region) that formed part of the pilot-test to ensure that the research questions were relevant to the study. The participants in the researcher's study had to have at least one year of experience in the probation section, in order to be able to answer the questions. This requirement was set to ensure that participants had experience when it comes to the field of probation. The participants that the researcher chose for the study came from different ethnicity, age, gender, culture and religious backgrounds. The sample inclusion was probation officers who were working particularly in the Johannesburg Metro Region. The researcher mainly chose the probation officers working in Jhb Metro Region, as she needed a small sample, as well as ease of access to these participants. The participants were all residents of Johannesburg aged between 27 and 52 years. The researcher sought permission from the probation officers' supervisor, to ask if the

probation officers could participate in the study. The researcher drafted a letter explaining what her research was about and distributed it to the supervisor as well as probation officers at the DSD, Gauteng, Jhb Metro region. This was done to inform them about the particulars of the study. The researcher also distributed the participant information sheets and informed the probation officers that participation was voluntary. The researcher purposefully selected fifteen probation officers (male and female) to be involved in the study.

The sampling criterion for the study was as follows: (15 participants)

- Each participant selected was a probation officer working at Department of Social Development, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region.
- Each participant had to have at least one year experience working in the field of probation services.
- Each participant had to be a resident in Gauteng.
- Each participant had to be registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions.
- Each participant was between the ages of 27 and 52 years.
- The researcher chose participants who had shown interest in taking part in the study, as well as two additional probation officers who would not be included in the study, but rather in the pilot-test.

The exclusion criteria were that the researcher was only looking for the experiences of probation officers; not supervisors or managers. The researcher wanted to find out the experiences of those probation officers who were working in the field and who had one to ten years' experience in the field. This is an entry level experience of probation officers.

DATA COLLECTION

The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews. These interviews lasted for forty-five minutes to an hour. The interviews comprised of semi-structured and open-ended questions that were intended to generate views and opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2014). The researcher interviewed participants individually, because this allowed the researcher to create rapport with each participant. This approach created an environment that allowed participants to feel at ease, and speak about their experiences openly. The interviews were audio-recorded with permission of the participants, and thereafter transcribed. Interviews were conducted at a private office at Department of Social Development and Randburg Magistrate's Court respectively. This ensured accessibility and convenience for the

participants. It was anticipated that this study would create low risk for participants. However, debriefing was arranged with FAMSA Soweto, at Soweto Satellite Office 3217 Zone 3, Pimville (Contact number: 011 933 1301), in cases where participants felt they needed counselling after the interview or in cases where they would have been negatively affected by the pandemic, as it can be understood that Covid, did cause some disruptions with the way that they were able to work.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the process of bringing meaning, order and structure to the mass of collected data (De Vos et al., 2011). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from interveiws**.** Data analysis is working to uncover patterns and trends in datasets (Creswell, 2014). The researcher followed the standardised steps adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006). The first step was for the researcher to acquaint herself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher did this by transcribing the interviews verbatim as well as listening to the recordings of the interviews more than once (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher after having transcribed, read the data repeatedly (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Familiarising with the data is useful in that it provides the researcher with an idea of what the dominant themes would be in the research, based on the common ideas derived from the interviewees' responses (Timm, 2003). The researcher further read the transcripts more than once, as De Wet and Erasmus (2005, p. 30) state that "this will help understand fragments of data in context and help the researcher to look out for unexpected responses and alternative narratives to what has emerged from what was said." It is important for the researcher not to lose any content of the data, as Struwig and Stead (2001, p. 169) state that there should be no change made to the raw data, because then it ceases to be the original data, and this can be "methodologically problematic." During the process of going through the material, for accountability purposes the researcher made notes of important information that came out of each interview (De Wet and Erasmus, 2005).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the second step was to develop initial codes. Starks, Brown and Trinidad (2007) state that coding is when statements are analysed and categorised into meaningful bunches. Timm (2003) supports De Wet and Erasmus (2005) in stating that the researcher should use the words spoken by the interviewees to draw themes using a coding system and that this can be done through assigning categories to the themes. The researcher engaged in coding and thereafter, categorised similar statements from each participant and clustered them together (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is referred to as content

analysis where the researcher works through each transcript systematically, allocating codes like numbers or words to characteristics or features within the text (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Grouping similar statements helped the researcher to derive at themes (De Wet and Erasmus, 2005).

Thus, the researcher defined the themes based on dominant ideas derived from the interviewees' responses (Timm, 2003). The researcher analysed the words that were spoken by the participants, and classified them into themes using a coding system (Timm, 2003). During coding, the researcher underlined words, phrases and ideas that she thought to be important, as well as that were similar and different in participants' responses (Timm, 2003). Furthermore codes were formulated relating to the theoretical framework of the study and the aim of the study (Timm, 2003). The underlined information was documented in a separate document for each of the participants (Timm, 2003). The researcher did this on pieces of paper (Timm, 2003). The third step involved looking for themes upon which data was firstly coded and ordered (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Smith and Osborne (2008), the researcher should look for recurring patterns and other issues that may come out from the transcripts. In this way, this helped the researcher to identify similarities and differences in interviewees' responses (Smith and Osborne, 2008). This step involved sorting the different codes to arrive at themes which were lead by the objectives of the research and also putting the relevant coded data excerpts within the identified themes (Starks, Brown & Trinidad, 2007).

The fourth step was to review the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This entailed determining whether the themes were compatible with the coded extracts and the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The fifth step was to define the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This took time (the researcher took 48 hours), because the names of themes needed to make sense and tell the overall story. The researcher ensured that identified themes provided relevant responses to the objectives of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was important to define distinct titles and meanings for each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There were ten themes that were identified, and the themes were 1. Advantages of probation work, 2. Reasons for choosing probation, 3. Educational training, 4. Definition of occupational stress (according to POs), 5. Difficulties of working in probation, 6. How POs deal with stress, 7. Support, 8. Strategies implored by DSD to help POs cope with occupational stress, 9. How EWPs could be improved, 10. Solutions for DSD to curb occupational stress among POs. The final step

was to produce the report, in such a manner that the identified themes would make sense. The findings of the study are presented in the form of graphs and tables.

With permission of the participants and her supervisor, the researcher will make the research report available to the Department of Social Development, as well as to the participants that took part in the study. One of the goals of the study was to ensure that knowledge about probation officer experiences on occupational stress regarding their job was obtained in order that Department of Social Development may intervene to ensure that it is a mandate that probation officers obtain debriefing or counselling for the secondary trauma that may arise as a result of the interactions with offenders, and furthermore, look into the possibility of reducing the workload after hearing their plight through provision of different units providing different probation services, to name a few.

TRUSTWORTHINESS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Credibility

According to Creswell (2014), the researcher must illustrate the truth of the study's findings by linking the findings to reality. In order to enhance the credibility of the study, the researcher ensured that she wrote extensive field notes throughout the research process (Mertens, 2005). Mertens (2005) states that the researcher could enhance credibility even further by involving other peers to challenge the researcher's interpretation of the results and through member checks by means of the participants being involved in confirming the themes identified after data analysis. The peer debriefing strategy was used in order to enhance credibility (Mertens, 2005). The researcher spent time in the field in order to understand the participants under study. She spent time in the office with the probation officers when she was free, to get a better understanding of the participants' work environment. In spending time with the probation officers in their offices and getting to know them, the researcher learned valuable information about the participants, like how they conduct their work, what about their work stressed them out, etc. According to Creswell (2014), the more experience a researcher has with participants in their environments, the more precise the results will be. In order to ensure credibility, the researcher double checked the data collected as noted in transcripts of the interviews. Furthermore, when comparing the data from the pilot-study with that of the research findings, the researcher found that there were similarities in answers. The researcher's supervisor also checked the data collected and the transcripts of the interviews to ensure credibility.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the research study's findings being repeatable and consistent (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2014), an inspection audit involves having an outside researcher investigate the processes of data collection and analysis data, as well as the results of the research study. This is done to ensure that if another researcher were to look at the data, they would find similar results, interpretations and inferences from the same data (Creswell, 2014). The researcher established dependability by pre-testing the interview guide on two probation officers who were working at DSD, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region, but who did not form part of the study. Their responses were similar to the points discussed by the study participants. In order to ensure dependability, the process of the study should be reported in detail, so that a future researcher may be able to repeat the work, if not necessarily to obtain similar results (Shenton, 2004). This was done where necessary in this research, as the researcher documented the research process in terms of conceptualising the study, collecting and analysing data, as well as reporting the findings (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the question of whether or not the findings of the study could be established by another (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used reflexivity to enhance confirmability in the study through the research process, as she documented every step of the research process. According to Creswell (2014) reflexivity is an attitude that a qualitative researcher takes on when collecting and analysing the data. To achieve reflexivity, a qualitative researcher can have a reflexive journal which they uses to document the research process (Creswell, 2014), which the researcher did. An audit trail was used, which Shenton (2004) states will allow any observer to track the trail of the research, step-by-step by way of the decisions made and procedures described.

Reflexivity

Greef (2005) states that a researcher should always write down the impressions that they may have gotten from the interviews, as it would help the researcher in developing interpretations. The researcher did not write down notes during the interviews, as she did not want this to be distracting to the participants. The researcher did however, write down some notes after each interview, for future reference-to help in terms of interpreting the interview data in future. This fostered reflexivity which is when the researcher makes regular entries at every step of

the research process (Creswell, 2014). In these entries the researcher recorded the methods used, decisions made, and the reasons for making those decisions, the logistics of the study and one's own interests and opinions (Creswell, 2014). This particular aspect of the methods is more than just advancing biases and values in the study (Creswell, 2014). It is about how the researcher's background may shape the way the study goes. (Creswell, 2014).

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the findings of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts (Creswell, 2014). According to Mertens (2005) generalisability can be done by comparing each case to existing theories. In this study a detailed account of the research methodology was given which may assist other researcher's to make judgements on transferability (Creswell, 2014). According to Shenton (2004), in order to evaluate the extent to which findings may be true of people in differing contexts, similar studies using the same methods, but conducted in different environments could be of substantial value. Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study. The interviewing of one participant at a time was advantageous in that, the researcher did not confine the discussion to the questions noted on the interview schedule. This approach allowed participants to answer more elaborately.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are one of the most crucial aspects of research. According to Creswell (2014) the researcher must safeguard the participants, develop trust, uphold the validity of the study and prevent improper behaviour. This was accomplished using certain ethics that the researcher acknowledged and made sure of through research.

Getting approval to conduct the study

The researcher obtained ethics clearance from the School of Human and Community Development, Social Work Department at Wits University, which allowed her to conduct the study. The researcher also needed to get permission from the Department of Social Development (DSD) to conduct the study by interviewing employees working at the department. The researcher sent her research proposal to DSD informing them of the proposed study. The researcher was able to obtain an approval letter from DSD that she could conduct the study. Furthermore, the researcher had to request permission from the supervisor of the potential participants. The supervisor gave the researcher permission to conduct the

study. It was then that the researcher invited the probation officers (potential participants) to take part in the study.

Voluntary participation

According to Creswell (2014), voluntary participation is when participants willingly decide to participate in a research study. Participants were informed about the study prior to taking part. They were not coerced to participate in the study. No incentive was offered by the researcher for the participants who chose to take part in the study. The researcher also stated this in the participant information sheet. Participants were assured that participation was entirely voluntary and they were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any moment. The researcher did not hold anything against the participants if they did not wish to participate or continue with the study.

Informed consent

According to Creswell (2014) informed consent is the researcher's responsibility to fully inform participants of the different facets of the research in a language that they can understand, and also informing them that participating in the research is completely voluntary. The researcher informed participants about what the study was about. She also provided other relevant details pertaining to what was required of each participant, (the researcher's role and how the results would be used, and published if at all. This was further discussed in the participant information sheet and permission for potential participants to participate was confirmed by participants signing consent forms. The participant information sheet identified the researcher, the educational institution where the researcher is studying, the reason for the study, the guarantee for confidentiality, that there are no personal benefits to participating in the study, that the participants can withdraw at any time during the study, what the potential outcome of the study could produce and names of persons to contact if there is a need.

Confidentiality and anonymity

According to Creswell (2014) confidentiality is when the researcher knows the identity of the participant, but takes steps to prevent that identity from being discovered by others. Participants' names were not disclosed in the report and throughout the research process. The audio-recordings were safely stored and protected as password-secured files, and no one apart from the researcher and her supervisor would have access to them. Anonymity is when the

identity of the participants is not known to the researcher (Creswell, 2014). The researcher ensured anonymity in that anyone reading the results would not be able to identify the participant, as the identifying details (their real names and other identifying information) of the participants were not disclosed. The researcher in producing the results, named each participant "participant" so that nobody would be able to identify who the participants were. Their names were also not in the audio-recordings, so no one would be able to identify them.

No harm to participants

According to Creswell (2014), researchers need to apply the principle of "no harm" to participants. They also need to be aware of the potential harms that might be imposed upon participants (Creswell, 2014). In cases whereby some degree of harm was anticipated, the researcher mitigated this. It was anticipated that little or no distress would arise from participants engaging in the study. However, debriefing was arranged with FAMSA Soweto, at Soweto Satellite Office 3217 Zone 3, Pimville (via contact number 011 933 1301).This was accessible to all participants, because they work and stay in Johannesburg. However, none of the participants reported that they were distressed at the time of the interviews or months after the interviews were conducted. Therefore they did not need counselling.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

According to Creswell (2014), limitations refer to influences that the researcher cannot control. This study focused on a small number of participants (fifteen participants), thus, it would not be possible to derive a generalisation based on the findings. The researcher's study was exploratory and future research involving probation officers in South Africa might benefit from a bigger sample size that would allow for more in-depth conclusions. The results would only be appropriate to that number of participants. However, if future research was to be conducted with a larger sample, the findings might be different. This study only focused on probation officers based at the Department of Social Development, Jhb Metro Region. Thus the results were limited to probation officers (POs) at Jhb Metro Region. The study did not consider probation officers in other sectors. Thus, future research can be done and the findings might be different. Qualitative research is based on individual perspectives, and since these can change, the data collected for the study was only reliable at the time that it was gathered (De Vos et al. 2011).

Another limitation was that the researcher did not ask the participants how COVID-19 affected their work, and the researcher could not conduct focus group discussions, owing to

restrictions imposed by the pandemic. The researcher did not find out if those probation officers who felt that they had the support of their supervisor performed better, or had increased morale and less stress, than those who felt that they did not have support from their supervisor. This is because, the researcher did not probe further regarding this. This could have really helped to establish the effects of having a supportive supervisor. Further research should be conducted in order to determine this. The researcher also did not ascertain the marital status of participants, to see if those who were married had less stress than those who were not married. The researcher's study also did not reflect on probation officers' safety or perceived safety when interacting with clients (people in conflict with the law). This is because, the researcher did not probe the participants further in order to establish this. The researcher feels that further research in South Africa should be conducted to establish this.

The researcher also did not find out the ratio of case load to probation officer, when participants were talking about the heavy caseloads that they have to work on. The researcher deemed claims about heavy caseloads reasonable enough, owing to the fact that there are only eleven probation officers (doing pre-sentence and pre-trial) who service the entire Johannesburg area. Further research should be conducted to ascertain caseload ratios. The researcher also did not explore the culture of the participants to find out if it had something to do with how they deal with stress, or if culture had to do with why some may not see debriefing as a suitable means to help deal with stress. The researcher feels that this is an important aspect that she may have overlooked.

Delimitations are decisions made by the researcher which should be mentioned (Creswell, 2014). The researcher chose to undertake this study, because she wanted to understand the occupational stressors experienced by probation officers working at the Department of Social Development (DSD). The researcher wanted to establish effective strategies to help probation officers to deal with occupational stress. The researcher only spoke to probation officers based at one site. The delimitation was that the researcher decided to only interview probation officers from DSD and other probation officers from other sectors were not selected. This was for ease of accessibility. The theoretical frameworks that the researcher used are P-E fit theory and Lazarus and Folkman's theory of stress. The researcher used these theoretical frameworks, because they were the most appropriate out of all options considered by the researcher. They provided the best descriptions of occupational stress, in relation to the study.

CONCLUSIONS OF CHAPTER

Chapter 3 provided an account of the research methods adopted for the study. Sampling procedures and data collection processes were discussed. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted factors concerning the trustworthiness of qualitative data, as well as the ethical considerations that were taken into account. The limitations and delimitations of the study were also noted.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the results of the study are presented and discussed in accordance with the objectives of the study. The chapter discusses the following: Common court reports, experiences of probation officers (POs), advantages of probation, difficulties of working in probation, the effects POs' work has on them, limitations POs have due to their job description, work that POs do not like, POs educational training did not prepare them, POs do not get training prior to working as POs. The chapter also sheds light on: POs' understanding of occupational stress, how POs deal with stress, any strategies implored by the Department of Social Development (DSD) to help POs cope with occupational stress, support, supervisor/supervision, POs, EAPs and EWPs, how EWPs could be improved, and finally solutions for DSD to curb occupational stress of probation officers. The chapter begins by providing the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 4.1: Demographic profile of the participants.

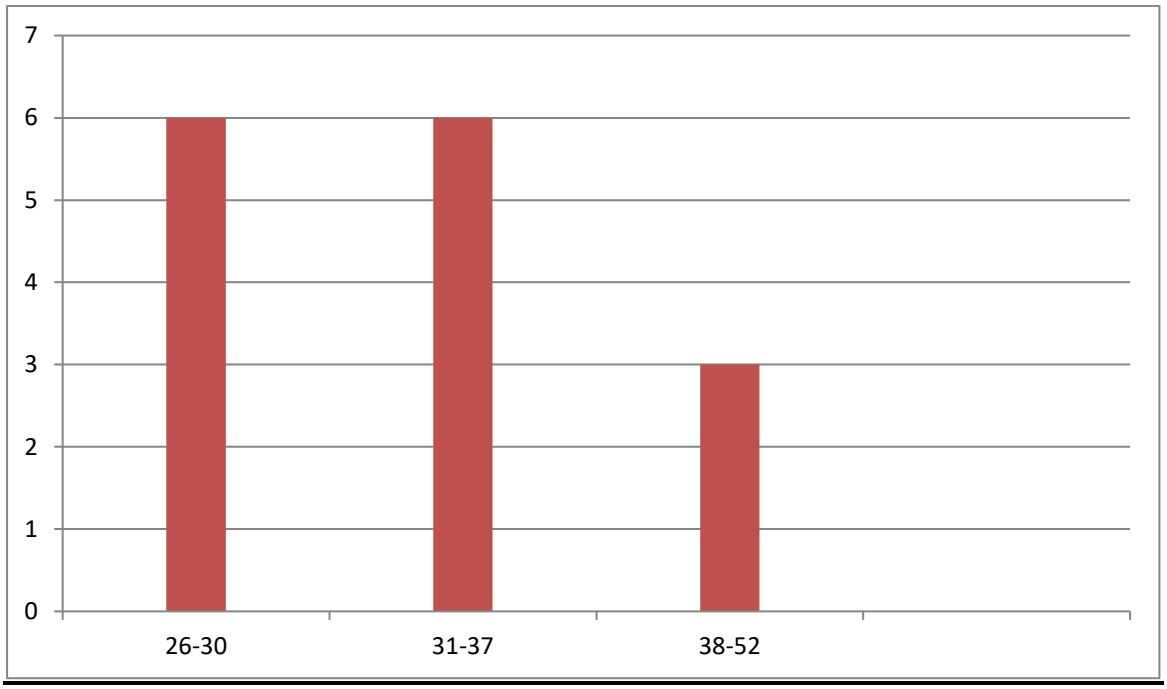
Participant	Age	Gender	Race	Years experience	Field of service
1	31	Female	Black	5 years	Presentence and pre-trial
2	33	Female	Black	6 years	Presentence and pre-trial
3	32	Male	Black	6 years	Presentence and pre-trial
4	30	Female	Black	8 years	Presentence and pre-trial
5	29	Male	Black	1 year	Presentence and pre-trial
6	52	Female	Black	5 years	Presentence and pre-trial
7	41	Female	Black	13 years	Presentence and pre-trial
8	29	Female	Black	6 years	Presentence

					and pre-trial
9	31	Female	Black	7 years	RAR (receive, assess and refer)
10	31	Female	Black	5 years	RAR (receive, assess and refer)
11	38	Male	Black	6 years	Presentence and pre-trial
12	30	Female	Black	7 years	RAR (receive, assess and refer)
13	30	Female	Black	7 years	Presentence and pre-trial
14	27	Male	Black	3 years	RAR (receive, assess and refer)
15	37	Female	Black	8 years	RAR (receive, assess and refer)

Table 1 shows the demographic profiles of the participants. All of the participants in this study were black. Most of them were female (11). The gender distribution of participants is supported by Dewane (2006) who noted that social work is dominated by women, because its roles are perceived as "caring" hence the majority of women and a minority of men. All participants obtained their Bachelor of Social Work Degree from various universities in South Africa. They were all registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions. Most of the participants were in the unit pre-sentence and pre-trial and the rest

were under the unit RAR (receive, assess and refer). Most of the participants (eleven participants) were aged 27 to 33. Five of them worked at RAR, and ten of them were from pre-sentence and pre-trial. Out of the five from RAR, four were female and there was one male. Out of the ten from pre-sentence and pre-trial, seven of them were female, and three of them were male. The participants did not have specific job training for probation officers. They rely on the training they acquired from university education.

Graph 4.1: Age distribution of participants



Findings

Several themes were derived from the study. These themes were organised into categories based on the study's objectives. The discussion in the forthcoming section will be organised according to the major categories and themes.

Table 4.2: Categories and themes

Category	Themes
Experiences of probation officers working at Department of Social Development, Jhb Metro Region	1. Advantages of probation 1.1 Interesting job 1.2 Learn a lot 1.3 Meet and work with a diversity of people

	1.4 Challenging job (difficult cases)
Why probation officers chose the field of probation?	2. Reasons for choosing probation 2.1 did not choose probation 2.2 chose probation
Did probation officer's educational training prepare them for their work?	3. Educational training 3.1 POs educational training did not prepare them 3.2 POs educational training prepared them 3.3 POs don't get training prior to working as a PO
Understanding of occupational stress	4. POs definition of occupational stress
What causes probation officers' stress?	5. Difficulties of working in probation 5.1.The effects POs' work has on them 5.2.Limitations POs have due to their job description 5.3. What POs don't like about their job
How probation officers deal with stress at work (coping mechanisms)	6. How POs deal with stress
Do they have support in cases whereby they have occupational stress?	7. Support 7.1.Supervisors/ supervision 7.2 POs and EAPs/EWPs
Are there any programs that help to deal with occupational stress?	8. Strategies implored by DSD to help POs cope with occupational stress 8.1.There are programs 8.2.There aren't any programs
What could be done differently to make EWPs more effective?	9. How EWPs could be improved
If they were the heads of DSD, what would	10. Solutions for DSD to curb

they do to address the issue of occupational stress among probation officers?	occupational stress among Pos

Each theme was presented along with its sub-themes. Relevant quotations from the interviews were referred to where possible.

The first objective was to explore the experiences of the probation officers working at the Department of Social Development, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region. The probation officers shared their different experiences with regards to probation work. However, what stood out and what was expressed more often was that probation work is interesting, but very demanding. The advantages and disadvantages of probation were therefore identified as discussed below:

Theme 1: Advantages and disadvantages of probation

The participants shared their experiences about working in probation. They shared both negative and positive experiences. They identified mostly positive experiences. According to the probation officers the main advantage of working in probation is that it is an interesting job, and one learns something new every day, as no two cases are the same. They all noted that on is able to grow professionally as a probation officer. The disadvantages of working in probation are that the work is very demanding, owing to heavy caseloads which may require officers to take their work home for unpaid overtime, which also compromises their family time.

Sub-theme 1.1: Challenging job (difficult case)

Probation is not without its challenges. Five of the participants, of which four were female and one was male, felt that probation is challenging. As we see below when the participants mentioned their caseloads and the difficulties they sometimes encounter working in probation. Participant 11 said*, "it's a, it's a demanding job, I think mentally and physically. Some of the cases that we deal with are very traumatic"* Participant 9 said, *"Yoh sometimes it gets stressful, cause we work with. Sometimes you get difficult cases such as rape and murder, and yeah. They sometimes trigger stress in you, cause you think a lot of. When you hear what exactly happened, how, how the child committed that, that, that crime."* Participant 8 added that*, "*So it's very

interesting, but then at the same time it's very demanding." Participant 6 said, "*Yoh to be a probation officer is very difficult job."* Participant 5 mentioned, "*You learn a lot. At the same time, it's hectic."*

Theme 2: Reasons for choosing probation

In this study, most of the probation officers were deployed to the unit; they did not get to choose where they were allocated.

Sub-theme 2.1.I did not choose probation

Most of the participants were deployed to work in probation. When they were absorbed into the Department of Social Development they were placed according to where there was a need and demand, even though they did not have prior training on probation. Participant 1 stated that she had wanted to go to foster care, but the spaces were already filled there so, she was assigned to the probation unit. Participant 3 explained, "'*Um, basically the field chose me. (laughs). In other words, I'm saying, coming to this department in 2016, I basically was placed in these sections*." Participant 6 said, "Yoh I didn't choose probation. When I start here they just choose us. They select us to go to probation." Participant 9 said, "*I love working with teenagers, and I was so excited when they placed me here at RAR, because at RAR we focus more on children, than adults."* Participant 11 explained, *"Well yeah I didn't choose um per say. I think when we were employed we were placed according to where there was needs and demands."* Participant 14 also added, "I didn't choose it, um, when I was hired. I was allocated to this section."

Sub-theme 2.2. I chose probation (motivation for choosing probation)

Only three of the participants got a chance to select where they wanted to be placed within the department and they chose probation unit. Below the probation officers share why they chose to work in probation. Participant 2 explained, "*I wanted to be exposed or to say to grow, um, in a field of social work, maybe in the next future decide to what um, specialise in it."* Participant 5 said, *"So I'm currently studying LLB, so I felt, you know, if I come to, to pre-sentence, then I'll be able to learn a lot. Most especially the court processes and everything*." Participant 8 said, "*Uh, well it was just, it just sounded very interesting. When they were describing it to me. I thought you know, this is something I would enjoy."* Participant 13 said, *"Well as I've said before I've always wanted to work in probation. I wanted, I always wanted to work with children, youth and adults in conflict with the law. So, that's the whole reason as to why I chose probation*." According to Finn and Tomz (1998), when a person tends to or assists someone, or makes a difference in their lives, she/he

finds joy in their job or lives. That good feeling that one gets when one has helped someone; there is an internal reward that comes with it, and as a result, it gives meaning in the way that person looks at their job, stays committed and deals with stress (Finn and Tomz, 1998). As evidenced by participant 9 when answering why she chose probation, she states, "*So yeah I love working with children and helping them overcome their challenges, and also helping them to discover their, their purpose and the potential and the gifts, and to use those gifts to better their lives, and to just stay away from crime."*

Theme 3: Educational training

All participants holders of a Bachelor of Social Work Degree (BSW) qualification and they were registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). The participants received practical training from first year until their last year of studies (training in generic social work). The practical training of generic social work was to help prepare them for the work world. This practical training entails practical skills training workshops and field instruction (or field practice), where students get to practically apply the knowledge that they have acquired at university (www.wits.ac.za). This involves students being placed at various organisations under supervision of qualified social workers (www.wits.ac.za). Training in social work solely does not qualify a person to act as a PO, as probation work is a specialisation that requires expertise in criminology, punishment objectives, criminal law and procedures, the operation and psychology of the criminal justice system and offender treatment (Gxubane, 2008). This shows that it is a specialised field that requires specific training. However, at school level, the participants do not study criminal law or criminology under the degree of social work. Some participants felt that what they studied at school was totally different from what they do at work.

According to Muntuwenkosi and Warria's (2020) study, there is a lack of training on the Child Justice Act amongst probation officers in South Africa, which results in failure to implement the Act accordingly. According to Muntuwenkosi and Warria (2020), the standard of their pre-sentence reports is not always good, and this puts their competency and work under investigation, especially when they have to testify in court. Gxubane (2008) stated that magistrates in South Africa often expressed dissatisfaction with the quality and inadequacies of pre-sentence reports. Graser and de Smidt's (2007) deduction was that this is related to social worker's lack of training in probation work. This adds a further burden to the probation officers.

Sub-theme 3.1 POs educational training did not prepare them

Some participants felt that their social work training did not prepare them for the work that they are doing now. Participant 1 stated that they were trained to do counselling at university and that in probation she does not do counselling, but rather refers clients to go for counselling, as she only conducts investigations. She further went on to say, "*So, I don't think what I was doing at school and what I'm doing now…is the same."* Participant 3 said*, "Hmm. My educational training was based on theory in most parts. So, the practical parts was limited. It was actually so small. So, we tend to learn more than what we have learnt. Basically, in the varsity field or in tertiary institutions."* Participant 4, in answering a question about whether she feels her university education equipped her for probation explained*, "Oh no it didn't. You know what, theory-wise I had the tools, but when you get into working as a social worker then it's a different field all together. So, you cannot just say "Just because I have my um in-service training and qualification, then I can do this." No, you don't."* Participant 7 said*, "It did not, because remember at school we do generic social work."* Participant 8 also said*, "We did a module on probation, very briefly. But it wasn't, it, we didn't get any intense training on this specific section."* Participant 15 felt that*, "Well with probation I won't lie, it didn't, but as far as um, micro it prepared me and being able to counsel or interview the client, because here at RAR we do a lot of interviewing."*

Sub-theme 3.2 POs educational training prepared them

However, some participants felt that their university training prepared them as they have to use skills they learnt at university in their everyday interactions with clients, particularly their micro, meso and macro work skills. This was particularly true for those probation officers in RAR and pre-sentence. Participant 5 said, "*I mean it prepared me. You meet clients who don't wanna open up. So, now you have to think of all your skills. Your Egan, you know, (laughs). Bring them into play."* Participant 9 said, "*I remember I only, I only did theory. Otherwise practical work, cause I remember we, we went through all the stages of probation. That when; I knew that there's RAR, pre-sentence and all those things, but I didn't know how to execute what I've learnt.*" Participant 10 said, "*Um, I think it prepared me well. To the extent that I feel like we not doing, we not getting. We just at the tip. Just doing the tip of what we were told or trained to do.*" Participant 11 said, "*Well, it has hey, cause there's lots that what we deal with. Typing of reports, dealing with people of different backgrounds, understanding communities. So I think when I do reflect back on the years of um of wor-of studying basically I can fully say that it was beneficial and it is relevant to my day-to-day um involvement of my work."* Participant 12 said, *"With regards to the practicality of*

how assessment is done. We were well prepared, cause we start doing reports from first year. We do um field work as well, so obviously we had a different or a taste of what the real work world is like from our field practum." Participant 13 said*, "Oohh, um. I would say that yes it did even though it wasn't like, like it wasn't in-depth information of what is expected of me at the workplace."*

Sub-theme 3.3 POs do not get training for the work that they do as probation officers, prior to working as a PO

This study revealed that, the participants did not receive prior training before they started practicing as probation officers. Rather they learn while they are already in the field (on the job). Participant 2 stated, "*We were never prepared for probation. We never got training that, "this is probation; this is what you're going to do." They just chose us and we got in probation. We taught ourselves when we were here. We never got like a formal training telling us about the caseload. We only got trainings of reports when we were already doing the work. We were not trained prior. It means most trainings we got them while we were still doing the work and most of the things we taught ourselves from other colleagues."* Participant 6 shared the same sentiments and stated, *"Eh...they've never even prepared us. They just give us maybe somebody's report and just go and...and look. Yes, they've never give, give us any training."* Participant 14 stated, *"Um, we did a module briefly on probation, but it wasn't in-depth. I learnt while I was on the job."*

It is evident the officers are supposed to execute their duties based on knowledge acquired on the job. Tertiary education may prepare them for generic social work (micro, meso and macro work etc). However, it may not adequately prepare them for their work as probation officers. According to Home-Office (1989a), research reports pointed out that the diploma in social work was not probation-specific enough for the training of probation officers. This might be the case with the Bachelor of Social Work degree in South Africa.

Theme 4: POs definition of occupational stress

Most of the participants when asked what their understanding of occupational stress was, answered that they understood it to be stress caused by work. Participant 1 stated that, "*Occupational stress, right is the stress you get at work."* Participant 2 felt that occupational stress has to do with workload, and support from supervisors and management. Participant 3 stated*, "My understanding of occupational stress is related to any activity which is kept on in the workplace*." Participant 9 put it simply as, "*Yeah, I think it,it's stress that is caused by maybe the amount of work that the load of work that you have. Not being able to manage it and also maybe*

the kind of, of cases that you deal with." Participant 13 felt that*, "Ok, my understanding is that if maybe you always feeling overwhelmed about your work."* Participant 14 stated, "*I would say, like you know, any difficulties that come with the job.*" Participant 15 gave the same sentiments to say, "*Well, the word itself occupational refers to work. So, I take it that it would refer to stress that is aligned to my work."*

The next objective was to explore the occupational experienced by the probation officers. Most of the participants explained that heavy caseloads, meeting deadlines on time, an dealing with in-depth reports were the most significant stressors.

Theme 5: Difficulties associated with working in probation

The participants shared some of the difficulties of working in probation. Some stated that there is a work overload; another shared that probation is a very difficult job; another stated that probation is very demanding. Some stated that they work with traumatic cases, of which they do not receive debriefing while handling such cases. In answering a question about what aspects of their roles causes them to stress, participants had this to say. Participant 1 stated, *"You work with a deadline. It causes me stress. Coz there's a lot of things that you have to do. In-depth reports for children. Obviously you have to start with that. So, what about the other work, that you had throughout? There have to be backlogs now and you have to push, because remember you have a deadline, that you need to follow."* Participant 2 stated, *"It's to meet deadlines on time."* Participant 4 sated, *"It's, it's mostly investigations, and again the number of cases allocated to you in that month."* Participant 5 stated, *"Amount of cases, firstly. Um, the attention that you need to give each and every case*."

Participant 4 stated that it is difficult when she gets allocated a case (in-depth reports) when she already has others, and as a result she always has to rearrange her diary and reschedule things so that she can make room for in-depth reports. She said, "*I think it's having to deal with in-depth reports. With the in-depth report, I plan this and then. Say I plan to do a home visit and then I get an allocation that I now need to be in court on that day. Then it changes my whole diary."*

Other participants mentioned that it becomes difficult when clients give them misinformation during assessments and investigations. Participant 5 stated, "*As I've said the, the misinformation that you get as well from, from the clients*. " Participant 14 also stated, "*I wouldn't say I have much stress. The only thing I can think of is when clients are not honest when doing the assessments, because it compromises the, what can I say? The, like, the integrity of the report."* Participant 1

stated that when she is on leave, she is expected to produce work, and this can be stressful and takes away from her family time or rest time. She said, "*Even if when you're on leave, Lebo you'll get a call and they tell you there's a case of whoever, whoever*, *whoever. They say they want her/his report at court.*" Four participants stated that as probation officers they have limited time to compile reports.

Participant 2 stated that they have cases coming in everyday; there is not a day where they do not have new cases. In answering a question about whether there was something in particular that she did not like about her work, participant 2 stated, "*Limited time to do the reports, because cases they come in everyday. Everyday, we have no day with, where you don't get a case. And, all of them they are demanding.*" This can attest to the fact that they have heavy case loads, because there is no room to relax. This can make it challenging for them to attend EWP programs, because they might not have time within their work schedules to attend. This contrast is referred to at a later stage in the study. Participant 8 felt that there is a lot of pressure and demands that comes with their job. Participant 3 mentioned that they are not given a structure for consultations when they are doing their investigations. This participant said, "*So, ai, if there was a structure, cause we are not given a structure of consultation. We are consulting um based on our thinking level. We are not given a structure to say, "Your first entry is this when you are consulting with clients.*" It can be argued that they are taught interviewing skills and communication skills at undergraduate level. However, specifics on how best to approach a probationer may be lacking. The same participant stated that as a result of the above they are making many mistakes. Another difficulty that was shared was time management. Participant 10 from RAR, stated that they get limited time to do assessments. She stated, "*And you don't get to help the kid as much as you'd like to, (coughs), sorry, you'd like to due to time limit and all these things. So, yeah."* Participant 3 and participant 1 also mentioned that they are given limited time to conduct investigations for in-depth reports.

One big issue that participants shared was that they interact with rapists and murderers and they have no form of debriefing following such interactions. Participant 2 stated, "*Or maybe you get um, cases of murder and when they tell you how that person was murdered maybe, you, you once had a spouse or family member who was murdered. So, things like that they do affect us, a lot. And we don't get counselling. We have to just deal and just, you know, you move on."* Participant 4 also mentioned*, "We, we, we speak to rapists, murderers and you have to go back and act as if everything else is normal when you, you, you, you were maybe consulting with a person who turned, who's life turned upside-down, because of maybe a heinous crime and you have to do a report; go to*

court; you are, you are asked questions; you come back and you move onto the next report. However way that may have impacted you. We do not really, get that addressed."

Participant 8 mentioned that she wishes there was an opportunity for them to rotate within the department, so that it offers them an opportunity to experience work in other fields such as canalisation, foster care, field and intake, sustained livelihoods, school interventions and substance abuse programs unit. In canalisation, they facilitate adoptions, and assist in providing documentation to assist social workers in the removal of children from unfavourable conditions (www.dsd.gov.za). Foster care deals with all aspects related to foster care (www.dsd.gov.za). Field and intake is the initial contact of a client with a social service organisation (www.dsd.gov.za). Substance abuse programs unit is where officials provide awareness about substance abuse to communities and make referrals for people who are addicted to substances to receive treatment in the form of rehabilitation services (www.dsd.gov.za). The above shows noted differences from what probation officers do in their work, compared to work in other fields.

Stressors experienced by probation officers

Wells and Johnson (as cited in Giovannoni et al., 2015) state that stress and burnout take place when employees do not feel valued and their work environment does not enable them to make decisions which affect their job. When answering a question about what aspects about her role as a probation officer causes her stress, participant 8 stated, "*Um, um the management part of it it's like you don't get the freedom as a professional to express your, the way you know how to express your profession. You're being micro-managed. You cannot work as an independent*." She was referring to the strict nature of probation that one's work environment does not enable them to make decisions which affect their job or how they conduct their job. Participant 10 mentioned that she cannot do more for her clients, due to her job description and she feels restricted with regards to what she can do with her job. Participant 14 stated, *"I like my job, but somehow I feel that I am um, limited in what I can do for my clients. My job doesn't really allow me to make a huge difference on my clients, because my powers as a PO are limited."* In answering a question about what he would change about the way he conducts his job if he could, participant 14 stated, *"After assessing the client, I would be in control of the services they receive after the assessment, and I monitor the um, progress of the client to ensure that they go through with the program and don't return to the system."* This shows that it would make a difference if probation officers

were given the opportunity to make decisions which affect their jobs, or at least how they conduct their jobs.

Most of the participants indicated that they have heavy caseloads and that compiling in-depth reports and meeting deadlines on time are some of their stressors. Ben (as cited in Tolaj, Havolli and Beqiri, 2019, p.115) states that "higher levels of job demands also increase occupational stress." The probation officers mentioned that they have an increase in their work load, in that now they have to do in-depth reports and pre-trial reports, which adds to their already heavy caseloads, whereas before, they were only doing pre-sentence reports and victim-impact reports.

Sub-theme: 5.1 The effects POs' work has on them

Some participants mentioned that their work affects them in negative ways. Participant 1 stated, "*You have to work at night, just because you are chasing time. It robs of your time with family. You don't have time. When you're sitting, it's a holiday, it's what. You're thinking of your report. "* Participant 2 stated, "*So, it's also affecting us emotionally; psychologically, because in some instances, maybe you get to, um…be exposed to a case where you had past experience of similar."* She added*, "So, it has, I've grown. I'll say I've grown and also…it's also affecting me as well. Emotionally, um...psychologically, because we have nowhere to vent. You get a case it's heavy for you; you have to deal with it and move on.* In commenting about how work stress has impacted her, she further stated, "*Yeah. It has impacted me, on my health big time. What I have now I didn't have before. Is because of the stress from here."* Participant 11 stated, *"I mean we find ourselves typing reports late at, at night, because of due dates. Um, sacrificing your family time."* Participant 2 also added, "*So, our family time is limited with probation."*

According to Oginska-Bulik (2005) there can be costs incurred as a result of stress when it is experienced by the employees and the organisation employing them. Oginska-Bulik (2005) further states that there is increasing expenditure on the state resulting from medical conditions and absence of employees experiencing occupational stress. In probation, they cannot afford for an official to be absent or sick, because then it would mean that his/her cases will fall behind. As the participants mentioned, case allocations are done months in advance, and they start preparing for those cases as soon as they receive them.

Sub-theme 5.2.Limitations POs have due to their job description

Some of the job frustrations according to Torbet, (as cited in Reddington and Kriesel, 2000, p.12) include "the attitudes of the clients and their families, probation officers not being able to really impact the lives of the youth that they supervise and not being able to define and measure success." As mentioned previously, probation officers working in RAR, felt that they are limited in terms of their powers as probation officers due to their job description. They cannot do more for their clients, because their job description does not allow for that. Participant 10 felt that, "*You don't necessarily do, go beyond what you think a social worker should do. Here you don't get to, to go in deeper detail with the kid. And you don't get to help the kid as much as you'd like to, (coughs), sorry, you'd like to due to time limit and all these things."* Participant 14 stated, "*I like my job, but somehow I feel that I am um, limited in what I can do for my clients. My job doesn't really allow me to make a huge difference on my clients, because my powers as a PO are limited."*

Participant 10 explained what she wishes she was able to do, were it not for her job description. She describes it as follows, "*So, if it were up to me I would say if you have this child, we assess him, you monitor, you monitor the progress and if the child needs um diversion, you do the diversion yourself, and it must be you who conducts the programs, because you're the one who understands that this child needs um programs for anger management. So I would. You help the child from the moment he enters, until he leaves the system."* So here it can be understood, as explained by participant 10, that, as a probation officer in RAR, one assesses the child and refers the case. Once it is out of the probation officer's hands, he/she cannot intervene any further. Participant 14 also described what he would do if his job description did not limit him. He went on to say, *"After assessing the client, I would be in control of the services they receive after the assessment, and I monitor the um, progress of the client to ensure that they go through with the program and don't return to the system*."

Sub-theme 5.3.What POs do not like about their job

Majority of the participants in this study revealed that what they do not particularly like about their job is limited time to work on investigations, assessments, and in-depth reports. Participant 2 stated, "*Limited time to do the reports, because cases they come in everyday."* Participant 3 was speaking about how they are given only twelve days to compile the in-depth reports they have to submit to court. They explained that it is insufficient time, because you also have to conduct investigations. *"So we are given fourteen days to work on in-depth reports, which is basically unfair, because the fourteen days include Saturdays and Sundays. So if we*

include Saturdays and Sundays it means we are left with twelve days. In twelve days you must submit your report to supervisors, three days before. It means how many days are you left to do court investigations?" Participant 4 stated*, "I think it's having to deal with in-depth reports."* Participant 5 stated the reasons why he hates in-depth reports, *"Yes, I hate, hate the cases that involve children, where the child is the accused. I hate those cases. The reason is you are only given two weeks to investigate, in fact less than two weeks, because it's twelve days to investigate, which includes weekends."* Participant 10 revealed that*, "And you don't get to help the kid as much as you'd like to, (coughs), sorry, you'd like to due to time limit and all these things."*

The next objective was to identify the coping mechanisms probation officers use in managing occupational stress.

Theme 6: How POs deal with stress

Majority of the participants revealed that they talk to their supervisor or to their colleagues when they are feeling stressed. Participant 1 stated, "*Talk to the colleagues. At least, "Hey I've got a case like this and that.*" Participant 4 stated, "*Maybe when I feel that maybe it's too much, then maybe I, I, I could speak to my supervisor."* Participant 7 also mentioned, *"So, all, if I have work challenges I communicate with my colleagues. We talk about it and we laugh about it. We move on."* Participant 12 mentioned, *"Colleagues we get to sit and debrief and offer each other alternatives on how to deal with certain challenges we face with our caseloads."* Participant 14 stated, *"I will just talk to my supervisor or share with my colleagues."* Participant 15 stated that she would just speak to her supervisor.

According to Agbonluae et al. (2017), there are three approaches to coping with stress: avoidance approach, stress management approach and ideal stress coping approach (Agbonluae et al., 2017). The avoidance approach is when an individual relies on alcohol and other substances, or anything else, to deal with the symptoms of stress, temporarily (Agbonluae et al., 2017). However, these strategies may work temporarily, but will have harmful long-term effects (Agbonluae et al., 2017). There were only a few probation officers who did not deal with stress in seemingly healthy ways. Participant 5 stated that he drinks alcohol to deal with stress, which is a very unhealthy way to handle stress. Participant 6 mentioned that she sometimes takes her stress out on her children, which is also a very unhealthy way to deal with stress. She said, "*What did I say? I just stay with it. Yes, maybe I, when I get home sometimes you, you, you, get angry to the children. You, you take it from your, your, kids."*

A third way of coping is the style concentrated on avoiding experiencing and thinking about stress-inducing situations (Lazarus, 1993). However, Wirkus (2015) states that suppressing one's emotions can be associated with negative health. Others stated that they just stay with the stress, and as a result it stresses them even more. Participant 10 stated, "*I don't deal with them*." Others also mentioned that they do not deal with the stress. Participant 8 stated, "*I don't think I am dealing with this work stress. I'm just (laughs) doing what I am told to do*." Participant 2 stated, *"Sometimes, I just, what can I say? Sometimes I just want to go home and sleep and forget everything."* This is characteristic of the avoidance style of coping which is when one avoids experiencing and thinking about situations that may aggravate stress.

Theme 7: Support

Support would be any form of emotional or physical support given by managers towards their employees (Salyers et al., 2015). It may come in the form of programs such as employee assistance programs (EAP) or employee wellness programs (EWP), or psycho-social support given by managers. EAP is a tool that helps employees improve their quality of life by providing them with the resources they need to deal with personal and work-related issues (Richard, 2009). EWPs are initiatives that are designed to promote employees' health and well-being, usually through preventive care (Berry, Mirabito & Baun, 2010). According to Saylers et.al's (2015) study, social support is an effective way of reducing burnout. Their study encouraged the adoption of interventions that could help supervisors to exercise efficient methods of offering support to officers in their departments in the future (Salyers et al., 2015). Some participants stated that they have support in the form of their supervisor and EAP/EWP programs. Participant 4 stated, "*We have our supervisor. We have our EAP program."* Participant 7 stated, *"Yes. There's EAP."* Participant 8 stated*, "I think it's ICAS and EAP, employee wellness programs, yeah."* Participant 12 summed it up to say*, "Our Zinanekele employee wellness program, supportive supervisor."* Participant 14 felt strongly*, "The only one I can think of is my supervisor, yeah. That's a huge support I have."* Participant 15 also felt that she had a supportive supervisor.

Others felt that they did not have support. Participant 2 mentioned, "*I won't say we really have support. I won't say we really have support. Instead we support each other as colleagues here. We, we, we try to assist each other."* Participant 1 stated, *"What can I say? They say it's there, but I have not seen it."* Participant 3 stated*, "At the end of the day, I don't have any support. If there was*

a way for us to address or to know who to go to when we experience stress. At the end of the day, it doesn't; we don't have any link."

Sub-theme 7.1.Supervisors/ supervision

Some participants felt that their supervisor does well in supporting them. Participant 6 felt that, "*Maybe if you told your supervisor that you have such stress. Maybe he will refer you somewhere*." However, others felt that their supervisor did not offer them support. Participant 4 stated, "*Saying "I'll speak to my supervisor about it." Does not yield any positive outcome."* Participant 5 stated, "*At the moment, I don't. I don't feel like my supervisor supports me to that level."* Participant 12 from RAR, stated that she does not receive supervision. She is supposed to receive supervision every month, but that has not been done. This is a concern, because an employee is supposed to be supervised, so that they are guided in doing their work and also so that they can relay their challenges when faced with any. According to Snyder (1983), supportive and good supervision, as well as in-service training can alleviate burnout amongst probation officers. Therefore, it can be seen that it is necessary for probation officers in the department to have supervision, and the support of their supervisors, to reduce the risk of burnout.

Sub-theme 7.2 POs and EAPs/EWPs

When it comes to EAPs/EWPs most of the participants in this study had not attended these programs at all. Participant 4 stated, "*I've not um looked into using the EAP, cause I don't think that could do so much for me hey."* Participant 5 stated*, "Yeah, there's EAP, but I've never went there, so."* Participant 8 in answering a question about whether she has attended EAP stated*, "Not that I've used."* Participant 11 however who did attend an EAP had this to say*, "And um personally from experience I have used those services, and they are not as useful as it is easy for them to be quoted. I even question the credibility of those people who actually render this service to us."*

The next objective was to find out what strategies are employed by DSD to help probation officers deal with stress.

Theme 8: Strategies implored by DSD to help POs to cope with occupational stress

In this study it was found that DSD has EWPs to assist employees with any challenges they may be having, which may impact on their productivity and overall ability to perform their

duties. This study revealed that most of the participants are not aware if these programs are still available within the department, because as stated by the participants these programs are not visible. Many participants wondered if they are still there.

Sub-theme 8.1.There are programs

Some of the participants knew that there were programs. Participant 4 stated in answering whether there are any programs at the department stated, "*Yes. EAP*.**"** Participant 5 stated, "*Yeah, there's EAP*." Participant 7 stated, "*EAP. Isn't it that EWP they are there for us?"* However, some wondered if they were still there. Participant 15 stated, "*I think there is EAP, but I've only heard of it once. I'm not sure if it's still there*."

Sub-theme 8.2 There aren't any programs

Most of the participants felt that there are no programs in the department. Participant 1 stated, "*I don't know them (laughs). Nope*." Participant 2 stated confidently, "*Like I said, none. There's no programs we attend. Nothing. Cause, if we had I think we were gonna be, I don't know. We were, we, maybe we were gonna have ways where we find coping mechanisms, because we are not coping."* Participant 9 stated*, "No, there are no programs. I don't know of any."* Participant 14 stated*, "No, not that I know of."*

Theme 9: How EWPs could be improved

Many of the participants felt that if EWPs advertised their services more, then employees would be aware of their existence. Participant 5 said, "*That unit is invisible hey. (laughs). It's, it's invisible. They, they don't promote their things enough, their services."* Participant 12 stated, "*I think it should be advertised properly with; by advertise I mean making it known to employees like I doubt our new officials know about it*." Participant 15 stated, "*If they could advertise their services more, because we don't know if they are still active or what. There needs to be more, what can I say? Um, visibility."* The participants also said that if they were more visible and easily accessible it would improve their services, as well as if they offer their programs on a monthly basis. Participant 8 stated, "*More visible. It's not visible. The only time I've ever seen anything like that is when they have a wellness day. So, I don't think we prioritise it in this department."* Participant 14 offered the same sentiments and said, *"I think, I think if they were more visible, because all we know is that they say they are there, but we don't, well I don't know about their services or where they are.*" Participant 10 stated, "*We must have someone that is accessible here in the building.*

Each office must have somebody." Participant 13 stated, "*I feel they should actually offer those programs on a either on a monthly or like, like weekly basis."*

Participant 6 stated that, "*Maybe if, maybe every month, if they can come to the, to, to, to our offices and ask or maybe they say "These days we are going to provide with employee wellness."* Participant 2 suggested, "*So, at least they should come and see our schedule. So maybe if they can try to see, ok; how busy we are and try to accommodate us. . I don't know how, but, so that we can get that opportunity to vent; to debrief."* Participant 3 had this to say, "*I think um, if we could be involved in the decision-making, because we are the ones in the field. We are the ones stressed. We know things that cause us stress. And we know the type of programs which we feel they will be suitable, suitable and we know how the component of the structure should be to address our immediate needs."* Participant 11 felt that they should be in communication with employees and conduct interviews to find out what their stressors are. He said, "*Like what we are doing now, you know such interviews where they will be able to find out our needs and stuff then they will be effect-they will be able to reach maybe us, somewhere than just an overall, you know, umbrella approach, to everyone."*

The final objective was to explore suggestions and recommendations from probation officers on strategies that Department of Social Development may implement to aid coping mechanisms of probation officers.

Theme 10: Solutions for DSD to curb occupational stress among POs

Wirkus (2015) suggests that in order to curb occupational stress, employees need to make decisions with regards to their work, and companies should provide career counselling with an objective to help solve the problems of employees, relating to their jobs. The participants gave the researcher suggestions for what DSD can do to address the issue of occupational stress among probation officers. Most of the participants stated that DSD should have interviews with POs to understand their challenges. This is what they had to say. Participant 3 stated, "*The first thing I will do is to call the probational, probation officers to hear their side of the story. What are the stresses and what are the causes, and how will they; what kind of programs they will like to see."* Participant 13 stated, *"I would wanna consult with them to understand what exactly is causing stress or what is, um, what is it that they feel they are often stressed about in their work. So I feel like if you consult with your employees and understand what they're going through it's gonna be much easier and work with them in terms of coming up with solutions that will actually work better."* Participant 14 stated*, "I think in order to address this, DSD first needs to know that*

stressors POs face on a daily-basis, so they can help them based on their needs. If the issue is maybe case-maybe case-loads then they should employ more social workers, so that the current probation officers don't feel the pinch of heavy caseloads."

Wirkus (2015) states that there should be preventative campaigns dedicated to occupational stress and creating a conducive working environment. The participants in this study also made similar suggestions. They also felt that they should have EWPs available every month or bi-monthly, and the department should add more officials, to lessen the burden of heavy case loads on probation officers. Participant 2 stated, "*Maybe make it part of, um…part of what? (sighs). Part of their schedule maybe let's say…on Fridays, maybe once in a month or bi-monthly. Maybe probation officers for that week they just not getting cases, not going to court, not doing visits and they deal with such programs. So, that we can vent; feel better.* She further added*, "I could say, maybe if they add officials. More officials, it will take out our stress levels. Or have two units doing the same thing, so the work can be divided into two units."* Participant 5 shared the same sentiments with participant 2 saying, "*Capacity. First of all, like look at, at us there's only eleven probation officers, serving the whole of Jhb area."* Participant 4 stated, *"I would offer debriefing sessions, maybe bi-weekly or once a month."* Participant 6 stated*, "Um, I will make sure that every month, especially those who are doing presentence. They should go to employee wellness."* Participant 7 stated that*, "Let's not wait for EAP to, the EAP, when do these GEMS people come? Let's not wait for that? Once a year. No, let's, let's do it on a monthly basis. And maybe we can have an EAP practitioner here in the region."* Participant 11 stated*, "I would encourage that it is a compulsory thing that on a three-month basis maybe, it must be forced upon us to actually participate in such um programs, to assist us, because of the nature of the work."* Finally, the participants spoke about the issue of rotation within the region, to give probation officers the chance to go to other units, other than probation if they choose to. Participant 13 stated, *"I would encourage rotation in this probation. Because you have people doing one thing for six years. Other sections are way too high-paced. Others are very slow. People who are in the high-paced sections, are burned out. So, a rotation is necessary."* Participant 11 also mentioned the same thing that there should be rotation*, "I think we need different exposure, rotation."*

MAIN FINDINGS

The researcher, prior to her study, conducted a pilot test with two participants who did not form part of the study, but who were of the target population. This pilot test was done in order to assess the length of the interview, as well as the appropriateness of the questions in meeting the aim and objectives of the study (Creswell, 2014). The first participant in the pilot test spoke about the importance of not having a judgemental attitude towards offenders, and described how she is empathetic towards offenders, stating that they sometimes commit crimes due to the circumstances that they may find themselves in. This was a refreshing stance, that none of the other participants in the study mentioned. Both participants mentioned that as probation officers they receive different cases every day, so each case is unique. It was found that there are dangers of the job which both participants mentioned, where one participant mentioned that she had been followed by an offender or the offender's family. It was found that the participant's educational training helped them in terms of report-writing and admin. In terms of how they deal with stress, it was found that both participants stated that they could speak to their supervisor and colleagues, but more specifically, the first participant stated that she preferred talking to her colleagues whom she shares similar experiences with regarding her work. Both participants mentioned that what is typically the cause of their stress is children who re-offend and heavy caseloads. The second participant also mentioned that as probation officers, they are given limited time to assess clients and conduct investigations, and furthermore, re-emphasised the issue of re-offending of the children. There is an issue of children re-offending and further research needs to be done to identify the reason behind children re-offending to give a better understanding of this behaviour.

The first participant felt that if she could change the way she conducts her job it would be submitting her report straight to court, because she feels she is experienced enough in her work (competent) that she does not need her work to be canalised (checked for conciseness and quality) by her supervisor. The researcher disagrees with this and feels that this canalising of a probation officer's report is a necessary process for quality assurance, and that this process was put in place for a particular reason. In terms of support, the first participant stated that she has never had debriefing in the five years she has been working at the department. Considering the work that they do as probation officers, there needs to be a strong emphasis for the provision of counselling services to probation officers. The second participant felt that she had support from her colleagues and supervisor. In offering

suggestions on how to curb occupational stress within the work environment, the participants felt that there should be a discussion group where they share their experiences, like a debriefing session. Both participants felt that EAP services would be more beneficial if they could accommodate their schedules, as probation officers so that they can also attend their programs, and offer their services more regularly.

It can be seen that the probation officers in the pilot test have support in the form of colleagues and supervisors. They stated the challenging nature of their work, but what seems to be most stressful is the issue of re-offending of the children they provide services to. Further research needs to be conducted to find out the reasons behind this behaviour. It is also important for the issue of debriefing or counselling be stressed, because the probation officers need it.

In terms of information from participants involved in the study, probation officers at DSD, Jhb Metro Region compile pre-sentence and pre-trial reports, in-depth reports for children, victim impact reports and background reports. They also conduct investigations. They deal with children, youth and adults in conflict with the law. Probation officers at DSD, Jhb Metro Region who work in RAR (receive, assess, refer) conduct assessments and facilitate referrals for children who are in conflict with the law.

The study shows that probation is an interesting job and that probation officers learn something new every day, as no two cases are the same. It was found that probation officers work with difficult cases such as murder, rape and fraud, to name a few. They also interact with a diversity of people. The findings revealed that what causes probation officer's stress is the meeting of deadlines, heavy case loads, limited time to conduct assessments and investigations, and compiling in-depth reports. Probation officers felt strongly about the dissatisfaction with working with in-depth reports for children, because they are given limited time to conduct investigations and compile reports and before issuing them to court.

This study showed that probation officers do not receive any debriefing after they are done consulting and interacting with their clients, who are in conflict with the law. After interacting with their clients, they are expected to carry on as per normal despite the nature of the crime which may have been committed by their clients.

This study also revealed that most probation officers feel that they are able to turn to their supervisor who could support them when they were faced with challenges. They felt that they

have an internal support system. Others strongly felt that they could relieve work stress by communicating with their colleagues when they are facing challenges with the work. This shows that probation officers have good rapport.

The researcher found that probation officers do not receive any training prior undertaking their duties as probation officers. The only requirement is that they need to have completed their Bachelor of Social Work degree and be registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions. The participants mentioned that upon being deployed to the probation section, they learnt while they were on the job. Some recalled having to learn by using someone else's report to know how to compile a pre-sentence or pre-trial report. Most of the participants also revealed that their university education did not prepare them for the work that they were doing in probation. Some of the participants recalled that the work they did in university and what they are doing at work is not the same. Probation officers working at RAR, however, who mostly conduct assessments, stated that the micro work (counselling and assessments) which they did in university assisted them, because they are able to conduct assessments and adequately conduct interviews. Most of the participants were allocated to the probation unit when they were first employed, because that section needed more staffing.

The researcher also found that the participants' service the entire Johannesburg area. There are only eleven probation officers in the region who are dealing with pre-sentence and pre-trial. This speaks to the amount of case loads that probation officers receive. The participants in this study expressed that they have heavy caseloads and deadlines, with limited time to conduct investigations and do assessments. Participants stated that they always have cases; each day, there is always an allocation, which makes it difficult for them to attend any EAPs or EWPs. Participants also noted that DSD does have programs that deal with work-related stress. However, most of the participants did not attend these programs, because they had court dates and were unable to attend trainings, which coincided with work commitments such as, attending court or conducting home visits. They were also unsure whether these programs were still available.

Participants in this study gave suggestions on how EAPs/EWPs can be more effective. Participants stated that EAPs/EWPs should look at POs' schedules and accommodate the different schedules. This includes running programs that are relevant to their needs. Participants stated that EWPs should interact with POs to find out what their challenges are so they can be better equipped to meet their needs. Most participants felt that EAPs/EWPs are

not visible and accessible, so they should advertise their services more. Participants felt that EWPs should have programs running every month.

Finally, the POs gave solutions for DSD to curb the issue of occupational stress among POs. They recommended that DSD should have interviews with POs to understand their challenges. They also recommended that EWPs should be made available every month or bi-monthly, during dedicated times, so that POs are able to attend. Participants felt that DSD should employ more officials to lessen the burden of heavy case loads amongst POs, as there are only eleven of them servicing the entire Johannesburg area.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be seen that the probation officers in this study have similar experiences with regards to probation work. Participants felt that probation is dynamic and it is an interesting job, but it is also very demanding and stress inducing. Participants seem to be reliant on peer support or supervisor support when they face challenges. So, overall, the majority of them adopt positive coping mechanisms in dealing with stress.

DSD has programs (in the form of EAPs/EWPs) to help probation officers' deal with stress, but these services are not easily accessible and they seem to be invisible, because many of the participants said that they did not know if the programs were still available. This suggests that they do not advertise their services often, as mentioned by the participants. The participants offered good suggestions for DSD to employ, so as to effectively deal with occupational stressors they experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends that DSD employ more officials, to lessen the burden of caseloads among the current probation officers. Job rotation should be considered an option for those probation officers who want to be exposed to new skills via a different position. It is recommended that negotiations be made between management and probation officers to allow time for probation officers to attend EWP and EAP services. The probation officers in the study mentioned that currently their workload does not allow them time to be able to attend these sessions, which they would benefit from if they did attend. Thus, negotiations need to be conducted between management and probation officers to be prioritise this service. It is recommended that EAP services within the department be made more visible to employees, so that information regarding these services is easily available to all employees.

It is recommended that time management and capacity-building workshops are hosted, as a method of training for probation officers as well as educating them on how to make proper use of their time, so that they complete their work activities timeously. It is also recommended that universities should include criminal law, criminology and relevant modules pertaining to probation, so as to prepare the probation officers for work in the field of probation. It is recommended that the processes within RAR be reviewed with regards to practice and a forum be held where the probation officers can provide information about their challenges in practice, and suggestions and feedback by stakeholders should result in a resolution to make recommendations for the amendment for the Act to provide certain provisions that maybe, were not there before, as indicated by the participants such as monitoring the placement of a child in programmes to ensure that they do not return to the system again.

Furthermore, there should be research into whether South African social work education equips students with all the knowledge needed for them to enter the job market, because during the interview in the researcher's study, the participants raised the frustration of having to learn things anew coming from tertiary education to the workplace, particularly with probation. Participant 7 mentioned that at school they did generic social work, which was not inclusive of probation work.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focused on the experiences of probation officers working at the Department of Social Development, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region on occupational stress and their coping mechanisms. The objectives of the study were to explore occupational stressors of probation officers at the Department of Social Development, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region. They were to identify coping mechanisms adopted by probation officers in managing occupational stress. They were to find out what strategies are employed by DSD to help probation officers cope with occupational stress. Furthermore, they were to explore suggestions and recommendations from probation officers on strategies that DSD may implement to aid coping mechanisms of probation officers. The research design that was used for this particular study was an exploratory single case study research design, because it allowed the researcher to probe further into the responses given by the participants to obtain more detailed descriptions of experiences. By using qualitative research, the researcher was able to thoroughly examine the research problem.

SUMMARY

In the researcher's study, it was found that probation officers have heavy caseloads, such that they need to work late hours during the week and on weekends, in order for them to can meet deadlines on time. It was found that they have limited time to do investigations and assessments, which puts pressure on them. It was found that probation officers do not receive training prior to them assuming their duties. They had to learn while on the job. It was also found that in terms of educational training, there are some limitations, as most participants revealed that their educational training prepared them in terms of report-writing, (as many of them did generic social work), but implementing probation practice was limited. It was found that opportunities for debriefing or counselling was limited for the probation officers, because often EAP services are only available when they are assuming their duties, and therefore they cannot attend EAP. Participants in the study also mentioned that EAP services do not accommodate their busy schedules, so in the event that they are at the department, the probation officers may not be able to attend. Although, the probation officers have not been able to attend debriefing sessions, they stated that they do have social support which they receive from their supervisors and colleagues, in instances where they have stress.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that most of the participants adopted positive coping mechanism to deal with occupational stress, by speaking to their supervisor(s) and confiding in their colleagues. The participants mentioned that they struggle to deal with heavy and traumatising cases which they do not even receive debriefing for. It is necessary for them to get access to a professional to debrief concerning the cases that they deal with, especially, rape and murder cases. The participants revealed that they are unable to attend any programs (EAPs/EWPs) arranged by the department, because their work commitments often clash with when the programs are run. Thus, it is important for management and EAPs/EWPs to consider the probation officers' schedules when conducting sessions, so as to enable them to benefit from these services. These professional services would be able to help them better cope with the type of cases which they deal with on a daily basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Probation is a specialised field, and so the researcher feels that it would be beneficial to provide specialised training before probation officers start their duties. There should be further research conducted into the training of probation officers in South Africa. Particularly, there should be research into the training practices of probation officers in their first year of work.

It is recommended for the department to re-consider dividing the units within probation (one section for pre-sentence and one for pre-trial) so that the probation officers can work effectively without any pressure of stress. It is recommended that in order to reduce workload, there should be assistant probation officers appointed (where possible) that will generate reports of probation officers (after the probation officer having drafted the report). Thereafter, the report to go to the probation officer for proof-reading. The report will as normal be canalised by the supervisor, so that if there are any discrepancies, the probation officer can fix them.

There should be an update or revision of their duties (quarterly) to clarify their functions and also for those who might be new entrants in the field to have knowledge about their duties, since it was indicated by the participants that they do not get training prior to starting their work.

It is recommended that there be a forum for probation officers, police officers, investigating officers etc. and for there to be engagements, so that there is consensus between all

stakeholders and they work together, because some of the participants mentioned that when probation officers need to get information from the investigation officer, they struggle at times. This would be beneficial so that clients benefit from services, because after all, social service professionals should have clients' best interest at heart.

It is recommended that opportunities for promotions be enacted within the department, as incentive for probation officers to remain in probation. Unfortunately, the researcher did not ask questions related to supervision. That is a shortfall of the research. However, it is recommended that future studies explore supervision practices of probation officers, in order to elicit information concerning whether supervision assists them in their challenges with their workload. It is also recommended that probation officers play a part in policy development, because if not they will be playing no part in decisions that ultimately affect them as social workers.

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APPENDIX A: PERMISSIONS



GAUTENG PROVINCE
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: Dr. Sello Mokoena
Tel: 082 331 0786
File no.: 02/01/21

Dear O Monnye

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Thank you for your application to conduct research within the Gauteng Department of Social Development.

Your application to conduct research on **"Experience of Probation Officers Working at The Department Of Social Development, Gauteng, Johannesburg Metro Region of Occupational Stress and Their Coping Mechanisms"** ***[University of the Witwatersrand]*** has been considered and approved for support by the Department as it was found to be beneficial to the Department's vision and mission. The approval is subject to the Department's terms and conditions as stated on the GDSD application form.

You have permission to interview officials and beneficiaries within facilities regulated by the department, conduct observations and access relevant documents where necessary.

May I take this opportunity to wish you well on the journey you are about to embark on.

We look forward to a value adding research and a fruitful co-operation.

With thanks

Dr. Sello Mokoena
Director: Research and Policy Coordination
Date: 12-01-2021

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

DEPARTMENTAL HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SOCIAL WORK)
CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Protocol number: SW20/09/01

Project title: Experiences of Probation Officers Working at Department of Social Development, Gauteng, Jhb Metro Region on Occupational Stress and their Coping Mechanisms.

Researcher/s: O Monnye, student number: 560903

School/department: SHCD Social Work

Date considered: 29 September 2020

Decision of the committee: Provisionally Approved depending on permission from DSD (Low risk).

Date ratified: 20 November 2020

Expiry date: 31 July 2023

Date: 15 December 2020 **Chairperson:** Prof E. Pretorius

Cc: Supervisor: Ms Laetitia Petersen

Declaration of researcher(s)

To be completed in **DUPLICATE** and **ONE COPY** returned to the Administrative Assistant, Room 8, Department of Social Work, Umthombo Building Basement or e-mailed to Fezile.Ndebele@wits.ac.za

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorised to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we 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. **For Masters and PhD an annual progress report is required.**

17/12/2020

SIGNATURE DATE

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

School of Human and Community Development: Social Work
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050, South Africa
T +27 11 717 4472 | **E** socialwork.SHCD@wits.a.c.za | www.wits.ac.za/shcd/social-work/social-work-as-a-profession/

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



EXPERIENCES OF PROBATION OFFICERS WORKING AT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, GAUTENG, JHB METRO REGION ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND THEIR COPING MECHANISMS

Good day

My name is Olebogeng Monnye and I am a postgraduate student registered for the degree MA in Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for the degree, I am conducting research regarding the experiences of probation officers working at the Department of Social Development, Gauteng Region on Occupational Stress. It is hoped that the information gathered could assist the Department of Social Development to develop effective strategies to manage occupational stress experienced by probation officers. The outcome of the study could inform both knowledge base and practice of Social Work in Probation Services.

As a probation officer working at the Department of Social Development, you are ideally positioned to contribute to my research. I therefore wish to invite you to participate in my study. If you accept my invitation, your participation would be entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. There are no consequences or personal benefits of participating in this study. If you agree to take part, I would arrange to interview you at a time and place that is suitable for you. The interview will last approximately one hour. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time, and you may also refuse to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with answering. It is anticipated that participation in the study will not result in distress. However, debriefing has been arranged with FAMSA Soweto (011 933 1301) for participants who may need counselling after the interviews.

If you decide to participate, I will ask your permission to tape-record the interview. No one other than the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be

kept in a locked cabinet for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study. A copy of your interview transcript without any identifying information will be stored permanently in a locked cupboard and may be used for future research.

Please be assured that your name and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report. The results of the research may also be used for academic purposes (including books, journals and conference proceedings) and a summary of findings will be made to available to participants on request.

Please contact me on 076 421 3719 or monnyemisso@gmail.com, or my supervisor, Laetitia Petersen on 011 717 4474 or laetitia.petersen@wits.ac.za if you have any questions regarding my study. We shall answer them to the best of our ability. If you have any concerns and complaints about the study, please contact Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) Contact Details: Chairperson: Jasper.Knight@wits.ac.za. or the administrator Mr. Shaun Schoeman Tel 011 717 1408 Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

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

Yours sincerely

Olebogeng Monnye

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

EXPERIENCES OF PROBATION OFFICERS WORKING AT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, GAUTENG, JHB METRO REGION ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND THEIR COPING MECHANISMS

I hereby consent to participate in the research study. The purpose and procedures of the study have been explained to me.

I understand that:

- My participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study without being disadvantaged in any way
- I may choose not to answer any specific questions asked if I do not wish to do so
- There are no foreseeable benefits or particular risks associated with participation in this study
- My identity will be kept strictly confidential, and any information that may identify me, will be removed from the interview transcript
- A copy of my interview transcript without any identifying information will be stored permanently in a locked cupboard and may be used for future research
- I understand that my responses will be used in the write up of an honours project and may also be presented in conferences, book chapters, journal articles or books

Name of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO-TAPING OF THE INTERVIEW

EXPERIENCES OF PROBATION OFFICERS WORKING AT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,GAUTENG, JHB METRO REGION ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND THEIR COPING MECHANISMS

I hereby consent to tape-recording of the interview.

I understand that:

- The recording will be stored in a secure location (a locked cupboard or password-protected computer) with restricted access t the researcher and the research supervisor
- The recording will be transcribed and any information that could identify me will be removed
- When the data analysis and write-up of the research study is complete, the audio-recording of the interview will be kept for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study
- The transcript will all identifying information directly linked to me removed, will be stored permanently and may be used for future research
- Direct quotes from my interview, without any information that could identify me may be cited in the research report or other write-ups of the research

Name of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

EXPERIENCES OF PROBATION OFFICERS WORKING AT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,GAUTENG, JHB METRO REGION ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND THEIR COPING MECHANISMS

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Identifying information

Name:
Age:
Gender:
Race:
Years of service:
Qualification:
Field of service:

1. What is your role as a Probation Officer?
2. Share with me your experiences working as a probation officer.
3. Is there a particular reason why you chose the field of probation?
4. To what extent did your educational training prepare you for your work?
5. The word occupational stress is often used in workplaces. What is your understanding of occupational stress?
6. What are some of the aspects about your role as a probation officer which causes stress?
7. Tell me how you deal with aspects at work that are causing you stress.
8. Is there anything you do not particularly like about your job?YES/NO
9. What would you change about the way you conduct your job if you could?
10. Do you have support at work in cases whereby you have occupational stress?
11. Are there any programs at work that help to deal with occupational stress?YES/NO
12. Do you see the value in employee wellness programs?YES/NO
13. What could be done differently to make employee wellness programs more effective?

14. If you were the head of DSD, what is it that you would do to address the issue of occupational stress among probation officers?