

**EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF THE CHILD PROTECTION  
SOCIAL WORKERS IN JOHANNESBURG REGARDING  
SUPERVISION.**



*A Research Report Presented to*

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for the degree Master of Arts in the field of Social Development**

**By**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any degree or insemination in any other University. The cited sources have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Ropafadzo Chanyandura

March 2016

## **DEDICATION**

To my loving parents, Mr. N.W Chanyandura and Mrs. J. Chanyandura; my sister Shingayi Punungwe and my brother in-law Tinashe Punungwe; my dearest brothers Jonathan Chanyandura and Joshua Chanyandura: thank you for your help in prayer, your faith in me, your love, support and encouragements throughout my studies.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The social work profession has long regarded professional supervision as central to the maintenance of best practices and has taken a leadership role in asserting the significance of supervision in human service settings. The goal of the study was to explore the experiences of child protection social workers with regards to supervision. The study utilized a qualitative research approach. Through a case study design, the researcher explored the experiences of a purposively sampled group of child protection social workers in Johannesburg on supervision. The researcher gathered qualitative data by carrying out face to face interviews with a total sample of twelve participants drawn from two child protection organizations based in the Johannesburg area.

The study established that group supervision, individual supervision and peer supervision are the three main types of supervision utilised by child protection organisations, with group supervision being the most commonly used method. Furthermore, the study discovered that supervision plays three main functions in the work of child protection social workers, namely educational, supportive and administrative functions. The study also exposed numerous challenges faced by child protection social workers in their supervision of their daily work.

In view of the study's findings and conclusions in relation to the experiences of child protection social workers in supervision, the researcher proposes that child protection organisations need to utilise the most effective types of supervision which are beneficial to both the organisation and, more importantly, the clients they serve.

**KEY WORDS:** Child protection, Social work, Child protection social worker, supervision.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ASWB:	Association of Social Work Boards
AU:	African Union
DSD:	Department of Social Development
IDM:	Integrated Developmental Model
IFSW:	International Federation of Social Workers
JISS:	Johannesburg Institute of Social Services
NASW:	National Association of Social Workers
OAU:	Organisation of African Unity
SACSSP:	South African Council for Social Service Professions
SDG's:	Sustainable Development Goals
UN:	United Nations
UNICEF:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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# CHAPTER 1

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Child protection is a worldwide phenomenon and, indeed, child welfare supervision has expanded its recognition as an important administrative factor in the staff's maintenance (Landsman & D' Aunno, 2012). Child protection issues that social workers deal with worldwide, South Africa included, comprise the divide between physical punishment and abuse of children and child fatalities, prevalent child sexual, physical and emotional abuse, maltreatment and neglect. In addition, there have been increases of children being abducted, kidnapped, exploited and/or trafficked.

In response to these child protection cases, Landsman and D'Aunno (2012) identified supportive supervision as a very important factor which affects the profession gratification, responsibility, and the maintenance of child the welfare workers. Thus, the profession of social work has long viewed supervision as a very crucial factor to the maintenance of best performances of the workers and it has also taken a guidance role in emphasizing the importance of supervision in the social service settings. Not only does supervision in social work benefit the frontline social workers, but it also indirectly impacts the client through knowledge and skills that the supervisor imparts on the supervisee (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). Kadushin and Harkness (2002) further assert that supervision contributes both to the excellence of human service delivery and the professional growth of frontline social work practitioners. Supervision is a resource to improve growth "as it helps to equip the supervisee with the professional knowledge and skills necessary to do the job efficiently" (Tsui, 2004, p. 20).

This chapter gives an overview of the study. It briefly highlights the rationale of the study, significance of the study, research question, aim and objectives of the study, as well as the research methodology. The key concepts used in the study are also defined in this chapter. Ethical issues which were considered in this study are briefly outlined. The chapter further gives a brief explanation of how the research report is structured.

In addition, the Integrated Developmental Model (IDM), which offers the theoretical framework of this study, is discussed. It is argued that, despite its shortcomings, the IDM is one approach that may be fully adopted and utilized in the supervision of child protection social workers. It should, nonetheless, be emphasized that the IDM, on its own, might not be adequate in the effective supervision of social workers. An amalgamation of approaches is, therefore, proposed. This, however, requires collaboration among various stakeholders such as government departments, the private sector, and, most importantly, social workers themselves.

## 1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Literature review confirms studies which have demonstrated the positive effects of supportive supervision. Blane (1968) experimentally tested the effects of supportive and non-supportive orientations to supervision. Counselling social workers, who experienced supportive supervision, showed a significant difference in emphatic understanding after supervision as compared with scores before supervision. Additional confirmations come from an important longitudinal study by Kim et al. (2008) who concluded from their research with social service employees that the workers who experience good supervision through task assistance, emotional support, and effective relationships with supervisors respond with a positive attitude and a good behavior toward their work and the organization. Based on the studies done, it can be deduced that supervision is very crucial, as it enables both the supervisor and the supervisee to be more professionally effective. Through a good relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee they find an obligatory way in which to utilize resources in an effective way whilst meeting the daily demands of the organisation. Studies, such as those addressing supportive supervision contribution to worker self-efficiency (Collins-Camargo & Royse, 2010), worker ability and workload management (Juby & Scannapieco 2007; Steven, 2008), worker job satisfaction (Barth et al. 2008; Mena & Bailey 2007; Stalker et al. 2007), and worker retention (Chen & Scannapieco, 2010; Ellett, Ellis, Westbrook & Dews, 2007; Jacquet, Clark, Morazes & Withers, 2007; Landsman, 2007) have also been conducted. Gant et al. (1993) found that social support from supervisors is associated with reductions in anxiety, depression, somatic complaints, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion.

The need for this study was motivated by the following:

The South African Department of Social Development (DSD) and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP), in their supervision framework for the profession of social work, substantiates the rationale for supervision of social workers (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Botha (2002) concurs that social work supervision in South Africa is random, there is no-routine, the standards are not the same, it is greatly individualized, and that the indistinguishable nature of social work practice requires supervision. A report by the DSD (2006) indicates that there is a deficiency of structured supervision and, when available, the quality of supervision is poor. The South African supervision framework additionally emanates from “the perceived need for effective supervision within the social work profession in order to improve quality social work services offered to service users” and “it is informed by, amongst other things, lack of adequate training, structural support and unmanageable workloads” (DSD & SACSSP, 2012, p. 14). Another motivation for this framework is additionally based on Botha’s (2002, p. 1) postulation that “the problem, however, does not lie with supervision practice or the nature thereof, but the fact that supervision applied is either faulty or weak”. In order to respond to the “faulty or weak” use of supervision, the South African supervision framework offers a theoretical and a relative framework, which serves as a foundation for the framework’s clearly formulated norms and standards on supervision (Engelbrecht, 2013). The standardized South African supervision framework could be a benchmark for gauging performances of organizations, supervisors and supervisees.

The researcher has also developed personal interest in the area of investigation i.e. supervision of child protection social workers. The researcher has been a practicing social worker for the past five years in various organizations, at CMR Nigel where she would get supervision only when she needed clarity on a case and at Jo’burg Child Welfare where she gets supervision when she requests for it. Upon careful reflection, the researcher realizes that supervision should be on a regular basis and not only when needed or requested for.

There has, accordingly, been an increased demand for trained and competent supervisors and a better understanding of the best use of supervision. The researcher could now argue that issues emanating from lack of supervision could be successfully addressed through effective use of all modes of supervision. As the demand for supervision for child protection workers increases, there is a perceived gap in availability of and modes of supervision applied. This

study investigated the experiences of the child protection social workers on the supervision they receive in the child welfare organizations. It is hoped that the study will contribute to the value of human service delivery and the professional growth of the child protection workers through supervision.

### 1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Supervision of social workers in practice is crucial. Weinbach (1994) alludes that a manager at any level in the organisation needs to understand what supervision is and to be aware of some of the options available for providing it. Failure to do so will result in the supervisor taking responsibility for a supervisee who does not grow professionally.

Exploring the experiences of the child protection social workers in Johannesburg regarding supervision would enable the researcher to examine the type of supervision received by child protection social workers; to investigate the role supervision plays in the work that child protection social workers do and to explore supervision-related challenges encountered by the child protection social workers.

Midgley (2013), who has had a significant influence on the international discourse on social development, perceives it as a “process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development” (p. 2). Social Development also refers to the government policies and programmes “concerned with the ‘social aspect’ of development such as reducing poverty, increasing literacy, combating malnutrition and improving access to health education” (Midgley, 2013, p. 3). “The aim of social development is to build a social wellbeing that makes people capable of acting and making their own decisions in the broadest sense” (Homfeldt & Reutlinger, 2008, p. 1). In relation to social development, the study hopes to show the integrated related functions of supervision, namely administration, education and support, which provide good-enough working environments. Such environments can energize social workers to actively, creatively, and continuously pursue new knowledge to assist service users and to improve the circumstances in their communities (Parker & Doel, 2013).

Finally, and of particular concern, is the lack of knowledge by both supervisors and supervisees of the theoretical underpinnings of several supervision models (Engelbrecht, 2013). Without social work supervision, it may happen that supervisees do not grow professionally. Lack of professional growth may be due to the fact that learning needs, preferences and styles are neither identified nor prioritized. From the researcher's professional experience she observed that supervision is and can be carried out in a vacuum if both learning needs and learning styles are not identified and accommodated. However, it is worth noting that South Africa is recognised nationally (Patel, 2005) and internationally (Midgley, 2013) as one of the few countries to have incorporated a developmental social welfare approach. What is not known, however, is how both frontline social workers and their supervisors contextualise their functions and approaches within the rubric of this developmental welfare perspective. In this respect, there was need for further investigation of the concept of supervision in South Africa so as to come up with more informed recommendations, something this study sought to achieve.

#### 1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the experiences of child protection social workers regarding supervision?

#### 1.5 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of child protection social workers with regards to supervision. In order to achieve this aim, the following specific objectives were formulated:

- i) To examine the type of supervision received by child protection social workers:
- ii) To investigate the role supervision plays in the work that child protection social workers do: and
- iii) To explore supervision-related challenges encountered by the child protection social workers.

#### 1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research, which utilised a case study design. The case study design is popular in qualitative research as it allows researchers to attain a wealth of descriptive

information and to gain an insight and an understanding of the dynamics as to why individuals think, or behave the way they do (Polit & Beck, 2008). Utilising a semi-structured interview schedule, the researcher conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with ten child protection social work supervisees and two supervisors. The researcher applied purposive sampling to select the twelve child protection social workers. The participants were selected from two child protection organisations based in Johannesburg.

Data were subsequently analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was chosen because it provides flexibility for the researcher in analysing the data. Furthermore, it is a relatively easy and quick methodology to learn; it summarizes the key features of a larger body of data; and can generate unanticipated insights. The researcher was mindful of all possible obstacles that might hinder trustworthiness of the research. Thus, measures to ensure rigour in qualitative research were adhered to. These measures were aimed at achieving the four elements of trustworthiness, namely credibility, transferability, conformability and dependability. Some of the measures included pre-testing the research instrument, as well as triangulation.

## 1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL (IDM) OF SUPERVISION.

Theoretically, it is intimidating to define “a precise type of supervisory model that is likely to be most effective in child welfare practice environment because it is particularly daunting” (Smith, Russell & Giddings, 2007, p. 1). Consequently, no single model of supervision will continually develop as the best way to supervise everyone under all circumstances (Morgan & Sprenkle, 2007). Nonetheless, the IDM “presents a clear and flexible conceptual model of the developmental approach to supervision” (Smith, 2009, p. 5). It informs expectations and roles in supervision and encourages supervisory behavior which is appropriate to the needs of the supervisee (Stoltenberg *et al.*, 1998). Smith (2009, p. 4) observes that the IDM is “one of the most researched developmental model of supervision which” was introduced as a panacea to some of the flaws of early developmental models.

The IDM, according to Smith (2009), defines advanced stages of supervisee growth from a trainee to a professional, with each stage comprising of distinct characteristics and skills. The author further states that supervisors employing a development approach to supervision

should be conversant with the supervisee's present phase and offer suitable response and maintain that developmental stage, at the same time assisting the supervisee development to the next stage. This entails the utilization of a collaborative process which promotes the supervisee to use prior awareness and skills to produce new knowledge. Smith (2009, p. 4) refers to this interactive process as "scaffolding" whereby, "as the supervisee approaches mastery at each stage, the supervisor gradually moves the scaffold to incorporate knowledge and skills from the next advanced stage".

The progressive stages and skills envisaged by the IDM are congruent with the different phases of supervision in general and this makes the IDM very relevant to the supervision of child protection social workers and consequently this study. The supervision process may be described in four stages, namely the preliminary stage, the beginning stage, the work stage and the termination stage (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). Every stage has its discrete skills which are also recognized by the IDM. The onus, therefore, rests upon supervisors working in child protection organizations to fully understand these stages and skills, in order to provide effective supervision to supervisees and thus rendering effective child protection services to the clientele system.

Broadly speaking, supervision practices in South Africa are engaged within the country's social development approach towards the social welfare services, and the Government's Integrated Service Delivery Model for Social Service Delivery (Engelbrecht, 2013). The social development approach calls all sectors of society to work together towards social advancement, as well as emphasizes the implementation of policies and programs that enhance people's welfare (Midgley, 2013).

In the context of supervision of child protection social workers, the IDM provides the prerequisites for improved and effective social service delivery by developing supervisees (social workers) from novices into child protection experts (Smith, 2009). This is in line with the goals of both the social development approach and the Integrated Service Delivery Model towards improved social services. Admittedly, though, social service agencies including child protection organizations in South Africa are not bound by any legal requirement or policy to adopt any specific clinical supervision model. Instead, organizations rely on a supervision model that they deem fit to meeting their organizational goals and the clientele they serve, and as long as that specific model is in line with government's policies on

effective service delivery (Bogo & McKnight, 2005; Engelbrecht, 2013). At the same time, any adopted model should also fall under the realm of the National Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). However, the absence of a specific supervision model among child protection organizations may result in inconsistencies and lack of uniformity in the rendering of child protection services, as well as the quality of supervision rendered to supervisees.

Interestingly, wittingly or accidentally, the IDM appears to be debatably the most utilized approach in many child protection organizations in the country (Bogo & McKnight, 2005). Although there is little empirical proof to corroborate this assertion, it is indisputable that most social work students and new graduates find themselves in the service of child protection organizations. This may be attributed to various reasons, among them, unattractive remuneration in most child protection organizations in the country, leading to high staff turnover and a large number of organizations providing child protection services particularly in the Johannesburg area (Sibanda, 2014).

A supervisor dealing with mainly new social work graduates needs to be conversant with the supervisees' needs. The supervisor plays educational, supportive and administrative functions, whilst at the same time applying skills that are best suited for each supervisee's needs. Social work is a value-based profession and, because social work supervisors are mentors, they should always strive to model behavior to their supervisees which emphasizes values and principles that the profession is based on. Thus, a developmental approach to supervision is beneficial in that it informs the anticipations and roles in supervision and inspires supervisory behaviour appropriate to the needs of the supervisee (Stoltenberg *et al.*, 1998).

## 1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

### 1.8.1 Supervision

Supervision in social work is a professional activity in which at least two practitioners, one of whom is a supervisor, "are engaged throughout the duration of their careers regardless of experience or qualification" (Davys & Beddoe, 2010, p. 21). Davys and Beddoe (2010, p. 21)

further indicated that “the participants are accountable to professional standards and defined competencies and to organizational policy and procedures”.

### 1.8.2 Child protection

Child protection means those interventions that are designed to promote, safeguard and “fulfil children’s rights to protection from abuse; neglect; exploitation; and violence” (Sibanda, 2014, p. 4). According to the DSD (2006), such interventions often seek to avoid, react and resolve the abuse, negligence, abandonment and exploitation of children in all environments.

### 1.8.3 Child protection social workers

These are persons registered with the SACSSP as social workers in terms of the Social Service Professions Act No. 110 of 1978. Part of their legal mandate includes performing statutory work, by virtue of being in the service of a child protection organisation (Children’s Act No. 38 of 2005). Child protection social workers perform, among others, the following child protection services as stipulated in Section 105 of the Children’s Act No. 38 of 2005:

- ✓ Services aimed at supporting the proceedings of the children’s courts;
- ✓ Services aimed at implementing the orders issued by the children’s courts;
- ✓ Prevention and early intervention services;
- ✓ Services related to the removal and placement of children in alternative care (temporary safe care, foster care and child and youth care centres); and
- ✓ Reunification and reconstruction services for children in alternative care.

## 1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher was cognisant of several ethical issues. Prior to commencing the study, the researcher submitted the research proposal to the University’s Ethics committee to obtain ethical clearance. The researcher only carried out the study after receiving authorisation from the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee (Non-Medical). The researcher made sure that participation in this study was voluntary for all participants. The participants were informed about their right to withdraw at any point of the process without any repercussions. Participants were also informed about their right to refrain from answering any questions that

they did not feel comfortable to answer. In addition to ascertaining voluntary participation, the researcher also explained all the elements of the study to participants so that they were fully informed before giving consent.

Thus, participants were made aware of all aspects of the research process and procedures prior to them giving consent. The researcher also guarded against any danger that might have affected the research participants. One way of doing this was to divulge all the necessary information beforehand to the participants as part of the obligation to protect participants from both physical and emotional harm. The study also adhered to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of participants by protecting participants' identities through the use of pseudonyms. Participants were informed that there would be no benefits (monetary, goods or services) attached to participating in the study.

## 1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

This research report comprises five chapters. Chapter 1 is a general introduction and description of the orientation of the study. The chapter begins with an introduction which is followed by rationale for the study, significance of the study, aim and objectives of the study, the research question, the research methodology and a brief outline of the ethical issues considered in this study. The study's key concepts are also defined in this chapter. The Integrated Developmental Model (IDM) of supervision, which was selected to inform this study's theoretical framework, as well as its relevance to the supervision of child protection social workers are also discussed.

Chapter 2 is a review of literature on social work supervision in general and the supervision of child protection social workers in particular, within the South African context.

In Chapter 3, a detailed discussion of the research methodology and ethical considerations is provided. The study's limitations are also highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the research findings. The discussion of the research findings is blended with relevant literature.

Lastly, Chapter 5 discusses the main findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## 1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the study. It briefly highlighted the rationale of the study, significance of the study, research question, aim and objectives of the study, as well as the research methodology. The chapter further discussed the theoretical framework of the study. The key concepts used in the study were also defined. Ethical issues which were considered in this study were briefly discussed. A brief explanation of how the research report is structured was given. The next chapter focuses on a review of literature relevant to the supervision of child protection social workers.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (2012, p. 1) notes that social work strives towards enabling “all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives, and prevent dysfunction through intervention at the points where people interact with their environments.” Its primary mission is “to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed and living in poverty” (National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 2008, p. 1). This mission can be fully accomplished through quality supervision of those tasked with the helping process (social workers).

The NASW and Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) (2013, p. 5), “maintain that supervision is a crucial and a major part of the training and continuing education required for the skilful development of professional social workers”. “It is a very essential part of reflective practice and an integral part of social work” (Hughes, 2010, p. 51). The determination of supervision is to improve the delivery of human services through checking staff presentation and supporting staff members to develop and mature in information and ability (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2011). Supervision protects clients, supports practitioners, and is regarded “as one of the primary elements in the development and maintenance of high standards of social work practice” (NASW & ASWB, 2013, p. 5).

This chapter reviews literature related to supervision of social work practitioners, particularly those in child protection organisations. The literature review, in this chapter, aims to examine the critical roles of supervision in the administration, execution and delivery of quality child welfare services. The chapter further reviews challenges related to social work supervision, particularly in the South African context.

#### 2.2 CHILD PROTECTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Child protection refers to “the process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect” (Royal College

of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2014, p. 102). In addition, child protection services are aimed at preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children in all settings (DSD, 2006; UNICEF, 2006). Thus, child protection social workers in South Africa strive towards implementing child protection services for the benefit of those children falling within their organisations' area of jurisdiction.

Closely linked to child protection services are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As the UN (2015) cogently observes, child protection issues intersect with every one of the seventeen SDGS and failure to address obstacles to child protection will be tantamount to failing to achieve the SDGs. For instance, children separated from their mothers at early developmental stages, if they stay in underfunded institutional settings, are at higher danger of premature death. This would delay efforts to ensure health lives and promote the well-being of all at all ages (SDG 3) Protecting children requires close cooperation between different partners, and this would consolidate the need for a global partnership for sustainable development (SDG 17).

The successful and effective implementation of child protection services, and, indirectly, the attainment of the SDGs, therefore, needs the supervision of the child protection social workers by qualified individuals mandated to render supervision services within child protection services. Hence, supervision plays a fundamental role in the work of child protection social workers as they deal with delicate issues affecting those individual children identified as in need of care and protection.

In a nutshell, child protection is a worldwide phenomenon and, indeed, “child welfare supervision has gained increased recognition as a key organizational factor in workforce retention” (Landsman & D’Aunno, 2012, p. 1). Child protection issues that social workers deal with worldwide in general and South Africa in particular include the divide between physical punishment and abuse of children and child fatalities, prevalent child sexual, physical and emotional abuse, maltreatment and neglect. In addition, there has been an increase of children being abducted, kidnapped, exploited and/or trafficked.

Child protection social workers derive their professional mandate from various statutory instruments such as the ones mentioned above, as well as from their academic knowledge and professional boards, like the SACSSP, that regulate their work. They do this whilst

ensuring the importance of participatory democracy by involving the children when making decisions that affect the children concerned (Lombard, 2010). Notably, is that working with children will remain a trying and difficult aspect of the social work practice as demanding choices in often complex situations have to be made with a wide array of legislation, law and social policy (Brown, 2014; Muchanyerei, 2015). In this regard, the significance of social work supervision should not be underestimated.

## 2.3 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

As in most sectors of the South African society, the post-1994 democratic government had to redress the imbalances of Apartheid which were characterised mainly by racial segregation and discrimination (Patel, 2008). The government put in place, among other reforms, legislation and white papers aimed at treating all citizens equally, with dignity and respect. In order to execute the above, the government is guided by both international and local statutes. These edicts include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa; and the Children's Act (38 of 2005, as amended). These legal instruments assist child protection social workers and their supervisors in dealing with matters affecting children.

### 2.3.1 *The International Convention on the Rights of the Child*

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child sets minimum satisfactory principles for the wellbeing of all children. The South African government signed the Convention in 1995, committing itself to abide by the Convention's guiding principles, namely that all children have an intrinsic right to life, existence and growth (The United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2001). The UNAIDS (2001) additionally highlighted that all children should be treated in the same way (non-discrimination); in all policies and decisions regarding children, the welfare of the child should be the main concern; and the views of children should be valued and taken into account in all decisions concerning them. By signing the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989), the South African government made it a key instrument which guided the development of the Children's Act, which subsequently seeks to assist child protection social workers as they identify and intervene with children in need of care and protection. It is however, important for the child

protection social work supervisors and supervisees to familiarise themselves with all the 41 articles, each of which details a different type of the children's rights as they do their work.

### *2.3.2 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

In order to reaffirm observance to the principles of the rights and welfare of the child enshrined in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, member states of the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU), in 1990, adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (OAU, 1999). The Charter entered into power in November 1999 (OAU, 1999). In addition to the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child mentioned above, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child also identifies that the child inhabits an exceptional and an advantaged position in the African society (OAU, 1999). Therefore, for the complete and pleasant growth of his/her behaviour, the child should be raised in a family setting. The child should enjoy an atmosphere of pleasure, love and appreciation. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child (1999) also asserts that the child, "due to the needs of his/ her physical and mental development; also need particular care with regard to health, physical, mental, moral and social development, as well as legal protection in conditions of freedom, dignity and security". The African Charter however, emphasised the need to include African cultural values and experiences when dealing with the rights of the child which the child protection social workers should be aware of through the different models of supervision for example going for trainings and seeking guidance in instances where they are not certain on how to deal with the culture-related information presented. There should nevertheless be an awareness campaign towards tackling these specific African issues that affect children. It is important for the child protection supervisors and supervisees to be acquainted to the African cultural values and experiences in order to guide them as they provide services to the children in order to protect them.

### *2.3.3 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*

The South African Constitution is the supreme law of the nation. The Bill of Rights deals specifically with children's rights. Subsections 1 and 2, for instance, provide that every child has a right to be safe from mistreatment, negligence, exploitation or deprivation; and that a child's best interests are of vital significance in every difficulty concerning the child

(SCORE, 2008). In short, therefore, all children have the constitutional right to appropriate care, survival, protection, development and participation (SCORE, 2008). It is evident that the piece of the legislation safeguard children's right which is important for the child protection social workers supervisors as they provide supervision so that the supervisees are guided as they provide services to the children.

#### *2.3.4 The Children's Act (38 of 2005, as amended)*

The Children's Act is the main legal instrument which guides child protection social workers when performing their duties. The Act defines a child as a person under the age of eighteen years. The Act ensures that the rights of all children are not infringed upon by making it an offence for a parent or legal guardian of a child to deliberately neglect, abandon, abuse or exploit a child. Child abuse is defined in the Act as physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse and deliberate neglect. The Act, in Section 150, states conditions under which a child may be said to be in need of care and protection, as well as the steps which need to be followed in dealing with such a child.

Child protection social workers are given the powers and mandate to address challenges faced by such children. It is through this obligation derived from the Act that child protection social workers and their supervisors render a variety of child protection services in communities that they work with. They do this through both preventive and corrective procedures. At a preventive level, child protection social workers play a pivotal role of disseminating information to communities on issues such as child abuse, children's rights and responsibilities, as well as available resources for children (McNeill, 2009).

Corrective procedures involve responding to a child's allegation on matters relating to abuse. Consequently, it is critical for child protection social workers to possess all the skills necessary for dealing with child abuse issues. For instance, they need to listen to the child, recognise and be sensitive to the child's feelings and fears, reassure the child that there will be support for them, and, most importantly, report the abuse (McNeill, 2009). It is in this vein that social work supervision is paramount through its educational, supportive and administrative functions, in order to ensure quality and effective rendering of these child protection services. Social workers require supervision when carrying out their obligations

such as family preservation, removing and placing children believed to be in need of care and protection, and rendering reunification services to the children’s biological families.

### 2.3.5 Policy framework governing supervision in South Africa

The declaration of social work as a scarce skill by the Minister of Public Service and Administration in 2003 acted as a catalyst in the development of policies and strategies to attend to the concerns and conditions of services that have an unwanted pressure on service delivery (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The DSD responded by initiating the development of a Recruitment and Retention Strategy (DSD, 2006). According to the DSD and SACSSP (2012, p. 11) “The Strategy identified supervision as one of the critical areas that needs attention if retention of professionals is to be realized. The Strategy further highlighted a decline in the productivity and quality of services rendered due to lack of supervision.” Thus, the DSD and SACSSP initiated the development of the supervision framework, as well as norms and standards for supervision within the social work profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2013). This was also in response to mounting pressure from various stakeholders such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), other state departments, local government and social workers themselves, including those social workers in private practice.

The DSD and SACSSP (2012, p. 15) observe that, with reference to the supervision of social workers and other social service professionals, organizations and employers operate within the ambit of different policies and legislative frameworks. These policies and legislative frameworks are summarized in Table 2.1 below.

**Table 2.1: Summary of supervision legal and policy frameworks, Adapted from DSD & SACSSP (2012)**

<b>Policy and legislative framework</b>	<b>Core mandate</b>
DSD (2005): Integrated Service Delivery Model towards improved social services	The model provides the nature, scope and the levels of intervention based on the developmental social service delivery that provides guidance on service delivery.
DSD (18/2009): Recruitment and Retention Strategy for	Recruitment and Retention Strategy calls for the effective management and supervision of social welfare professionals as part of

Social Workers	effective service delivery.
Batho Pele “People First” White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997).	Batho Pele principle promotes service delivery which is quality-driven and person-centered. It also allows access to information, encourages transparency, redress and respect, standards, cost-effective and time-bound.
Labour Relations Act, No. 66 of 1998	The Act ensures the right to fair labour practices. The Act reflects the vision of workers’ and employers’ rights as envisioned by the Constitution.
White Paper for Social Welfare (1997)	Chapter 4 of the White Paper for Social Welfare gives an overview of the status of human resources within the welfare sector, specifically social workers. It reflects issues of redeployment capacity-building and orientation, education and training, remuneration and the working conditions.
DSD (2011, August): Framework for Social Welfare Services	Supervision of social service practitioners aims to ensure the delivery of quality services to beneficiaries, whilst supporting and building the capacity of the practitioner.

The above overview by the DSD and SACSSP (2012) gives an important insight into the legislative frameworks and policies guiding social work practice and supervision, as well as quality service delivery in the country. It, however, suffices to note that this overview does not capture other important legislation frameworks and policies such as the Children’s Act No. 38 of 2005 as amended, as well as the SACSSP Code of Ethics of 2007. According to Engelbrecht (2013, p. 457), the SACSSP’s Code of Ethics, the Children’s Act, together with other statutory requirements of social work practices in South Africa “provide a mandate for supervision of social workers.”

As noted earlier, the rendering of child protection services and the subsequent supervision of child protection social workers in South Africa is informed by both international and local statutes. These statutes play a significant role in guiding child protection organizations when executing their duties. It should, therefore, be borne in mind that several factors interplay and intersect in respect of supervision of child protection social workers. Thus, in South Africa, the delivery of child protection services in general and the supervision of child protection social workers in particular is informed by, among others, socio-political factors, the historical past of the country, local and international legislation, and the SACSSP Code of Ethics.

## 2.4 HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

Sheafor and Horejsi (2011, p. 599) observe that “throughout most of its history, the social work profession has looked to the process of supervision as critical to the preparation of new practitioners as well as a means of quality control in the delivery of services.” “The profession of social work has long considered professional supervision as significant to the care of best training and has taken a guidance role in affirming the significance of supervision in human service settings” (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2014, p.2). Social work extends the use of supervision well beyond the worker’s period of training.

The history of social work supervision can be traced way back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the Charity Organization Society movement (Tsui, 2005). Kadushin and Harkness (2002) add that the most important component of help was offered by “friendly visitors”, helpers who were allocated to families to offer individual care and to encourage behavior in a socially enviable direction. “ Before social work was trained in school settings, social workers were taught or mentored in agencies by experienced social work field educators who taught them what social work was, how to perform social work tasks, how to build relationships and how to develop the necessary self-awareness for effective practice” (Australian Learning & Teaching Council, 2010, p. 8)

Kadushin and Harkness (2002) note that in the early conceptions of supervision, the supervisor was the master of the supervisee and knew exactly what was good for the supervisee and the supervisee also had his or her influence on the client as he or she was assumed to know what is good for the client. These conceptions, however, might have fostered an authoritative relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee, as well as between the supervisees and their clients. In other words, a more psychodynamic approach to supervision was applied, “whereby the supervisor was seen as the uncomplicated expert who had the knowledge and expertise to assist the supervisee, thus giving the supervisor a significant authority” (Smith, 2009, p. 1- 10).

Carroll (2007) summarises the historical development of professional supervision by identifying three stages through which it has travelled, namely stage one, stage two and stage three. Stage one took place in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when supervision was presented as a helpful and thoughtful space for social workers. Stage two of supervision emerged in the

1950s with some bias towards psychotherapy orientations. The last phase, stage three, took place in the 1970s when there was “a major shift in supervision theory and practice” as supervision “now became centred on practice, the actual work done with a view to use that work to improve future work” (Carroll, 2007, p. 34).

Tsui (2005) explains that, due to this long history of supervision, the trends that it took can better be understood in different phases of development. After some years of the development of the social work profession, the supervision process saw a shift in focus from administrative to educational supervision. This notion is supported by The Australian Learning & Teaching Council (2010, p. 8) which observes that “When social work education moved into academia, a dual approach evolved, which consisted of classroom and field instruction.” The Australian Learning & Teaching Council (2010, p. 8) refers to this “process by which field instructors assist a student’s education through practical training and professional growth in a human service organization as supervision”.

#### *2.4.1 Social work supervision in South Africa*

The Department of Labour (2008, p. 67) observes that the social work profession in South Africa was marred by “lack of coherent governance and leadership” particularly during the apartheid era. The SACSSP was sceptically viewed by many black social workers, at that time, as an extension of Apartheid control. To date, the SACSSP has failed to fully transform particularly in the area of professional development involving provision of proper supervision and support to its members (Agere, 2014). On the contrary, Earle (2007) believes that the SACSSP should be applauded for its efforts in working with various other stakeholders in promoting the interests of the profession.

At the dawn of independence, in 1994, the democratically elected South African government had a massive mission of addressing the inequities it inherited from its apartheid predecessors (Sibanda, 2014). One of the new democratic government’s mandates was to reverse the legacy of apartheid through the democratic government’s pre-election manifesto of promoting equity, social justice and human rights (Patel, 2008). According to Engelbrecht (2006), there was a dramatic change in learning and training institutions, in particular a high growth in the number of black graduates entering the professional workforce. The author adds that organisations and company policies were restructured to value diversity and to

uphold the human rights enshrined in the Constitution. This also included promoting equity by increasing the number of black social worker supervisors in child protection organisations.

The first announcement of social work as a scarce “skill” was made in 2003 by the Minister of Public Service and Administration Zola Skweyiya (Schenck, 2004, DSD & SACSSP, 2012). In February 2007, President Thabo Mbeki echoed the same sentiments in his State of the Nation Address when he highlighted the need to “accelerate the training of family social workers at professional and auxiliary levels to ensure that identified households are properly supported and monitored” (Department of Labour, 2008). According to the report by the Department of Labour (2008, p. 5), “This statement represents the most high-level public acknowledgement by government of the critical role of social workers in social development and an important statement towards improving the support of these professionals at both the level of education and working conditions.”

## 2.5 ETHICAL ISSUES IN SUPERVISION

Social work ethics relate to how one behaves within the profession. They go hand in glove with values, which refer to what one believes as a social worker. There should, however, be value clarification and this should usually take place at the beginning stages of the supervisory relationship. Supervisors are therefore faced with the task of value clarification, as well as assisting supervisees with reducing conflict between professional and personal values. The AASW (2014, p. 3) warns that “social work supervision is an aspect of professional practice and, as such, all social workers are required to meet their ethical responsibilities”, when engaging in supervisory processes. Consequently, “supervisors assume a wide range of responsibilities that require in-depth knowledge of the standards of the profession” (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004, p. 8).

In South Africa, for instance, the ethical responsibilities of social workers are envisaged in the Code of Ethics for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2007), whilst those for supervisors and supervisees are outlined in the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Social workers should, therefore, familiarize themselves with these guidelines. They should know issues such as who can be a social work supervisor, ratio of supervisor/supervisee, and the theoretical model underpinning

supervision. They should also educate their employers (if the employer does not have a social work background) that only social workers may act as social workers' supervisors and, if there are no qualified persons to become supervisors within the organization, supervision services may be outsourced (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

Ethical standards in supervision, which are discussed in detail below, include issues relating to confidentiality, respect of persons, professional integrity including honest and competency, social justice, and interdisciplinary collaboration. These ethical guidelines need to be discussed and reviewed by supervisors and their supervisees during the supervision contract, in order to effectively deal with ethical dilemmas. The guidelines are briefly discussed below:

### *2.5.1 Confidentiality*

The SACSSP (2007) emphasizes that confidentiality should be expected in the perspective of the right to privacy which is also enshrined in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. This right to privacy should, therefore, be respected and upheld at all times by social workers. The breach of clients' right to privacy may therefore be regarded as unethical which may lead to disciplinary measures being taken against those involved.

Child protection social workers come across a lot of information, some of it sensitive, during their interaction with clients. This information should always be kept confidential. Frontline social workers engage with abused children, those living with HIV, those having different sexual orientations, drug addicts, among others. As such, supervisors should discuss with supervisees about the importance of upholding the principle of confidentiality and the implications of failing to do so. Dilemmas in this regard should also be highlighted so that they would know when and how confidentiality may present difficulties in certain instances. If there is need to share some private information with the client's significant others, this should also be discussed with them. Measures to ensure that the client receives necessary psychosocial and other support should nonetheless be in place before sharing the information with others (AASW, 2014).

Confidentiality also entails maintaining control over information shared between parties in the supervision contract (supervisor and supervisee). Drawing of a supervision contract is,

therefore, vital so that parties involved have an opportunity to refer to the details of the contract.

### *2.5.2 Respect of persons*

The supervision process should always be built on mutual respect between the supervisor and supervisee. Both parties should understand that one can only respect clients if one respects oneself as well as other parties in the supervision contract. This will extend to respect of clients. The SACSSP (2007, p. 6) observes that social workers “respect the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, self-determination and autonomy, and are mindful that legal and other obligations may lead to inconsistency and conflict with the exercise of these rights.” Thus, child protection social workers should not be judgmental of clients on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, religion, cultural practices, language, socio-economic status, ethnicity and race. They should embrace the principle of diversity and thus accept people as they are.

### *2.5.3 Professional integrity (honesty and competency)*

Supervisors and supervisees rendering child protection services need to protect the integrity of the profession by being honest, fair and respectful. Supervisors, for instance, need to be fair when evaluating supervisees’ work and not be driven by hate, jealousy and self-aggrandizement. Simultaneously, supervisors should be honest and respectful to clients and not abuse the powers and trust invested in them. This calls for avoiding dual relationships with subordinates and clients, dishonesty and negligence. Instead, child protection social workers should exhibit a high degree of competency in their line of work and be honest to the client system in areas that they lack competency. They can improve in areas in which they are lacking through further training and professional development. Supervisors should make it their responsibility to ensure that they arrange for continuing training and staff development of their subordinates (AASW, 2014).

### *2.5.4 Social justice*

Supervisors should encourage supervisees to pursue social change while condemning and challenging social injustice, especially against vulnerable members of society such as

children and those living in abject poverty (SACSSP, 2007). Child protection social workers deal with abused children, those enduring discrimination, and they, therefore, advocate for the rights of these children whilst shunning corruption. Child protection social workers should ensure that their clients are aware of social services available in their communities through information dissemination and education campaigns.

### *2.5.5 Interdisciplinary collaboration*

Social workers need to understand that their profession does not exist in a vacuum. There are other disciplines such as medicine, education and psychology that are useful in the effective provision and rendering of child protection services. These service providers should be consulted when there is need, for the benefit of the clients. However, collaborators need to do so using the principles of equity, equality, respect and fairness so that they can avoid playing power games (Muchanyerei, 2015; Sibanda, 2014). Supervisees, nevertheless, should first seek advice and counsel of their supervisors before engaging other service providers, in order to deal with this conflict of interest in other instances.

## 2.6 THE ESSENCE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

Davys and Beddoe (2010, p. 21) define professional supervision in social work as a specialised activity in which at least two specialists, one of whom is a supervisor, “are engaged throughout the duration of their careers regardless of experience or qualification. The participants are accountable to professional standards and defined competencies and to organizational policy and procedures.” Morrison (2003, p. 46) states that “The overall aim of supervision is to promote best practice for clients by maintaining existing good practice and continuously striving to improve it.” Hughes (2010, p. 62) adds “that the purpose of supervision is to enhance the social worker’s professional skills, knowledge, and attitudes, in order to achieve competency in providing quality care. It aids in professional growth and development and improves outcomes”.

It is abundantly clear from the above that supervision plays an important role in the lives of both child protection organizations and the clients they serve. Supervisors, through their different roles in the supervision process, such as clarifying lines of communication and authority, as well as planning and preparing for supervision services, among others, on one

hand, equip supervisees with the knowledge and skills to perform their duties in a professional manner. On the other hand, supervisees keep abreast with new developments in the professional field whilst simultaneously complying with the Code of ethics (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). This will, resultantly, lead to the effective delivering of child protection services. Through adequate and strong supervision, therefore, child protection organizations are able to accomplish their missions and set goals whilst at the same time satisfying the needs of clients. The functions are briefly discussed below:

### *2.6.1 Functions of supervision*

Supervision serves many purposes in social work (Hughes, 2010). In a study on supervision models in social work, Tsui (2005, p. 20) found that “the primary goal of supervision is to ensure that the quantity and quality of service leads to a successful client outcome as a result of social work intervention.” The author also reported that supervision is a means to increase growth as it benefits “to equip the supervisee with the professional knowledge and skills essential to do the job excellently” (Tsui, 2005, p. 20). Tsui (2005) further discovered that supervision offers a period and space for the supervisor to demonstrate thankfulness and offer emotional support to the supervisee. Finally, supervision promotes team work by giving “social workers the opportunity to communicate, coordinate and cooperate with one another” (Tsui, 2005, p. 20).

Similarly, the AASW (2014) proposes that professional supervision plays a pivotal role in three main ways. Firstly, it enhances “the professional skills and competence of social work practitioners and thereby strengthening the capacities of social workers to achieve positive outcomes for the people with whom they work” (AASW, 2014, p. 2). Secondly, through supervision, social workers are engaged “in on-going professional learning that enhances capacities to respond effectively to complex and changing practice environments” (AASW, 2014, p. 2). Thirdly, supervision contributes toward “retaining social workers in organizations by supporting and resourcing them to provide quality, ethical and accountable services in line with the organization’s vision, goal and policies” (AASW, 2014, p. 2).

The above functions are best captured in three broad components of social work supervision, namely educational, supportive and administrative components (Coleman, 2003; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). These three functions of supervision should not be viewed independent of

each other as they “overlap, interplay and complement in different ways” (AASW, 2014, p. 4). Thus, “the combination of educational, administrative and supportive supervision is essential for the growth of skilled, principled and professional social workers” (Engelbrecht, 2013; NASW & ASWB, 2013, p. 8).

Researchers in social work supervision have thus focussed mainly on the issues of supervision with regards to its three processes, namely administrative, educational and supportive supervision. Their focus has been more on the process of supervision than on the perceptions of those who undergo this process in their professional development. The main focus of the study is to examine the critical roles of supervision in the administration, execution and delivery of quality child welfare services, as well as to investigate the knowledge and views of supervisors and supervisees regarding supervision style and model, the use of power, authority and relationship in supervision, as well as challenges allied to supervision. It is those on the receiving end who will grow as professionals because the guidance provided by the more experienced will lead to the development of the other as a professional. If this does not occur in practice, it will be difficult for the developing professionals to uphold the standards and values of the social work profession. The three different functions are discussed in the next three sections.

#### *2.6.1.1 Educational function*

The AASW (2014, p. 3) states that education in supervision “entails a facilitated process of exploration and critical reflection on practice aimed at social workers better understanding the people they work with, themselves as practitioners, the impact they have and knowledge, theories, values and perspectives that can be applied to enhance the quality and outcomes of their practice.” “The educational function is a primary element of the professional supervision of social workers. This also includes the inculcation of professional standards, delivery of information, and training in practice skill for effective professional practice” (Guidelines for Social Work Supervision, 2009, p. 1). “Attention is concentrated on increasing practice-based knowledge, understanding and abilities that will increase the capability and the professional fulfilment of social workers. It also requires both self-reflection and crucial examination as social workers look at dynamics and relations at interpersonal level, as well as the wider impact of policy and structures in society. Consequences for practice are drawn from the new information and understanding, which

can be examined and improved over time through the supervisory relationship” (AASW 2014, p. 3). Burns (2012, p. 50) also concurs that the primary focus of professional supervision of child protection workers in the education function is “to provide a regular space for the supervisees to reflect upon the content and process of their work; to develop and understand skills within the work; to receive information and another perspective concerning one’s work; and to receive both content and process feedback”.

Kadushin and Harkness (2002, p. 131) highlight the significance of educational supervision by stating that, “education for social work provided the general framework of the knowledge needed for the practice.” Supervision was noted as more significant than graduate training in defining the actual use of knowledge. They further argued that “when supervision fails, the failures are most keenly felt in the area of supervision” (p. 131). In most cases, the supervisees would blame their supervisors for not critically analysing their work and guiding them on how to handle cases. Ultimately, educational supervision provides the training that enables workers to achieve and deliver the best possible services to the clients. It is also important to educate child protection social workers on the five p’s in social work so that they are equipped to tackle problems when they come. The five p’s, namely people, problem, place, process, and personnel cannot be conveniently treated in isolation because child protection social workers need to learn about the people, the intervention processes they will use and the ways in which they will professionally engage with the people (Burns, 2012).

#### *2.6.1.2 Supportive function*

Supportive supervision is “concerned with workers’ job satisfaction, morale and development of job-related knowledge, values and skills” (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2011, p. 599). This allows the supervisee “to deal with job-related issues and to improve the approaches and feelings that are beneficial to effective job performance” (Coleman, 2003, p. 1). Supportive supervision also “sustains staff morale and gives supervisees a sense of professional self-worth, and a feeling of belonging, both in their agencies and in the profession” (NASW & ASWB, 2013, p. 2). According to AASW (2014, p.3) “Supervision is a space where social workers can become more aware of how their work is affecting them and, in turn, how their personal reactions and emotional state are impacting on practice”. Supervision is “a place for

encouragement and validation, working through personal-professional bound” (AASW 2014, p. 3).

Munson (2002) argues that “supportive” supervision is more effective learning than non-supportive or negative supervision. According to Kadushin and Harkness (2002, p. 161) “supportive supervision includes such procedures as reassurance, encouragement and recognition of achievement, along with realistically based expressions of confidence, approval and attentive listening that communicates interest and concern”. According to Burns (2012), “supportive” supervision is important to child protection workers because they have to be certified and supported both as persons and as workers and also to safeguard that as persons and social workers they are not left alone to carry unnecessary difficulties, problems and projections.

It has been further debated that professional sustenance and progress functions of supervision within social work have been deficient, with too much attention being focused at managerial surveillance (Gibbs, 2001; White & Harris, 2007). “A study that examined the impact of stress on child welfare supervisors highlights how supervisors are also at risk of burnout and/or compassion fatigue, a situation which would severely undermine their capacity to provide support and supervision to their supervisees” (Burns, 2012, p. 50). Social work “studies that focused on decisions to leave found that lack of supportive supervision was one of the main factors which contributed to workers expressing an intention to leave their jobs” (Burns, 2012, p. 51). Literature highlights that supportive supervision is very important and it is one of the key sources of improving job satisfaction and mediating burnout (Hughes, 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Morrison, 2003).

### *2.6.1.3 Administrative function*

The Guidelines on Social Work Supervision (2003, p. 1) state that the administrative function “is a management function that includes the setting of service objectives and priorities, clarification of roles, planning and assignment of work, review and evaluation of work, and accountability and responsibility for the supervisee's work”. NASW and ASWB (2013) observe that administrative supervision is the same with management. It involves monitoring the work of supervisees to ensure that it meets agency standards (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2011). Social work supervision has its roots in the administrative function (Tsui, 2005), which is

concerned with the promotion and maintenance of good organizational standards and policies. Hence, administrative supervision is concerned with ensuring that social work service rendering to the user-system occurs in an effective and efficient manner (Bogo & McKnight, 2005). Closely linked to administrative activities is accountability whereby attention is focused “largely on the organizational context of practice and simultaneously relates to the broader professional, inter-organizational, political and legislative context of the field of practice with which social workers are expected to engage”, (AASW, 2014, p. 4).

Davis (2010) states that the administrative function is about monitoring the supervisees, evaluating their work and making sure the agency’s policies, philosophies, and procedures are being adhered to by the supervisee. Thus, as part of an agency’s middle-management team, supervisors play an important role in agency policy, program and personnel decisions (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2011). Kadusin and Harkness (2002) argue that supervision is a special aspect of organizational administration, and administration can be understood as a process that implements organizational objectives. Supervision is, however, “an administrative process with an educational purpose and this emphasizes the view of supervision as a process involving inextricably related and interdependent functions of administration and teaching” (Williamson 1961, p. 26).

According to Kadushin and Harkness (2002, p. 26), a supervisor is “a member of the administrative staff offering an indirect service that includes administrative, educational and supportive functions”. This implies that, in administrative supervision, the supervisor does not work directly with the supervisees as in the case of educational supervision where the main purpose is to teach directly. In administrative supervision, the supervisor is a link in the chain of administration because the administrator has an indirect contact with the worker. Kadushin and Harkness (2002) outlined the tasks of an administrative supervisor as staff recruitment, inducting the placing workers, work planning and delegation, monitoring, reviewing and evaluation of work and coordination. This implies that administrative supervision allows the supervisor to plan and direct the movement of all the workers in an agency unlike in educational supervision where the focus is on transferring the knowledge of the profession from the experienced to the inexperienced worker.

Burns (2012, p. 49) states that in his interviews with the social workers, “supervision as an exchange resource was considered one of the key factors in the decisions to stay or leave

child protection and welfare social work. A typical aspect of these discussions was the unbalanced focus of supervision, where the administrative focus was prominent with little attention on the other foci of supervision". "The managerial attention in supervision is the only factor of the three core purposes of supervision within social work practice, which is educational, supportive, and administrative" (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006, p. 60). Burns (2012, p. 5) further states that, "The primary foci of the administrative function for child protection social workers are to have space to explore and express personal distress, re-stimulation, transference or counter-transference that may be brought up by the work". "The other foci are to plan and utilize their personal and professional resources better; to be proactive rather than reactive; and to ensure quality of work" (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012, p. 64).

### 2.6.2 *Methods of supervision*

Hawkins and Shohet (2006) assert that there are several types of supervision that supervisors may choose to adopt. This view is supported by Sheafor and Horejsi (2011) who observe that supervisory sessions can take several forms. Similarly, the AASW (2014, p. 5) adds that "Social workers engage in a range and combination of supervisory arrangements that can meet the *Supervision Standards* if they address the purpose, functions, standards and requirements of professional supervision." In fact, supervision is a continuing procedure which is practiced in many diverse locations and forms, stretching from the proper planned office-based sessions to relaxed and ad hoc discussions in the corridors (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Hughes, 2010; Morrison, 2003).

The AASW (2014), however, warns that, "Each of the supervisory schedules are possibly expected to have positives, negatives and uncertainties related with the precise practice setting in which it is applied. Social work practitioners and managers in child protection organizations are, therefore, required to be quick to respond to emergent pressures and to analyse and discuss measures to achieve the best outcomes". This calls for collaboration and team work in the choice of more relevant supervisory arrangements (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2011). The most common types of supervisory relationships, which will be discussed next – include individual supervision, group supervision, team supervision and peer supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Hughes, 2010; Morrison, 2003).

### *2.6.2.1 Individual supervision*

According to Hughes (2010, p. 67), “supervision is predominantly a one-to-one relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee.” This notion is developed by Sheafor and Horejsi (2011) who point out that one-on-one meetings between the supervisor and supervisee are the most prevalent form of interaction. The DSD and SACSSP (2012) state that, due to its intensity, individual supervision promotes personal growth on the supervisee. A supervisee has an opportunity to spend “scheduled private time with his or her supervisor during which the worker’s performance can be candidly examined with sufficient emotional safety to address practice successes and failures” (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2011, p. 599). Thus, the advantage of individual supervision is that the supervisee gets adequate time and attention from the supervisor, and is, therefore, able to extract more from the relationship because there is more focus on the problems and concerns she or he may be bringing to the supervisor (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

“The role of the supervisor encompasses the administrative, educational and supportive functions” (DSD & SACSSP, 2012, p. 358). A supervisor utilizing this method of supervision is, therefore, supposed to understand the supervisee’s needs and address them accordingly. Knowledge of both the supervisee’s level of professional development as prescribed in the IDM, as well as the phase of the supervision is of paramount importance. This will help the supervisor to provide relevant information in accordance with the needs of the supervisee.

Not only does individual supervision have positives in the supervision process, but its shortcomings also ought to be highlighted. A major setback of this supervision arrangement, particularly in the context of child protection social workers, is time-consumption (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). Given the shortage of social workers in child protection organizations and the resultant high caseloads, it is extremely difficult to utilize this type of supervision. Consequently, some supervisors resort to group supervision though individual supervision might be the more appropriate method in certain instances. Individual supervision, thus, requires availability of adequate time for it to be fully utilized. This, therefore, calls for the need to address the issue of shortage of child protection social workers, starting at the policy level by improving the working conditions of these social workers and addressing all the concerns which result in several social workers opting for other sectors.

### *2.6.2.2 Group supervision*

Group supervision is defined by Morrison (2003, p. 200) as a “...negotiated process whereby members come together in an agreed format to reflect on their work by sharing their skills, experience and knowledge in order to improve both the individual and group capacities.” Sheafor and Horejsi (2011) observe that group supervision offers a time-efficient chance for new workers or volunteers to develop events, share facts and insights, and help each other gain knowledge and skill in service provision and meeting agency expectations. Hawkins and Shohet (2006, p. 152) echo the same notion that one of the rewards of group supervision is that it “provides a supportive atmosphere in which new staff or trainees can share anxieties and realize that others are facing similar issues.” In other words, “participants benefit from both the collaborative contributions of the group members as well as the guidance of the supervisor” (AASW, 2014, p. 5).

This arrangement of supervision may be appropriate in the context of South African child protection organizations where it is reported that supervisors might not have enough time due to high caseloads (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2013). The supervisor needs, however, to be skilled in group dynamics (AASW, 2014), in order to provide quality supervision in such an atmosphere.

In spite of the above-mentioned advantages of group supervision, there are also concerns in some instances about this supervision arrangement. Thus, group supervision is not immune to some of the challenges associated with group work in general. Morrison (2000), for example, notes that this method of supervision does not address the individual needs of supervisees. Individual supervisees are at times viewed as a group with the incorrect assumption that the problems which they face are always similar. This might result in supervisees continuing with the same mistakes in their line of work since their individual problems would not have been addressed.

More so, group supervision infringes on the principle of confidentiality as client cases may be discussed during supervision sessions. Some client information might not need to be shared with every colleague, but a supervisee may feel compelled to share such information during a supervision session, in order to get a problem resolved by the supervisor. Both supervisors and supervisees should, therefore, have a clear contract on what information may

be and may not be discussed during group supervision, in order to try and address this supervision and professional conflict.

Nevertheless, group supervision remains a cardinal method of supervision in child protection organizations as it addresses some of the shortcomings of individual supervision. As long as the shortage of social workers within the child welfare sector remains unaddressed, child protection organizations will continue utilizing this supervision arrangement at a larger scale as they have to deal with many cases with the available human resources.

### *2.6.2.3 Team supervision*

Team supervision, in the words of Hawkins and Shohet (2006, p. 162), “involves working with a group that has not come together just for the purpose of joint supervision, but have an interrelated work life outside the group.” In this kind of relationship, workers in the same team project are grouped together for the purpose of supervision due to the nature of their jobs, for instance child protection social workers, social auxiliary workers and community workers.

Team supervision allows workers to share different ideas and benefit from each other’s input. Moreover, the supervisor is able to supervise several supervisees at the same time, thus, saving time. This is definitely economic in terms of time, given the shortage of experienced supervisors in most child protection organizations and the caseloads that they deal with.

This kind of supervision arrangement, in addition to other challenges, also faces problems which are common in working with groups. This is worsened by the fact that the supervisor has to engage with workers not having the same line of work. Although their work might be interrelated, there are obvious differences in the level of education of the supervisees (social workers, social auxiliary workers and community workers). Instead of saving valuable time, some considerable time might be spent with the supervisor trying to address the needs of all parties concerned. Furthermore, instead of building team spirit during supervision sessions, some workers may be frustrated during supervision and, therefore, end up not benefiting as expected from the supervision process. Team supervision, as a result, requires clear-cut goals and objectives so that it can at least be useful to parties involved.

#### *2.6.2.4 Peer supervision*

Peer supervision occurs when one employee pursues supervision from another employee (their peer) (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). The AASW (2014, p. 6) argues that peer supervision is whereby “a collaborative learning and supervisory forum is established by two or more professional colleagues (social work or multi-disciplinary) of equal standing in which participants move between the roles of supervisor, supervisee and collaborative learner”. This arrangement of supervision is necessary if workers are unable to acquire “good supervision as their immediate line senior has neither the time nor the ability to supervise them” (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006, p. 164). This arrangement might be necessary in some South African child protection organizations, given the acute shortage of seasoned supervisors in this sector (Department of Labour, 2008; DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2013). However, caution needs to be exercised in this regard in terms of legislative requirements which state that only social workers with a minimum of five years’ professional experience can be supervisors (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

The DSD and SACSSP (2012) emphasizes that peer supervision must not at any point substitute individual or group supervision. This is mainly because of the obvious strengths of the latter and the shortcomings of the former.

### **2.7 CHALLENGES TO SUPERVISION OF CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS**

Studies conducted in the past on social work supervision unearthed a number of challenges to quality supervision in general (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2013; Social Work Policy Institute, 2011). The Social Work Policy Institute (2011, p. 6), for example, identified several challenges and put them into two groups, namely challenges related to “training and knowledge development; and challenges that relate to organizational issues and implementation of child welfare practices”. Similarly, Engelbrecht (2013) categorizes these challenges in terms of training of supervisors, competencies of supervisors, and structural supervision issues. Actually, various studies point to a similar inference that social work supervision remains marred by a complex-combination of interrelated challenges (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2013; Tsui, 2005).

### *2.7.1 Lack of proper supervisor training*

In his study, Engelbrecht (2013) discovered that required specialist training relied on social work experience in the rendering of supervision. This view mirrors the findings of the Social Work Policy Institute (2011, p. 6) which states that there is “lack of adequate training related to the roles, tasks and competencies for being a supervisor”. Clarke (1991, p. 8) “notes that there is a virtual absence of formal training courses for supervisors and that the majority of organizations make the assumption that supervisors are fulfilling their job and the needs of those below them without having any formal way or process of checking”. However, there is need for more specialized supervision preparation in the human service industry environment and such training should emphasis on how to shape a rapport that is constructed on reliance, honesty and mutual exploration with a wide range of supervisees (Hair, 2012; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). Supervisors of child protection social workers need the skills to effectively assist and support their supervisees, most of whom have little social work experience.

### *2.7.2 Supervisors' incompetency*

Lack of skills due to absence of or inadequate specialized supervision training on the part of supervisors has a negative effect on their competency. Engelbrecht (2013) highlights that in the South African context, there appears to be a leadership gap which increases to a skills shortage. Many child protection organizations have difficulty in retaining competent front-line workers and have to constantly deal with frequent turnover of high-ranking and experienced social workers (Social Work Policy Institute, 2011). This may be attributed to the salary difference that “exists between the government and NGO welfare sectors and between different provinces within the NGO sector” (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997). In addition, the government’s aim on employing people and escalating the general quantity of social worker posts, “has resulted in a massive flow of social workers out of the NGO sector into the public welfare sector” (Department of Labour, 2008, p. 71). The combination of these push and pull factors, such as better social work opportunities particularly overseas and/or in other sectors outside social welfare, has resulted in the emigration of South African social workers (Social Work Policy Institute, 2011). This has resulted in a massive shortage of experienced and competent child protection social workers to execute progressive capabilities, such as leadership, administration, support and education to inexperienced social workers.

### *2.7.3 Structural supervision issues*

The DSD and SACSSP (2012) note that there has been a drop in the production and value of services rendered due to deficiency of supervision. However, Botha (2002) believes that the supervision applied is either faulty or weak. This lack of supervision or application of faulty or weak supervision may be attributed to a plethora of factors including extremely high caseloads, workplace stress and anxiety due to personal, professional and societal demands, empathy exhaustion, emotional burnout, lack of resources, inefficiency, and even cases of negligence as social work is condensed to crisis management (Department of Labour, 2008; DSD & SACSSP, 2012). In other instances, social workers are frustrated with their direct management by non-social workers. This is despite the clear stipulation by the Social Services Professions Act No. 110 of 1978 as amended and a reiteration by the SACSSP that social workers may only be supervised on social work matters by another competent registered social worker (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

Social workers also face the risk of a professional identity crisis as they “increasingly identify with their agencies more than their profession” (Engelbrecht, 2013, p. 8). This also may end up in conflicting interests rather than pushing towards a mutual goal in practice. In addition, this results in an over-emphasis on administrative functions in supervision at the expense of educational, supportive and clinical aspects of supervision to progress practice and products (Social Work Policy Institute, 2011).

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

The literature reviewed in this chapter highlighted that supervision is a crucial element to effective social work practice. The assessment of supervisee, as well as the assessment of the impact and outcome of supervision, is a significant responsibility of the supervisor. It can be argued that there is a gap in research studies to identify measures available of the impact and outcome of supervision, to identify the abilities and backing structures that make up a good, competent and effective social work supervisor. Furthermore, the literature reviewed in this chapter outlined the nature and scope of the country's child protection and the legal framework, how these were established alongside the various legislative instruments which reinforce the provision of child protection in South Africa. The successful and effective

implementation of child protection services, therefore, needs the supervision of the child protection social workers by qualified individuals mandated to render supervision services within child protection services. Key to effective supervision is a trained supervisor; however, there is a better need for further examination of the types of professional growth and training options that could be recommended for social work supervisors to permit them to flexibly explore the inherent complications and strains allied to their supervision roles. From the literature which was reviewed, it has led to the conclusion that effective and balanced supervision is essential to best practice and the service offered to clients.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research methodology that was employed in this study, namely the research approach, research design, the study population and sampling procedures, the research instrument, the data collection method, data analysis, as well as the method of data verification. Ethical issues that were considered during this study are also discussed in this chapter. The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of child protection social workers with regards to supervision. In order to achieve this aim, the following specific objectives were formulated:

- i) To examine the type of supervision received by child protection social workers:
- ii) To investigate the role supervision plays in the work that child protection social workers do: and
- iii) To explore supervision-related challenges encountered by the child protection social workers.

The research question formulated for this study was what are the experiences of child protection social workers regarding supervision?

#### 3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study was informed by interpretive social science to explore the experiences and perspectives of the participants and their approach to social reality (Neuman, 2006). As such, the study adopted a qualitative research approach. Burns and Grove (2009) describe the qualitative approach as a logical, liberated methodology used to define life experiences and to give them meaning. Hancock (2002) adds that qualitative research is concerned with the ideas, skills and feelings of individuals generating subjective facts.

Thus, qualitative techniques enable the researcher to be typically immersed in the research process and these are particularly good at answering the “why”, “how” and “what” questions. Qualitative techniques according to Matveev (2002, p. 63), “employ symbols and words to indicate the presence or absence of phenomena or categorize them into different types”. In

addition, they involve the identification and investigation of an amount of often commonly connected variables that give insight into human behaviors. Such behaviors include motivations, opinions and attitudes which are related to the nature and sources of certain complications and the consequences of the complications for those affected. Consequently, qualitative techniques are credited for their ability to supply a greater depth of information about social reality in a particular research setting.

Therefore, the ability of qualitative research to deliver difficult documented reports of how people experience a given phenomenon under study (Fawole, Egbokhare, Itolia, Odejide & Olayinka, 2006) is the reason why the researcher saw it prudent to choose this method. Furthermore, the qualitative research model was selected because “qualitative methods can deliver thorough descriptions of phenomena, address questions that have received little attention, and propose new perceptions and understandings” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 70).

### 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The collective case study design was utilized in this study. The research design is the researcher’s general strategy for attaining responses to the research questions posed. A case study entails an in-depth study of a particular situation or phenomenon. Polit and Beck (2008) note that case studies allow researchers to acquire a wealth of descriptive information and to gain an insight and an understanding of the dynamics as to why individuals think, or behave the way they do. They “offer a multi-perspective analysis in which the researcher considers not just the voice of one or two participants in a situation, but also the views of other relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them” Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 75). The collective case study design was relevant to this study as it allowed the participants to freely express themselves on how they experience supervision in their organisations therefore allowing the researcher to obtain rich descriptions of the phenomenon under the study. The collective case study method can, therefore, utilise numerous sources and methods in the data gathering process. In this regard, data for this study were collected from two groups of participants, namely supervisors and supervisees, in order to obtain divergent views.

According to Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 545), “a case study design should be considered when the researcher cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study and

when the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions because they believe they are relevant for the study”. This was the case in this study.

Researchers utilising this method should, however, guard against some of the criticisms levelled against the case study design. One such criticism is that the case study design lacks scientific rigour and generalizability. In a qualitative study of this nature, however, the aim is not to generalize, but it is to gain as much insight into and to understand the dynamics of the chosen area. Efforts to ensure credibility of the research findings should always be in place. This can be achieved by, for example, continuous monitoring of all interpretations and eliminating biased views.

### 3.4 STUDY POPULATION AND SAMPLING

According to Strydom and Delpont (2002, p. 337), “population is a term that sets boundaries on the study units”. It “refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics” (Strydom, 2011, p. 223). This study was conducted at two child welfare organizations based in Johannesburg, namely Johannesburg Child Welfare Society and Johannesburg Institute of Social Services (JISS) being the study population. Consequently, the sample for the study comprised all child protection social workers, which is two supervisors and ten supervisees, in the service of the said organisations. Both organisations were chosen for their experience and expertise (Nieuwenhuis, 2007) in rendering child protection services in the Johannesburg area. It was the researcher’s conviction that these organisations would be ideal in providing the participants for this study.

“Sampling refers to the process used to select a portion of the population for study” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 50). The researcher selected a total of twelve child protection social workers (ten supervisees and two supervisors). Seven social workers (six supervisees and one supervisor) were selected from Johannesburg Child Welfare Society because the organisation has more child protection social workers, whilst JISS provided five participants (four supervisees and one supervisor).

The researcher applied purposive sampling in selecting the twelve child protection social workers. Babbie (2007, p. 494) defines “purposive sampling as a type of non-probability sampling in which units are selected on the basis of the researcher’s judgment about which

ones will be the most useful representatives”. In other words, participants are selected because “they contain the most characteristics or attributes of the population that serve the purpose of the study best” (Grinnell & Unrau, 2008, p. 153). This technique allowed the researcher to purposely seek typical and divergent data from participants (Strydom & Delport, 2011). Participants for this study were supposed to meet the following selection criteria: registered social workers with the SACSSP; minimum of six months working in the child protection field; receipt of some form of supervision in the workplace; and willing and available during data collection.

The research also used triangulation of sources. Leedy and Ormond (2010, p. 99) state that “triangulation of sources is used when data from other sources are collected with the hope that they will all converge to support a particular hypothesis or theory”. However, Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) define triangulation of sources as the assessment of the regularity of diverse information sources from within the similar technique, for instance, at different times, in communal versus secluded locations and matching people with different views. Two social work supervisors of the child welfare organizations were interviewed as key informants. Apart from meeting the above selection criteria for participants, the two key informants were also selected on the basis that they had supervision experience of more than five years each. They were, therefore, knowledgeable about the topic under discussion and, thus, were able to give a deep insight of the supervision process.

### 3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The researcher utilised a semi-structured interview schedule to collect data from participants (one for the social workers/supervisees and the other for the supervisors) (See Appendices B & C respectively). Legard *et al.* (2003) highlight that semi-structured interview schedules encompass of a list of questions that direct the researcher when conducting the interview. This assisted the researcher in overcoming some of the common limitations of unstructured interviews. The semi-structured schedule comprised of a series of open-ended questions which afforded both the researcher and the participant opportunities to explore further, and in detail, the issues under investigation. The researcher believes that eliciting information using the aforementioned method enabled her to explore the detailed information that inevitably led to a much better understanding of social work supervision.

### *3.5.1 Pre-testing the research instrument*

Pre-testing is the supervision of the data collection instrument with a small set of participants from the population, merely to ascertain certain trends (Neuman, 2006; Strydom & Delpont, 2011). The purpose of pre-testing is to conclude whether the methodology, sampling, instruments and analysis are adequate (Collins, 2003). Although the results of the pre-test were not used in the main investigation, they formed an important part of the research process as pre-testing the research instrument enabled the researcher to understand practical aspects of the research, such as establishing access, estimating time and costs, making contact, among other issues. Apart from this change no further changes were made as the pre-test revealed that the instrument was adequate and appropriate for this study. It enlightened the researcher on the feasibility of the study in terms of financial resources, time and the willingness of the participants to be involved in the study (Strydom & Delpont, 2011). Thus, the research instrument was pre-tested using two participants “possessing the same characteristics as those of the main investigation” (Strydom & Delpont, 2011, p. 394).

## 3.6 DATA COLLECTION

In order to extract the needed data on the experiences of child protection social workers regarding supervision, the researcher applied semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews as a method of data collection with twelve child protection social workers. Greeff (2011) observes that interviewing is a shared method of collecting data in qualitative research which involves a direct exchange with one person or a group of people believed to own the information required.

The researcher compiled a set of pre-determined questions which guided the interview process with the participants. Data collection only commenced after gaining permission from the study participants and after ethics clearance had been received. Participants’ information sheets and consent forms were provided to the participants. The researcher explained the nature of the study to the participants. Interviews were conducted at a place and time that was suitable for the participants such as quiet rooms with no disturbances of people or telephones. Participants also availed themselves for the interviews in their spare time. The interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed verbatim. The researcher first sought both verbal and written consent from the participants to audio-tape the interviews. All participants were

provided with consent forms to this effect and none of the participants refused to sign the forms.

Participants were first asked to fill in their demographic information on separate forms before the commencement of the interviews. The demographic information covered aspects such as age, gender, position in the organisation, professional qualifications, and professional experience. To ensure confidentiality, participants were requested to use their initials and ages when filling their demographic profiles.

Each interview lasted an average of 45 to 25 minutes. Some of the research participants asked if they could get a set of the questions prior to the interview so that they prepare their responses, because of the interview audio recording and would want to schedule their time well. This request was adhered to by the researcher and the interview schedule was made available to the study participants a few days or a few hours prior to the actual interviews. Five participants requested to revise the questions first before they conducted the interviews. The researcher gave them the set of questions before she recorded the interviews but most participants answered before rehearsing the questions.

According to Fouche and Schurink (2011, p. 297), “semi-structured interviews have more flexibility for both the researcher and the participant”. Richard and Grinnell (1993, p. 268) argue that “the response rates for face-to-face interviews are relatively high.” Thus, interviews were chosen as a method of data collection because they allow the researcher to incorporate more open-ended questions, to probe, seek clarity and also allow the participants to openly share their views (De Voset *al.*, 2011; Richard & Grinnell, 1993). Participants were asked the same questions, in order to enhance the **trustworthiness** of the data collected. The researcher also took down brief field notes during interviews. In addition, probes were used to encourage participants to clarify the meaning of their responses and to encourage in-depth descriptions.

### 3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Babbie (2007, p. 378), qualitative data analysis is the “...nonnumeric examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships”. Hancock (2002, p. 8) adds that “analysis of data in a

research project involves summarizing the mass amount of collected data and presenting the findings in a way that communicates the most important features.” In qualitative studies, data collection and data analysis usually occur simultaneously (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis. Rubin and Babbie (2007, p. 745) define this type of data analysis as “a research method for studying virtually any form of communication, consisting primarily of coding and tabulating the occurrences of certain forms of content that are being communicated.” In order to achieve this, the researcher followed certain procedures in data analysis as described by Lacey and Luff (2009) and Hancock *et al.* (2009). They include preliminary data analysis, transcription, clustering similar data, coding and developing themes.

Thematic analysis was chosen because it provides flexibility for the researcher in analysing the data. Furthermore, it is a relatively easy and quick methodology to learn; it summarizes the key features of a larger body of data; and can generate unanticipated insights. Some of the disadvantages include the fact that it is time consuming, and that there are a lot of difficulties involved in analysing the data, for example, encountering overlaps in the emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researcher recorded data using digital recorders. The researcher ensured that she used more than one recording device in case data were lost. Using digital devices gave the researcher ample time to communicate, listen and probe attentively. Furthermore, recording data verbatim allowed the researcher enough time to listen again and again during the process of transcribing. Transcribing involved listening to the recordings repeatedly and writing them on paper verbatim. These transcriptions were read several times, putting notes and commentaries on the page margins.

The voluminous data were then compressed by producing groups, main themes, and significant themes that appeared and reappeared during data collection with the child protection social workers (Schurink *et al.*, 2011). When all the themes had been identified, the researcher engaged the services of an independent coder, another social worker, to do the coding. This was meant to enhance trustworthiness of the findings. The independent coder applied colour-coding which involved similar categories and patterns being highlighted using one colour. The researcher then interpreted the data. Data were then presented thematically as research findings in a hierarchical order.

### 3.8 MEASURES TO ENSURE RIGOR IN QUALITATIVE STUDY

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 90) state that, “scientific rigor in qualitative research is associated with openness, relevance, epistemological and methodological congruence.” The author proposes four criteria to ensure rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative data. These are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Credibility (truth value) seeks to set up how certain the researcher is with the truth of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be increased by maintaining high credibility objectivity. Demonstration that the evidence for the results reported is sound and when the argument made based on the results is strong (LaBanca, 2010). In order to maintain high trustworthiness in a qualitative study, Krefting (1991) suggested four criteria to ensure valid interpretation of data: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. In the qualitative approach, truth value is measured by credibility: having an adequate engagement in the research setting so recurrent patterns in data can be properly identified and verified. Application is established with transferability: allowing readers to be able to apply the findings of the study to their own situations. Since a qualitative researchers perspective is naturally biased due to his or her close association with the data, sources, and methods, various audit strategies can be used to confirm findings (Bowen, 2009; Miller 1997). Therefore trustworthiness of (a) interpretations, and (b) findings are dependent on being able to demonstrate how they were reached (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). To ensure the above, the researcher engaged in thorough, in-depth interviews with the research participants. In addition, re-reading interview transcripts enabled the researcher to capture descriptions as accurately as they were reported by the participants.

Transferability is concerned with the degree to which the outcomes of one study can be practical to other circumstances. It refers to “whether the findings of the research can be transferred from a specific situation or case to another” (Schurink *et. al.*, 2011, p. 420) To allow transferability, the researcher, through the sampling selection criteria, explained sufficient detail of the context of the field work and the factors which impinged on the findings to enable readers to decide whether the environment investigated is similar to other situations or environments and whether the findings could justifiable be applied to those settings (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

Schurink *et al.* (2011, p. 420) note that “dependability is the alternative to reliability. The researcher seeks answers to whether the research process is logical and whether similar results would be obtained if the work were repeated”. The aim of the research was to explore the experiences of child protection social workers with regards to supervision. Thus, a qualitative approach and semi-structured interviews were adopted as data collection methods as these provided an opportunity to capture the information required to convincingly answer the research question.

The researcher ensured conformability as a way of protection against attaching pre-conceived thoughts or own insights on the experiences of the participants. This was attained through upholding objectivity, avoiding being judgmental and being careful of the questions asked while becoming closely involved with the participants’ experiences. The researcher provided rich and detailed data concerning the explanation of the research setting or environment. The researcher further witnessed transaction and procedures, in-depth discussion of findings and themes as a mechanism of safeguarding rigor and transferability of data to other settings (Shenton, 2004).

### 3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher was mindful of the following ethical issues:

#### 3.9.1 *Voluntary participation*

Neuman (2006) observes that an important standard of research is that contribution must be volunteering. The researcher made sure that participation in this study was voluntary for all participants. To facilitate this procedure, the researcher requested every participant to show their voluntary acceptance to take part in the study by signing an informed consent form. The participants were informed about their right to withdraw at any point of the process without any repercussions. Participants were also informed about their right to refrain from answering any questions that they did not feel comfortable answering.

### 3.9.2 *Informed consent*

Informed consent is described by Babbie (2007, p. 64), “as a norm in which subjects base their voluntary participation in research projects on a full understanding of the possible risks involved.” Obtaining informed consent implies that all possible information should be communicated to all parties concerned. “Informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so that they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate” (Mack, et. al, p. 9). However, caution should be taken to ensure that the subjects concerned are legally and psychologically competent to give consent (Strydom, 2005).

In this study, the researcher explained all the elements of the study to participants so that they were fully informed before giving consent. Thus, participants were made aware of all aspects of the research process and procedures prior to them giving consent. Information given to participants included the duration of the study, guarantee on anonymity and confidentiality, and an offer to provide them with a summary of the findings. Participants were further informed that recorded and transcribed material and information would be kept in a locked cabinet for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study. Consent was also sought from the participants to audio-tape the interviews and every participant was provided with an informed consent form to this effect.

### 3.9.3 *Avoidance of harm and debriefing of participants*

Babbie (2007) asserts that social research should never harm the individuals being studied irrespective of whether they agree to take part in the study. According to Strydom (2011), although physical injury cannot be completely ruled out, emotional harm is the most dominant in social science research. The researcher, therefore, needs to guard against any danger that may affect the research participants. This can be done by ensuring that participants are carefully informed in advance about the possible impact or effects of the investigations. Such prior information gives the participants a chance to pull out from the study if they so wish. Thus, the researcher divulged all the necessary information beforehand to the participants as part of the obligation to protect participants from both physical and emotional harm. Arrangements to help participants, such as free counselling, were organized

with a qualified counsellor in case of emotional distress emanating from the study. At the end of each interview and as part of the debriefing, the researcher gave participants a few minutes to express their feelings and ask any further questions about the interview and study in general.

Prior to commencing the study, the researcher submitted the research proposal to the University's Ethics Committee to obtain ethical clearance. The researcher only carried out the study after obtaining approval from the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee (Non-Medical). Babbie and Mouton (2001) argue that ethics committees have the responsibility to assess research proposals for any ethical dilemmas when studying human beings. The researcher also sought permission from the management of the selected child welfare agencies who participated in the research.

#### *3.9.4 Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality*

Adherence to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality entails guarding the participants' interests, identity and well-being especially if disclosing them would prejudice or injure them (Strydom, 2011). According to Babbie (2007, p. 64), "anonymity will be guaranteed if neither the researcher nor the readers of the research findings can identify a given response with a given respondent." Confidentiality, however, entails handling information in a confidential manner. The researcher explained to participants that their identities would be protected during the data analysis and reporting process, through the use of codes. No one except, for the researcher and her supervisor, would have access to the data.

#### *3.9.5 Compensation and Deception of participants*

The participants were informed that there would be no benefits (monetary, goods or services) attached to participating in the study. Thus, the researcher did not use any form of deception. Deception refers to misleading participants and the deliberate misrepresentation of facts or withholding of information from participants usually with the intention of generating meaningful research information (Strydom, 2011).

### 3.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the study achieved its aim and objectives, it is important to acknowledge and appreciate some of the limitations. The study utilised a relatively small sample since participants were recruited using non-probability sampling. Consequently, the experiences of the participants might not represent those of all child protection social workers in the Johannesburg area and South Africa at large. It is, however, necessary to note that when conducting an explorative study through a case study design, every person's experience is important and relevant to understanding a given phenomenon such as supervision (Fouche & Schurink, 2011). Furthermore, the fact that the researcher is also employed in one of the organizations being investigated might have made the participants manipulate the information and say it in a particular way, in order to please the researcher. The researcher, however, tried to deal with any form of bias or manipulation by probing more in the interviews, in order to identify discrepancies within the information that was being shared.

### 3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has detailed the research methodology which was utilised in this study. The chapter discussed the qualitative research design that was adopted in this study. The study population and sampling procedures, research instrument, the data collection method, as well as the data analysis method which relate to the qualitative research approach were also presented. Ethical issues that were considered during this study, the limitations of the study and the method of data verification, were also discussed in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the empirical findings of this study. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. The chapter begins by presenting the aim and objectives of the study. This is followed by the demographic information of participants which is presented in the form of a table. This demographic information captures the participants' pseudonyms in order to protect their identities, ages, gender, positions and qualifications. The themes and subthemes that emerged during data analysis are initially presented in a table, and a discussion of these themes and subthemes then follows supported by direct quotes from the participants. The findings and participants' voices are immersed in relevant literature.

#### 4.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to explore the experiences of child protection social workers with regards to supervision. In order to achieve this aim, the following specific objectives were formulated:

- i) To examine the type of supervision received by child protection social workers;
- ii) To investigate the role supervision plays in the work that child protection social workers do; and
- iii) To explore the challenges related to supervision encountered by the child protection social workers.

#### 4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

This demographic information captures the participants' pseudonyms, in order to protect their identities, ages, gender, positions and qualifications. The researcher interviewed twelve participants (two social work supervisors and ten social work supervisees). The demographic information of the participants is summarised in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Summary of participants' demographic information**

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Post-qualification experience</b>	<b>Child protection experience</b>
B	32	M	Social Worker	Master's	8	5
BB	37	F	Social Worker	BSW	17	8
J	28	F	Social Worker	Master's	4	4
L	34	M	Social Worker	Master's	9	9
M	41	F	Supervisor	BSW	15	12
MS	24	F	Social Worker	BSW	1	1
N	29	F	Social Worker	BSW	5	5
T	35	F	Supervisor	BSW	10	8
V	29	F	Social Worker	BSW	5	5
VN	29	F	Social Worker	BSW	5	5
W	23	F	Social Worker	BSW	1	1
Z	25	F	Social Worker	BSW	2	2

Table 4.1 above shows that there were ten social workers and two supervisors who participated in this study. Participation in the study was based on willingness to participate (voluntary participation), as well as availability during the study period. Participants were also supposed to meet the selection criteria as outlined in the previous chapter. All participants were selected from two child welfare organizations based in Johannesburg.

Of the twelve participants, two were supervisors whilst ten were supervisees. Inclusion of supervisors and supervisees in the study enabled the researcher to use triangulation of sources, which in turn enhanced credibility of the research findings. There were only two male participants and the rest (ten) were female. This may be attributed to the demographic

gender distribution of social workers within the selected organisations, as well as South Africa in general; there are more female than male social workers in South Africa.

The majority of participants (eight) had five years and more of social work experience, while four had less than five years' experience. All the participants had at least one year work experience in a child protection setting. This indicates that all the participants had considerable knowledge of what supervision entails since they were either recipients and/or providers of supervision in their professional life. Finally, all the participants were in possession of at least a BSW degree, with three of the participants already having a Master's degree.

#### 4.4 MAIN THEMES ARISING FROM DATA COLLECTED

The main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data collected are discussed below. They are firstly presented in the form of a table and then discussed in detail. The discussion is supported by extracts from participants, as well as relevant literature. It is prudent to indicate that, although data from supervisors and supervisees were processed and organised separately during data analysis, the themes and sub-themes that arose from these two groups were amalgamated, with differences and similarities highlighted where possible through the participants' voices.

*Table 4.2: Summary of major themes and sub-themes*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>
1. Types of supervision utilised by child protection organisations	1.1 Group supervision
	1.2 Individual supervision
	1.3 Peer supervision
2. Role of supervision in the work of child protection social workers	2.1 Educational function
	2.2 Supportive function
	2.3 Administrative function
3. Challenges to supervision	3.1 Lack of adequate support from

supervisors

3.2 Resistance of supervision by  
supervisees

3.3 High caseloads

3.4 Inadequate or lack of organisational  
support systems

3.4.1 Trainings and workshops

3.4.2 Debriefing sessions

3.5 Incompetent supervisors

#### 4.5 DISCUSSION OF THEMES

This section details the themes and subsequent subthemes that arose from the interviews with participants. These themes, namely types of supervision utilised by child protection organisations, role of supervision in the work of child protection social workers, and challenges to supervision, are integrated with relevant literature. All the themes are in line with the objectives of this study. They highlight the experiences of child protection social workers on supervision.

##### *4.5.1 Types of supervision utilized by child protection organisations*

A major theme that arose during data analysis relates to the types of supervision utilized by child protection organisations. This theme is congruent to observations made by some authors who argue that there are several types of supervision that supervisors may choose to adopt and that supervisory sessions can take several forms (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Sheafor & Horejsi 2011). The main methods of supervision that emerged from this study, which are discussed in detail below, include group supervision, individual supervision and peer supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Hughes, 2010; Morrison, 2003).

#### 4.5.1.1 Group supervision

Responses from participants of this study show that group supervision is the most commonly utilised supervision method in child protection organisations, particularly those with a considerable number of social workers, for instance, eight or more. Both groups of participants (supervisors and supervisees) indicated that group supervision is preferred due to limited time available to both supervisors and supervisees, given the high caseloads they deal with. The above sentiments are captured in the following responses:

*“What I can say is that most of the time supervision is rendered by our supervisor to a group of about six or so social workers under her team whereby we discuss challenges and issues of children that we are working with, and when we need guidance the supervisor will assist us accordingly.”* (B, male supervisee, aged 32).

*“Currently in my job, because we do not have enough time and because of the nature of work that we are doing, we also have group supervision because sometimes you need experience or knowledge of the experienced social workers to guide you on how to handle certain cases.”* (N, female supervisee, aged 29).

*“I mainly utilise unstructured group supervision because of the many cases we are dealing with and the number of social workers I have to supervise.”* (T, female supervisor, aged 35).

The findings confirm the assertion by DSD and SACSSP (2012) and Engelbrecht (2013) that child protection supervisors do not have enough time to render individual supervision on a regular basis due to high caseloads which may be difficult to manage. The result is that both supervisors and supervisees might not have enough time to have regular one-on-one sessions. The above responses are, therefore, a clear indication that child protection organisations with many social workers prefer to use group supervision as a method of addressing issues affecting their social workers. The findings also confirm the observation by the AASW (2014) that participants of group supervision may profit from both the combined efforts of the group members as well as the support of the supervisor.

#### 4.5.1.2 Individual supervision

Another important type of supervision highlighted by participants of this study was individual supervision. Participants reiterated that, in spite of the issue of inadequate time available for one-on-one supervision sessions between the supervisor and supervisee, individual supervision remains an integral part of the process of supervision. Supervisees categorically stated that they prefer this type of supervision as it helps them with adequate guidelines pertaining to their line of work. The following responses from some of the participants testify to this notion:

*“I can say that here we also make use of individual supervision as one needs proper guidance. It’s something which guides you to handle some of the cases. It’s a guide on how you have to make long term decisions for the children and also it’s a motivation as well to do better in your work. Again it improves the working relationship between you and your supervisor. It builds a good relationship between you and your supervisor and ultimately you and the children as well.”* (V, female supervisee, aged 29).

*“I would say that individual supervision is not that sufficient; it’s very limited when we look at the nature of our work that we are doing. However, for me, I think it should be one of the things they really put effort into because individual supervision plays a bigger role because firstly it makes you or the worker proactive and it gives you guidance and it gives you knowledge, so when you limit it, it also affects your work.”* (W, female supervisee, aged 23).

*“To me supervision means having a one-on-one session with your subordinate to discuss on how they are coping personally and professionally. In addition to this, the supervisor and the supervisee will discuss case by case of the supervisee so that they can agree on the most effective and most efficient ways of serving the best interest of the child/children.”* (J, female supervisee, aged 28).

The issue of the importance of individual supervision highlighted by some of the participants in this study supports the observation by the DSD and SACSSP (2012), as well as Sheafor and Horejsi (2003) who argue that due to its intensity, individual supervision promotes the

supervisee's personal growth as the supervisee has an opportunity to spend scheduled private time with his or her supervisor during which the worker's presentation can be candidly inspected with adequate emotional safety to address practice achievements and disappointments. The findings are also in line with Hawkins and Shohet's (2006) notion that, during individual supervision, the supervisee gets adequate time and attention from the supervisor, and is, therefore, able to extract more from the relationship because there is more focus on the problems and concerns she or he may be bringing to the supervisor.

#### 4.5.1.3 Peer supervision

Another important form of supervision highlighted by participants of this study was peer supervision. Some of the participants noted that at times they resort to this method of supervision especially when their supervisors are not available for supervision due to other work commitments. Some of the participants had this to say regarding peer supervision:

*"Sometimes you have to rely on consulting with your colleagues because if you go for consultation with your supervisor sometimes she's busy with other things or someone is already consulting, you won't have enough time; she won't have enough time for you. So sometimes you consult with your colleagues, so consulting your colleagues is one of the things we usually do. When you want an idea or you want help, you just call your colleagues and you gather them and say guys I have got a case like this..."* (V, female supervisee, aged 29).

*"Sometimes when you have crises you consult your peers to ask other peers who have dealt with similar issues, so you end up being supervised by your peers. So we would have a case conference within the team, sit there as colleagues, pick our difficult cases and we discuss them and together we come with a way forward because fortunately we have experienced people who have been supervisors before."* (Z, female supervisee, aged 25).

The above findings correspond with observations by the Department of Labour (2008), DSD and SACSSP (2012) and Engelbrecht (2013) which point out that peer supervision is necessary when employees are incapable of getting good supervision as their immediate line managers might not have either the time or the ability to supervise them, something which is

common in most child protection organisations in South Africa, given the acute shortage of seasoned supervisors in this sector. Hawkins and Shohet (2006) and the AASW (2014) note that peer supervision occurs when one worker seeks supervision from another worker, usually through a cooperative knowledge and supervisory setting established by two or more professional co-workers. This assertion was confirmed by some of the participants as evidenced by the above excerpts. Although participants in this study did not confirm that peer supervision in their organisations was for experienced social workers only, the findings support the assertion by DSD and SACSSP (2012) that peer supervision may work better among experienced social workers.

#### 4.5.2 *Role of supervision in the work of child protection social workers*

In spite of a plethora of challenges mentioned by participants that they encounter in their line of work with regards to supervision, all the participants were unanimous in applauding the role which supervision plays in the effective execution of child protection services. Interestingly, the majority of the participants showed considerable understanding of what supervision in general entails, as well as what constitutes quality supervision. With regards to the role of supervision in general, one supervisee vividly put it as follows:

*“Supervision entails a collaborative and mutual relationship between supervisor and supervisee in which the supervisor is responsible for providing direction to the supervisee, imparting knowledge, skills and competency needed to execute the many roles and responsibilities as given to him/her by the organization. The supervisor and the supervisee both share responsibility for carrying out their role in this collaborative process. The supervisor is there to mentor, to provide counselling and somewhat play an educative role to enable the supervisee to perform the functions and responsibilities assigned to him/her. This will ultimately translate into evaluating the services rendered to the client. It is the supervisor’s responsibility to ensure that the supervisee provides competent, appropriate, and ethical services to the client...In my organization supervision plays a critical role to ensure that the job is done in line with the organization policy. Doing this provides a monitoring and evaluative aspect on the worker’s performance, filed work practices and administrative functions and provides support where necessary to ensure that quality services are rendered to the clients... Supervision should encompass all aspects of supervision functions, namely*

*administration, educational and supportive functions. Quality supervisors should exhibit high standards of ethical and professional practice that if applied on subordinates and ultimately clients, will enhance the quality of services that social workers render to their clients. Furthermore, quality supervision entails that supervisors obtain advanced knowledge so that their skills and abilities can be applied on supervisees in an ethical and competent manner during the supervisory process. Supervision provides guidance and enhances the quality of work for both the supervisor and the supervisee and, ultimately, the client.” (L, male supervisee, aged 34).*

The above insight corroborates the study by Tsui (2005, p. 20) which found that “the primary goal of supervision is to ensure that the quantity and quality of service leads to a successful client outcome as a result of social work intervention”. Tsui (2005, p. 20) further reported that “supervision is a means to enhance development as it helps to equip the supervisee with the professional knowledge and skills necessary to do the job effectively”. Tsui’s (2005, p. 20) study further discovered that “supervision provides a time and space for the supervisor to show appreciation and give emotional support to the supervisee”. Participants highlighted the main roles that supervision plays and these include the educational, supportive and administrative functions. These functions are discussed in detail below.

#### *4.5.2.1 Educational function*

The educational function was singled out as one of the most essential functions that supervision plays in the professional development of both the supervisors and supervisees. Participants indicated that this function is more important for supervisees, especially the ones with limited work experience as they climb the ladder from being novices to being experts (Smith, 2009). Some of the participants mentioned the following with regards to the educational function of supervision:

*“Some of my duties as a supervisor are to give advice to subordinates and ensure quality assurance of reports and statistics. I also instil confidence in supervisees and impart knowledge and skills in the implementation of the Children’s Act and other*

*policies, as well as mapping plans of action as per case.” (T, female supervisor, aged 35).*

*“Ok, I think supervision plays a lot of roles but the main one which I think about is the educational one because when you are working, of course you may have a lot of years of experience, but there are certain things that you still need guidance on or somebody's input so that you can improve on them. So I can say that supervision plays that educational function as the supervisor usually and in most cases or in my experience is like the expert who knows most of the things, so if you are facing challenges or something like that, you ask the supervisor then the supervisor gives you feedback or his/her knowledge in terms of what he or she thinks can be done. So this is a very important function of supervision. So if I am actually facing some challenges or I need guidance, that's when I go to the supervisor and the supervisor gives me that knowledge which I'm actually lacking, so in that case I can say that supervision plays an educational function.” (B, male supervisee, aged 32).*

*“Supervision for me is guidance especially when you are from varsity you know nothing about work place; you know nothing about procedures or how to write a report. You might have the varsity format but organizations have their own formats that they use, therefore when you get here the supervisor gives you supervision. The first time you are given or allocated files, maybe you will have two consecutive months then they tell you that now you are fine, you have gotten to the grip of things.” (Z, female supervisee, aged 25).*

The above findings confirm what the NASW and ASWB (2013) indicated that the educational function of supervision is an essential factor of the professional supervision of social workers as it comprises the inculcation of professional ethics, delivery of information, and training in practice skill for effective professional practice. “Attention is focused on developing practice-based knowledge, understanding and skills that will improve the competence and the professional satisfaction of social workers” (AASW, 2014, P. 4).

The findings of this study are also in line with Burns’ (2012, p. 50), “observation that the primary focus of professional supervision of the child protection workers in the educational function is to offer regular space for the supervisees to reflect upon the content and process

of their work; to grow and recognise skills within the work; to obtain data and another perspective concerning one's work; and to obtain both content and process feedback". Kadushin and Harkness (2002) also argue that educational supervision provides the training that enables workers to achieve and deliver the best possible services to the clients. This argument corroborates findings of this study.

#### 4.5.2.2 Supportive function

Another important function of supervision that was highlighted by participants of this study was that of support. Supervision was regarded as vital in providing support to child protection social workers, especially given the stress associated with their line of work. The majority of the participants reiterated that this function remains cardinal if they are to execute their tasks effectively. This is how some of the participants expressed their feelings about the subject:

*"I feel that supervision is very important especially when it comes to support, not just as a form of guidance in the work that I am doing but also for me as a social worker when it comes to debriefing as well because, like I said, in as much as we are obviously supposed to separate emotions from work, sometimes it becomes overwhelming and in the midst of all those things you become emotionally involved and attached, you end up not making objective decisions so you need someone else who is not as involved as you are someone like your supervisor to give you input that will help you."*(MS, female supervisee, aged 24).

*"Quality supervision must come as support, working together. The supervisee and the supervisor should help each other because they have the same goal; they want to achieve certain things so they have to achieve it together so that's what supervision must come with like motivation, it must be motivating, and it must be helpful. You mustn't stress alone, you must stress together."* (V, female supervisee, aged 29).

*"...So at times you find out that you are actually emotionally drained even yourself, so you also need some sort of support especially from the one who is above you, so during supervision that's when you can do some sort of debriefing, you are also like taking out everything which is affecting you to the supervisor. It can be even during*

*group supervision so even your colleagues can assist you in certain ways. I think the supportive role is also very important usually when you are doing supervision.”* (B, male supervisee, aged 32).

What the participants in this study raised regarding the supportive function of supervision confirms the argument by Sheafor and Horejsi, (2003) that supportive supervision is mainly concerned with workers’ job gratification, determination and growth of job-related awareness, ethics and abilities. The NASW and ASWB (2013, p. 2) adds that “supportive supervision sustains staff morale and gives supervisees a sense of professional self-worth, and a feeling of belonging, both in their agencies and in the profession”. The AASW (2014, p. 3) also notes that “supervision is a space where social workers can become more aware of how their work is affecting them and, in turn, how their personal reactions and emotional state are impacting on practice. Supportive supervision is, therefore, a place for encouragement and validation and for the working through personal-professional bond”. Participants of this study noted that supportive supervision is important to them as child protection social workers because they have to be authenticated and supported both as persons and as workers to ensure that as persons and social workers they are not left to carry unnecessary problems, complications and forecasts alone. This was in line with what Burns (2012) also observed.

#### *4.5.2.3 Administrative function*

Supervision was further reported to play an administrative role within child protection organisations. Basically, according to the Guidelines on Social Work Supervision (2003, p. 1) administrative supervision, “; 4 some of the participants in this study reported the following with regards to the administrative function of supervision:

*“As a supervisor one of my roles includes support, delegation, allocation and being an intermediate between management and staff.”* (T, female supervisor, aged 35).

*“Basically, when supervisors allocate a file to you, they have what they call slots that you have to complete. For supervision it’s basically to check if you have completed those slots. They would go through what it is that they have listed and what you are supposed to have done, and whether you have done it on time. If you haven’t done*

*those things, you will have to explain why you have done this and why you have done that, maybe if there were challenges what were the challenges basically? And your things will also have to be up-to-date in terms of your process notes and your records and all that.”(MS, female supervisee, aged 24).*

*“In most cases the supervision only concentrates on workload, how many cases you have; the cases which they need to allocate to you and the things which you didn't do which you were supposed to do. These are things which are mainly done by the supervisor. So in other words, it's not quality supervision. It concentrates more on numbers than on the quality of work you are producing in children. Yes it's more like auditing your work, what it is that you didn't do properly; that kind of a thing, that's how I can put it. The supervisor is looking at the fact that she/he gave you those cases now she wants to allocate the time frame.” (V, female supervisee, aged 29).*

The findings of this study correspond with the assertion by Davis (2010) that the administrative function is about monitoring the supervisees, evaluating their work and making sure the agency's policies, philosophies, and procedures are being adhered to by the supervisor. The findings are also in line with the observation by Sheafor and Horejsi (2011) who argue that as part of an agency's middle-management team, supervisors play an important role in agency policy, program and personnel decisions. Thus, as the AASW (2014) further observes, closely linked to administrative activities, is accountability whereby attention is focused largely on the organizational context of practice and simultaneously relating to the wider “professional, inter-organizational, political and legislative context of the field of practice with which social workers are projected to participate” (AASW, 2014, P. 14), accountability for client outcomes included.

#### *4.5.3 Challenges to supervision*

Just like previous studies on supervision, this study uncovered several challenges to supervision within child protection organisations. These challenges relate to training and knowledge development, as well as challenges relating to organizational problems and execution of child welfare practices (Social Work Policy Institute, 2011). In other words, they relate to training of supervisors, competencies of supervisors and structural supervision issues (Engelbrecht, 2013). Specific challenges highlighted by participants in this study

include lack of adequate support from supervisors, high caseloads, inadequate or lack of organisational support systems and incompetent supervisors.

#### *4.5.3.1 Lack of adequate support from supervisors*

The majority of the supervisees which participated in this study indicated that they were dissatisfied with the support that they were receiving from their supervisors. They noted that supervisors were not always available to navigate the work challenges that the supervisees were traversing in their line of work. Some of the supervisees reported as follows:

*“I think lack of support... because you find that in as much as you have a complicated case it becomes your baby alone.”*(MS, female supervisee, aged 24).

*“Sometimes you end up making decisions that are not in the best interests of the children, but because you want this case to be out of your hands, you just make any decision as long as the child is safe but it’s not in the best interest of the children. Sometimes you end up removing children who are not in need of care because you don’t have any supervision, you don’t have any guidance, you don’t have anyone to share your fears with or to share whatever circumstance you are in...So those are the challenges we come across due to lack of support from supervisors.”* (V, female supervisee, aged 29).

The above excerpts from supervisees show that the supervisees feel neglected and left alone by their supervisors in cases where they need the supervisors the most. These findings are similar to some previous studies on supervision that discovered that professional sustenance and progress functions of supervision within social work have been deficient, with too much attention being focused at managerial surveillance (Gibbs, 2001; White & Harris, 2007). Thus, when supervision fails, the failures are most keenly felt in the area of supervision and, in most cases, the supervisees would blame their supervisors for not critically analysing their work and guiding them on how to handle cases, as was the case in this study.

Social work “studies that focused on decisions to leave found that lack of supportive supervision was one of the main factors which contributed to workers expressing an intention to leave their jobs” (Burns, 2012, p. 51). Similarly, the findings of this study indicate that the

supportive function of supervision is not being fully implemented by some child protection supervisors.

#### 4.5.3.2 *Resistance of supervision by supervisees*

Contrary to responses given by the majority of supervisees on lack of support from supervisors, the supervisors and some supervisees felt that supervisees were also partly to blame on the issue. Some of the participants had this to say:

*“At times, there is resistance from the supervisees. It’s not like we don’t want to give them support but they give you all kinds of excuses in order to ensure that they don’t attend supervision sessions as arranged.”* (T, female supervisor, aged 35).

*“It depends because it’s not one sided. At times the supervisor would want to give us supervision but because of high caseloads and backloads you would run away from it and make excuses that you are going to court or that you need to attend meetings. Sometimes you haven’t done what the supervisor said you must do on a previous supervision.”* (Z, female supervisee, aged 25).

Responses from some of the participants are a clear indication that there is an array of factors that influence the perceived lack of support from supervisors. The issue has to be examined objectively by admitting that both supervisors and supervisees are to blame for some of the challenges in this regard. Hair (2012) concurs with Hawkins and Shohet (2006) that there is need for specialized supervision preparation in the human service industry environment and that such preparation should concentrate on how to form a relationship that is constructed on reliance, honesty and a mutual consideration with a wide range of supervisees. It was evident from some of the participants’ responses that this mutual trust and openness between supervisors and supervisees is still lacking, resulting in each part blaming the other.

#### 4.5.3.3 *High caseloads*

The issue of high and unmanageable caseloads also emerged frequently during data analysis. Participants mentioned that they were dealing with extremely unmanageable cases, resulting in poor service delivery. This was also said to be impacting negatively on the quality of

supervision being rendered. The following are excerpts from some of the participants' responses concerning the issue of high caseloads:

*"We have high caseloads which make it impossible to have free hours for supervision."* (J, female supervisee, aged 28).

*"Because of huge caseloads you end up not having any guidance, you rely on what you think is right and thus failing to render any meaningful services."* (V, female supervisee, aged 29).

*"We have problems of time constraints due to work overload and crisis cases."* (T, female supervisor, aged 35).

These concerns from the majority of the participants support previous studies on social work supervision. For instance, the Department of Labour (2008), as well as DSD and SACSSP (2012) postulate that extremely high caseloads result in the application of weak or faulty supervision by child protection organisations. This was consistent with findings of this study. Thus, due to extremely high caseloads, social work is at times reduced to crisis management (Department of Labour, 2008; DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

#### *4.5.3.4 Inadequate or lack of organisational support systems*

Organisational and structural issues were also highlighted as contributing towards the challenges experienced by child protection social workers in their supervision. Apart from the issues already alluded to above, participants of this study were wary about the lack of adequate support systems from their organisations. Some of the participants raised the following points:

*"There are no supportive programmes or activities in the organization. We suffer from burn outs. Organizations and supervisors only focus on us pushing files, numbers, statistics and targets as per their business plan for funding."* (BB, female supervisee, aged 37).

*“There are no support systems from the organisation and it’s really frustrating. The supervisors are not supportive as well. If you don’t take care of yourself, you will have burnout!”* (J, female supervisee, aged 28).

*“There are no services. You are just left with your problems.”* (Z, female supervisee, aged 25).

The above sentiments show the general feelings of social workers in child protection organisations regarding the support they receive from their superiors. They show that social workers face several challenges in their line of work because of lack of support from their organisations. This definitely results in frustration and stress, leading to some social workers opting to leave the child protection sector or social work as a profession. Because of frustration, many competent front-line workers leave child protection organisations, thus, the organisations have to constantly deal with frequent turnover of high-ranking and experienced social workers (Social Work Policy Institute, 2011). Participants of this study, therefore, felt that this lack of support was also a contributing factor towards the rendering of ineffective services to clients. Child protection organisations do not sufficiently provide support systems to social workers in their services. The support rendered appears to range from piecemeal to almost nothing.

#### *4.5.3.4.1 Trainings and workshops*

Although some of the participants noted that they receive some training and also attend workshops, they also stated that these support systems were not always available and at times not directly linked to supervision issues. The following is what some of the participants voiced:

*“So in terms of training there is none actually or even on-the-job training that we should get within the organization. The other trainings, if I do attend, I do it from my own pocket. I can even use my own resources. So in terms of giving support, I cannot say they are giving us support in terms of training because some of the trainings we attend are maybe with the Department of Social Development, which we attend for free. However, we have to pay for most of them. If you don't have the money now it becomes your own problem and I am actually not very comfortable to fork out my*

*own resources. Although you can say it's good for your own development but actually you feel the organization is supposed to do something in order to assist you to develop as it's going to help the organization through the services that I will render after the knowledge that I would have obtained from that training.” (B, male supervisee, aged 32).*

*“Supervisors need to be adequately trained so that they are able to provide mentorship and guidance to their subordinates. Given the complex nature of the social work profession, high caseloads and the pluralistic nature of the clients we serve, there is imperative need to equip us with the necessary skills to deliver competent and ethical social work services. Supervision protects clients, supports practitioners, and ensures that professional standards and quality services are delivered by competent social workers.” (L, male supervisee, aged 34).*

*“My suggestion will be that to start with, the organization needs to review and look at the nature of our work and provide appropriate training especially on supervision issues. Secondly, they need to take supervisors and managers, maybe for courses like supervision and management because I believe that it should start from there and come down to juniors. I can also suggest that they need to understand the importance of supervision in our work. We do go for trainings but sometimes it's not directly linked to what we are dealing with.” (W, female supervisee, aged 23).*

The findings of this study support Engelbrecht's (2013) study. Engelbrecht (2013) discovered that supervisors lacked specialist training and, instead, relied on the social work experience in the rendering of supervision. This view mirrors the findings of the Social Work Policy Institute (2011) which revealed that there is deficiency of sufficient preparation associated to the roles, responsibilities and capabilities for being a supervisor. Clarke (1991) notes that there is a simulated lack of proper preparation courses for supervisors and the majority of organizations make the hypothesis that supervisors are accomplishing their jobs and the desires of those under them without any formal method or procedure for proving this assumption. However, there is necessity for more specialized supervision preparation in the human service industry framework and that such training should emphasis on how to form a relationship that is constructed on reliance, honesty and mutual consideration with a wide range of supervisees (Hair, 2012; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

#### 4.5.3.4.2 Debriefing sessions

The issue of debriefing also constantly came out during data analysis. The majority of participants indicated that this was lacking in their respective organizations.

Responding to the question ‘*What are some of the support systems/programs provided by your organization for debriefing if you are faced with some work-related challenges?*’ some of the participants were quick to say the following:

*“None and it’s really frustrating. The supervisors are not supportive as well. If you don’t take care of yourself, you will have burnout!”* (J, female supervisee, aged 28).

*“There isn’t at all...”* (V, female supervisee, aged 29).

*“Currently here where I’m working I will say no. We are actually in dire need of those programs which are meant to assist us especially in terms of debriefing but here there is none and when you try to raise those issues like in meetings or wherever we meet to say that it’s actually very important that we get those services, the main issue that we are told is about lack of finances to do that, but from my point of view I can take it as lack of will by those who are above us to ensure that actually those services are provided.”* (B, male supervisee, aged 32).

The Department of Labour (2008), as well as DSD and SACSSP (2012) indicate that debriefing is an important way of dealing with emotional burnout and professional demands. Participants of this study concurred with this observation. Nonetheless, most of the supervisees who participated in this study, however, felt that a lot needs to be thoroughly researched in this area in order for them to deal with the several challenges they face in their work. They felt that much support was coming from their colleagues through sharing and discussing challenges they face rather than from the supervisors whom they expected to assist them more.

#### 4.5.3.5 Incompetent supervisors.

Participants of this study, particularly supervisees bemoaned the lack of competence among several supervisors. This incompetence was attributed to lack of proper training of supervisors prior or post to their appointments as supervisors, as well as a high staff turnover. Some of the participants had this to say regarding the issue of incompetence by some of the supervisors:

*“Supervisors at my organisation appear devoid of supervision standards, methods and strategies that could assist their subordinates to execute their duties to their required standards. Supervision at this organisation is more of assigning work, monitoring that the work assigned to you is done and failure to execute the task as given to you means one will be in trouble. They do not care about the obstacles or challenges that could have hindered you from performing the task in time. What they want to see is work done as per their instructions. Thus, supervision here does not instil growth or development; it does not inspire confidence and motivation to subordinates through mentorship or guidance but rather threatens subordinates and puts them under pressure to perform without necessarily supporting them.”* (L, male supervisee, aged 34).

*“We also have negligent supervisors who are not committed to doing their jobs.”* (J, female supervisee, aged 28).

*“...what I can add is that when organizations employ supervisors or managers they really need to look at their overall skills not just that they have been working for 10 years as social workers; they need to look at what they can provide, competency and all that.”* (W, female supervisee, aged 23).

Some of the participants' voices are congruent to previous studies on supervision. Engelbrecht (2013), for instance, observes that lack of skills due to absence of or inadequate specialized supervision training on the part of supervisors has a negative effect on their competency. Engelbrecht (2013) adds that, in the South African context, there appears to be a management gap which gives rise to a skills shortage. The combination of the push and pull factors, such as better social work opportunities particularly overseas and/or in other sectors

outside social welfare, has resulted in the emigration of South African social workers (Social Work Policy Institute, 2011). This has resulted in a massive shortage of experienced and competent child protection social workers to execute progressive capabilities, such as leadership, administration, support and education to junior and inexperienced social workers (Engelbrecht, 2013). This incompetence was attributed to lack of proper training of supervisors prior or post to their appointments as supervisors.

#### 4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the empirical findings of the study obtained after a thorough data analysis process. These findings highlighted a number of issues regarding supervision within child protection organisations. Themes that emerged from interviews with supervisors and supervisees include types of supervision utilised by child protection organisations; the role of supervision in the work of child protection social workers; challenges to supervision; and support systems for child protection social workers. These themes were discussed in detail through various subthemes. There were remarkable similarities between findings in this study and previous studies undertaken by other researchers on social work supervision, notably those of Engelbrecht (2013) and Tsui (2005). The study's main findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarises the main findings of the study. Conclusions and recommendations that emanated from these key findings are also presented. It is essential to state that child protection social workers' experiences with regards to supervision are, to a large extent, characterised by numerous challenges, particularly lack of adequate support systems for both supervisors and supervisees. There is, therefore, need for a general approach in tackling these challenges and this calls for cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders.

#### 5.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of child protection social workers with regards to supervision. In order to achieve the above aim, the following specific objectives were formulated:

- i) To examine the type of supervision received by child protection social workers;
- ii) To investigate the role played by supervision in the work that child protection social workers do; and
- iii) To explore the challenges related to supervision as encountered by child protection social workers.

#### 5.3 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

This section presents the key findings of the study. These main findings are in line with the research question as well as the aim and objectives of the study as specified above.

##### *5.3.1 Types of supervision received by child protection social workers*

Through engagement with participants during data collection and the subsequent analysis of data, the researcher identified three main types of supervision that child protection social workers receive. These are, in chronological order, group supervision, individual supervision and peer supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Hughes, 2010; Morrison, 2003). Thus

supervisory sessions may take several forms and, depending on the situation, supervisors may choose to adapt the methods that they deem necessary and appropriate (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Sheafor & Horejsi 2011).

The most popular method utilised by child protection organisations, nonetheless, is group supervision as it saves time. The preference of group supervision over the other types of supervision was also attributed to the high caseloads that both supervisors and supervisees have to manage (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2013). Though not regularly rendered, supervisees also benefit from individual supervision, which the majority of supervisees said they preferred due to its intensity; it helps them with adequate guidelines pertaining to their line of work (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Sheafor & Horejsi, 2003). Finally, peer supervision was also identified as being utilised in child protection organisations mainly because of inadequate time for proper supervision by supervisors due to several commitments (Department of Labour, 2008; DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2013).

### *5.3.2 Role of supervision in the work of child protection social workers*

Supervision plays a critical role in the effective execution of child protection services. Supervision is a means of enhancing development as “it helps to equip the supervisee with the professional knowledge and skills necessary to do the job effectively” (Tsui, 2005, p. 20). The study confirmed that there are three main roles of social work supervision, namely education, support and administration.

The educational function was identified as one of the most essential functions that supervision plays in the professional development of both the supervisors and supervisees, especially for supervisees with limited work experience as they climb the ladder from being novices to being experts (Smith, 2009).

Supervision is also regarded as vital in providing support to child protection social workers especially given the stress associated with their line of work. This function remains cardinal if they are to execute their tasks effectively. Supportive supervision is important to them as child protection social workers because they have “to be validated and supported both as

persons and as workers and also to ensure that as persons and social workers they are not left to carry unnecessary difficulties, problems and projections alone” (Burns, 2012, p. 50).

As part of an agency’s middle-management team, supervisors also play an important role in agency policy, program and personnel decisions (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2011). Thus, the administrative function is about monitoring the supervisees, evaluating their work and making sure the agency’s policies, philosophies, and procedures are being adhered to by the supervisor (Davis, 2010). Some participants, however, felt let-down by supervisors who prefer the administrative function at the expense of the other two functions of supervision.

### *5.3.3 Challenges to supervision of child protection social workers*

The study uncovered several challenges to supervision within child protection organisations. These challenges relate to training and knowledge development, as well as challenges relating to organizational challenges and application of child welfare practices (Social Work Policy Institute, 2011). In other words, they relate to the training of supervisors, competencies of supervisors and structural supervision issues (Engelbrecht, 2013).

Specific challenges unearthed in this study include lack of adequate support from supervisors, resistance of supervision by supervisees, high caseloads, inadequate or lack of organisational support systems (trainings and workshops, and debriefing sessions), and incompetent supervisors. The study established that child protection organizations do not sufficiently provide support systems to social workers in their service. The support rendered appears to be piecemeal or almost nothing. The major support systems suggested by participants relate to training and workshops particularly for supervisors, in order to ensure that they acquire the necessary skills and well-equipped for supervision. Debriefing sessions, particularly for supervisees, were said to be lacking in spite of the essential role they play in addressing issues such as emotional burnout, work-related stress and societal demands (Department of Labour, 2008; DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

## 5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are based on the key findings of this study:

The researcher concluded that group supervision, individual supervision and peer supervision are the three main types of supervision utilised by child protection organisations, with group supervision being the most commonly used method.

The researcher further concluded that supervision plays three main functions in the work of child protection social workers, namely educational, supportive and administrative functions. The researcher concluded that there are a number of challenges regarding the supervision of child protection social workers, among them lack of adequate support from supervisors, resistance of supervision by supervisees, high caseloads, inadequate or lack of organisational support systems (trainings and workshops, and debriefing sessions), and incompetent supervisors.

## 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the foregoing findings and conclusions on the experiences of child protection social workers concerning supervision, the following recommendations are made:

### *5.5.1 For social work practice*

Child protection organisations need to utilise the most effective types of supervision which are beneficial to both the organisation and, more importantly, to the clients they serve. This calls for an understanding by both supervisors and supervisees, of the rudiments of supervision such as supervision types, functions and models. Supervisors, in particular, need to possess the prerequisites necessary for effective supervision, in order to enhance quality services to clients.

### *5.5.2 For Social Development*

Government, through the Department of Social Development, needs to be conversant with the plethora of challenges faced by social workers and address them accordingly. To achieve

this, DSD should work closely with child protection organisations and social workers in issues such as skills and professional development of supervisors and supervisees, as well as improving the working conditions of child protection social workers.

### *5.5.3 For further research*

There is need for further exploration of supervision of child protection social workers, particularly in other provinces of the country so as to draw up similarities and differences on issues affecting social workers. Future studies should also focus on supervision models relevant to the South African context. This area of supervision models seems to be under-researched.

## 5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The occupation of social work has long viewed supervision as a very crucial factor to the maintenance of best performances of the workers and it has also taken a guidance role in emphasizing the importance of supervision in the social service settings. Supervision contributes to the value of “human service delivery and the professional growth of frontline social work practitioners” (Guidelines for Social Work Supervision, 2009, p. 1). It is a means of enhancing growth as it assists to prepare the supervisee with the professional awareness and abilities required to do the job efficiently. “Supervision is an important and vital part of the preparation and on-going education necessary for the skilful growth of professional social workers. It is a vital part of insightful practice and an essential part of social work” (Hughes, 2010, p. 51). Most importantly, supervision protects clients, supports practitioners, and is regarded as one of the core components in the growth and upkeep of high values.

In view of the numerous issues unearthed in this study on the supervision of child protection social workers in South Africa in general and Johannesburg in particular, a lot still needs to be done in this area. The onus, therefore, rests upon all stakeholders to thoroughly examine all the issues raised in this study and come up with effective solutions, especially to the challenges affecting child protection social workers. Issues of supervision are not only for supervisors, neither are they for child protection organisations alone, but for all role players including government, business people, funders, supervisees and the clients themselves. It is

vital, therefore, for all these parties to join hands through constructive collaboration, in order to ensure that supervision in the context of child protection social workers is a success.

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## **APPENDIX A: Participant Information Sheet**

Good day,

My name is Ropafadzo Chanyandura, and I am a postgraduate student registered for the degree Masters in Social Work at the University of Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for the degree, I am conducting a research to explore the experiences of social workers with regards to the supervision they receive in their organizations. It is hoped that this information may enhance the effectiveness of supervision received by the supervisees to deliver services to their clients.

I therefore wish to invite you to participate in my study. Your participation will be entirely voluntary and refusal to participate will not be held against you in any way. If you agree to take part, I shall arrange to interview you at a time and place that is suitable for you. The interview will last for approximately an hour. There are no benefits attached to participating or not participating. You may withdraw from the study at any time and you may also refuse to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable to answer. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded. No one except for me and my supervisor will have access to the tapes or data. The tapes and interview schedules will be kept in a locked cabinet for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study. 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.

Please contact me on 076 078 0610 (cell) or my Supervisor, Dr Ajwang Warria on +27 11 717 4482 if you have any questions regarding the study. We shall answer them to the best of my ability. Should you wish to receive a summary of the results of the study; an abstract or summary of the results will be made available on request.

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

Yours Sincerely,

Ropafadzo Chanyandura

## **APPENDIX B: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule –Participants**

### **Demographic Information**

Pseudonym:

### **Interview questions:**

1. Could you tell me a bit more about your experience as a social worker working with child protection issues?
2. Kindly explain to me your understanding of supervision as it relates to child protection?
3. How would you describe the supervision provided in your organisation?
4. What does the process of supervision entail?
5. According to you, what do you think are the functions or the role that supervision plays in your practice?
6. From your point of view, what do you think constitutes quality supervision when working within the child protection field?
7. Could you share with me some supervisory challenges you are experiencing which hinder your social service deliver to clients?
8. What are some of the support systems/programmes provided by your organisation for debriefing or if you are faced with these work-related challenges?
9. What suggestions do you have that might improve the supervision provided so that you can deliver better services to the clients?
10. Is there anything else that would be important for the research which I have not asked you?

Thank you for participating in my study!

## **APPENDIX C: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule: Key Informant**

### **Demographic information:**

Pseudonym:

### **Interview questions:**

1. Tell me a bit about your role as a supervisor?
2. Kindly explain to me your understanding of supervision.
3. From your experience, what is the importance of supervision?
4. How would you describe the supervision provided in your organisation?
5. What does the process of supervision entail?
6. In your opinion, what do you think are the functions or the role that supervision plays in your practice?
7. From your point of view, what do you think constitutes quality supervision when working within the child protection field?
8. Could you share with me some supervisory challenges you are experience?
9. What suggestions do you have that might improve the supervision provided so that your supervisees deliver better services to the clients?
10. Thank you. Is there anything else that would be important for the research which I have not asked you?

## **APPENDIX D: Consent form for participation in the study**

I hereby consent to participate in the research project. The purpose and procedures of the study have been explained to me. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to answer any particular items or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences, I understand that my responses will be kept confidential.

**Name of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX E: Consent form for audio-taping of the interviews**

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

**Name of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX F: Permission letter – Jo, Burg Child Welfare



9 July 2015

Ms Ropafadzo Chanyandura

We acknowledge your letter dated 06 July 2015 requesting to conduct interviews with Social Workers at Jo'burg Child Welfare who are working in the frontline in the field and how they experience supervision.

We are granting you permission to conduct your research entitled "Exploring the experiences of the child protection social workers in Johannesburg regarding supervision". The interviews will be conducted in the Child and Family Unit.

Kind regards

Carol Bews

**Assistant Director**

Caring for our children

**E-mail:** [director@jhbchildwelfare.org.za](mailto:director@jhbchildwelfare.org.za) ♥ **Website:** [www.jhbchildwelfare.org.za](http://www.jhbchildwelfare.org.za)

**Postal address:** P O Box 62606, Marshalltown, 2107 ♥ **Address:** 1st Floor, Edura House, 41 Fox Street, Johannesburg ♥ **Tel:** +27 11 298 8500 ♥ **Fax:** +27 11 298 8590

Patrons: Justice Zukisa Tshiqi, Justice Edwin Cameron, Basetsana Kumalo, Gerry Elsdon (Othandweni)

Registered in terms of the Non-Profit Organisations Act 71 of 1997 - Registration No.: 000-566 & Section 18A of Income Tax Act 58 of 1962

# APPENDIX G: Permission letter – Johannesburg Institute of Social Services (JISS)

## Johannesburg Institute of Social Services

Reg. No. 000-850 NPO  
FBO No. 530068015

Dear Ropafadzo

Our telephonic conversation refers

I hereby give you permission to do some research at our organization as part of your requirements to complete your Masters degree.



Kind Regards  
Mrs. M van der Merwe

Your contact person is Mrs. Madelie van der Merwe  
Social work manager  
Telephone number: 0118526016/17  
jisslenasia@telkomsa.net



P O BOX 241  
CROWN MINES  
2025

SECRETARIAT  
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Queens Road  
Mayfa  
Tel : (011) 837-4151;  
Fax : (011) 837-415

JISS CENTRE - MAYFAH  
Corner Battery Street &  
Queens Road  
Mayfa  
Tel : (011) 837-4151;  
Fax : (011) 837-415

JISWA CENTRE - LENASU  
5 Suikerbos Street, Lenasia  
Extension 1  
Tel : (011) 852-6016  
Fax: (011) 852-602

JISWA SCHOOL  
Maitse Street, Lenasia  
Extension 1  
Tel : (011) 854-9902  
Fax: (011) 854-582

# APPENDIX H: Ethics Clearance Certificate



Research Office

**HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)**

R14/49 Chanyandura

**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H15/06/11**

**PROJECT TITLE**

Exploring the experiences of the child protection social workers in Johannesburg regarding supervision

**INVESTIGATOR(S)**

Ms R Chanyandura

**SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT**

Human and Community Development/

**DATE CONSIDERED**

19 June 2015

**DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE**

Approved unconditionally


**EXPIRY DATE**

13 August 2018

**DATE**

14 August 2015

**CHAIRPERSON**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Dr A Warria

**DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)**

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10005, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized 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. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

## **APPENDIX I: Transcribed interview – Participant**

**(V) Code name for participant**

**(R) Researcher**

**R:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study, so you can feel free. How long have you been working as a child protection social worker?

**V:** I started working in child protection in 2011 so it's been about 5 years now.

**R:** So have you changed companies or you have been working for one company since.

**V:** For child protection I only worked for Jo'burg Child Welfare but I started working as a social worker

**R:** Ok so 5 years in child protection. Ok so how has been the experience working with children?

**V:** It's a bit challenging but you learn a lot of things because you come across a lot of things which happening here in South Africa and in our country and there are a lot of things which you never thought would happen to children. Those are the things we come across. We don't come across children who are abused only, children who are neglected, children who are...,each children came with their own stories which makes you to learn a lot of things more specially you will be able to know things that are happening to children.

**R:** So the experience is nice and at the same time challenging.

**V:** Yes.

**R:** Ok since you have been working with children since they are delicate. So what is your understanding of supervision as it relates to you providing services to children?

**V:** Supervision is very important especially if we are talking about future of the children, because we are talking about future. So whatever you come across with you must have....it mustn't be based on the .....you make for children, it must be .....on your emotions, it has to include a long term of children, because the children they are very ....and they need help but hey have got future as well so supervision I think it helps you to understand especially the impact of long term decisions which you can make on children. So then if you are getting supervision it makes you to be aware of the things which never thought.

**R:** K so that's your understanding of supervision. So what do you think are the functions or the role that supervision plays in your practice?

**V:** I can say that supervision its guidance, it's something which guides to, it's like, it's a guide in how... to handle some of the cases it's a guide on how you have to make based on

long term decisions for the children and also its a motivation as well because supervision it must motivate you to do better your work and also again it's a working relationship between you and your supervisor. It must be something building a good relationship between you and your supervisor and you and the children as well.

**R:** Ok so how would you describe supervision provided in your organization now?

**V:** Its very poor I don't want to lie to you, it's very poor in a way that a year without supervision the only thing which I say that its better because you always consult on your cases on daily but for you to have a proper supervision to say that now this is your case load and what's happening on your cases and where are you, where do you need help, what kind of help do you need, those kind of things we don't get them. We only consult.

**R:** So it's more consultation than supervision?

**V:** Yes it's more consultation than supervision because we are the ones who will be working.

**R:** Ok since you said it's more consultation during those times when supervision is provided, what does it entail like how is the supervision done?

**V:** In most cases the supervision its only concentrate on workload, how many cases do you have, the cases which they need to be allocated to you and the things which you didn't do which you were supposed to do .these are things which are still...by the supervisor.

**R:** So in other words it's not... supervision, it concentrates more on numbers than on the quality of work you are producing in children.

**V:** Yes it's more like auditing your work, what is it that you didn't do properly, that kind of a thing, that's how I can put it more on what motivation you can some other things you can never go direction or on how you can handle some cases. It's rare to find ...because everyone is looking on what you achieve. The supervisor is looking at that I gave you that top cases now I want to allocate and then time frame you only spend 30 minutes. He won't listen to you. You just report that this is what I did and then what's your plan and then you can say my plan is to do this and this, an input on your cases it's rare.

**R:** Ok I think I am interested in what you have said how the supervision entails, so what do you think constitutes quality supervision when you see that if I get this then I can provide proper services to the children?

**V:** Quality supervision, it must come as a support, working together the supervisee and the supervisor helping each other because you have the same goal, you want to achieve certain things so you have to achieve it together so that's what supervision must come with like motivation, it must be motivating, it must be helpful. You mustn't stress alone, you must stress together.

**R:** And from the supervisors what do they need to do to ensure there is quality supervision?

**V:** They must prepare time, they must know what is it that they are going to like auditing files it's not supervision because you just check on things which were supposed to be in the file and... it's not supervision. Supervision if you check my file and then you find that there were things which supposed to be in the file it must discussed that this is supposed to be in the file so that I may know in future the importance of having this file so they must prepare for supervision, they must make time. Supervision must have an agenda both the supervisee and the supervisor must know the agenda before the supervision so that both they can prepare because some of the things you will think about it like I should have asked this and that because you didn't prepare. Sometimes you will be told that tomorrow they have got supervision and you didn't prepare anything so if someone who is stable will not even know things even if, the supervisor they must also check with the supervisee that what is it that they must put in the agenda so, because its time where the supervisor and the supervisee hey have got time to discuss about the work.

**R:** So in other words supervisor and the supervisee should always communicate, not to just say out of nowhere I want you for supervision?

**V:** Yes that's why I am saying you need to be prepared and then there must be an agenda and then the supervisor and the supervisee must study the agenda before they go to supervision so that they will know.

**R:** So you also prepare so see what things she needs and what you expect from her?

**V:** Exactly because supervision it's not an interview where you will be surprised by being asked some questions so then you have to impress. This is reality, we are dealing with children's lives and everything must be known if there is a challenge the supervisor must have the solutions, must discuss all those things.

**R:** So could you share with me some supervisory challenges that you experiences, those things which hinder your service delivery to the children. What challenges are you experiencing since you have mentioned that supervision is poor, like because you are not getting supervision, what challenges are encountering?

**V:** Sometimes you end up making decisions are not at the best interests if the children but because you want this case to be out of your hands, you just make any decision as long as the child is safe but it's not at the best interest of the children. Sometimes you end up removing children who are not in the need of care because you don't have any supervision, you don't have any guidance, you don't have anyone to share your fears with or to share whatever

circumstance you are in, so you end up moving children who does in need of protection and care even if they are in need of care and protection but where services can be rendered because they are in the caregivers of the parents. S those are the challenges we come across with. Another thing sometimes supervision it's more like a training, educational, like information sharing because sometimes supervisors they have got more opportunity of attending workshops than us so whatever they came across I think are the things which they must share us. If there is no supervision where are you going to find those kind of information unless if you read the newspaper, how times do we have time to do that considering the caseload and the nature of work? Another thing is that you end up having caseloads because you struggle to finalize cases because you don't have any guidance, you rely on what you think it's right, you end up having huge caseloads and there are cases which we end up not knowing how to deal with them and we end up not rendering any services.

**R:** So at the end of the day it ends up affecting your services given to the children.

**V:** Exactly and the children are affected by those kind if things.

**R:** Ok so how are overcoming this challenges?

**V:** Sometimes you have to rely on consulting with your colleagues or you always go and consult with a supervisor who, if there is no time allocated for you for supervision, if you go for consultation sometimes she's busy with other things or someone is already consulting, you won't have enough time, she won't have enough time for you. Consulting with your colleagues sometimes you have to consult with other supervisors and it's not supervision it's just a consultation and then you won't rely on consultation everyday so consulting even your colleagues is one of the things we usually do. And then also going back to the act as your guidance it's what sometimes we do and which time is consuming at some point because you have to look for...

**R:** Since you say supervisors go much for training, so they are supposed to be well trained and well informed so that when you go you know that you are guided, so if it's lacking then.

**V:** Yes it is very.

**R:** Ok what are some of the support systems or programs provided in your organization and let's say maybe for debriefing when you are faced with these work related challenges?

**V:** There isn't at all but what they do sometimes is to offer trainings though it's too simple, 2 to 3 hours, the whole day on children's matters and that's what I can say that it motivates us because you will have a chance to hear other people's challenges, what they are going through, how they overcome those challenges so some you will listen, cut and paste. You try to listen and implement, sometimes it works, it helps.

**R:** K you say there is no date set, so it's more consultation than supervision, do you sometimes have group supervision?

**V:** No there is no such kind of a thing. When you want an idea my dear or you want help, you just call your colleagues and you gather them and say guys ' I have got a case d then this is what is happening' group supervision since I arrived here or the years I have mentioned I have never seen that.

**R:** K so what suggestions do you have that might improve supervision provided so that you can deliver better services to clients?

**V:** I think it must start with the supervisors, they must understand what supervision is and how it's helpful. More training to the supervisors about partnership because it starts with them. If it can start with them they can understand why people must get supervision.

**R:** So apart from what you have already mentioned, how can supervision be improved?

**V:** Training. People must always go training on those kind of things, they must always get training even for us who can understand supervision, for us who know even sometimes you go to your supervisor to say once, we demand supervision and makes you understand why you must get supervision but the person who has to offer that is the one who doesn't understand why do you get it, if the person is not giving you supervision you don't see any reason why you must have supervision and then you as a supervisee you have to go and want supervision, so you must understand each and every supervisor must understand why they must supervise us and why there must be supervision.

**R:** At the end of the day children are delicate they need to be protected.

**V:** Yes. That's the ....because if you make decisions not on the best interests of the child, then it comes back to you that this child was not supposed to be placed in adoption, they were supposed to be placed in foster care and you say it was based on what I thought r what I have experienced but ask my supervisor and then.....

**R:** So there is no consistency in supervision?

**V:** Yah, and then your supervisor must be accountable for those kind of things you as a person you won't agree or deny you will think it was in the best interest of the child because of whatever experience you have experienced, but when you ask your supervisor she doesn't even know about that case, she can't even remember even the caseloads, how many cases we had.

**R:** Ok I think that's all unless if you have anything important for the research which I have not asked you. Anything to add on?

**V:** No no. What I can say is that even if the managers can supervise the supervisors, they

supervise them based on what they are doing they demand to see that all the organizations, I think the organizations must have like a must supervision and then it must be audited not the supervisor auditing your work, they must be audited about what they are doing, about such kind of supervision, training like it's a must with the council with social workers, at least they have attended certain number of training per year for them to be able to ....on the next. So those kind of the things it was supposed to be a must for the supervisor to have consulted or conducted supervision with their managers based on the supervision they did with the social worker, so that it was going to improve, they were going to make an effort because they don't do anything, they just sit in there in their offices and play with their computers, busy making calls and you will find that even when you want to consult that person you can't find the person. It's not fair making personal calls for hours and you want help, you will be waiting for 2 hours to be assisted on 1 case about a person with a person on a personal call.

**R:** Do you think that this is a problem faced by your organization only or its all social workers providing child protection?

**V:** It's just that in our organization there are lot of supervisors maybe each supervisor supervising 6 people which is manageable, its manageable every month the supervisor can be able to see those people unlike supervisors in the department of social development where 1 supervisor will be supervising 20 people, so for us its very manage able and then I am not sure about other supervisors how they are doing their supervision because I had previous supervisors who never missed any month without supervision and you would never struggle with any case. If you are struggling with a case they would want to know that ' I allocated a best case on this and I made this instruction what have you done so far to get it and you will explain that on your instruction this is what I did this is what I have not done and they say o you need any help, or if you are struggling with anything else they will ...based on my instruction is there more which you didn't understand or do you want help based on my instruction because so fat you have done this, what is it that you ate struggling on because you should have finalized or should have made final decisions about the placements but you haven't what is it that's happening and then you will explain that ' I didn't manage to get placement, what do you want me to help with, how can I help you so that you make final recommendations about this case on a monthly bases. And then still it will come with instructions to say ok we have discussed this and this is what we have greed go and do 1 2 3 and then you will know that I am not alone and even if you go and consult, you consult on something that person has guided you but to consult on something a person doesn't even know about the case, Yoh my dear it's a pain.

**R:** So this is a problem you are facing in the organization because 1 you said.... on the supervisors so it's a...

**V:** Some other workers they might be getting that supervision because I once, I had two previous supervisors which they never missed any....

**R:** So it depends in the organization and the admin of the organization which is not really accountable to see what it is because it's everything done in one according or what, people do as they please supervisors do as they please.

**V:** What I can say is the admin, we have got a system where we write what we do so I am just wandering if the managers is.....because my work, they can access my work and my supervisors work, so then it comes back to the management, the manager is not monitoring because myself if I say this is my work which I did my supervisor can be able to go and check if it's true reflection of what I am saying. So then manager I am not sure if she asks about such kind of things about the supervision thing such kind of thing but am not sure if she asks about what the supervisor did a month because on monthly bases I know that she also had supervision, so I am not sure what she reports which is asked on supervision because if she's being asked, the manager can go and check if it's a true reflection. I would also say it comes with laziness because people sometimes they expect people to.....on the system but they can't even go and check if the other person is doing their work.

**R:** So there should be consistency?

**V:** Yes.

**R:** K thank you very much for the information and thank you for participating again.

**V:** Thank you.

## **APPENDIX J: Transcribed Interview - Participant**

**(Z) Code name for participant**

**(R) Researcher**

**R:** Thank you for participating in my study. So please feel free. How long have you been working as a child protection social worker?

**Z:** I have been working as a child protection social worker for a period of two years straight from varsity and this is my 1st.....

**R:** How has been the experience?

**Z:** Very frustrating. When I came here I was energetic, I was looking forward to child protection and I had all these theories and ideas, but when I got here people tell you to relax. They say this is child protection you need to chill. Sometimes you get frustrated by internal politics, lack of support, dynamics between department of social development and NGO's so all those things are discouraging.

**R:** So you are saying lack of support from everyone or supervisor??

**Z:** At times you get support from your teammates, supervisor not that much

**R:** OK so what is your understanding of supervision as it relates to child protection?

**Z:** Supervision for me is guidance especially when you are from varsity you know nothing about work place; you know nothing about procedures or how to write a report. You might have the varsity format but organizations have their own formats that they use, therefore when you get here the supervisor gives you supervision. The first time you are given or allocated files, maybe you will have two consecutive months then they tell you that now you are fine, you have gotten to the grip of things

**R:** Then you go on alone?

**Z:** Yes.

**R:** So how would you describe the supervision which is provided in your organization?

**Z:** It depends because it's not one sided, at times the supervisor would want to give us supervision but because of high caseloads and backloads you would run away from it and make excuses that you are going to court or that you need to attend meetings. You would come up with all sorts of excuses because if you are seated there you know that 40 files and its two hours you are not going to finish so it means supervision is going to go on for the whole week every two hours you are with the supervisors, so its two sided. Sometimes you haven't done what the supervisor said you must do on previous supervision. Sometimes you

would want to have supervision but the supervisor will only supervise the cases that have crises because she is also seating with other teammates files that are going to court that she must correct and sign. So yes it's too much for both supervisors and the employees.

**R:** So for the ....supervision you have... how often is it done or maybe per month??

**Z:** This year I had only two, and it's from November to December

**R:** 11 months, so have you been coping?

**Z:** I wasn't because I even took leave. I felt like I was losing my mind....I went home and stayed for the whole two days without even going to the mall because I would confuse court dates thinking I am supposed to be in court when I am not supposed to be at court and sometimes I would seat thinking I don't have court only to find out that I have court, that's how bad it was. Sometimes when you have crises you go you go and report to supervisors and they tell you to go and sort it out but it's a crisis, you came to them because you have a crises and they tell you to ask other teammates who have dealt with similar issues, so you end supervised by other teammates who .....

**R:** Instead of the supervisors who are supposed to be supervising..?

**Z:** Yes.

**R:** What do you think are functions or roles of supervision in your practice?

**Z:** Guidance, support, giving case direction and being hands on. Those are the roles because sometimes there are issues, let's say there is a placement breakdown in one of the children's home and you are no longer called by their social workers, you are now speaking to their directors and managers so now it becomes power issues and you are just a mere social worker and you need your supervisor to step in and call people and explain what are your challenges but they would just say return whosoever's call and they make it your problem, for the fact that the child is under your name it becomes your problem even if there is a crisis and the manager is there they would just walk past and say oh what have you done' it becomes your baby once a child is under your name like a biological child.

**R:** It's like there is no one to stand with you.

**Z:** Nah you must see on your own, even if the child absconds people are not there to support they just disappear.

**R:** Ok. Based on what you are saying, what do you think constitutes quality supervision within the child protection field?

**Z:** You must understand that we are working with children. Children are vulnerable, they need our support but at times I feel they focus more on the logistics than the actual work that we are supposed to be doing. I personally feel that quality supervision is when the supervisor

seats down and understand the type of cases you receive in your team because most of the time you find their trends, alcohol abuse especially places like Soweto, there is higher rates of alcohol abuse, parents who are dating, parents who leave children unattended for weekends and during the weekends when they are out partying and there is high levels of poverty. So if you are a supervisor you need to know the area where we are working like people you are working with, their daily challenges so that even cases come, you give cases direction to case managers, you have taken into account what challenges are and how to best tackle those, that would help with prevention services because we do not have you would not have so many cases.

**R:** So at least your supervisor and you are on the same page of understanding what types of cases are coming

**Z:** Yes because if the supervisor has not been there, they don't know what is happening in the community. You would come here having with your written they go like ' see what you can do, so if they know your daily struggles and challenges

**R:** So you suggest you have team meetings or group supervision, so what kind of supervision are you getting now, is only open door or one on one?

**Z:** It's a one on one supervision hence I said its twice, But however I have forced the supervisor, whenever I feel like I have challenges I would just grab my files and in seat in her office and discuss the file and as a team together we have come up with solutions. We have seen that sometimes we .....so we would have case conference within the team, we would seat there, we would pick your difficult cases and we discuss them and together we come with a way forward because fortunately we have experienced people who have been supervisors.

**R:** Oh wow that's good.

**Z:** It's easier like that we support each other.

**R:** What are other supervisory challenges are you experiencing which hinder your social services deliverance to your clients??

**Z:** The supervisor taking me serious when I come and say there is a crisis and they laugh and yah we are used to it and we deal with it, just don't panic

**R:** So things are not taken seriously?

**Z:** Yes unless the child is in the office, if you are still saying the child is where and these are the challenges they sort of brush it off until calls keep coming and coming or until the problem escalates to a level where management is involved that is when your case will be taken seriously.

**R:** So in other words if there is no consistency to the supervision then things will blow out at the end of the end?

**Z:** Yes. Sometimes we are left alone in the office and people are going home because the child is under your care so you must see, you must make a plan.

**R:** So how do you overcome this challenge, is it only one or there is more?

**Z:** It's supervision, supervisors going on power trips. The best way to overcome it really is to talk about it during team meetings and highlight the challenges we are facing.

**R:** Team meeting without the supervisor or with?

**Z:** With the supervisor. We just tell the supervisor how we feel about the services she's giving us which can affect the services we render to our clients.

**R:** Do the team meetings help?

**Z:** They do help but sometimes supervisors take them personal, they feel like it's a personal attack

**R:** Yet you want to deliver the services to the clients?

**Z:** Yes. In as much as you would try and be professional in the manner which you address, they still take them personally, even after meetings they would still victimize you and say you think I am not doing my job, you don't know what I go through and so on.

**R:** What are some support systems or programs which are provided by the organization especially when you are faced with this kind of challenges?

**Z:** There are no services. You are just left with your...

**R:** Until you regain your energy alone?

**Z:** Yes.

**R:** Which suggestion do you have that might improve?

**Z:** We need supervision provided in the organization so that we deliver our services to the children. I would say we need people, We need wellness day during the year not in December when people are already on leave then they come with wellness day, what are you going to do when people are no longer there.

**R:** Maybe during the year?

**Z:** Yes maybe in June and then have another one in September. Maybe make it important and then maybe have somebody for debriefing because sometimes you are faced with traumatic experiences and you have nightmares and there is no one to help you.

**R:** OK so you say there are no any programs....

**Z:** Quarterly awareness day at least you have someone in the office to debrief because sometimes you have nightmares because of court case nature we did and there is no support.

**R:** At least the person comes once in a while.

**Z:** Yes because you can just go there once because ...and we someone to talk to because these are confidential issues I can't just tell it to my spouse and say this is what happened.

**R:** And it ends up messing your relationship....

**Z:** Or sometimes my debriefing ends up at home because ....person that I can talk to as much I don't say this child's name is whoever I just say this is what happened today at work. He is the only person who would try and understand but here nothing

**R:** So generally apart from what you have already mentioned what else can you add on, how can supervision be improved?

**Z:** I think supervisors .....to keep up with the times because you can't be a supervisor that worked in child protection in 2001 and still think the trend of child abuse is the same. You need to keep up, understand what's going on so that when you tender services you are on time you give a social worker guidance and also just being there for social workers even if it's no longer work related. When they go through personal stuff you can't separate self in as much you need to but .....work more hours. So if you are not happy at work it affects you and your health as an individual. So I think they must just create a good energy and good environment where people are free to express themselves because another problem as an organization you would want to report that supervisors are not doing their job to management but at the end of the day management anonymously and you would hear the supervisor saying I heard you went to my manager and said...

**R:** There is no confidentiality.

**Z:** Yes there is no longer confidentiality. You are just put up there, yes you said... so we end up keeping things to ourselves. We fear.

**R:** So you don't give maximum attention to the client?

**Z:** Yes.

**R:** Because you have to deal with yourself?

**Z:** Yes and clients become the same. Sometimes you would forget what the child looks like until the next court date or say this is whatever file, which child is this and then when you read that file you remember the face, you can't remember places that much and that's the nature of our work.

**R:** Ok thank you so much for participating. If you have anything to add on please share.

**Z:** Wishing you all the best with your studies.

**R:** Thank you.

## **APPENDIX K: Transcribed Interview: Key Informant**

**(M) Code name for participant**

**(R) Researcher**

**R:** May you tell me a bit about your role as a supervisor

**M:** In the first place guide the people, and guide them in a way that they do their work to build bold structures and the most important is into guide in their personal life because if you are sorted out in your personal life you will be a better worker at the end of the day.

**R:** Ok so how many social workers do you supervise?

**M:** 6

**R:** K so how often do you give them supervision?

**M:** Once a month for.....and an open door policy and then we do group supervision.

**R:** Group supervision is also once a month?

**M:** Yes

**R:** Ok

**M:** We do.....and we do 4 in a year

**R:** Explain to me your understanding of supervision

**M:** Supervision is to assist a social worker that they can cope with their work load in the first place, that they can know how to organize their work.....with all the clients and not only focus on certain and this is my aim that they must cover.... And then to guide them if they need guidance. I believe a social worker must sort things out themselves as well, they must learn in their own way so I will guide them on anything but they must....themselves. If there is a.... They must go there themselves, it's the way of them for learning if I do it all the time for them, they won't learn.

**R:** So also there is, based on someone's character that maybe someone doesn't look for books to read on their own or they get influence from institutions they were from?

**M:** I motivate them to read their books and I motivate them to study the acts themselves, but there is influence on their previous work and are good but some of the social workers are new and I must focus more on them. I do consultation with the most experienced social workers and mostly supervision with the young ones.

**R:** How do you describe supervision provided in your organization?

**M:** We try to...I set certain appointments with them...we try to.....sometimes it's not easy

because all that's happened we change but however if there is a set date on a specific week.....

**R:** But the end of the day you get to supervise them-----

**M:** Yes.

**R:** Which is good?

**M:** Yeah we try to.

**R:** So u mentioned that what it entails is one on one work and it's an open door policy, I guess that we can skip. So according to you what do you think are the functions IR riles that supervision plays in child protection field?

**M:** More guidance and more support. Support is most important because it's a very difficult field.....social work..... I need to debrief this why there is an open door policy, if it's difficult there must be place to debrief

**R:** Like children are delicate so the more pressure is the more is their needs.

**M:** And .....we also believe we must be light and we must make things .....for the people so that they can have a place coz I see places where they can put input, they can debrief, they can talk.... to stay healthy because .....when people don't get leave so they need to debrief. So we do a lot of stuff, wellness functions and start outings and ...and we take people out.

**R:** So that they stay fresh.

**M:** Yes. They need to stay fresh otherwise they will be depressed.

**R:** So what are the challenges which are experienced like when you do your supervision?

**M:** I haven't experienced a lot of challenges. People are being cooperative and...stuff members. The things I tell people to do they do it, and they complete their deadlines that we give them and we do a proper ordered when we monitor them. So I don't experience challenges.

**R:** At least that's better. So what suggestions do you have that might improve supervision program?

**M:** I think a supervisor they must read more than other people, they must know more, they must always be a step head. Sometimes it's a little bit difficult because everybody is not on the same level ....there is different levels, you must have that ability to give that one thing that everyone needs to know more then you have to study so that you can....the next level but you must always know your stuff so well so that you can know how to put them on the next level because.....put personalities and profession on one level otherwise they will be stuck. Always give them a chance; always give them something more challenging to do to see if

they can reach that and assist in that. So everyone is on a different level.

**R:** Is there anything important you would like to add besides what you have shared?

**M:** I think it's important that we teach a supervisor proper ethics and professional conduct that they behave in a certain manner and so we concentrate on.....of ethics at they are part of their lives at the end of the day to see .....talk in the passages if court, the way that they talk to other people. This is very important to us. I would also like to challenge the social workers to.....for example go to .....and be experts on their level. I believe in investing in the person it doesn't if they don't study at least I know I ....somebody .....so I must.....in that person, not only professional level but up on a personal level and on their family life, on their mothers and fathers in when they bring up children, the way they make it in marriages so we work on all those levels. I think supervisory is not only for the professional work but to build a person at the end of the day and they are better social workers and.....

**R:** Thank you very much, it was very informative.

**M:** It's not always easy to marry a manager and a supervisor because you need to manage.... You need to manage property, you need to manager everything and.....so its two hacked job...

**R:** To make sure the organization is going.

**M:** And if I am not in this office they must know that I can go on without me and if I'm not there I must know they can go on themselves. So I am only wandering....also .....on each time I will be there.

**R:** So there are a few social workers there?

**M:** Yes they have 3 and 4 here so we split organizations so I need to be....

**R:** Ok. Thank you very much

**M:** Ok. You are welcome.

