The experiences of supervisors in the implementation of the Supervision Framework for social workers in South Africa in the Johannesburg region.

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ABSTRACT

Social work supervision plays a vital role in promoting professional growth, accountability, and the effective delivery of services to individuals, groups, and communities. In the South African context, supervision has been acknowledged as a foundational element of developmental social services. Despite its importance, Botha (2002) found that supervision practices are often inconsistent and lack structure, leading to challenges in service delivery. To address this hiatus, the Department of Social Development, in partnership with the South African Council for Social Services Professions, introduced the Supervision Framework for Social Workers. This framework provides a standardised approach to supervision while allowing flexibility for organisations to adapt its implementation according to their specific operational needs and contexts. Consequently, this study explores and describes the experiences of supervisors in the implementation of the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in the Johannesburg metro region in South Africa.

This study was thus intended to explore the experiences of supervisors in the implementation of the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa in the Johannesburg region. A qualitative research approach was adopted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with social work supervisors to collect in-depth data. Themes were derived from analysing data using thematic analysis informed by open-ended questions resultant from the objectives of the study and literature reviewed to ensure rigour and ethical considerations. To further enhance accuracy and organisation of the data, computer-assisted analysis was conducted using ATLAS.ti 24. Findings reveal that while the supervision framework is to some extent effective in advancing the supervision agenda, several challenges persist in its implementation. These include the influence of managerialism, increased administration, lack understanding and collaboration between the parties including social workers and managers of the guideline imperatively the study unit does not have context-specific supervision policy tailored to the environment.

Key Concepts: social work supervisor, supervisee, supervision, experiences, supervision framework.

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CHAPTER 1
GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Social work supervision is significant to social work practice. This is because, according to Bongo and Nights (2006), Engelbrecht (2019) and Wynne (2020), social work supervision is the cornerstone of social work practice. The conceptualisation and theorising of social work supervision are broadly understood and defined in practice. Social work supervision is conducted by a designated person who directs the work of the supervisee through teaching, administration, and supporting the junior social worker (Munson 2002). According to Kadushin and Harkness (2002), social work supervision refers to overseeing the job performance through an interactional process between the social worker and the social work supervisor and effectively serves as indirect service to the client.

The goal of social work supervision is designed “to promote effective and professional social work services” (Mokoka, 2016:53). Supervision ensures quality services, builds confidence in decision-making and facilitates the development of the supervisee identity in the profession (Engelbrecht 2019:24). Engelbrecht (2012) and Wynne, (2020) also contend that social work supervision is a determinant to staff retention and contributes to competent professional practice. From this discussion, it can be deduced that social work supervision also benefits the organisation, the clients, promotes the integrity and excellence in the profession.

To promote professional integrity in social work supervision, the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the South African Council of Social Service Professions (DSD& SACSSP, 2012) contend that supervision should be based on professional approaches, models, techniques including policies and mandates of the organisation. Consequently, there are defined roles for both the supervisor and supervisee. The roles of supervisor are integrated and influenced by statutory mandates, organisational policy, and perspectives (DSD & SACCSP, 2012). A supervisor thus undertakes various integrated roles during supervision

including administrator, educator, supporter, expert, motivator, enabler, activist, and broker who ultimately empowers the supervisee (Engelbrecht, 2019). These roles are also emphasised by Zastrow (2009:) and Kadushin (2002). For effectiveness and best outcomes of the supervision relationship, Wonnacott, (2012) and SACSSP and DSD, (2012) list various supervisee roles which include engaging in planning and preparation for supervision, attending scheduled supervision, pursuing on-going professional growth and others. Consequently, supervisees must take ownership of their professional development in supervision.

Kadushin and Harkness (2014), Mokoka (2016) and Engelbrecht (2019), also highlight different functions of supervision, which are administrative, educational, and supportive supervision. Administrative supervision thus refers to the correct implementation of organisational policies, objectives, and procedures (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Engelbrecht and Ncube (2021) concur that administrative supervision focuses on organisational documents, clarifying roles, plans, where the supervisor assigns, monitors, reviews and evaluates work performance. Under the educational function the supervisor imparts skills, knowledge, and attitude required to perform certain tasks. Khosa (2022) adds the educational function can be applied through mentoring and coaching of the supervisee by the supervisor. Owing to the challenging and overwhelming work of social work, supportive supervision enhances the psychological well-being of the social worker and ensures the retention of social workers in the profession (Wynne 2020; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).

Prior research (Parker, 2017; Khosa, 2022) highlights that the administrative function of supervision is often prioritised over educational and supportive functions. According to Jacques (2019) this is mainly because of the accountability orientation of supervision. This emphasis reflects a tendency to focus on managerial tasks and organisational compliance, sometimes at the expense of professional development and emotional support for supervisees. However, the authors underscore the importance of integrating all three functions -administrative, educational, and supportive - to ensure supervision is both comprehensive and effective (Engelbrecht, 2013; Makhubela, 2016; Gunda, 2021).

These three functions of supervision are interrelated and executed by means of various methods including individual, group, consultation, and peer supervision. Individual supervision is a one-on-one encounter between the supervisor and the supervisee (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014) where the supervisor implements all the supervision methods to encourage personal development and growth of the supervisee such that they apply work processes, organisational policies in providing best possible services to the service user effectively and efficiently (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Whereas group supervision is applied with a group of supervisees who share similar services and meet with the purpose of sharing knowledge and experience for purposes of personal development, the supervisor should be aware of the importance of managing group dynamics during group supervision according to Kadushin & Harkness, (2014) and Alschuer (2021).

Supervisees can also use the consultation method of supervision. Consultation refers to a meeting initiated by the supervisee who has administrative knowledge and skills acquired during the developmental phases of supervision. The supervisee consults to seek advice or expertise in the area of work from the supervisor (Botha, 2002; Engelbrecht, 2012). Individual and group supervision are thus planned while consultation is unplanned but forms part of the supervision contract to ensure interminable yet consistent learning (Nye, 2007) which is encouraged in the social work profession.

Supervisees may also be exposed to peer supervision by the supervisor. Peer supervision refers to supervision among peers; it is a planned and structured process which is non-hierarchical, self-determining, self-directing and self-renewing where supervises learn from each other in areas that they believe they need to develop (Phillips, 2021). It is a collegial relation among colleagues (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:29) in the absence of a supervisor wherein supervisees take turns to lead the mentoring sessions.

Further to the above, in South Africa, social work supervision is regulated. South Africa had a huge transition following the 1994 democratic elections which brought changes politically, economically, and socially. The 1994 government brought with it not only political changes but also a different social welfare system

which sought to redress poverty caused by the previous apartheid dispensation. Consequently, in 1997 the White Paper on Social Welfare was enacted, and the policy sought to ensure that social services are rendered equitably, specifically to previously disadvantaged communities. Therefore, the social work profession was identified as one of the key stakeholders to render developmental services and eradicate poverty (Engelbrecht, 2019; Khosa, 2022). Moreover, the policy made provisions for circumstances under which supervision ought to be rendered.

Years later, in 2006, another policy was introduced in the sector, i.e., the Recruitment and Retention Strategy. According to the Department of Social Development (2006), gaps in service delivery were identified, attributed to inadequate supervision of social workers, which led to substandard services provided to users. The Recruitment and Retention Strategy therefore declared the social work profession as a scarce skill, and a need to recruit more social work supervisors was consequently highlighted. Similarly, Botha (2002) had previously highlighted weaknesses and faults in supervision practice, emphasising the detrimental impact on services. These findings thus underscored the critical role of effective supervision in ensuring quality social services.

In South Africa social work supervision is further endorsed by several legislations including the Policy Guideline for Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics and Rules for Social Workers by the SACSSP (2007). The policy emphasises in section 5.4.1(a)(e) and (f) that a supervisor ought to be skilled and knowledgeable in the field they are providing supervision on; further they are liable for decisions made by the social worker, and they must be registered practitioners.

Furthermore, another critical policy introduced in the sector is the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa, which is the focus of the study. The Supervision Framework for Social Workers was introduced in 2012 and its introduction fulfilled one of the objectives of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy (Engelbrecht, 2013), which was to improve and standardise supervision in South Africa and to ensure uniformity across the fraternity. The

Supervision Framework for Social Service Professionals was introduced in 2012 with the aim of standardising supervision practices across all organisations employing social workers. The framework seeks to promote consistency, accountability, professional development, and quality service delivery within the social service sector. Given the significant role of supervision in supporting practitioners and strengthening professional practice, the implementation of this policy framework forms the central focus of the present study. The conceptual foundations, principles, and broader context underpinning the framework will be explored comprehensively in Chapter 2.

The policy was also developed and implemented because social work supervision continued to be dogged by inconsistencies. For instance, studies by Mathonsi (2016), Shokane (2016), Mokoka (2016), and O'Donoghue and Engelbrecht (2021) show that supervisors are challenged by competing responsibilities, counterproductive working conditions, structural challenges, poor resources, and high case load in their supervision undertakings. Also, social work supervisors struggle with the integration of the three functions of supervision which are interlinked because, according to Engelbrecht (2013) and Tsui (2005), the administrative function of supervision usually takes precedence over the educational and support functions, rendering educational and supportive supervision marginalised and culminating in supervision that is not practiced holistically.

Consequently, with over a decade of introduction and implementation of the supervision framework in the sector, this study sought to investigate the experiences of social work supervisors in its implementation in the Johannesburg region and to explore if the policy achieved that which it was designed to achieve which is to ensure accountability, professional development, and quality supervision services.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

This study was instituted because, as alluded to earlier, social work supervision continues to be challenged. According to the DSD (2006), the post-1994 political transition and transformation of the welfare system created uncertainty among skilled and experienced social work supervisors, many of whom sought opportunities abroad, leaving a significant gap in social work supervision. The brain drain is also confirmed

in Engelbrecht (2012) who reports that it resulted in the deterioration of supervision practice, which in turn affected service delivery negatively. During that period, supervision in practice was put in the back banner and its consequence was observed in the quality of parlous services (Du Plessis in Khosa, 2020). The 2015 Social Work Indaba held in Durban, South Africa, also emphasised that social work supervision is deficient in practice (DSD, 2016). Botha (2002) and Engelbrecht (2013) also hold the view that supervision is faulty and poor, and this sentiment is also shared by DSD and SACSSP (2012).

Furthermore, changes in the academic space could also be observed resulting in supervision discourse not receiving adequate attention in academic writing in the late 1990s (Engelbrecht, 2019) this was mainly because the country had o focus on service delivery as a priority. Researchers (Wynne, 2020, Engelbrecht, 2013,2019, Silence, 2017, Mathonsi & Makhubela, 2016) also attribute poor service delivery to lack of supervision of social workers. The Supervision Framework for Social Worker Profession in South Africa also confirms that the decline in productivity and quality of services rendered by social workers was attributed to lack of supervision and attributed the supervision challenges in South Africa. Supervision is critiqued for it being unstructured, highly individualised, unpredictable, non-routine and slight (DSD &SACSSP, 2012:13).

Mokoka (2016), Shokane (2016), and Khosa (2022) argue that a major challenge facing social work supervision in South Africa is the lack of effective supervision, which is often weakened by supervisors' limited knowledge and training in supervision theories, models, and approaches. The authors proceed to state that sometimes supervisor also have conflicting supervision responsibilities, unmanageable workloads, experience problems of power dynamics, including poor working conditions, and lack of context-based supervision policies.

Another challenge facing supervision is that supervisors are also reported to focus mostly on the administrative function of supervision, thus overlooking the educational and support function (Wynne, 2020). This observation is also supported by other researchers Nye (2009) and Khosa (2022). Again, highlighted by Kadushin and Harkness (2002) who reported that supervisors are typically focused on administrative

tasks including staff recruitment, induction, planning delegation, monitoring, evaluation, and coordination. Engelbrecht (2010) also noted that since the inception of supervision, administration was the primary task in social work supervision. Administration was historically given precedence in the social work field training as suggested by Tsui (2005), subsequently neglecting educational and support supervision functions.

The researcher has also experienced this first-hand, that supervisors in practice often carry out administrative roles wherein they conduct performance appraisals, compile data and statistical reports, canalize supervisee statutory reports and many other administrative tasks which consumes most of their time, thus leaving minimal time for educational and support supervision functions.

Further to the above, there are also structural and organisational issues which impact supervision in South Africa. Some of the challenges stressed by Shokane, (2016), Mokoka, (2016), Engelbrecht, (2019), Nortje, (2022) and Khosa, (2022) include scarce resources and poor working conditions, lack of training of supervisors and high workload load ratio of supervisees per supervisor.

Owing to the preceding question, it is thus advanced that the introduction of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa has not translated into outright improved and efficient supervision services by social work supervisors. Engelbrecht (2013) argues that persistent challenges stem from frameworks driven by managerial ideologies that prioritise compliance, control, formality, and quantitative evidence, thereby imposing normative approaches despite claims of flexibility. This view is confirmed by Mathonsi and Makhubela (2016), and Silence (2017) whose research studies found that conflicting responsibilities, poor training of supervisors, lack of resources and high case load contribute to lack of understanding of the supervision framework among officials and as such Mokoka (2016) recommends the employment of more staff to alleviate burnout due to high case load.

To determine whether the framework achieves its intended purpose of improving supervision practices in South Africa, studies by Hair (2012), Engelbrecht (2013),

Shokane (2016), Makhubela and Mathonsi (2016), as well as Gumbi (2021), identified structural challenges and supervisors' lack of training and knowledge as major obstacles to effective supervision. The authors also argue that supervision is applied for compliance purposes rather than its intended purposes of improving services and developing the social worker competency subsequently improving quality services to meet the needs of disadvantaged communities. Against this backdrop, the following problem statement was formulated for the study:

Social work supervision in South Africa continues to be challenged and this affliction influences social work service delivery. There is thus a need to explore the experiences of social workers supervisors in the Johannesburg region regarding their implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa so as to strengthen their supervision practice.

1.3 THE RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This study is significant to the researcher and to the social work profession at large in South Africa. This is because the researcher is currently employed as a social work supervisor at the Gauteng Provincial Department of Social Development. Consequently, in practice she has experienced first-hand challenges relating to the operationalisation of the Supervision Framework for Social Work Profession in South Africa within the Johannesburg region which led to the interest in this study.

One of the measures to monitor the implementation of the framework in the Johannesburg region was the introduction of supervisors learning forums in all the nine provinces of the country. The supervision fora are consolidated and facilitated at national and provincial levels with the purpose of capacitating the supervisors to implement the framework and thus improve on supervision. As a member of the said forum in the Gauteng region, the researcher together with other fellow supervisors converge on a quarterly basis to discuss challenges and learn best practices from peers as they all endeavour to effectively implement the supervision framework. It was through my involvement in the forum that I developed an interest in investigating supervisors' lived experiences regarding the implementation of the framework, having observed that meetings often became platforms for venting and debriefing about

challenges with senior management and the unprofessional or unethical conduct of subordinates (social workers), rather than focusing on deliberations about supervision.

The researcher has also identified that whilst the framework has good intentions, structural issues are a hinderance because supervisors are sandwiched between managerial and supervision responsibilities hence the need to explore their experiences in this regard.

After developing an interest in the topic, the researcher then conducted a literature search to locate studies conducted on the topic in South Africa. The literature search confirmed that studies conducted on the implementation of the framework by Englebrecht (2013), Shokane (2016), Makhubela and Mathonsi (2017), Gumbi (2021) and Khosa (2022) focus on the experiences of social workers and supervisors in the implementation of the supervision framework for social work supervision in the Vembe District of Limpopo, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Eastern Cape respectively. In this study, it is advanced that while there are some studies that investigate the experiences of social worker supervisees and supervisors as evidenced, the said studies are qualitative in nature, which according to Gogdan and DeVault (2016), Padgett (2017) and Nayak and Singh (2015) means that their findings cannot be generalisable to the Johannesburg Region hence the contribution of this study.

Furthermore, another gap identified from the listed studies is that most of the participants were mainly social workers. For instance, in the study conducted by Englebrecht (2013) there were 40 social work participants vis-a-vis 8 supervisor participants while in the study by Shokane (2016) there were 62 participants comprising social workers, social auxiliary workers and student social workers and of those only 15 were social work supervisors. Therefore, this means that the voice of social work supervisors specifically in the Johannesburg Department of Social Development have not been captured.

It is thus envisaged in this regard that the research findings highlight challenges and strengths of the supervision framework and contribute to its enhancement.

1.4 Definition of key concepts

The following are the overarching keywords of the study:

1.4.1 Social work supervision

Social work supervision is conducted by a line manager who renders social work intervention to members of the same profession with the intention of mentoring them to improve professional services to service users (Mokoka, 2016). Engelbrecht highlights that “social work supervision is a process through which a supervisor helps a social work supervisee to accomplish their professional tasks as effectively as possible” (2019:75) and this further develops their professional identity. For the study, a definition by Silence (2017) that social work supervision is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, empowerment, and liberation of social workers is adopted.

1.4.2 Social work supervisor

A social work supervisor is a qualified social worker (SACSSP, 2007) appointed to render administrative, educational, and supportive supervision functions to a fellow social worker (Kadushin and Harkness, 2014:23). The DSD (2012) concurs that a social work supervisor is a qualified, experienced social worker registered and mandated by the SACSSP code of ethics to supervise another social worker, including social auxiliary workers and student social workers. For the purposes of this research project, a supervisor is an experienced, knowledgeable and skilled social worker registered with the SACSSP and who has been appointed and/or assigned supervision responsibilities of the supervisee by the Department of Social Development in Johannesburg.

1.4.3 Supervisee

A supervisee is a person who receives guidance, support, training, and oversight from an experienced and knowledgeable supervisor within a structured relationship (Busse 2021). DSD and SACSSP (2012) position a supervisee as a social worker, student social worker, Auxiliary worker, student auxiliary worker and Child and Youth Care workers receive supervision to improve competence, accountability and ethical

practice while Jackson, Brady, & Dawkins, (2023) adds that a supervisee is an inexperienced worker who engages in a professional relationship experienced employee in a capacitation role in order for the inexperience supervisee to fulfil their responsibility in a supportive guided environment. For this study a supervisee will thus be regarded as a social worker receiving guidance, support, training, and oversight to improve competence, accountability and ethical practice from an experienced social work supervisor within a structured social work relationship.

1.4.4 Experiences

Experience is the accumulation of skills and knowledge that result from direct participation in an event or activities. This experience includes direct observation or participation in an event and feelings the person has undergone (Collins, 1998:390). Grobler, Schenck and Mbedzi (2013) add that experiences are from the external world, interpreted internally by the individual to form their own perceptions of experience of the outside world. These experiences are different and unique to every individual and include perceptions, needs, behaviours and values. For this study experiences are direct feelings, observations and behaviours and or interpretations unique to the participants' views regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa.

1.4.5 Supervision framework

A supervision framework in social work refers to a structured policy guideline that establishes the norms, standards, and principles for the implementation and standardisation of supervision practices within the profession (NASW 2013). In collaboration with the Department of Social Development, the SACSSP developed a supervision framework for social service professionals to ensure that supervision does take place in an accountable manner (SACSSP & DSD, 2013). A supervision framework in this study is therefore regarded as a guiding document that specifies norms, standards, and principles for the implementation of supervision practices within the profession. The policy thus guides social work supervisors on how supervision ought to be implemented across diverse organisational contexts.

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is a to delineate a broad conception of what the research intends to achieve (Nayak and Sigh, 2015). Neuman (2014) suggests that the goals are aimed at drawing conclusions on the research question. Neuman (2014) distinguishes goals of the researcher as either exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. It can therefore be deduced from the preceding definitions that research goals are aspirations of what the researcher intends to achieve at the end of the study. In this study a goal was also formulated to:

Explore the experiences of supervisors in the implementation of the Supervision Framework for social workers in South Africa in the Johannesburg region.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION

Research questions are broadly conceptualised and researchable (Padgett, 2017). They take shape from the researcher's intellectual curiosity, prior theoretical frameworks, personal experiences and commitment to social change as espoused by Neuman (2014). The broad research questions are then understood through literature review, conceptualising well-informed questions, that subsequently develop into objectives which consequently answer the broad research questions. The research question for the study is formulated as follows:

What are the experiences of supervisors in the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work in South Africa within the Johannesburg region?

1.7 OBJECTIVES

Research objectives are realistic steps undertaken within a certain timespan to achieve set research goal of a study (Neuman, 2014). Padgett (2017) support the view and share that research objectives are careful conscious decisions on how the research project is carried out with specific time frames on how the research process unfolds to reach the research goal. After deciding on the research question specific objectives to achieve the goals must be constructed and the following objectives were thus derived for this study:

- To explore and describe the experiences of supervisors in implementing the Supervision framework for social workers in South Africa.
- To draw conclusions about the supervisor's experiences regarding the implementing of the supervision framework.
- To make recommendations on the implementation of the Supervision framework for social workers to policy makers and for future research.

To achieve the set objectives of the study, a series of specific and detailed task objectives were undertaken. As Padgett (2017) explains, that task objectives involve a systematic description of the activities carried out by the researcher to reach the study's goals. In this study, the task objectives included:

- selecting a sample of social work supervisors from the Johannesburg region who met the criteria for inclusion,
- conducting semi-structured interviews with participants who consented to explore the experiences of social workers regarding the implementation of the supervision framework for social workers in South Africa,
- transcribing, analysing, and interpreting the data
- thereafter, corroborating study findings with existing scientific literature to validate the findings from the social work supervisors.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Research projects have limitations which must be acknowledged and accounted for in empirical decision-making (Padgett, 2015). This research process was also not without challenges and some of the prominent ones experienced include the following:

- A significant limitation of this study was the delayed response from gatekeepers, which impacted the overall timeline. Gatekeepers, who often serve as crucial intermediaries in accessing participants or research sites, took longer than anticipated to grant the necessary permissions. The prolonged waiting period generated uncertainties. This delay necessitated the researchers to account for potential bureaucratic or administrative hurdles when designing timelines for future projects.

- Another notable limitation of this study was the unavailability of some participants at their scheduled dates and times for data collection. This issue necessitated the rescheduling of appointments, which not only extended the timeline of the study but also imposed additional logistical challenges. Furthermore, the researcher incurred increased costs associated with travel to accommodate the revised schedules, which strained the financial and time resources. The latter can be budgeted for in future projects
- One of the limitations encountered during the research process was the time-consuming task of transcribing the interviews. The process took longer than anticipated, as it required careful attention to detail to accurately capture the participants' responses. Given the volume of interviews conducted, transcribing each session took a considerable amount of time, which delayed subsequent stages of analysis. The researcher could have used transcription software.
- Learning the software for qualitative data analysis (i.e., ATLAS.ti) was also daunting. It took some time, as it involved understanding its various functions and how to effectively apply them to the research process. However, this learning curve proved worthwhile as it significantly enhanced the rigour of the study.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This research report is divided into the following five chapters:

Chapter 1: General introduction and overview of the study

This chapter introduces the study, outlining its foundation and significance. The background of the study provides context. The rationale underscores the importance of the study and its potential contributions to the field. Key concepts are clearly defined to ensure understanding. The research questions, purpose, and objectives are explicitly stated.

Chapter 2: Literature review

In this chapter, a comprehensive review of the literature is presented, focusing on the concept and practice of supervision and its significance in social work. Relevant concepts are discussed to provide a well-rounded understanding of supervision.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

The chapter presents the research methods employed to conduct the study. This comprehensive explanation provides clarity on the methodology, laying a foundation for understanding the study's results and conclusions.

Chapter 4: Research findings

This chapter presents the research findings, systematically integrating them with relevant literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the study's outcomes. In addition, comparisons are made with existing literature to highlight consistencies, contradictions, and contributions to the field.

Chapter 5: Summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, offering a concise overview of the key insights derived from the analysis. It synthesises the conclusions drawn from the research, Furthermore, it proffers recommendations to inform practice and guide future research.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Drawing from the purpose of this study, designed to explore the experiences of supervisors in the implementation of the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa in Johannesburg Social Development Department, this chapter presents a literature review of the existing and published literature on social work supervision. This generates a comprehensive understanding of contemporary issues in the practice of social work supervision both locally and internationally.

The study was conducted in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the literature review primarily focuses on the South African context while also incorporating perspectives from scholars in other countries to provide a broader understanding of social work supervisory practices. The review traces the historical development of social work supervision in South Africa, examining how legislative mandates and the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa, have shaped the profession. Key concepts are explored to enhance comprehension of supervision practices, including approaches, methods, and functions, while also addressing contemporary issues and challenges in social work supervision. By integrating local and international insights, this approach ensures a comprehensive examination of supervision practices while remaining firmly grounded in the South African context. Also, the social development approach is the lens through which the study interrogates this contemporary literature.

2.2 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION IN SOUTH ARICA

2.2.1 Colonial and apartheid era

The development of social work and social work supervision in South Africa has been influenced by three distinct eras of colonialism, apartheid, and democracy. The trajectory can be traced to the colonial penetration of Southern Africa in 1652 that set the stage for conflicts culminating in the Anglo-Boer War in 1902 (Grey, 2006). After this inception of the colonial enterprise came the industrialisation which introduced

significant social challenges, including the dislocation of the Afrikaner community (Engelbrecht, 2010). This displacement contributed to the emergence of the "poor white" community, which was often attributed to factors such as lack of education, urbanisation, poverty, and disease (Grey, 2006:196). In response to the ‘poor white community’, church-led volunteer initiatives emerged to provide social welfare services aimed at improving the living conditions of this white population.

During the colonial development of social work in South Africa, supervision was largely informal and mainly administrative in nature. Mainly because services were provided to individuals and families that were affected by social ills including displacement, health issues Its primary focus was the regulation and control of finances and resources. This form of supervision aligned with general supervisory practices that emphasised compliance (Engelbrecht 2013). The supervision of volunteers was undertaken by paid contractors, while services were influenced by anthropological ideologies (Gray, 2006). During this period, professional supervision was not regarded as a priority because social work had not yet been fully professionalised even supervision was not regulated. Instead, the emphasis remained on administrative control and resource management.

The poor white problem mentioned above thus necessitated the professionalisation of social services. The formalisation of social services education in South Africa took shape in 1934, primarily to address the "poor white" problem, while other racial groups were largely excluded because of the apartheid policy of separate development (Grey, 2006). White poverty influenced the development of social work education, which began at the University of Cape Town in 1921 and later expanded to other institutions. This led to the formal establishment of social welfare organisations in 1937 (Engelbrecht, 2010; Midgely, 2005) structured along racial lines and reinforcing systemic inequalities. Services at the time were mostly residual and institutional further fragmented due to separate development and the services were mainly individualistic rather than preventive and developmental. The country’s welfare system was also divided into seven regions and each region functioned under the supervision of an experienced social worker or welfare officer (Du Plessis in Bopape, 1968:42).

Several legislative frameworks were later introduced to regulate social services, including the National Welfare Act 100 of 1978, which provided for the registration of welfare organisations, and the Social and Associated Workers Act 110 of 1978 established to regulate the training and registration of social workers. These measures remained racially segregated.

Moreover, the Social Services Profession Act 110 of 1978 was enacted and paved a way for the establishment of the South African Council for Social Work, that has since transformed into the South African Council for the Social Services Professions later in 1998. Through the Council, in 1986 the Code of Conduct for the Social Work Profession was gazetted in the Government Gazzette No. 10205, 25 April 1986. The primary role of the council is to regulate and promote professional social service practice in South Africa.

2.2.2 Post-apartheid era

During the apartheid era following colonial rule, social services in South Africa were divided along racial lines; therefore, services were fragmented. Post 1994 general elections there was thus a need to prioritise the underprivileged, by designing and implementing services, which were aimed at redressing the inequalities entrenched by apartheid policies (Engelbrecht, 2019). During this transition into the democratic period, priority was to address the disparities caused by apartheid, specifically against the previously disadvantaged groups who had been relegated to the so-called Bantustan authorities Act of 1951. The Bantustans were geographical territories designed to segregate the population and promote separate development consequently disadvantaging the black communities (Twala and Ndlovu, 2025). Social work profession was therefore identified as a key stakeholder responsible for providing social services to these vulnerable populations (DSD, 2006) caused by past disparities.

The post-apartheid era ushered in significant policy changes, notably reflected in the White Paper for Social Welfare of 1997 (DSD, 1997), emphasising a developmental approach to social services. Developmental social welfare aimed at integrating social and economic objectives within a micro-policy framework mainly focused on poverty

alleviation (Midgley, 1995). The democratic government adopted additional broader policy approaches including the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) which, according to critics like Midgley (1995), were not clearly aligned and further constrained the envisaged developmental approach. These strategies had competing priorities, resulting in the neglect of human services including social work supervision. Consequently, social work supervision was unfortunately also not prioritised at the time (Engelbrecht, 2010). To address the gaps identified above in supervision various policies were promulgated.

2.2.3 Supervision policies

2.2.3.1 White Paper on Social Welfare

The White Paper for Social Welfare was introduced in 1997 to address the disparities of the separate development era described above. Restructuring of social services was a necessity beginning with the promulgation of the White Paper for Social Services. This policy co-ordinated the segregated social work roles and responsibilities including supervision among different spheres of Social Development Services (DSD, 1997), which were divided into national, provincial and local levels. It should also be emphasised that the White Paper on Social Welfare gave birth to the adoption of the social development approach to service delivery (DSD, 1997) in the social services sector in South Africa. Further to the enactment of the White Paper on Social Welfare services following a social development approach to service delivery, a gazette was propagated in the GOVERNMENT GAZETTE No. 10205, 25 April 1986 that set professional Course of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers Professionals, specifically highlighting the conduct of supervisors which is described below.

2.2.3.2 Course of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers

Social work supervision is mandated and regulated by statutory bodies in different countries to ensure that professional standards are upheld. According to O'Donoghue (2021), these regulatory bodies establish minimum standards for training and

education to ensure that social workers provide competent and high-quality services to service users (NASWA, 2013). In South Africa, the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP, 2007) is the guardian of social work practice. Social work supervision in South Africa is cemented during Conduct, Code of Ethics and Rules Conduct of the South African Council for Social Services Professions (SACSSP). The policy, SACSSP (2007:37), amongst other issues, makes the following proclamations regarding social work supervision: section 5.4.(1)(f) proclaims that social workers must be supervised in social work matters by a supervisor who is registered as a social worker while section 5.4.1[e]) submits that a supervisor could be held liable for unprofessional conduct lodged against the social worker in their supervision. In section 5.4.(1)(a) the rule of conduct adds that a supervisor should have necessary skills, knowledge to supervise appropriately and should do so within their areas of knowledge and competence. Further, reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that adequate organisational resources are available to provide appropriate supervision in section 5.4.(5)(c). The regulations thus reinforce the value of professional accountability for social workers, supervisors, and organisations to safeguard and ensure high standards of service delivery.

2.2.3.3 Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers

At the dawn of democracy in South Africa, there was also a concerning gap and decline in social work supervision influenced by political changes at the time. Over this span, there was a notable increase in the migration of social workers particularly skilled, white supervisors who had been given precedence for supervisory roles during apartheid and then migrated to European countries, thus depleting local expertise (Engelbrecht, 2006). These shifts resulted in a shortage of qualified supervisors, ultimately undermining the quality-of-service delivery.

To mitigate the challenges of poor service delivery resulting from inadequate supervision, (DSD, 2006), the then Minister of Social Development, Dr. Skweyiya, enacted the Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers in South Africa. The strategy sought to improve the working conditions of social workers (DSD, 2006). Poor and unstructured social work supervision was also acknowledged as a key gap contributing to ineffective services, with the strategy highlighting the historical lack of

supervision skills amongst the new black cohort (DSD, 2006). The concern about supervision was emphasised because, as Kadushin and Harkness (2014) notes, social workers frequently face complex decision-making scenarios, necessitating supervisory support. Additionally, Kadushin (2002) asserts that supervision enhances social workers' competency and autonomy in professional decision-making, underscoring the need for knowledgeable and skilled supervisors to guide and support their development.

2.2.3.4 Framework for Social Welfare Services

The Department of Social Development has sought to transform its role by promoting the image of the social work profession and addressing concerns related to service conditions (DSD, 2006).This strategy aims to support individuals, groups and communities in achieving optimal social functionality and self-reliance through a structured approach known as the continuum of services wherein supervisors are required to be at the forefront of service delivery. The scope of the framework is to provide a range of holistic social services that includes social and economic development (Midgley 1997).

The Framework for Social Welfare Services is articulated as a broad range of planned developmental interventions aimed at promoting social change and improving human well-being (Midgley, 1995; Payne, 2000). It involves collaboration among different spheres of the state in partnership service users in the provision of protective, supportive, and rehabilitative services to individuals, groups, and communities. The framework is underpinned by the developmental social welfare approach, which emphasizes the integration of social welfare with socio-economic development. Although the envisioned social and economic transformation has been widely conceptualized by scholars such as Midgley (1995), Patel (1997), and Ncube (2019), the implementation of these policies has not fully translated into tangible empowerment for the communities they were intended to redress in response to colonial inequalities. Consequently, there is a need for supervisors to effectively transfer knowledge and understanding of the social development framework to supervisees to strengthen policy implementation and developmental practice.

2.2.3.5 Batho Pele principles

Batho Pele principles are referred to as basic rules of conduct and behaviour that governs all workers employed by the state (Republic of South Africa, 1997) including social work practitioners. Some of the principles espoused in the policy include accountability, accessibility, empowerment and self-reliance, sustainability. These principles thus align with supervision as follows:

- Accountability: denotes that both the supervisor and the supervisee should be accountable for the supervision process and agenda.
- Accessibility: An organisation employing social workers should make effort to ensure that social workers have access to supervision (SACSSP, 2007).
- Empowerment and Self-reliance: Supervision should strive to improve the skills, knowledge, and expertise of the social worker, using all the functions of supervision to develop independent social workers.
- Sustainability: Supervision ensures that there is sustainability by encouraging continuous learning of the supervisor through supervision (Republic of South Africa, 1997:26).

To effectively implement the continuum of services, supervision need strengthening, as recommended in the Retention Strategy for Social Workers. Consequently, the Supervision Framework for Social Workers was developed as a guideline to standardise and formalise supervision practices across all organisations in South Africa that employ social workers.

2.2.3.6 Supervision Framework for Social Service Professional in South Africa

The Supervision Framework for Social Service Professionals in South Africa, implemented in 2012, was introduced as part of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers to enhance the quality of supervision in the profession. A structured framework is vital to support staff in developing the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate an ever-evolving work environment and increasing demands (Rankine, 2019). Furthermore, the political changes within South Africa underscored the need for such a guideline to ensure consistent and effective supervision practices.

This policy guideline outlines specific requirements for all organisations employing social workers, drawing on key legislative frameworks such as the South African Social Service Professions Act No 110 of 1978 the Children's Act No 38 of 2005, the Generic Norms and Standards for Social Welfare Services (2013), and the Policy Guidelines for the Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics, and Rules for Social Workers (2006). These legislative frameworks are logically integrated into the requirements of the Supervision Framework. Amongst other attributes, the supervision framework makes the following proclamations to the employers of social workers:

- That all practicing social worker supervisors must be registered.
- That authority to supervise is delegated by the organisation to a competent, experience and qualified supervisors with specific roles and responsibilities.
- That organisations should have a context-based supervision policy aligned to the supervision framework as the guideline.
- That the employer and the delegated supervisor should further ensure that training in supervision is received.

Notwithstanding the attributes of the framework outlined above. Research conducted by Silence (2017) in the Department of Health reveals that the supervision of social workers is not always mandated to be conducted by a registered social work professional. This practice may be even more prevalent in both public and private institutions employing social workers, thereby raising serious concerns regarding the supervision of social workers by professionals who are neither registered within the social work profession nor adequately grounded in its professional standards and ethics. Such misalignment in supervisory practices undermines the professional growth and competence development of supervisees, ultimately compromising the quality and effectiveness of social work service delivery.

There are also requirements for direct supervision in the policy:

- that supervision of staff is contracted; and

- that staff receives regular, planned, and structured supervision based on the developmental needs of the social worker.

The supervision framework also sets that the ratio for supervisor- supervisee at 1-10 or 1-6 depending on other managerial and duties assigned to the supervisor.

It is, however, critical to note herein that the conditions outlined in the supervision framework serve as directives that organisations employing social workers are expected to follow. In fact, their implementation must consider the unique context of each organisation (DSD, 2012) because this contextual flexibility ensures that supervision practices remain relevant and effective while adhering to the overarching guidelines established by the framework, together with the principles and values of supervision as highlighted by Bhuda (2019).

Different work contexts, including high statutory caseloads and the dual role of supervisors as middle managers, may limit the effective implementation of the supervision framework. These contextual realities can hinder the achievement of the framework's intended goals of providing consistent, planned, and structured supervision. As a result, supervision practices may become more compliance-driven and reactive, rather than reflective, supportive, and developmental in nature.

The social work professional is embedded in theories and perspectives which guide the profession in understanding phenomena and models of intervention which are discussed below.

2.3 CONCEPTUALISATION OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

2.3.1 Definition of social work supervision

Social work supervision is a structured process designed to help supervisees carry out their professional responsibilities by equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and values (Tsui, 2005; Kadushin, 2002; Engelbrecht, 2019). Social work supervision must be a consensual process of learning relationship, where the supervisee reflects on their performance (DSD, 2012). Supervision typically encompasses three interrelated functions: administrative, educational, and supportive,

which collectively guide and enhance professional practice (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Wonnacott, 2012). This relationship is usually formed between the supervisee and a supervisor (often the line manager who provides mentorship, coaching, and consultation) with the goal of improving the quality of services (Kadushin, 2014; Mokoka, 2016; Engelbrecht, 2019). The relationship is understood as interactional, positive, and non-discriminatory, while drawing on diverse theories, models, and perspectives (DSD and SACSSP Development, 2012). It can thus be denoted herein that social work supervision involves multiple interdependent variables and should be understood within the broader organisational context**.**

2.3.2 Significance of supervision

In recent years, both professionals and academics have engaged in interrogating the significance of social work supervision (Engelbrecht, 2019). Despite this, the development of knowledge surrounding supervision has continued to grow, with its roots traceable back nearly 90 years ago. The National Association for Social Workers (NASW) reinforces the value of supervision by endorsing its importance in practice. According to NASW (2013), social work supervision is important because it forms an integral component of professional training, continuing education, and development. It plays a vital role in equipping social workers with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide ethical and competent services. In the South African context, supervision is not only valued but mandated by various regulatory frameworks, including the Children's Act 38 of 2005, the Social Service Act 110 of 1978 and in the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa (2012). Social work supervision is thus considered significant because is geared towards staff well-being, retention, professional competence, and effective services (SDS, 2006; Maidman, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2019; Wynne, 2020).

To function effectively, social workers require a solid foundation of skills and knowledge (Egan, as cited in Nortje, 2022) and social work supervision quips social workers to navigate the fast-paced and demanding nature of their work environment, where critical decisions must be made in the best interest of clients. The supervisor, therefore, plays a vital role by employing various supervisory functions to develop, support, and empower social workers in carrying out their responsibilities. Continued

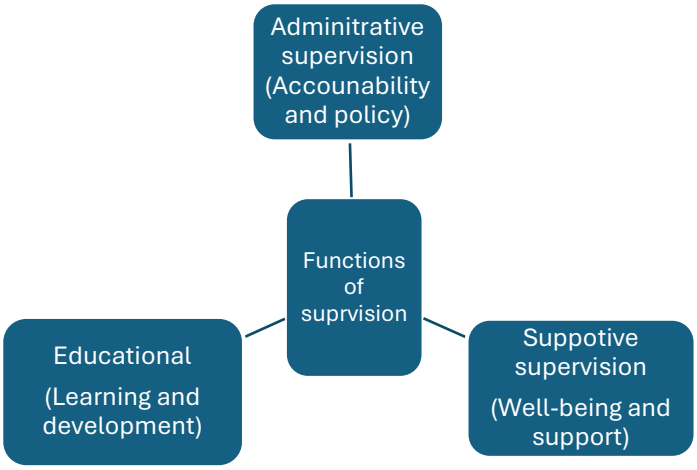
professional development (CPD) is also actively encouraged through the supervisory process. Stoltenberg (1992), in his Integrated Developmental Model (IDM), emphasises that supervisees progress through various developmental stages, eventually reaching an advanced phase characterised by increased ownership, motivation, confidence, and the ability to identify their own training needs. At this stage, supervisees take initiative to acquire more knowledge, indicating a shift towards self-directed learning and reliance in relation to the developmental approach. Importantly, Stoltenberg notes that reaching this advanced phase is not determined by the number of years of work experience, but that learning is an ongoing process.

Similarly, the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa (2012) and the Policy Guideline for the Course of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2007) are resolute in interminable supervision, maintaining that even senior or advanced social workers, despite their capacity, independent and autonomous functioning, are still expected to consult with supervisors. This continued engagement in supervision is essential, as it reinforces the development of knowledge, expertise, and competence. Supervision in this regard also supports critical decision-making, promotes accountability, and ultimately enhances the quality of service.

2.4 FUNCTIONS OF SUPERVISION

In South Africa, the supervision of social workers is guided by Kadushin's supervision framework, which identifies three key functions as normative (administrative), formative (educational), and restorative (supportive). These constructs of supervision are interdependent (Engelbrecht, 2019) as pointed put in Figure 1. These functions have been officially endorsed in the Supervision Framework for Social Service Professions in South Africa, reflecting their foundational role in guiding practice. This approach is not unique to South Africa but is recognised globally. For instance, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in its 2013 guidelines affirms these three functions, while the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 1993) also promotes and endorses them.

Figure 1.: Supervision functions



2.4.1 The administrative functions

The administrative function of supervision is a fundamental component that requires supervisors to be skilled in planning, organising, human resource management, and evaluation (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). This function should align with organisational policies and procedures, ensuring that they are effectively implemented by the supervisee (Tsui, 2005:). In tandem, the administrative function plays a key role in maintaining accountability, not only to the organisation but also to the service users. Thus, the supervisor has the role of imparting the knowledge and skills to the supervisee.

The administrative tasks of a supervisor encompass a wide range of responsibilities, including staff recruitment and selection, induction, task assignment, delegation, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. These tasks ensure that qualified and relevant supervisees are appropriately placed within the organisation (Bhuda, 2019). In addition, supervisors play a crucial role in maintaining service quality by guiding social workers to carry out their duties in aligned to both organisational and statutory norms. This may include assessing the developmental needs, support professional growth and ensure adherence to policies and standards (Wynne, 2020) of the supervisee. In

addition, the administrative function facilitates regular assessment and reviewing of supervisee performance, ensuring alignment with organisational objectives, legislative frameworks, and safeguarding clients.

Supervisors often occupy a position akin to middle managers within organisations, and as such, face the challenge of balancing administrative duties with their core function of supervision. Research findings by Khosa (2021), and Gumbi (2022) highlight that supervisor frequently spend a substantial amount of time on managerial and administrative tasks, which can detract from their primary supervisory responsibilities. This concern is echoed by Melichercik (1994) and Shokane (2016) who posit that due to this challenge, supervisors often have no time to apply other methods of supervision. While administrative tasks are integral to a supervisor's role, striking a balance between managerial responsibilities and effective supervision becomes problematic. There is also a need for supervisor to engage supervisees in education supervision.

2.4.2 The educational function

Educational supervision is understood as a process that ensures learning for novice supervisees. It further supports the continuous development of an independent, autonomous supervisee, encompassing both coaching and mentoring (Engelbrecht, 2019). Through this educational process, supervisees develop self-awareness and develop professional identity. According to Tsui (2005), the supervisor plays a key role in identifying the developmental needs and addressing these gaps through appropriate training, equipping them with the necessary skills, attitudes, and knowledge. Such training may include accredited courses, in-service programmes, modelling, and coaching. Educational supervision also involves helping social workers understand organisational policies, culture, and dynamics, as well as the programmes and communities the organisation serves (Tsui, 2005).

Educational supervision further includes the practical application of social work values, skills, and knowledge, supporting the supervisee in applying theory to understand clients, conduct assessments, implement interventions, and evaluate outcomes. This comprehensive approach promotes self-awareness, helps

supervisees assess their strengths and weaknesses, and identifies areas for further growth (Engelbrecht, 2010). In this context, the supervisor serves as a resource, using coaching and mentoring to enhance professional competence (Tsui, 2005).

Educational supervision is a broad and ongoing process that occurs through daily interactions between the supervisor and the supervisee. Given the continuous nature of this relationship, it is essential for the supervisor to serve as a positive role model. The supervisor's behaviour, attitudes, and professional conduct significantly influence the supervisee's learning experiences and play a crucial role in shaping their professional identity.

The relationship between the administrative and educational functions of supervision is a topic of ongoing debate among scholars. Kadushin and Harkness (2014) and Engelbrecht (2013) argue that these functions are interconnected, with the educational aspect playing a significant role in staff development. Differing perspectives exist regarding the prioritisation and integration of administrative and educational functions. Kadushin and Harkness (2002) emphasises the importance of educational supervision, while Ereza and Lazar (1994) see a potential conflict between administrative and educational roles and the author advocates for their separation. To address this perceived conflict, external supervision model has been introduced. However, practical challenges such as budget constraints pose obstacles to fully implementing this separation, particularly in underdeveloped countries. Shokane (2016) points out that a failure to educate the supervisee is a significant shortcoming in supervision practices and thus underscores the argument that effective guidance and education by supervisors are integral to the successful execution of supervision.

While there may be differing opinions on the integration of administrative and educational functions, it is essential to recognise their interconnectedness. Educational supervision serves as a prerequisite for effective administrative functions, ensuring that social workers are adequately trained, informed, and supported in their roles. Therefore, a balanced approach that incorporates both administrative and educational and supportive functions is crucial for the comprehensive and effective supervision of social work practices.

2.4.3 The Supportive Function

Supportive supervision is often described as "caring for the carer," with the supervisor aiming to reduce stressors that negatively affect a social worker's performance. The primary goal is to offer psychological and interpersonal support to staff, thereby improving their morale and overall well-being. The supportive function of supervision plays a vital role in social work because the profession is often characterised by high levels of stress and risk of burnout. The supervision stressors may include client demands, strained relationships with supervisors and colleagues, and ineffective administrative or educational supervision (Bhuda, 2019). When these stressors are addressed through supportive supervision, supervisees can develop greater self-awareness and recognise how their personal challenges influence their work performance, ultimately prompting them to seek further intervention where necessary (Munson, 2002). Given the complex demands placed on social workers by multiple stakeholders, the presence of a robust support system is essential for maintaining their well-being (Wynne, 2020).

Kadushin and Harkness (2002) and Shulman (1995) also underscore the importance of supportive supervision in managing workload stress, enhancing morale, and preventing burnout. This type of supervision encompasses emotional, appraisal, informational, and practical support, therefore contributing to a healthier work environment. As Wynne (2020) further explains, supportive supervision offers reassurance, encouragement, recognition of achievements, approval, and constructive feedback, subsequently sustaining the motivation and resilience of social workers. Engelbrecht (2014), adds that the goal of supervision is to provide psychological and interpersonal support to the supervisee, ultimately improving worker morale. Supportive supervision may also extend to debriefing social workers who experience stress or burnout.

Despite the clear benefits of emotional support within the supportive supervision framework, it is often overshadowed by the administrative functions of supervision, which focus on risk management and surveillance (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). As a result, supportive supervision is frequently treated as an afterthought. It is argued that this is because emotional distress involves significant self-disclosure which

supervisees may want to avoid (Tarshis, Occhiuto and Todd, 2025). This reluctance often stems from concerns about vulnerability, confidentiality, and potential professional consequences. To address these challenges, Beddoe (2012) suggests referring social workers to Employee Assistance Programmes, or utilising group and external supervision, to strengthen supportive supervision. However, Tarshis, Occhiuto and Todd (2025) found that supervisees referred for Employee Assistance Programmes reflected this hesitancy. Similarly, participants in the study by Bhuda (2019) and Newcomb (2021) voiced that they often feel emotionally unsafe in the workplace. The study further emphasised the importance of supportive supervision, as illustrated in the model provided below.

In conclusion, while supportive supervision is crucial for mitigating stress and preventing burnout among social workers, the full realisation of its benefits hinges on addressing barriers to emotional support. Creating a supportive environment that fosters open communication, trust, and mutual respect could help alleviate these concerns and enable social workers to fully engage with and benefit from the supportive functions of supervision. Thus, integrating emotional support effectively within the supervision process is vital for enhancing the overall well-being and effectiveness of social workers in their professional roles.

2.5 TYPES OF SUPERVISION

There are various types of supervision including individual, group, peer, e-supervision, and other innovative forms of supervision such as remote supervision and external supervision. These types of supervision denote that a supervisor has various avenues they may use in the endeavour to develop the supervisee professionally. The Supervision Framework in South Africa (2012) indicates that social workers' needs may be provided using this method of supervision in accordance with the Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2007). Of the various types of supervision, only three are discussed hereunder in keeping with the South African supervision landscape.

2.5.1 Individual supervision

Individual supervision denotes a contractual, one-on-one engagement between a supervisor and a supervisee (DSD, 2012; Kadushin, 2014, Tsui, 2005). Chibaya and Engelbrecht (2022) similarly describe it as an intensive process in which the supervisee engages in the review and reflection of their work, significantly influencing their professional development and retention. Notably, individual clinical supervision is closely shaped by casework practice in social work, which is typically characterised by one-on-one relationships between social workers and clients, or families discussed above. In line with this, Chibaya and Engelbrecht (2022) emphasise that this form of supervision should primarily include educational and supportive elements. According to the Department of Social Development (2012), there are specific expectations for supervision frequency, for instance newly appointed social workers should receive supervision weekly, while more experienced social workers should be supervised at least monthly. The effectiveness of individual supervision largely depends on the developmental approach adopted by the supervisor and their ability to prioritise supervision amidst competing demands such as time constraints and workload.

2.5.2. Group supervision

Group supervision is one of the key models, alongside individual supervision, and also serves as a form of staff development (Engelbrecht, 2010). It involves bringing together a group of social workers based on a shared need, the meetings are structured around clear agendas and objectives (Kadushin, & Harkness 2014). According to Goodyear (2019), these meetings are held regularly to monitor the quality of work, while also providing supervisees with opportunities to discover and develop their professional identities. Within this setting, members share their practice experiences and learn from one another, with discussions facilitated by a supervisor who acts as the group leader and carries out the typical responsibilities of supervision (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). One of the main advantages of group supervision is its efficiency because it saves time and resources by delivering the same information to multiple practitioners while promoting diverse learning through shared experiences. Additionally, it offers emotional support not only from the supervisor but also from fellow group members (Kadushin, 2002). O'Donoghue (2021) further notes that group supervision serves multiple functions, including providing emotional support, practical

consultation, team building, behaviour change facilitation, and addressing organisational issues.

Unlike traditional hierarchical supervision, group supervision is characterised by a more collaborative approach in which the supervisor does not assume a superior role but instead facilitates reflective discussions, offers critical feedback, and nurtures a challenging yet supportive environment. However, as Tsui (2005) points out, group supervision can present several challenges, including rivalry, competition, inhibition of critical feedback, and heightened exposure for the supervisor. To effectively address these issues, Kadushin and Harkness (2014) emphasise the importance of supervisors being attuned to group dynamics, demonstrating strong communication and facilitation skills, and maintaining a confident and self-assured presence.

Group supervision benefits may encourage prioritising supervision because of the advantages stated, however, there are also challenges that a supervisor should address, especially the consideration of individual social worker's needs.

2.5.3 Peer supervision

Peer supervision is another alternative model to supervision. However, this form of supervision is not facilitated by the designated supervisor unlike the others (DSD,2012). Though peer supervision also involves a hierarchical setting between an experienced and a less experienced colleague (Bhuda, 2019) for instance social workers in private practice or employed in organisation without a designated supervisor are also required to be supervised by a knowledgeable and experiences supervisor. This therefore means that a social worker may seek peer consultation from another social worker who is more knowledgeable in the subject although they are not designated supervisors.

On the other hand, peer supervision can be a form of mutual help and collaboration among supervisees or colleagues who provide each other with encouragement, coping strategies and emotional support as indicated by Phillips, (2022), and Tsui, (2005). The Supervision Framework for Social Service Professionals in South Africa encourages this collegial sharing of responsibilities and consultation among

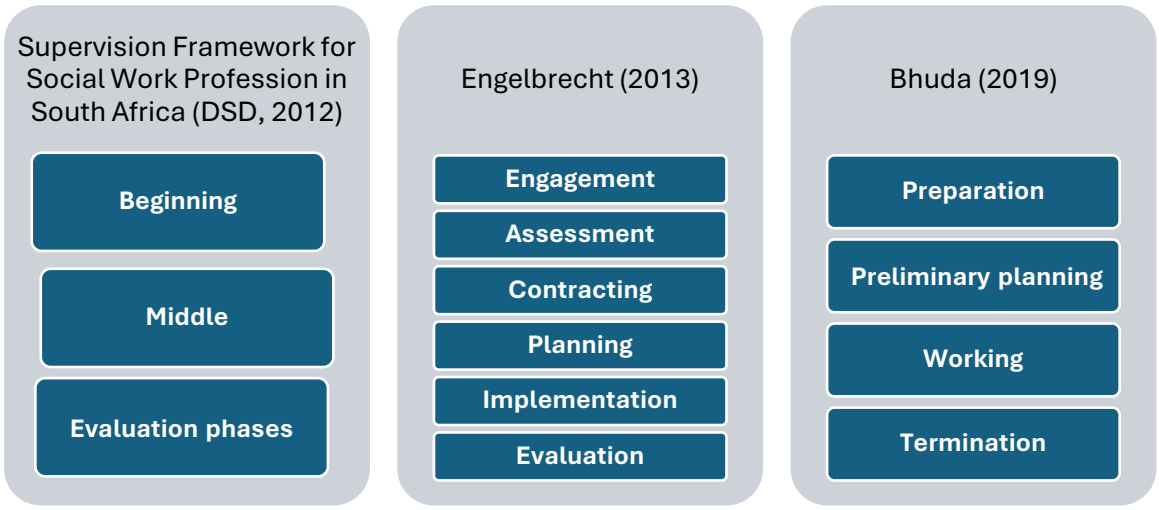
colleagues (DSD, 2012). The supervisor has to facilitate this arrangement because they ultimately oversee both practitioners. Peer supervision promotes responsibility, accountability, and authority among social workers (Kadushin, 2014).

It is critical to note with these types of supervision that a supervisor designated by the organisation still have the responsibility to provide supervision and can therefore not delegate their role to a senior staff member. This form of supervision can be beneficial when the supervisor is not available to provide support and supervision immediately during a crisis, but the consultant peer should inform the supervisor of the support given to another worker in the supervisor's absence. The core principles of social justice and equity are thus embedded in these types of supervision because they provide fair and equitable supervision to all subordinates.

2.6 SUPERVISION PROCESSES

As previously mentioned, social work supervision is not a one-time event but an ongoing process that takes various forms. It is fundamental that supervision be conducted professionally, meaning it should be structured and developmental (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). According to DSD (2012), Kadushin and Harkness (2014), as well as and Engelbrecht (2013), the supervision process follows a linear and progressive structure consisting of six stages of **Engagement, Assessment, Contracting, Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation**. In contrast, the Supervision Framework for Social Work Profession in South Africa (DSD, 2012) organises these stages of supervision into phases that include **beginning, middle, and evaluation phases**, while Bhuda (2019:) identifies the phases as **pre-preparation, preliminary and planning, working, and termination** (see Figure 2). For the purposes of this study, the supervision process as outlined by Engelbrecht is discussed.

Figure 2: Supervision processes



2.6.1 Engagement

The engagement stage is the initial phase of developing a collaborative and trusting relationship between the supervisor and supervisee (Engelbrecht, 2019). This relationship considers the background, knowledge, motivation, and career aspirations of the social worker (Kadushin and Harkness, 2014). The supervisors lead the process by identifying the requirements with which the supervisee has to comply in relation to the organisational mission and vision. This inventory includes comprehensive application of policy, social work methods, expectations when working with the community, programme management and monitoring and evaluation of services. At this stage of the relationship, the supervisor's skills, values and knowledge influence this dynamic of the relationship (Tsui, 2015). An open engagement in the relationship is encouraged.

2.6.2 Assessment

At this stage, following the identification of job inventory, job specifications, and setting of standard expectations (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014), the needs and strengths of the supervisee are assessed. This process is informed by both the expectations of the organisation and the developmental needs of the supervisee, forming the basis for a mutually agreed development plan. According to the authors this is a deliberate collaborative exercise focused on identifying the social worker's strengths, knowledge, and skills, which in turn guide the objectives of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2019;

Kadushin, 2002). Such supervision is aligned with organisational goals. At this stage, the supervisor primarily performs the administrative functions of supervision.

2.6.3 Planning stage

Planning is understood to be the collaborative, objective setting and logistical planning that may include deciding on the venue, time, and agenda for sessions (SACSSP & SDS, 2012; Tsui, 2015). The planning stage thus precedes both the engagement and assessment stages. Formal planning is necessary for the sequential order that may limit flexibility and adaptability (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). In this case supervision may have to be cancelled or postponed due to other work commitments. However, planning is necessary for both the supervisor and the supervisee as this is informed by the agenda, reinforcing structured supervision that can be evaluated in relation to their personal development.

2.6.4 Contracting

Contracting formalises the agreed upon plan in writing, outlining clear expectations for both the supervisor and the supervisee, which are then signed. The contract ensures that both the parties have a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and expectations (DSD, 2012). The agreement can therefore minimise misunderstandings and potential conflicts by establishing a shared framework with clear developmental objectives.

2.6.5 Implementation

Implementation is when the actual work takes place. Bhuda (2019) identifies this stage as the working stage. This is because after assessing, planning and contracting then work should begin wherein the supervisor facilitates supervision sessions, focused upon administrative, supportive, education interrelated functions of supervision. The implementation stage thus guides the supervision process based on cyclical evolution, wherein reflection is ongoing with adjustments and refinements made (DSD, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2019). Without these clear guidelines and milestones, the implementation stage may become fluid, potentially leading to confusion. Therefore time frames should be incorporated in the implementation. This implies that the

supervisor should ensure that the plans developed at the planning stage are executed and adjusted according to the needs of the supervisee.

2.6.6 Evaluation

It is imperative that evaluation takes place during each session and stage of the supervision process, in accordance with the developmental objectives and sett tasks for the supervisee (Tsui, 2015). Overall, the process of evaluation follows a developmental approach that identifies strengths, skills, resources, and areas for improvement within the supervision process. The knowledge gained from this evaluation inform ongoing plans and may result in decisions such as placing the supervisee under consultation as described above (DSD, 2012) or modifying supervision methods based on the social worker's level of competency. This reflects the understanding that supervision is a continuous lifelong learning process.

Based on the above stages of supervision discussed, it can be assumed that supervision process is a structured and iterative approach that emphasises collaboration, assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. While this linear framework provides a comprehensive guideline for supervision, its success relies heavily on the quality of engagement, ongoing assessment, and adaptability to meet the unique needs and competencies of the social worker. Continuous evaluation and development are essential for ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of supervision practices in supporting the professional wherein the supervisors execute related roles and responsibilities discussed below. It can thus be concluded that the preceding process espouses the principles of the developmental approach of participation and people-centredness (Batho pele).

2.7 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPERVISOR

The supervisor fulfils an indispensable function in the supervisee's professional growth by performing a range of middle management duties that are aimed at achieving specific outcomes (Engelbrecht, 2019; Khosa, 2022). This includes one among a range of responsibilities such as complying with statutory requirements, as specified for example in Children's Act, Act 38 of 2005, which dictates that a co-signature of a statutory report should be made by a supervisor. This requirement maintains the

ethical principles as contained in the Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2007), where social workers registered are to be supervised by other registered professionals in social work matters. Some of the functions of the supervisor beyond statutory functions, include administrative, educational and supportive roles, including planning, organising leading, control, coaching mentorship, consultation, advocacy, counselling and mediating.

2.7.1 Planning

When planning the supervisor takes responsibility for the work of their team. According to Nel (2019), planning supports the supervisory relationship by determining what goals need to be achieved and how the supervisee works towards these goals in alignment with the organisation's strategic objectives. This is done by developing an operational plan with clearly defined activities (Bhuda, 2019). Therefore, the supervisor plays a key role in supporting the team's planning efforts by identifying and organising specific activities needed to achieve these goals.

2.7.2 Organising

Nel (2019) suggests that organising involves key aspects such as staffing, arranging and allocating work among employees, and distributing resources to ensure that organisational goals are achieved. In line with this, the individual team members further organise their specific tasks with the support of their supervisor to effectively contribute to the team's goals. These team objectives, in turn, are aligned with the broader aims of the organisation. Throughout this process, the supervisor plays a crucial role by providing leadership and guidance to ensure cohesion and progress in the daily operations and activities.

Leading in supervision involves actively guiding operations once they are set in motion and taking on a leadership role during the planning phase. Nel (2019) outlines that leading is the central task of a supervisor, as it requires leadership qualities to inspire supervisees and ensure that they remain committed to the implementation stage. A key aspect of effective leadership in supervision is the ability to identify the strengths and assets of the team, aligning with the developmental approach to social work supervision. This approach not only promotes the effective use of team strengths,

to achieve collective goals but also fosters individual growth and recognition. Ultimately, leading in supervision means the supervisor must remain in control while motivating and directing the team toward success.

Control means that plans are effectively implemented, and potential errors are identified and rectified through supervisory monitoring (Nel, 2019). This involves setting and maintaining quality standards throughout the implementation process. Accordingly, Tsui (2005) notes that the supervisor is responsible for upholding professional standards and ethical conduct by monitoring workloads, reviewing and planning interventions, conducting critical analyses, and ensuring compliance with statutory requirements. When professional or organisational standards are not met, the supervisor must act proactively to support the supervisee. As the overseer of performance, the supervisor should provide continuous guidance through facilitation, mentoring, coaching, consultation, negotiation, and the appropriate use of media.

As suggested by Engelbrecht (2019) and Bhuda (2019), supervision activities often overlap and are closely interconnected. One key activity within this process is **coaching**, which is described as an outcomes-based method of learning that involves imparting both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Tsui (2005) further emphasises that coaching is transformational as it aids supervisees in developing a strong professional identity. Additionally, professional development within supervision is also fostered through mentoring, which plays a crucial role in supporting and guiding the supervisee throughout their growth.

Bhuda (2019) suggests that **mentorship** is a general relationship between an experienced person and a less experienced individual in which the experienced individual takes an active interest in the learning and development from the mentee. In this relationship, the mentee may choose their mentor. In social work practice, a supervisor serves as a designated mentor who facilitates the professional growth of the less experienced social worker through various supervisory functions, as well as performance evaluation. Both Cloete (2012) and the Supervision Framework (DSD, 2012) highlight the importance of mentorship as a key strategy for retaining social workers within the profession.

Consultation is recognised as a distinct supervisory activity that typically follows a period of intensive supervision, marking a stage in the supervisee's professional development. Engelbrecht (2013:362) defines consultation as a voluntary process initiated by the consultee, who seeks the guidance and expertise of a peer consultant. Botha (2012) supports this distinction, noting that while effective learning occurs during formal supervision, it may eventually transition into consultation. However, other scholars, including Kadushin (2014), Stui (2005), and O'Donoghue (2021), advocate for ongoing, lifelong learning, suggesting that the boundaries between supervision and consultation may be blurred. The Supervision Framework (DSD, 2012) also recognises consultation but ties it to the working contract and performance appraisal. Despite this, the informal and irregular nature of consultation driven by the consultee's initiative can challenge the supervision framework's aim of maintaining structured and consistent supervisory practices.

Advocacy is an important activity undertaken by a supervisor in the context of supervision. According to Kirst-Ashman (2013) an advocate is someone who speaks on behalf of another person's needs. Within the supervisory relationship, the supervisor acts as an advocate for the supervisee by ensuring access to the necessary resources that enable effective service delivery. This may include addressing human resource issues or other workplace factors that exert an impact upon the supervisee's performance.

In a professional relationship, the supervisor often assumes the role of a **counsellor**, offering guidance and support to the supervisee (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012:54; Kirst-Ashman, 2013). This counselling role, however, is subject to debate. Scholars such as Wynne, (2020), Rakine, (2019) and O'Donoghue, (2021) argue that while supervision involves providing guidance, it must remain within professional boundaries and should not extend into the personal issues of the supervisee. Maintaining this distinction and avoiding any encroachment into the personal matters helps preserve the integrity and effectiveness of the supervisory relationship.

Other supervisory activities include **mediation**. In this role, the supervisor is responsible for resolving conflicts and disputes between parties (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012, Kirst-Ashman, 2013). A supervisor must possess the necessary skills and

knowledge to assist in mediation processes. Conflicts that require mediation may involve service users, stakeholders, or the organisation itself. It is therefore essential for the supervisor to be familiar with labour relations policies to support the supervisee effectively in such situations.

Supervisors play a crucial role in the professional development of supervisees and act as a vital connection between the organisation and the service user. Further, it is important to note that the responsibilities of a supervisor extend beyond those discussed in this project, encompassing a range of additional roles and functions. This is because it is crucial, from a developmental perspective, that social workers are empowered to actively participate in an open and transparent supervisory relationship. This approach promotes the development of professional autonomy, enabling social workers to exercise self-reliance when making informed professional decisions, while still benefiting from the guidance and support of the supervisor.

2.8 SUPERVISION CHALLENGES

Research conducted in South Africa for several years has consistently highlighted a range of supervision challenges affecting social work practice across various sectors. These challenges are evident in both governmental departments and non-governmental organisations, reflecting systemic issues. While some of these difficulties are unique to the South African context, they equally mirror supervision challenges experienced globally. The following section outlines the key challenges identified in the literature.

2.8.1 Unstructured supervision

Botha (2002:3) identified that supervision in social work is weak and faulty due to its unstructured, unplanned, and individualised nature. Subsequent researchers, including Engelbrecht (2013), Maluleke (2016), Mokoka (2016), Gunda (2018), and Ncube (2019) have continued to find evidence supporting Botha's earlier observations. These studies consistently highlight that ineffective supervision often results from poor planning and a tendency to conduct supervision in an ad hoc manner.

Wynne (2020) highlights that proper planning and preparation for supervision are essential, as they ensure the correct application of interventions by the supervisee, enhance professional competence, and protect service users from harm. Similarly, Nortje (2022) found that the lack of alignment between supervision policies and the social development approach indicates a broader systemic fissure. This misalignment suggests that supervision is frequently consultative and unstructured, rather than grounded in a clear and consistent framework. Although the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa, introduced in 2012, aimed at promoting a developmental approach, the ongoing challenges indicate the need for empirical research to better understand current supervision practices.

2.8.2 Supervision training

Supervision training enables supervisors to perform their roles effectively. However, within the South African Supervision Framework, the responsibility for training is delegated to the employing organisations. In most cases, this training is typically delivered as in-service training argues Kadushin and Harkness (2014). The author further adds that this form of training often fails to adequately equip supervisors for their roles, and in many cases, no training is provided at all, consequently leading to futile supervision (Kadushin and Harkness, 2014). A lack of formal training has been identified as a major cause of poor supervisory performance (Tsui, 2005). Kadushin and Harkness (2014) again argues that most social workers are rarely prepared for supervisory roles because they lack training. This view is supported by Mokoka (2016), Shokane & Maluleke (2016), Gumbi (2021) who equally found that appointments to supervisory positions are commonly based on years of experience and performance in interviews rather than practical knowledge of supervision.

Further to the above, O'Donoghue (2015), Carpenter (2013) and Tsui (2005) argue that there is a lack of understanding regarding what transpires during supervision sessions and how supervision impacts client outcomes. Their view is that much of the existing literature on supervision is rooted in the supervisor's personal experiences as a supervisee, with little formal training on supervision. Consequently, this experiential approach to supervision is often transferred to their role as supervisors.

The Supervision Framework for Social Service Professionals recommends that aspiring supervisors must receive training from an accredited service provider, but the cost of such training may present a significant impediment and barrier. Engelbrecht (2013) has also suggested collaboration among higher education institutions (HEIs) to offer supervision training, though this has largely been incorporated for the purpose of educational supervision rather than tailored to the needs of practicing social work supervisors.

2.8.3 Managerialism

There is general consensus that the role of a supervisor is linked closely with that of middle management. Therefore, the supervisor has to establish equilibrium between these roles. Nel (2019) supports this perspective, highlighting that supervisors perform essential managerial functions such as planning, organising, leading, and controlling. These responsibilities extend to monitoring, reviewing, and appraising performance. Studies by other scholars have similarly found that supervisors frequently devote most of their time to managerial tasks rather than clinical supervision (Kadushin and Harkness, 2014, Bhuda, 2019, Nortje, 2022). This focus on managerialism, according to Davys and Beddoe (2021), is because there is scrutiny of social work practice by government and the public. Consequently, the role of the supervisor becomes that of a micro-manager and surveillance to ensure outcomes are met, guiding against mistakes more than providing developmental support. Similarly, Engelbrecht (2019) warns that neoliberal frameworks, with their focus on accountability and administrative efficiency, risk eroding the integrity of the social work profession by placing greater value on metrics and outputs than on quality. Consequently, clinical supervision is compromised, potentially resulting in burnout for both supervisors and supervisees due to the expectations derived from the ‘accountability ethic’ measured through high quantity with minimal resources.

2.8.4 Supervision relationships and power struggles

One of the objectives of supervision is to support the professional growth of the supervisee. This goal requires an interactive process between the supervisor and the supervisee, in which both parties are actively invested in the relationship that is developmental (Tsui, 2005; Davys & Beddoe,2021). The authors contend that it is the

most basic relationship therefore, for this relationship to be effective, a conducive environment must be created. However, the supervisory relationship has its own challenges (Tsui, 2005; Davys & Beddoe,2021). Further Engelbrecht (2019) underscores that supervisors should possess emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence entails the ability to monitor and differentiate one's own emotions as well as those of others, in order to guide thinking and behaviour. In addition, it is referred to as self-awareness and self-management (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Davys & Beddoe, 2021). A supervisor must be aware of their own attitudes, emotions, biases, and power dynamics in their interactions with the supervisee. Likewise, they should be capable of recognising signs of anxiety or resistance during supervision and addressing these with humility and empathy.

2.8.5 Structural challenges

Organisational structural mismatches have emerged as one of the significant challenges to effective supervision. According to studies, these include limited resources, unmanageable caseloads, shortages of supervisors, and high supervisor to social worker ratios (Shokane, 2016; Gumbi, 2022). The supervision framework in South Africa recommends a ratio of one supervisor to ten social workers, if the supervisor has no additional managerial responsibilities, and one supervisor to six social workers when managerial duties are included (DSD, 2012). However, studies by Shokane (2016), Gumbi (2022), and Khosa (2022) amplify that many supervisors oversee significantly higher numbers than recommended, which negatively impacts the quality and effectiveness of supervision. Moreover, managerial approaches that prioritise increased output with fewer resources, along with budget constraints, have led to cuts in human resource and programme funding. As a result, existing staff are expected to do more with less, often leading to severe burnout. The lack of support from management further compounds these challenges.

As evident above, the challenges in supervision encompass a range of issues from alignment policies, implementation, to navigating organisational structures and limited resources. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that includes policy reform, training, allocating resources, and structural improvements to strengthen supervision ultimately deliver better quality of supervision.

2.9 CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

Social work supervision and practice operate within diverse and often restrictive environments, which can challenge the profession's traditional approaches (Noble, 2008). These constraints compel the profession to continuously reposition itself by embracing innovations, adapting to new conditions, or, at times, simply finding ways to survive in a rapidly evolving work context. As these shifts occur, it is equally important that research drives these changes.

2.9.1 Globalisation

Harris (2005:80) describes globalisation as shared, open and free economic global connections. This global economic environment has a bearing on social work services. This global connection enables social work supervisors to engage with the international community through online seminars, fostering opportunities for learning and professional growth. However, global development also presents significant challenges for the social work profession, including issues related to migration, refugees, unaccompanied children, and other complex social problems. As a result, social work supervisors must support supervisees in navigating these emerging phenomena, which are often influenced by evolving global dynamics and technological advancements.

Technology has played a significant role in strengthening supervision by enabling communication between supervisors and supervisees in diverse locations. This remote communication via telephone, email, video conferencing, or social platforms like WhatsApp improves efficiency and allows for real-time guidance when needed (Mo, 2021). Benefits include timesaving, broader group communication, and opportunities for supervisors to engage in global learning through online conferences in different time zones. However, challenges such as poor internet connectivity can hinder real time interaction (Harris, 2005). In addition, ethical concerns around confidentiality, privacy, and security must be addressed. Barnard and Goodyear (2019) stress the importance of legal compliance and developing e-supervision skills. While technology supports global and distance supervision, face-to-face interactions remain invaluable for building rapport and empathy, which are foundational to the supervisory relationship.

2.9.2 Economic issues

Neoliberalism is an economic-based approach that embodies monetary values, budgeting, competition, and accountability in service delivery. This approach has notably influenced welfare services. Since social services are greatly dependent on government grants, fiscal constraints and the way funds are dispensed directly affect the quality and extent of welfare service delivery (Harris, 2005; Bernard and Goodyear, 2009; Noble, 2009). Political changes further contribute to ambiguity and fragmentation in the provision of social services, further unsettling and destabilising social work practice (Noble, 2009). This facet exerts a massive impact on social work supervision. For instance, a supervisor may be expected to deal with high case load because of lack of funding for social work posts. Despite these challenges, social work remains entrenched in the values of social justice, advocating for vulnerable communities who rely on social services while these services are delivered with limited resources. A supervisor is the pillar to service delivery when there are changes in social work practice as explained above supervisor needs to provide direction by reflection, reviewing and provide leadership.

2.9.3 External supervision

External supervision occurs when a non-line manager oversees a social worker. This form of supervision reduces the power dynamics generally observed in direct line management (Beddoe, 2021). This arrangement allows free expression, has stronger focus on clinical and professional development. Studies by Mokoka, (2016), Bhuda, (2019), and Wynne, (2020) suggest that such developmental and supportive areas of supervision are frequently neglected in traditional supervision, contributing to burnout. External supervision, therefore, offers a valued means of empowerment, support, and prevents burnout. However, Beddoe, (2021) contends that there is an absence of organisational authority that can result in unclear mandates, ambiguous accountability, and potentially unhealthy triangular relationships. Despite these challenges, external supervision is observed in practice, often casually and without formal contracts, when social workers seek support and guidance from more experienced colleagues who are not in a supervisory role but offer educational and emotional support.

2.10 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDEPINNING THE STUDY

This study adopted the developmental approach as its conceptual framework, serving as the lens through which the researcher interprets and analyses the findings. This is because post the 1994 democratic election South Africa adopted a social development paradigm to service delivery and the social work profession was legitimated as the provider of social welfare services (DSD, 2006). The developmental approach policies and programmes are geared towards meeting the needs, protecting and promoting human rights, managing social problems, facilitating the optimal use of opportunities, empowerment of people and social inclusion (Patel, 2005:29). It is, however, acknowledged that contemporary debates increasingly advocate for Afrocentric approaches to intervention, arguing that dominant paradigms in the social and behavioural sciences have been largely derived from Western literature. Such Western-based models are often criticised for their limited applicability to the African context, as they tend to overlook the continent's unique historical, cultural, and socio-economic realities (Rapholo and Makhubela, 2018). The developmental approach remains a relevant approach chosen as the lens through which social work supervision could be understood (Ncube, 2019).

It is acknowledged however that conceptualisation and practical application of the developmental approach within social work and supervision remain limited in practice. This challenge is largely attributed to the heavy preoccupation of professionals with child protection services, which often leaves minimal time and capacity to implement broader developmental social work interventions. As a result, economic and social empowerment initiatives receive less attention despite their importance in promoting sustainable community wellbeing. Furthermore, the absence of sufficient research, as well as clear norms and standards to guide implementation, continues to hinder the effective integration of the developmental approach within the profession. Which will be discussed below:

The developmental approach espouses the following values: social justice, humanness, democracy and participation, equality, non-discrimination, and reconciliation (SASSP and DSD, 2012). The approach also includes the following themes (1) right based approach (2) economic and social development (3) democracy

and participation (4) social development and partnership, bridging the micro and macro divide (Patel, 2015:63).

Supervisors in South Africa are expected to align their supervisory practices with the themes of social development, ensuring that social workers are educated and guided to apply these principles effectively during interventions. However, as noted by Ncube (2019), supervision in the South African context often fails to integrate the developmental approach as outlined in the White Paper for Social Welfare resulting in a disconnect between policy intentions and practical implementation. The developmental approach emphasises the promotion of human well-being, empowerment, and participation within a social justice framework principle that should underpin supervisory processes. Although this approach draws from multiple theoretical perspectives, these are not explored in detail here. Instead, attention is directed to how the themes of the developmental approach can be embedded within supervision.

2.10.1 Rights-based approach

The rights-based principles enshrined in the South African Constitution affirm that every individual possesses inherent rights, including equality, access to opportunities, social justice (South Africa,1996). These principles also recognise each individual's capability to function independently, provided that adequate support structures are in place. In alignment with these constitutional values, the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) establishes professional standards that affirm the social worker's right to receive supervision from a suitably qualified and experienced supervisor in section 5.4.(1)(f) (SACSSP (2007). Such supervision must encompass all forms and functions of professional oversight, as outlined in the relevant legislative and policy frameworks. Drawing from these rights, it is essential that the capabilities and strengths of social workers are acknowledged and developed within the supervisory process Engelbrecht (2010). Furthermore, the rights of social workers to be supervised should be respected and upheld by supervisors, ensuring that supervision promotes professional identity.

2.10.2 Economic and social development

The principles articulated by Midgley (1995) emphasise that service delivery should be closely aligned with economic growth to achieve meaningful social and human development outcomes. This perspective highlights the link between social welfare and economic growth, suggesting that lasting social progress depends on economic investment. Accordingly, both social and financial resources must be allocated to boost growth and enhance societal well-being. Within this framework, organisations that employ social workers have a critical role to play by prioritising the allocation of essential resources, such as time, funding, and human capacity to strengthen professional practice. Silence (2017) denotes that supervisors are not capacitated in economic change of development which has a weak implementation of this approach. The effectiveness implementation depends on the extent to which supervision practice implements the approach.

2.10.3 Democracy and participation

Sustainable change and development within social services require both openness and citizen participation (Schenck, 2010). Within supervision, participation is coupled with education on issues that concern humans because, as alluded to by Patel (2015), the aim is to ensure that citizen participation is meaningful and informed. This approach aligns with rights-based principles, which emphasise recognising and building upon the strengths, capacities, and innate resources of individuals (Engelbrecht, 2010). In this context, the professional development and empowerment of the social worker the goals of supervision depend on collaboration among all parties involved ensuring that empowerment is sustainable. The social work supervisor ought to educate the supervisee of her/his rights. Also, the Supervision Framework for the Social Workers Profession in South Africa expects that supervisees to also have an active role in the development of the annual supervision contract, developmental plan and planning for supervision agenda (DSD and SACSSP, 2012).

2.10.4 Social development and partnership

Even though the state plays a leading role in empowering communities, partnerships amongst stakeholders remain essential as they enable all parties to take ownership of the development process. Collaborative partnerships promote shared responsibility, mutual accountability, and sustainable community initiatives (DSD, 2005). In the

context of supervision, collaboration is most effective when the process is grounded in respect and non-discrimination (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). A cooperative supervisory relationship fosters trust, open communication, and mutual learning, ensuring that supervision objectives are achieved efficiently.

The support roles of supervision also overlap with advocacy and mediation in that, for instance the supervisor may mediate with other stakeholders like management and other external stake holders e.g. courts, school, health sector. Likewise, the supervisors assist the supervisee as a mediator, educator, and networker to connect the social service professional with resources that will capacitate the supervisee in the expected work, therefore increase the supervisee competency in various fields including macro level interventions. Furthermore, because the social development theme focuses on bridging intervention divide at the micro and macro level, the theme presupposes that it should be easy and practical for service users to access services (Patel, 2015) and as such, social workers should thus be capacitated by supervisors to identify barriers in policies, while ensuring that the gaps are closed to ensure efficient access to services.

In summary social development practice underpins the generalist approach to service delivery and ensures that the supervisee is well equipped with knowledge and skills. The social development approach centres around the development of the practitioner to render effective services that respond to the needs of the community. Consequently, by utilising this approach in the study, the researcher uncovered the following during the data collection process and presentation of findings:

- The participants are cognisant of the different theoretical frameworks that inform their supervisory practice.
- The participants aligned their supervisory responsibilities with the goal of empowering and supporting social workers.
- The strengths perspective, identified in the preceding discussion embedded within the developmental approach, was reported to be the most frequently utilised during supervision.

From the preceding discussion it can thus be deduced that the developmental approach reflects an anti-oppressive and strengths-based understanding of supervision, in which power is exercised collaboratively rather than hierarchically. Consequently, supervisors must remain critically aware of the power relations embedded within supervisory practice.

Tsui (2005) and Shokane (2017) concede that the supervisor has an evaluative authority role. This authority and power responsibility may negatively affect the authenticity of decision-making processes within supervision, as supervisors are simultaneously responsible for assessing supervisees' performance. The inherent power imbalance within this relationship may therefore privilege the supervisor's authority and undermine genuine collaboration. Norjte (2022) also warns that supervision relationship should not be used coercively". Accordingly, for supervision to remain ethically and developmentally meaningful, it must be consciously structured as a participatory and collaborative process that promotes mutual respect, critical reflection, and shared decision-making.

Despite the progressive intentions of the developmental supervision approach, several limitations have been identified in the literature. Scholars such as Lombard(2008) Engelbrecht (2010), Mokoka (2016), Silence (2019), and Khosa (2022) highlight persistent structural and organisational challenges that undermine effective supervision practice. A significant concern relates to the inadequate training of supervisors, as formal supervisory training is often not a prerequisite for appointment to supervisory positions (Mokoka, 2016). This limitation raises critical questions regarding the competence and preparedness of supervisors to effectively empower and develop supervisees. Furthermore, the inherent power dynamics within the supervisory relationship frequently position the supervisor as the "expert," despite the absence of specialised qualifications or evidence-based expertise to justify such authority. These unequal power relations may hinder genuine collaboration and participation, thereby contradicting the developmental and empowerment-oriented principles upon which the approach is founded. As a result, the effectiveness of developmental supervision may be compromised by insufficient resources, lack of supervisory training, and hierarchical organisational structures that limit meaningful professional empowerment.

The supervisory relationship should also remain mindful of the dynamics of institutional power and authority while promoting respect for human dignity and the principles of social justice within supervision practice. When supervision is grounded in these values, social workers are better positioned to apply the principles of social development effectively in their interventions with service users, fostering inclusive, equitable, and sustainable outcomes for individuals and communities.

2.11 CONCLUSION

The literature highlights the importance of supervision in social work, emphasising various models and approaches integrated in the developmental approach adopted in Sout Africa. Supervision in South Africa is often framed within Kadushin's conceptualisation, focusing on functions of supervision that are used internationally and further provide a frame of reference for supervision practice. Context-based supervision practice ought to meet the evolving needs of social work professionals using policy, literature and local studies to foster a nuanced understanding of how supervision functions in relation to the developmental approach adopted in the study. The literature assisted in the conceptualisation of supervision in South Africa to drive and anchor effective service delivery and professional identity.

Despite existing literature, there is a need for more research to explore the effectiveness of various supervision models and practices in the South African context which is based on the supervision experiences of supervisors. Investigating the challenges faced by social workers in supervision and exploring innovative supervision methods may contribute to enhancing supervision practices, providing invaluable insights for policy development and practice improvement.

CHAPTER 3

RESEACH METHODOLODY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter critically examined the literature deemed most pertinent to understanding the topic, drawing upon insights from both international and national scholars to contextualise supervision practices comprehensively, aligned with the developmental approach adopted in the study. Building on this foundation, the current chapter delineates the research methodology adopted in the study. To achieve the aim of the study, methodological decisions were made.

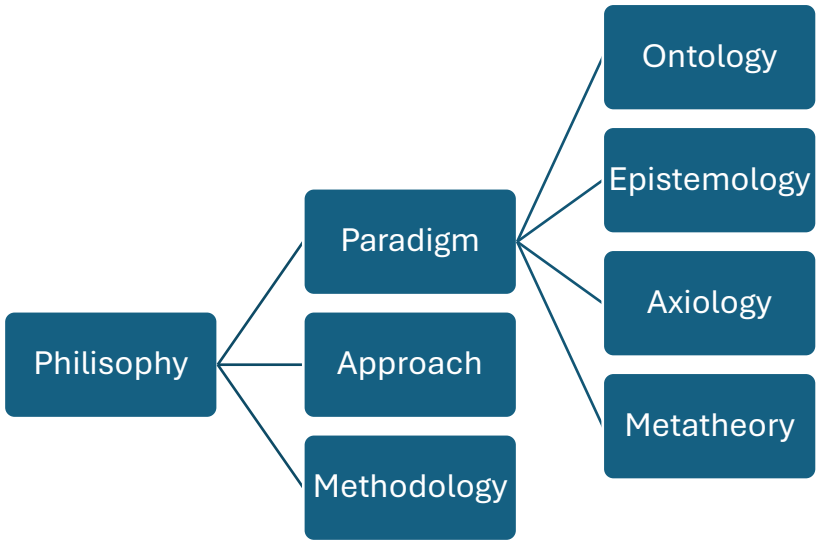
Methodology, according (Rubin and Babbie, 2011) to refers to decisions on the methods, procedures and processes. These processes assist with achieving the goals of the research through information gathering (Cresswell, 2014). Nayak and Singh, (2015) supports this notion that methodology involves various processes including sampling, pilot study, data collection, analysis and interpretation. Therefore, this chapter provides a thorough account of the decisions regarding the research paradigm, design, data collection methods, sampling strategies, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations and how rigour was ensured in the study. The primary aim of this chapter is to ensure methodological transparency and rigour of the study findings so that the study makes meaningful contributions. To ensure rigour, the study employed systematic and transparent methods. The study also upheld ethical standards. The methodological paradigm used in the research process is thus explored below.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Tailor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016), a research paradigm is broad beliefs about how the researcher sees the world and interprets reality. It is a set of assumptions and beliefs of how the world is understood (Fouche, 2021). Paradigm influences what is studied and how it is studied while also influencing how interpretation of the findings is consequently conducted (Creswell, 2014). Although paradigms have been conceptualised using various dimensions of beliefs about the nature of reality, the author emphasises that researchers must be aware of differing

assumptions regarding the nature of reality (**ontology)**; the ways of knowing and understanding this knowledge (**epistemology)**, while **axiology** seeks to understand how human perception, behaviour and decisions are influenced by their values, driven by ethical approaches (Sefoto 2021). Ethical behaviour of the researcher in how decisions are made in the research process is reflected on. Lastly **metatheory** is explained as a study of theory to understand or improve another theory (Allana and Clark, 2018). This study engages metatheory for the purpose of contextualising social work training and the enhancement of quality social services. These aspects of research are reflected on the graph below:

Figure 3.1 Elements that inform the philosophical paradigm



There are various research paradigms, often guided by the ontological stance of a particular discipline, which define its understanding of reality. In social science, research, such paradigms include objectivism, interpretivism, constructivism, critical theory, and postmodernism (Fouché, Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021). This study adopted the interpretivism paradigm, which posits that reality is constructed through human consciousness and meaning-making processes (Padgett, 2015). Interpretivism also emphasises that social reality and meaning are subjective interpretations by individuals, thereby highlighting the inherently dynamic and multilayered nature of reality (Fouché et al., 2021). This means that a single phenomenon can have multiple interpretations, shaped by diverse contexts and personal experiences. Consequently,

knowledge is fluid, evolving with time and influenced by human perspectives. Researchers within this paradigm acknowledge the limitations of fully understanding or definitively explaining phenomena, because reality is continuously shaped by social, economic, political, and personal factors. As Creswell (2014) notes, that interpretive paradigm highlights the importance of individual subjective realities, constructed through interactions within specific contexts. Ontology entails a study of reality, while epistemology is the study of knowledge; together these paradigms frame the approach used in this study to understand the experiences of social work supervisors in Gauteng, South Africa.

The ontological stance of this study is interpretivism, which emphasises understanding the subjective meanings and social realities constructed by individuals. While various epistemological positions exist, including positivism and constructivism, the positivist framework asserts that knowledge can only be discovered through an objective, detached approach guided by standardised measures to ensure reliability and objectivity (Fouché et al., 2021). In contrast, interpretivism aligns with studies aimed at exploring socially constructed and contextual meanings through an interactive and reflective process between the researcher and participants. Nayak and Singh (2015) illustrate this distinction by comparing ontology to materialistic (positivist) and idealistic (constructivist) perspectives, emphasising their foundational role in shaping research paradigms. Furthermore, axiology and metatheory provide additional layers of philosophical grounding for academic inquiry.

Axiology is central to qualitative research, stressing the importance of rigour, reflexivity, and ethical integrity in ensuring trustworthy outcomes while metatheory, on the other hand, focuses on the refinement and critique of existing theories, fostering the evolution of academic knowledge (Fouché, 2021). In this study, axiology underpins the commitment to ethical and rigorous research practices, while metatheory guides the review and synthesis of existing knowledge during the literature control phase of the analysis process, ultimately contributing to the enrichment of the study's theoretical framework.

The objective of the research question in the research study is best answered using constructive understanding of the lived experiences of the supervisors in their day-to-

day functioning based on their construction and interpretation of reality in relation to their environment. Therefore, deciding on an interpretivist paradigm assisted the researcher to plan and execute the research process following the constructivist method of enquiry (Neuman, 2014). The interpretive paradigm also assisted the researcher to understand the world that influences the participants' culture and values in their life experiences as supervisors.

3.3 STUDY APPROACH AND DESIGN

3.3.1 Study approach

A research approach is a systematic and logical plan that provides direction for how the research process unfolds (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016). However, other scholars, including Neuman (2014), Nayak and Singh (2015), and Padgett (2015), argue that a research approach often involves flexible plans subject to change based on the specific requirements of the study, especially in qualitative methods which do not follow rigid standards. Social research typically employs one of three main research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods driven by the research paradigm that that the researcher has chosen. The table below depicts three different study design approaches used in social research.

Table 3.1: Study approaches with elements of their designs

The approach	**Qualitative**	**Quantitative**	**Mixed methods**
Type of design(s)	Phenomenology	Experimental design	Sequential
	Case study	Non-experimental design	Concurrent
	Ethnography		

The qualitative research method aims to explore, describe, explain, and report people's experiences, perceptions, behaviours, and interactions (Nayak and Singh, 2015). There are certain characteristics in qualitative studies articulated by Cresswell (2014) beginning with research question as one of the key instruments in the processes from the start to the end. Secondly, collecting data takes place in the natural setting of the participants by talking directly to the participants. The process is not

linear and emergent but moves back and forth to develop patterns, categories and themes to understand the meanings the participants give to a phenomenon. In this study, the researcher is one of the participants who continuously reflects on her role and biases of experience and values.

For this study, the qualitative research approach was adopted because it aligns with the research objectives and the need for an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study, which is the implementation of the supervision framework for the social work professions in Gauteng, South Africa. To gain this understanding, the phenomenon was thus explored and described. The researcher, echoing Fouche' (2021), was also the primary data collection instrument. The study thus endeavoured to capture the authentic narratives, focusing on the lived experiences and actions of supervisors in implementing the supervision framework for the social work professions in South Africa. Furthermore, the researcher thus heeded the warning by Creswell (2005) during data collection in that she was aware of her own bias and personal values hence reflexivity as an ethical principle was adhered to (see subheading 3.6.1).

3.3.2 Study design

Research design is a strategic plan that seeks to explain how the investigation is carried out and helps to direct the research process (Nayak and Singh, 2015). The plan includes decisions made to execute the research project (Fouche, Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021). The plan is therefore systematic. Kumar (2011) explains that this decision is made to minimise and identify errors that may affect the study. In addition, the study designs vary according to what the research seeks to investigate. Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault (2016) state that even if the researcher decides on a plan in qualitative research design, this plan evolves and becomes flexible as the research process unfolds. However, the researcher must still clearly provide a well-informed study design based on the approach chosen. According to Kumar (2011) and Fouche, Strydom & Roestenburg (2021), research designs commonly used in qualitative research are case study design, phenomenology design, the narrative studies, and grounded theory as depicted in Figure 3.2

From the aforementioned designs, the phenomenological study design was adopted in this study. The phenomenology design is centred around studying the lived experiences of participants, their conceptions, thoughts, ideas and feelings to understand the meanings they attach to social work supervision practices in Gauteng, South Africa (Fouche, Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021).

Kotari (2011) adds that the phenomenological research design is a process of grasping the essence of the participants' experiences, specifically how they feel and think about a certain phenomenon. The phenomenological design has been adopted in the study to understand, describe, interpret and analyse the lived experiences of social works supervisors, so as to understand the real essence of their world in the implementation of the supervision framework for social workers through in-depth conversations with the participants.

Owing to the qualitative nature of the study, the exploratory, descriptive, and contextual designs were deemed suitable. An exploratory mode of inquiry is particularly appropriate when limited research exists on the question under investigation, as it allows for the generation and exploration of new knowledge (Yandis et al., 2018). This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the topic through examining the lived experiences and narratives of social work supervisors. However, as noted by Kumar (2011), the knowledge generated through exploratory research does not provide a definitive or conclusive solution to the identified problem. Instead, it serves to determine the nature of the situation and enhance understanding, while its findings cannot be generalised. In this study, the researcher employed an exploratory design to investigate the perceptions, feelings, and experiences of supervisors regarding their roles in implementing the supervision framework within the specific context of Gauteng.

According to Yandis (2018), the exploratory process involves both the participant and the researcher at various stages of the research. This interaction allows the researcher to gain insights through the descriptive narratives provided by participants about their daily lives and their interpretations of these experiences. Nayak and Singh (2015) supports this perspective, describing descriptive research design as a process where participants provide broad views and detailed accounts of the situation under study,

which the researcher further analyses and describes in the findings. Rubin and Babbie (2014) highlight that descriptive research design offers a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation. This approach relies on robust data collection methods to capture the characteristics and behaviours of the phenomena, enabling clear and detailed descriptions (Saunders et al., 2007). For example, in-depth and unstructured interview questions were used to probe participants' experiences. Consequently, the researcher employed a descriptive design to examine the state of supervision and explore social work supervisors' experiences with regards to the implementing the supervision framework in the Johannesburg region.

Qualitative studies emphasise the importance of understanding the context within which a phenomenon is explored and described. According to Kotari (2011), research contexts refer to the various aspects of the social world from which researchers derive knowledge. The social contexts in research may encompass subject specific, physical, or situational dimensions where the r data is collected. These considerations informed the decision to select the Johannesburg office as the case study of registered social work supervisors. This choice was guided by the aim to examine how supervisors within this specific population perceive and articulate their experiences in implementing the supervision framework.

3.4 STUDY POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

3.4.1 Study population

Research methods are decisions employed to collect data on the phenomena (Nayak and Sigh, 2015). Therefore, as part of the decision-making process by the researcher, a population for the study was identified. The population in research is depicted as the total unit of analysis that the researcher focuses upon to generate conclusions about the phenomena (Kotari, 2011). Tailor at al., (2016) adds that a population is all potential subjects who possess attributes that meet the criteria of inclusion in the study meaning that the population has common characteristics. The population that the researcher is interested in understanding can be either persons, events or case records. From the preceding descriptions, it can be deduced that a research

population refers to the people that possess knowledge about a phenomenon the researcher is interested in.

The population for this study were thus social work supervisors employed by the Gauteng Provincial Department of Social Development in the Johannesburg region, which is made up of Johannesburg South, North and West in terms of the municipality demarcations. Currently, there are 62 social work supervisors employed by the Gauteng Department of Social Development Johannesburg region, spread across 5 offices, which are Johannesburg central, Midrand, Soweto, Roodepoort and Lenasia. According to Neuman (2014) not everyone in the population can be included in the study and consequently a sample should be drawn from the population.

3.4.2 Sample and sampling

Sampling refers to selecting elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study (Padgett 2017:70), meaning that a specific number of people are identified from the population. According to Nayak at al., (2015) a sample is “a subgroup of a population.” Neuman (2014) highlights that the feasibility of the sample is significant because decisions are derived from the chosen sample. From the preceding descriptions, a sample thus refers to taking a portion of the population or universe as the representative of that population.

In this study, the sample was selected from a population of 62 social work supervisors. Qualitative research, as noted by Strydom (2021), typically involves relatively small samples determined by data saturation and in-depth information rather than predetermined quantity employed in quantitative methods. Further, the author emphasises that focus in qualitative studies in on transferability rather than generalisability of research findings. In this study, data saturation was achieved by the twelfth participant.

Qualitative studies apply non-probability sampling techniques (Padgett, 2017). According to Kumar (2011), Neuman (2014) and Tailor, Bogdan and Devault (2016) non-probability sampling techniques include the following convenient sampling, purposive sampling, and quota sampling.

To determine the sample, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were formulated. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were also decided on for the study as asserted by Yazidis (2018) to help with the recruitment and feasibility of the ideal pool of participants to get the most beneficial data which is rich and detailed. Kumar (2011) outlines that the exclusion criteria assist with eliminating participants who are not relevant and do not add value to the study. Participants with the following characteristics were thus included in the study:

- 7 years of work experience as a social worker
- Social work supervisors registered with the SACSSP
- 2 years more as a supervisor
- Social work supervisor in the employment of Social Development in the Johannesburg region.

The exclusion criteria were also formulated as follows:

- social work supervisors that are but employed not willing to participate in the study.
- those with less than 2 years supervision experience were excluded from the study because they would not have provided in-depth understanding of supervision guidelines and supervision experience
- Lastly, for ethical consideration, supervisors from the researcher's directorate were excluded.

The researcher initially confirmed 15 participations for the study. However, only 12 participants ultimately took part, because two participants withdrew due to work commitments, and one declined to participate after initially providing consent. Despite this, the principle of data saturation was achieved with 12 participants.

A purposive sampling technique was thus used in the study. In purposive sampling technique, the decision of who forms part of the study is based entirely on the judgment of the researcher (Tailor at al., 2016). Neuman (2014) adds that the decision is also based on the experience of the sample about the topic. Therefore, the parameters of the sample were decided on carefully. The sample was drawn from five different

service offices or satellite offices within the Social Development Johannesburg region, which are Johannesburg South, Midrand, Soweto, Roodepoort and Lenasia. Furthermore, the total sample consisted of supervisors from different directorates including those from intake and statutory services, probation services, substance, and school interventions. The sample was also in close proximity to the researcher, therefore minimising logistical costs and practicability of the study.

3.5 RECRUTMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

3.5.1 Recruitment

Before data could be collected from study participants, the researcher embarked on a recruitment process. Taylor et al., (2016) describe this process as the recruitment phase, which involves securing buy-in from both gatekeepers and prospective participants within organisational and individual settings. To ensure that data collection was effective, participants were recruited through a structured process starting with seeking permission and approval from the UNISA CREC (see (Appendix 1). Following this, the Social Development Ethics Committee granted permission to conduct the study (Permission letter is attached as Appendix 2) who further referred the researcher to the coordinator responsible for supervisors as the gatekeeper. With the approval of the supervisors' learning forum coordinator, the researcher was granted a platform during a supervisors' meeting to engage with the supervisors and introduced the study and oriented participants about its purpose.

The researcher then collaborated with the Human Resources office to identify participants who met the inclusion criteria. Subsequently, emails were sent to 40 supervisors in the cluster offices, excluding the researcher’s directorate. From this outreach, 17 supervisors who met the inclusion requirements responded positively. As advised by Rubin and Babbie (2009), the email communication was followed by telephone calls to confirm their willingness to participate. Appointments were then scheduled with the selected participants at the participants’ preferred venues and times, ensuring a seamless and ethical recruitment process. This recruitment phase, echoing Bodgan and Marjorie (2016), required diligence and patience to ensure ethical and effective engagement with participants.

3.5.2 Data collection process

Data collection procedures are associated with systematic processes and activities employed by researchers to gather information from a sample (Padgett, 2017). According to Mahajan (2018), qualitative research data collection often involves methods such as participant observation, individual interviews, and focus group discussions. In this study, interviews were selected as the primary data collection method. Maharaj (2018) describes interviews as a technique for understanding the world from the participant's perspective in a natural setting, aimed at achieving scientific explanations. Geyer further emphasises that interviews, as a form of verbal communication, offers authentic, descriptive, and detailed insights, aligning with the researcher's objective to explore the study's aims comprehensively. Nayab (2015) and Neuman (2014) identify various types of interviews used in qualitative research, including in-depth, structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Padgett (2017) concurs, highlighting that interviews are interactive processes involving asking questions, active listening, expressing interest, and systematically recording participants' responses.

In this study, the researcher employed face-to-face semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Semi-structured interviews, guided by a detailed interview schedule, combine structured questions with open-ended conversations to encourage deeper insights (Neuman, 2014). The interview scheduled attached to this report as Appendix 6 enabled the researcher to gather rich and thick information, as it allows flexibility for follow-up questions and gives participants the opportunity to elaborate on their narratives (Geyer, 2021). This guide served as a framework to ensure that the research questions are addressed while allowing for dynamic interactions. In this context, the researcher followed up on participants' interesting responses to gain further clarity and depth. As Padgett (2017) highlights, the interviewer and interviewee collaboratively create meanings during the interview process, positioning both as active agents contributing to the research.

Data saturation was also applied during data collection process to determine the number of study participants. Data saturation refers to an instance where no new information emerges, and repetitive patterns begin to be observed in the data. This

judgment aligns with Padgett's (2017) assertion that data saturation occurs when no additional insights or value are gained from continued data collection due to redundancy. The latter is also confirmed by (Strydom, 2021) that data saturation in qualitative studies begins at 12 to 15.

Effective interview techniques, such as a probing were applied to encourage self-exploration and for the participant to share more. Active listening was useful to enhance understanding of the participant verbal experiences, while observing non-verbal ques. As mentioned above that the researcher is as an instrument in data collection. Paraphrasing as a method of grasping the meaning of the participant was also used by reflecting on what the participant shared. The skill ensured that information was clarified (Cresswell, 2014). All these skills were applied to enhance the quality of the data collection process.

The interviews were also recorded and this assisted in capturing the specific language and words of the participants (Cresswell, 2014). Since it is impossible to recall every word in interviewing multiple participants, tape recording assisted to capture the discussion fully. Furthermore, recording assisted the researcher to focus on listening and make evaluation and reflective notes on what the participant shared without the disturbance of manual recording of fields notes (Geyer, 2021).

Before the data could be collected, a pilot study was conducted.

3.5.3 Pilot study

A pilot study serves as a preliminary trial run to test all aspects of the planned main inquiry (de Vos, 2002). The pilot study allows for testing the applicability and usability of the recruitment process and data collection instruments. Piloting considers and refines aspects such as rationality and challenges. It helps to refine, re-organise and reword the data instrument as advised by Strydom, (2021). Nevertheless, Padgett (2017) cautions that pilot studies do not address all the flaws of the research schedule but certainly helps to modify certain questions by changing the wording and sequence to facilitate better understanding of the questions and responses. Before commencing data collection, the researcher conducted a pilot study with two supervisors who met

the inclusion criteria and were homogeneous to the sample. Certainly, as Padgette suggested above the pilot study helped to refining the interview schedule, specifically question and 3 which read as follow:

1. Which methods of supervision do you apply in practice and why?

3. Is your supervision reflective, interactional, or developmental?

Following feedback from pilot-testing participants, the two questions were merged into a single item, now presented as question 2 below.

2. Supervision practice applies different methods and which reflective interactional and development which do you apply and why?

Further the pilot study allowed the researcher to become familiar with the research procedures, such as the time required to conduct interviews to prepare participants to allocate an hour for their interviews. As well as to enable the researcher to assess participants' reactions to the questions. The pilot study provided practical experience with the research schedule, ensuring its functionality before full-scale data collection. Consistent with Strydom's (2021) recommendations, the pilot study assessed the relevance, appropriateness, and precision of the planned research, including the feasibility of the interview schedule. Expert consultation was also sought, as Strydom (2021) emphasises the importance of involving supervisors to refine research schedules and ensure the data collection process is well-defined and effective.

Two supervisors from the pool of 17 recruited supervisors participated in the pilot study but were excluded from the main study and subsequent data analysis. The primary purpose of the pilot study was to evaluate and refine critical elements of the research process, particularly the wording and structure of the data collection schedule. This ensured that the instrument was clear, suitable, and effectively aligned with the study's objectives prior to the commencement of the main data collection. The responses provided by the pilot study participants were not included in the final data analysis, as the pilot was intended solely for procedural refinement.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Data analysis is a process of engaging with the collected data, through which the researcher identifies and interpret the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2009).

Data analysis additionally involves moving from working with individuals to working with text by making sense of the data collected and interpreting it. As espoused by Mohajan (2018) data analysis entails the examination of the content for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, and biases; it is further making sense, breaking down of the collected information in a clearer and logical form. Schurink, Schurink and Fouche' (2021) summarise the process of data analysis as bringing order, structure and meaning to the collected information. The authors further highlight that this is not a linear process but notes that the data analysis process are linked with other research planning and decisions from choosing the research design, data collection, analysis, presentation and dissemination of the study results.

In this study the researcher employed qualitative thematic data analysis, described as a process of identifying codes, categories, and relations to develop themes from the participants' responses (Cresswell, 2014). A computer assistance qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) ATLAS.ti.24 was used as one of the strategies of enhancing credibility and transparency in qualitative studies. Schurink, Schurink and Fourche' (2021) alludes that the computer assistance software facilitates accuracy and explicitness on how data was analysed, and further support audit trail. The software assisted in storing, organising, analysing and visual presentation of information of codes and categories. It also assisted with importing and exporting data for interpretation purposes. Nayak and Sigh (2015) advise that the CAQDAS should not limit the researcher role. Therefore, the guidelines outlined by Braun and Clarke in Yegidis, Weinbach, and Wyers (2018) were thus still applied when using ATLAS. ti, which include six key stages of analysis which are: familiarisation and immersion, inducing themes, coding, elaboration, interpretation, and checking were followed. During the familiarisation and immersion stage, the researcher manually transcribed the data by listening to the recorded interviews of the participants. The transcripts, along with field notes, were read multiple times to ensure a deep understanding of the content. To facilitate the analysis, all participants' transcripts were uploaded on ATLAS.ti version 24.

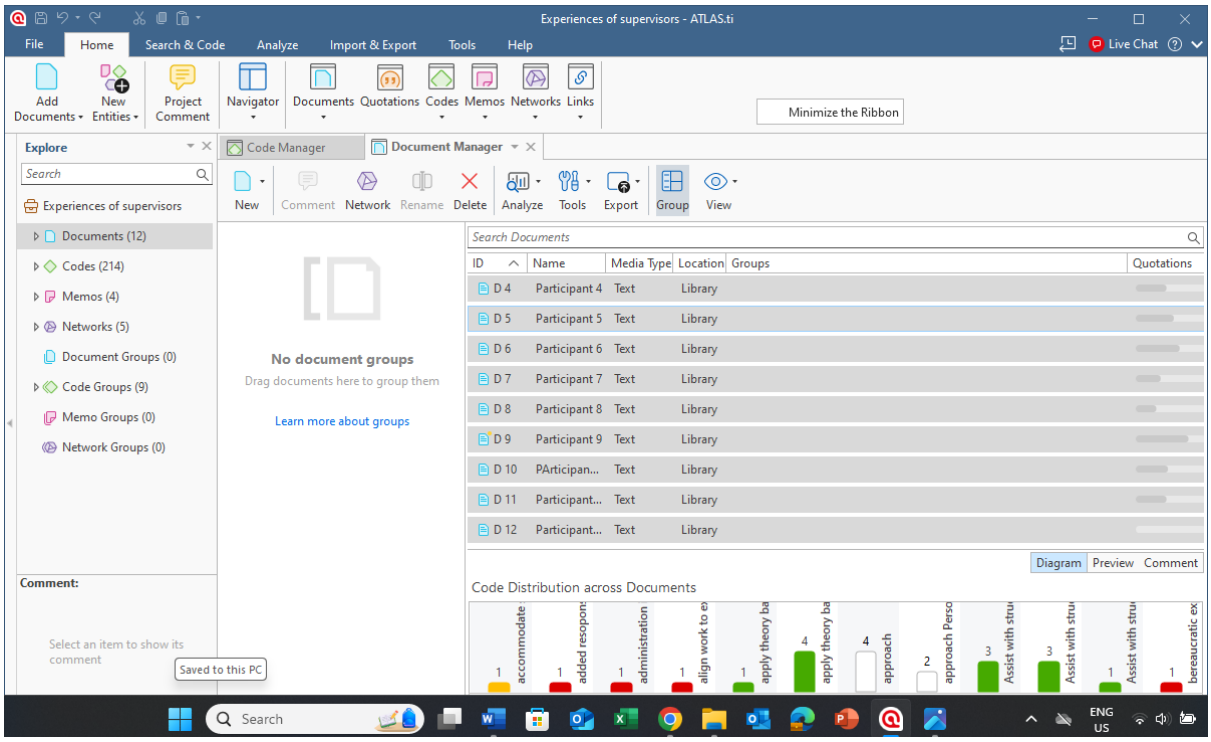
The researcher was activity involved with ATLAS.ti to compare extracts from the participants' interviews to match the data in a systematic and organised manner develop quotes, categories, and themes. During the process of deducing themes

stage, a top-down approach was utilised as recommended by Yegidis et al., (2018), incorporating the participants' language to identify initial codes, categories, and themes. During the coding stage, the researcher systematically identified and labelled codes and patterns, using colour coding to highlight their relevance, aided by the computer-assisted analysis program. This structured approach ensured a comprehensive and methodical exploration of the data visual presentation was abstracted using the ATLAS.ti.

3.6.1 Transcribing data

Transcribing refers to the process of converting and organising information from participants into a text document to prepare data for analysis (Schurink et al., 2021). In this initial step of data analysis, the researcher manually transcribed the audio-recorded interviews, by capturing the participants' words from the audio recording. This process allowed the researcher to immerse herself deeply in the detailed narratives, gaining valuable insights into the participants' experiences. The transcripts of interviews from 12 participants were subsequently uploaded to ATLAS.ti for efficient storage and organisation (see Figure 3.2). To ensure anonymity, the researcher assigned pseudonyms by identifying participants with numerical codes.

Figure 3.2: Document manager



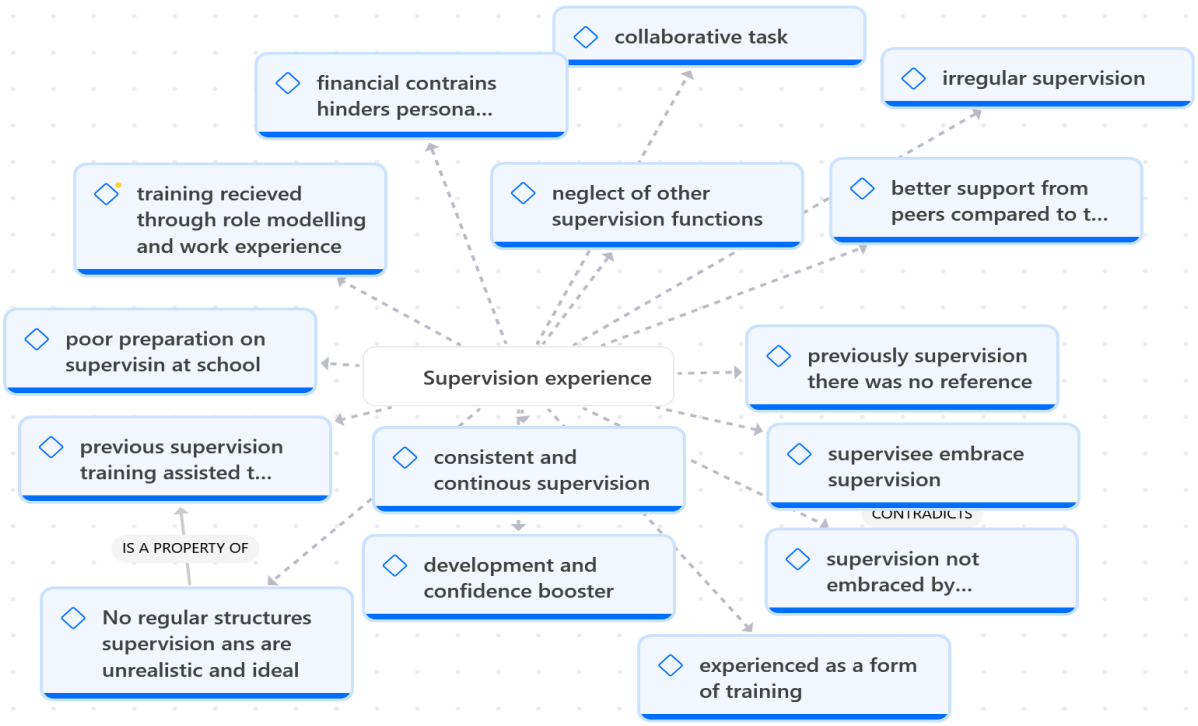
3.6.2 Familiarisation

The process of data familiarisation began during the transcription of interviews and continued as the researcher engaged in an in-depth review of the transcribed text. Following the guidelines outlined by Schurink et al., (2021), this phase involved printing the transcripts and repeatedly reading through them to immerse the researcher with the data. Through this iterative process of reading and re-reading, the researcher developed a comprehensive understanding of the participants' responses. Analytical observations were made, ideas were generated, and critical reflections on the meaning of the text were undertaken. This thorough engagement with the data facilitated the identification of meaningful patterns and the development of preliminary codes, which served as the foundation for further analysis.

3.6.3 Generating initial codes

In qualitative research, codes are utilised as descriptive labels to capture the meaning conveyed by participants within their responses. This process involves identifying and assigning labels to segments of text to represent the participants' expressed meanings. To ensure a rigorous approach, the researcher engaged in an iterative process of reading and re-reading each quotation from the transcripts, carefully considering its relevance and essential interpretation. This process was further informed by existing literature to conceptualise the deeper, underlying meanings within the data, a technique referred to as latent coding (Schurink et al., 2021). ATLAS.ti was thus used herein to code the data, and the coding process yielded a total of 249 distinct codes. Some of the codes are illustrated in Figure 3.3 reflecting the diverse meanings embedded in the participants' narratives.

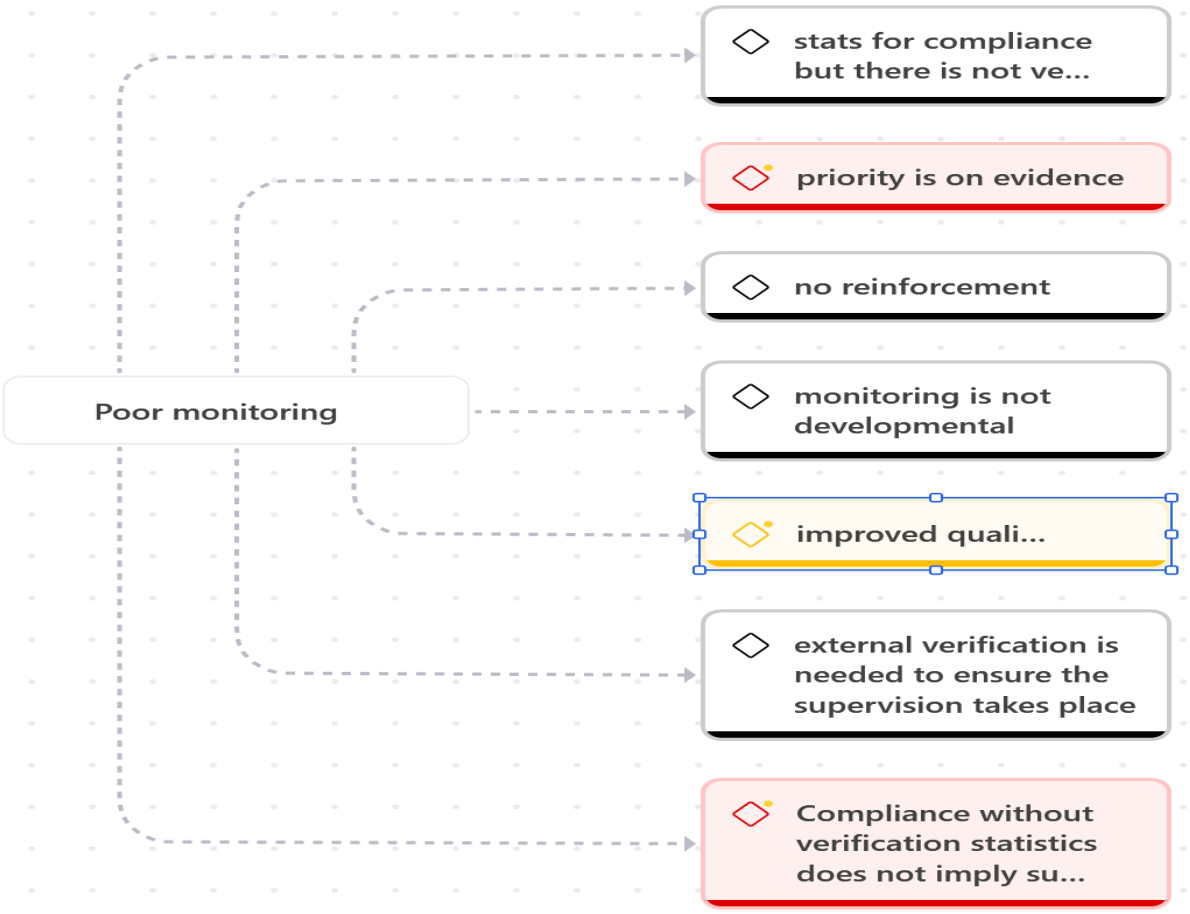
Figure 3.3: Open codes



3.6.4 Searching for categories

The coding process progressed by identifying patterns among the codes, this therefore facilitated the development of themes, and categories. This progression, often referred to as thematic development, involves abstracting, organising ideas and concepts from the labelled codes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The grouping of codes into patterns was guided by the research questions and objectives, culminating in the emergence of coherent themes drawing from the responses of the participants. Because of the repeated codes emerging from questions in the research scheduled, it became necessary to connect some of questions and brand them into one theme. The generated themes from the codes serve as higher-level constructs that capture the meaning embedded from the codes (Schurink at al., 2021). For instance, as illustrated in Figure 3.4, themes were derived from the patterns identified across participants' responses, demonstrating the systematic evolution of data from codes to structured thematic conceptual insights (Schurink at al., 2021)

Figure 3.4: Sub-category development from codes



3.6.5 Data interpretation

In alignment with the interpretive paradigm and the developmental theoretical approach adopted in this study, the researcher strove to understand supervisors' perceptions on their implementing the supervision framework. At this stage of the analysis, the researcher undertook a critical review of the identified patterns and categories that formed the preliminary themes. This process served as a quality control measure to assess whether these themes should be refined, further developed, or excluded based on their alignment with the research questions (Schurink at al,.2021). Nayak and Singh (2015) support this phase which involving refinement of concepts while actively interacting with data, by conceptualising the participants' perspectives and aligning them with relevant literature, with the aim of ensuring rigorous and holistic understanding of the empirical findings. This integrative

approach, which is comprehensively discussed in Chapter 4, allowed the researcher to draw meaningful connections between the participants' views and the broader theoretical context of the study.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Kumar (2017) describes ethics in social research as a guide to determine right from wrong while Yegidis at al., (2018) refers to ethics as conforming to standards of conduct in each profession or community of practice. Strydom and Roestenburg (2021) adds that ethics are the preferred moral and principles of behaviour to which the researchers adhere. From the preceding discussion, ethics denote a set of moral principles that a researcher should consider and that the researcher should accept as guidelines, pointing to how a researcher should conduct themselves during the planning, data collection, data analysis to the final report dissemination of a study. In this study, the following ethical principles were adhered to as advised by Padgett (2017) reflexivity, voluntary participation and informed consent, violation of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, non-maleficence, debriefing of participants, beneficence and management of information.

3.7.1 Reflexivity

The researcher conducted the study in the place of the researcher's employment. The researcher's own values and bias may affect objectivity. However, the researcher ensured effective account of interactions with the participants by using systematic research designs including rigorous planning, action and critical reflection on the researchers' feelings and thinking on the conceptual framework thereby including methods of research, research questions (Nyayak and Singh, 2015). Bias was addressed by applying the principles of conformity. Conformity is described by Maharaj (2018) as confirming validity of the study by other researchers and ensuring that data is transferable to another situation or context. Bias was again addressed through ensuring that participants' experiences are accurately reported according to the participants' authentic views recorded in the transcripts as advised by Bodgan and Marjorie (2016). To achieve the latter, Padgett (2017) suggests the use of journaling. As the researcher I consciously reflected on my feelings, values, and pre-conceptions after each interview.

3.7.2 Voluntary participation and informed consent

The ethical principles of voluntary participation and informed consent are intertwined. This is because voluntary participation denotes that the participants know what they are getting involved in by receiving sufficient information about the study from the researcher. According to Padgett (2017) and Leavy (2014) voluntary participation means that the participants are aware of all the advantages and disadvantages of participating in the study and are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any given time (Strydom and Reostenburg, 2021). Again, the participants' information should not be shared without their consent. Informed consent also means that all information pertaining to the research processes should be explained accurately to the participants for the participants to make a voluntary decision about participating in the research (Leavy, 2014). Yagidis at al., (2018) confirms that the standard component of informed consent involves giving correct information about the study, explaining the voluntary participation, and freedom to decline or withdraw from the study.

In adherence to ethical principles, the researcher presented the study to prospective participants, i.e., to supervisors in the Johannesburg region, during the supervisors forum meeting on 19 April 2024 to clarify the study's purpose. The presentation was preceded by emailing an invitation to 40 potential participants based on the criteria for inclusion, inviting the supervisors to take part in the research. Only those who responded were contacted further. An information sheet (appendix 3) containing comprehensive details about the study was emailed to participants. The document outlined the study aim, objectives, data collection methods, and the potential advantages and disadvantages of participation. Upon receiving emailed responses of consent to participate, 15 participants were contracted telephonically and emailed consent forms (appendix 4), which included a withdrawal clause, clearly stating that participants could withdraw from the study at any point during the data collection process.

3.7.3 Violation of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

Confidentiality involves protecting the information shared by participants, while anonymity ensures that participants remain nameless (Yegidis et al., 2018). Privacy, on the other hand, refers to the principle of respecting the rights of the participants

during the research process, (Nayak & Singh, 2015). Respect for the participants was applied through anonymity. Anonymity refers to the researcher not disclosing the identity of the participants, this was ensured by using pseudonyms Leavy (2014). During the recruitment process the confidentiality of the data collection process was discussed with prospective participants. The importance of confidentiality, as recommended by Leavy (2014), was reiterated verbally before and during the data collection process.

The information of the participants has thus been handled with confidentiality in the study. The details of offices and the programmes participants are responsible for are omitted in the study. The signed informed consent forms of participants are also stored safe in a lockable cabinet only the researcher has access to it. In this study, privacy and anonymity were upheld by using pseudonyms instead of participants' real names during the recording, transcription, and reporting of data to ensure that the identity of participants cannot be traced by the readers of the research report. Participants were referred to as Participant 1 through Participant 12 to safeguard their identities.

3.7.4 Non-maleficence

The ethical principle of non-maleficence in social research is one of the most important principles that the researcher must not cause physical and emotional harm to participants whether intentionally or unintentionally (Strydom and Roestenburg, 2021). Yagidis at al., (2018) and Leavy (2014) concurs that participants should not be exposed to direct or indirect harm especially that the study did not require participants to share personal sensitive information. To prevent harm to the participants, the researcher was sensitive towards ensuring that the participants are not exposed to any form of harm by being open about the research process so they could make informed decisions regarding their participation.

To lessen harm to the participants, the researcher also compiled a comprehensive study proposal wherein harm and risk to the participants was assessed by the Department of Social Work Research Committee and the College of Human Sciences Research and Ethics Committee (CREC). According to Tailor at al., (2016) careful scientific planning mitigates harm in research. The study was classified as low risk by

the CREC due to the minimal probability of harm based on its objectives. Participant discomfort was assessed throughout the data collection process, which involved conducting interviews in the participants' natural work environments. Although some work-related disruptions occurred, the researcher took measures to minimise inconvenience and discomfort. Participants were allowed to attend to urgent matters in their work settings as needed, ensuring that the research process remained flexible and considerate. This approach aligns with the guidance of Strydom and Roestenburg (2021), who emphasise the importance of researchers maintaining sensitivity and continuously assessing and evaluating participant well-being during the data collection.

3.7.5 Debriefing of participants

Debriefing is a process of addressing emotions after intense experiences that may have been brought by the research topic or process (Padgett, 2017) and it helps to minimise harm by ensuring that participants reflect on their feelings and misconceptions that may have arisen (Leavy, 2014). In this study, after each interview, the researcher checked with the participants to ascertain if there was any psychological harm brought by the study questions. None of the participants reported any emotional distress. In cases where emotional discomfort might have arisen, arrangements were made with the Social Department employee assistant official for assessment and debriefing services; however, none of the participants required these services.

3.7.6 Beneficence

Beneficence means that the researcher should maximise the benefits that the research accrues to the participants and avoid harm and further clarify the benefits of the study to the participants (Mahajan, 2018). Maximising benefits does not, however, involve misinforming or deceiving participants of the benefits. Mahajan (2018) warns that monetary benefit to participation does not equate to research benefit; rather benefits should be about improving the lives of participants as defined by Strydom and Roestenburg (2021).

In this study, it was explained to the participants during the recruitment process that the benefits of participating in the study were non-monetary. Two benefits for participating were thus highlighted to the participants that 1) the study gives them an opportunity to reflect on their own supervision practices and 2) that the long-term benefits of the study findings are intended to support social work supervisors in enhancing their supervision practices in the province and beyond. It is also worth noting that the study participants did not incur any debt by participating in the study because the researcher travelled to their offices to gather data. This ensured balance between the potential risk and benefits as advised by Rubin and Babbie (2009), most importantly to minimise any form of discomfort by participating in the study.

3.7.7 Management of information

Information gathered through qualitative research methods is extensive and includes text, manuscripts, and recordings. According to Tailor et al., (2016) and Maharaj (2018), it is essential to store field notes, transcripts, and other sensitive data in a secure location to ensure confidentiality. Participants were briefed at the beginning of the data collection and assured about how the information would be stored to ensure confidentiality and how the research report would be disseminated in consideration of the target audience as advised by Fourche and Roestenburg (2021). In adherence to these recommendations, the researcher ensured that physical copies of manual data, printed for reading purposes, were destroyed after use. Additionally, the transcripts were securely uploaded to ATLAS.ti with access granted solely to the researcher through a password-protected system. Interview recording were transferred to a secures computer device accessible to the researcher and deleted from a mobile phone maintaining the integrity and security of the data throughout the research process.

3.8 RIGOUR AND TRUSTWORTHINESS IN RESEACH

In qualitative research, ensuring the trustworthiness and quality of the data is a critical responsibility of the researcher. This involves employing systematic examination techniques to verify the accuracy and authenticity of the information collected. Such processes include checking, confirming, and ensuring certainty to enhance the study's reliability and validity concepts commonly associated with quantitative research

(Roestenburg, 2021). In the context of qualitative inquiry, trustworthiness is achieved through four key elements as identified by Guba and Lincoln which are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Schurink, 2021). These elements provide a robust framework for verifying data and ensuring methodological rigour. Additionally, data verification is an ethical imperative that should be embedded within the research design (Khosa, 2022). The process involves triangulating of the literature review for the purposes of empirical findings, which together form a solid foundation for data analysis and interpretation.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research refers to the ability to accurately understand and represent the expressed meanings of participants in a truthful and authentic manner (Padgett, 2017). According to Schurink et al., (2021) credibility serves as an alternative to internal validity in quantitative studies, ensuring that participants are correctly identified, and their perspectives accurately described. To enhance the credibility of this study, the researcher prioritised the participants' voices and viewpoints by incorporating direct quotations into the data interpretation process. This is because Schurink et al., (2021) emphases that credibility depends on the synergy between the researcher, the participants, and the collected data for the information to be authentic. In addition, collaboration with a supervisor who possesses expertise in the research topic and processes further strengthened the credibility of the study, as the supervisor's guidance ensured a rigorous and informed approach to data analysis and interpretation.

3.8.2 Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research refers to the stability and consistency of data findings over time, similar to reliability in quantitative studies. Schurink (2021) emphasises that dependability requires data to remain consistent if a study were to be replicated with the same participants by another researcher at a different point in time. However, Yagidis (2018) argues that replication in qualitative research poses challenges, as human knowledge and experiences are inherently dynamic and context dependent. This implies that the exact replication of participant experiences cannot be guaranteed, aligning with the constructivist assumption that interpretations and

contexts are constantly evolving. Despite these challenges, dependability of this study has been assured by following logical research processes and documenting the research processes Schurink (2021) as described earlier in this chapter.

3.8.3 Confirmability

Conformity, as described by Schurink (2021) refers to the researcher's critical self-awareness and examination of their own preconceptions, necessitating reflexivity that may arise from to their personal involvement in the data collection and research process. According to Shenton (2004) credibility of findings is established when other academics and researchers can confirm that the results are based on accurate data and that the methods of analysis were correctly applied, thereby ensuring objectivity and reliability, particularly used in quantitative studies. In this study, confirmability was achieved through supervisor reviews and evaluations, which confirmed the credibility and transparency of the findings by linking them with evidence from the literature and appraised knowledge during data analysis and interpretation as advised by Padgett, (2017) and Schurink at al., (2021).

3.8.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied to other contexts with similar conditions and context. Schurink and Fouché (2021) emphasize that transferability involves adapting insights from one study to another context, rather than generalising the findings universally. Padgett (2018) highlights that transferability should not be mistaken for generalisation but rather seen as a process requiring flexibility, rigour, and reliability to ensure the findings remain relevant across contexts. This approach is critical for comparing and applying insights effectively in similar settings. Transferability is further supported using methods and strategies that can be consistently employed to acquire knowledge within the same population. Data analysis through participants' perspectives, as described by Schurink (2021), was applied to describe the context and direct quotes to help readers understand the participants' views and experiences, even if they were not involved in the research process. Guest (2013), as cited in Gunda (2018) underscores the importance of enabling readers to gain an in-depth understanding of the context, facilitating the application of findings to other similar environments. On the other hand, Schurink

(2021) cautions against generalising results, by advocating that findings should be contextually applicable, allowing their relevance to extend to environments sharing comparable characteristics with the studied organisation but not generalised.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter outlined a systematic and iterative approach aimed at exploring and understanding the phenomena under study. The process commenced with the selection of a qualitative methodology aligned with the study's objectives, in this case, phenomenology. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews to gather rich and detailed information. The researcher provided a clear orientation on the data analysis process, which included transcribing, coding, and conducting thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and insights. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the implementation of the supervision framework by supervisors. Reflexivity, ethical considerations, and rigour were consistently prioritized throughout the research process to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Finally, the study acknowledged its limitations as part of a reflective process, emphasising areas for improvement.

CHAPTER 4
DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study, as alluded to previously, was undertaken to explore the experiences of social work supervisors' experiences regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa in the Johannesburg region. The aim was to gain insights into their perspectives on their implementation of supervision. To achieve this, the researcher employed semi-structured interviews conducted using an interview schedule and this data collection instrument allowed for flexibility and depth in responses. The data collected was transcribed, analysed, synthesised, and summarised to derive meaningful insights and this chapter focuses on presenting the findings thereof. Fouché (2021) argues that in the research process, data analysis and interpretation is a rigorous and involved coding, categorising, summarising, and identifying themes and sub-themes. Similarly, De Vos (2010) explains that data analysis involves reducing data into a format that is intelligible and interpretable, enabling a clearer understanding of the researched phenomenon.

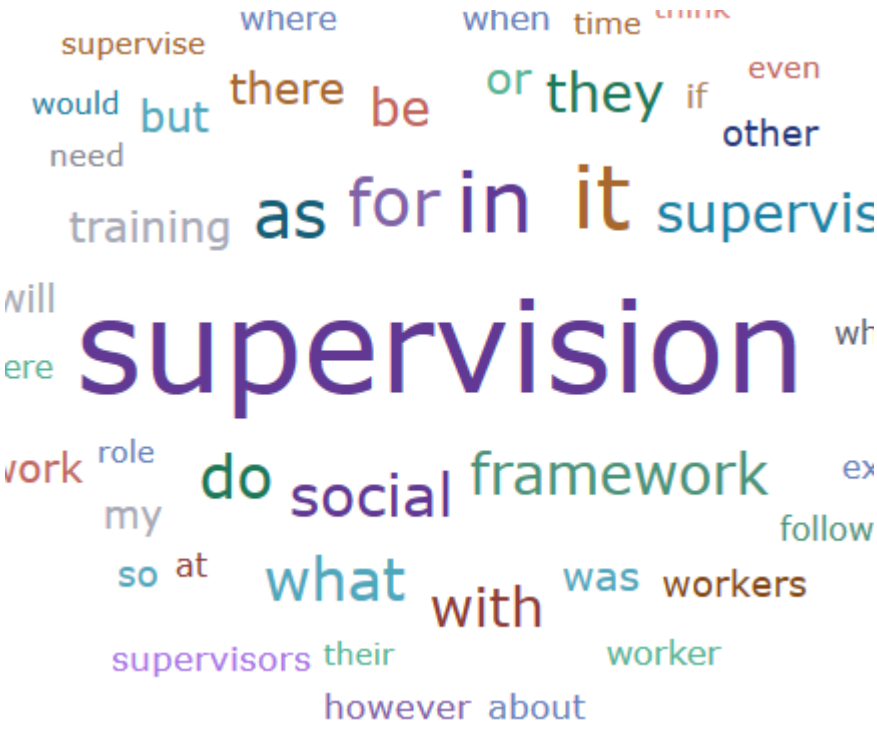
Because of the labour intensive, messy, and often problematic nature of manual qualitative data analysis (Mattimoe, Michael, Hayden, Murphy,& Ballantine, 2021), the researcher opted to use the support of the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, specifically ATLAS.ti 24, to manage the numerous transcripts from the semi-structured interviews that lasted approximately 60 minutes per participant. ATLAS.ti is a widely used software in qualitative research for analysing text, graphics, and audio, and it facilitates systematic and structured data analysis (Gupta, 2024). In this study, the researcher initially engaged with the data manually by identifying preliminary codes and themes, which helped build a significant understanding of the content. This was followed by the use of ATLAS.ti to support the coding and theme development process. Therefore, a combined approach, manual coding supplemented by ATLAS.ti, was adopted to strengthen methodological rigour and ensure the credibility and transparency of the findings.

The researcher employed technology to support the thematic data analysis process, which involved familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, and systematically organising and reorganising the data to develop, sub-categories, and overarching themes. Throughout the process, the researcher remained actively engaged with the data to ensure that the software did not take over the analysis and interpretation. The discussion begins with a presentation of the study participants, followed by an in-depth exploration of the themes that emerged from the data.

4.2 THE CODE REPORT

In the initial stages of analysis, 249 codes were generated as illustrated in (Figure 4.1) below. The analysis shows that supervisors frequently mentioned the term "supervision," with 180 tokens recorded. Additionally, "framework" and "training" also appeared frequently, as reflected in the word cloud exported from the project. Tokens represent the number of times a concept was used by participants in the study.

Figure:4.1: Word cloud / Frequency of words used

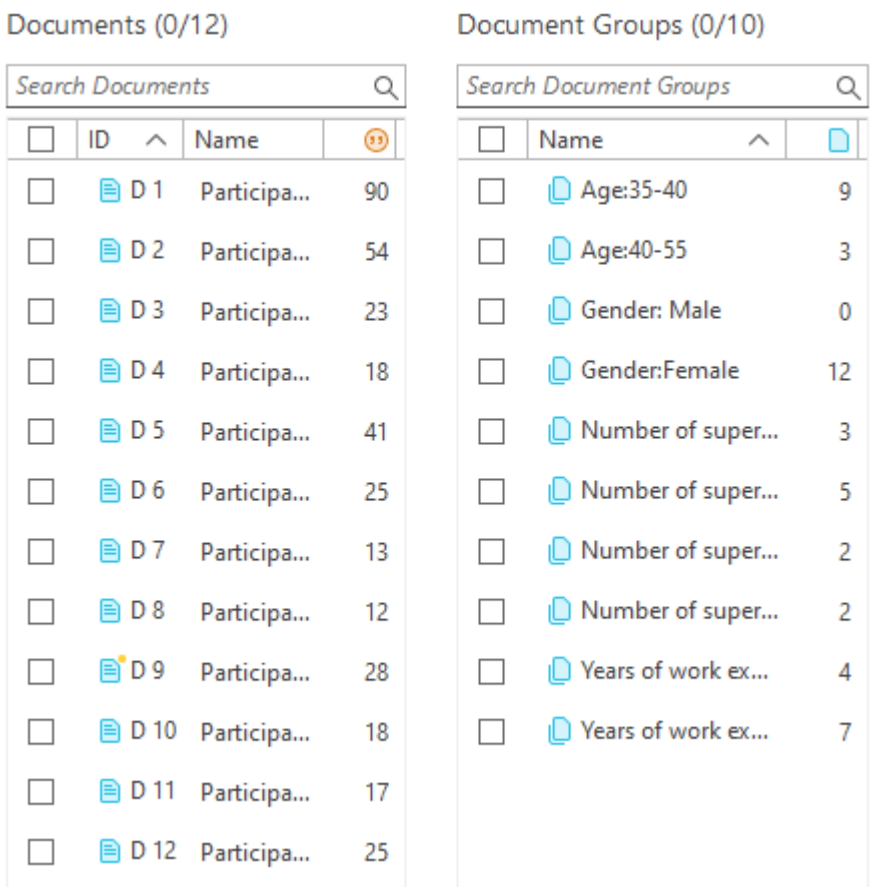


4.3 STUDY SAMPLE

A sample refers to a portion of a population selected to help researchers gain insight into a particular phenomenon (Bliss, 2011). Schurink (2021) further defines a sample as a subset of individuals, groups, events, or documents that are purposefully chosen to generate knowledge about the larger population. This implies that researchers must carefully select participants or units that share similar characteristics with the overall population of interest to ensure that the findings are understood within the context of that population.

In this study, a non-probability purposive sampling method was employed to recruit 15 participants. However, one participant withdrew after initially confirming participation, and two others were unavailable for the scheduled interviews. As a result, a total of 12 participants were ultimately interviewed. The sample was drawn from a population of 54 supervisors employed at the Johannesburg Regional Office. The criteria used for selecting these participants are detailed in Chapter 3. Below is a visual representation of the downloaded transcripts from ATLAS.ti, categorising participants based on demographic information.

Figure 4.3 Participant categorisation



4.3.1 The profile of participants

The demographic information gathered from participants as per the attached interview schedule (see Appendix 5) was sought in terms of the following information: participant ID, gender, age, years of social work experience, years of supervision experience, number of supervisees as well as field of service area. This is summarised on the table below.

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Table 4.1: Demographics profiles of participants (JHB metro region supervisors)

Partici-pant ID	Gender	Age	Years of social work experience	Years of supervisor experience	Number of supervisees	Field of service	Area
P 1	F	40	7	8	5	Probation services	JHB central
P 2	F	35	7	2	4	Substance abuse	Soweto
P 3	F	38	8	5	3	Intake (child protection)	JHB west
P 4	F	40	9	7	6	Statutory services	JHB north
P 5	F	43	8	10	6	Statutory services	Midrand
P 6	F	35	7	3	6	Intake services	JHB north
P 7	F	42	12	4	6	School intervention	JHB central
P 8	F	34	8	5	5	Statutory services	JHB South
P 9	F	53	9	14	8	Field statutory services	JHB south
P 10	F	35	8	4	4	Intake services	Soweto
P 11	F	35	7	2	7	Specialty services	JHB central
P 12	F	51	9	15	6	Substance abuse	JBH central

Cresswell, (2014) recommends that participants' profile information is important to justify the selection of the participants who assist the study to achieve its purpose and enhance credibility and transparency of the research.

4.3.2 Gender

The study participant pool comprised entirely of females, which reinforces Mason's (2012) assertion that social work is a female-dominated profession. Similarly, Walley (2012) affirms that social work is a caring profession predominantly occupied by women, with only a minority of men represented. This gender imbalance is particularly evident in the Johannesburg region, where 95% of social workers and social auxiliary workers are female, according to records of the Department of Social Development (2023).

4.3.3 Age

The participants in the study were between the ages of 34 and 53, which according to Mokoka (2016) and the Department of Social Development (2012) may be attributed to the organisational requirements of at least five years of work experience before promotion to a supervisory position. This age range aligns with findings by Bradley (2010), who noted that most social work supervisors in the United Kingdom are in their mid-30s. Similarly, Engelbrecht (2019) affirms that the supervisory workforce in South Africa is predominantly individuals from the Y generation, typically aged between 30 and 40 years.

4.3.4 Social work and supervision experience of participants

The participants in the study reported an average of 7 to 12 years of experience as operational social workers. This aligns with the Department of Social Development's appointment criteria for social work supervisors, which requires a minimum of five years of experience (HRM Circular Document, 2021). Botha (2002) asserts that supervision in South Africa is commonly viewed as a promotional opportunity. Similarly, Engelbrecht (2019) highlights that supervision is often perceived as a means of personal and professional growth within the social work profession. Supporting this view, Mokoka (2016) found in her study within the same study setting that years of experience often influenced promotion decisions more than knowledge or skills. Kadushin (2002) also confirms this assertion that supervision frequently overlaps with managerial responsibilities, making it a stepping stone toward management roles for which supervisors aspire.

It is also deduced from the table that the supervisors have a minimum of 2 years and more supervision experience with at least one supervisor with a cumulative 15 years of experience. This finding shows that the Department of Social Development Johannesburg office complies with the requirement for appointing supervisors as stipulated in the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa that a supervisor should have a minimum of 5 years (DSD &SACSSP, 2012). The study setting also complies with the legal prescripts in the policy Guideline for Code of Conduct, Code and the Rules for Social Workers in South Africa that echo that a social worker must be supervised in the performance of social work by a registered social

worker (SASSP, 2007). All the participants were registered with the South African Council for Social Services Profession.

The data further shows that of the twelve participants, three had supervision experience of ten years or more, another three had between seven and eight years, while the remaining six had less than five years of supervision experience. All participants had gained their supervisory experience within the Department of Social Development in Johannesburg. These findings suggest that the participants were already employed within the same department prior to their promotion, indicating that supervisory roles are often filled internally. This supports the notion that supervision is viewed as a steppingstone for personal and professional development within the organisations.

Using the years the supervision experience of participants could be categorised into the following transitional stages of professional development: the transactional, exploratory, consolidation, and master stages as outlined by Tsui (2005), Wonnacott (2012), and Engelbrecht (2013). Three supervisors were at the **transactional stage**, with 2 to 3 years of supervision experience. At this stage, they were still developing their understanding of the supervision role, relying on peer guidance and support due to uncertainty about expectations. Four supervisors were in the **exploratory stage**, having 3 to 5 years of experience. This stage reflected an awareness and engagement with their supervisory roles as they began to define their professional identities. Another four supervisors were at the **consolidation stage**, with between 7 and 10 years of experience. At this level, supervisors demonstrated independence, confidence, and a well-defined sense of their professional roles and responsibilities, along with the ability to balance personal and professional demands (Bhuda, 2019). Finally, one participant could be classified in the **master stage**. Individuals at this stage have advanced level of expertise; they also assumed managerial responsibilities due to a vacancy in the manager's position, indicating a level of professional maturity and leadership. Evidently, most supervisors are within the first three stages of supervision development. This reflects positively on the Department of Social Development in Johannesburg, especially in light of previous reports highlighting burnout and stress as factors leading to supervisors abandoning their role (Social Development, 2006; Engelbrecht, 2012; Wynne, 2020).

4.3.5 Number of supervisees per supervisors

The Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa prescribes specific norms and standards in relation to supervisor-supervise ratio. According to the framework, a supervisor responsible for other key performance areas should oversee a maximum of six supervisees, whereas a supervisor without such responsibilities may manage up to ten supervisees. In cases that a supervisor is responsible for experienced supervisees who are on consultation, the ratio may increase to one supervisor for fifteen supervisees (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Nel (2019) submits that beyond overseeing supervisees, other responsibilities of a supervisor include orientation, planning, organising, allocation of work, and performance evaluation. These roles are not fulfilled randomly but are integrated functions aimed at achieving supervision outcomes. However, the findings of this study show that the supervisor-supervisee ratios were not uniformly distributed, indicating disparities in workload distribution across the department.

The current study established varied supervisor supervisee ratios, with five supervisors overseeing six social workers each, another five supervising between three and five supervisees, and two supervisors managing seven and eight supervisees respectively. These findings contrast with earlier research by Mokoka (2016) and Gumbi (2021), who reported that supervisors typically have a high number of supervisees. The current study suggests a shift towards improved and more manageable supervision ratios, indicating progress in line with compliance with the Supervision Framework for Social Work Professionals. The compliance with established norms and standards promotes regular, structured, and planned supervision sessions, which are essential for quality supervision and improved service delivery outcomes (Engelbrecht, 2019).

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Data analysis and interpretation involve organising complex data to extract meaningful information that directly addresses the research question, allowing the researcher to make sense of the data and draw relevant conclusions (Schurink et al., 2021). Through the analysis, themes and sub-themes emerged inductively. According to Creswell

(214), this process occurs concurrently with other phases of the research, emphasising its iterative nature. In this study, themes for discussion and analysis were derived from the interview schedule (see Appendix 6) into six themes. These themes were constructed from the responses of the participants culminating into 6 themes since some of the questions were clustered. From the themes, subthemes also emerged and are presented as follows:

Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theoretical frameworks utilised during supervision	
Training received	Training in supervision practice
	Training on the supervision framework
	Peer supervision as a form of training
	Continuous learning
Significance of Supervision Framework for Social work professionals in South Africa	Professional planning, structure and guidance.
	Managing human capital and workload.
	Frequency of supervision
Determination and consultation as a method of supervision	
Challenges with the implementation of the supervision framework	Contextualisation of supervision policy
	Poor monitoring of the supervision standards
	Lack of collaboration in the supervision
Suggestions on how the framework could be improved to enhance supervision	Training, monitoring and collaboration

4.4.1 Discussion of the themes and sub-themes

4.4.1.1 Theme 1: Theoretical framework utilised during supervision

There are thus different types of theoretical frameworks, which include approaches, perspectives, and models. Perspectives refer to how reality and human behaviour are viewed and interpreted from different disciplines (Payne, 2020), while an approach refers to ways in which understanding of perspectives are carried out and applied in a specific practice (Heslop & Meredith, 2021). A model is a technique or skill used to

implement an approach for a particular perspective (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried and Larsen, 2017). The three defined concepts above assist in a developing a coherent mode of assessment and interventions in Social Work. Therefore, it can be inferred that effective supervision is grounded in relevant social work perspectives, approaches and models, Fleming & Steen (2004) adds that these provide for an intervention framework and a roadmap for practitioners. The framework informs professional services that are tested for effectiveness. Therefore, supervisors play a crucial role in helping social workers learn how to operationalise these models in their interventions with the service users. Supervision practice too is informed by theoretical supervision practices that the supervisor must apply in supervision with the social workers (Walker, 2013).

In line with the principle that supervision should be theoretically grounded, supervisors were asked to share the theoretical frameworks they use in supervision. Their responses were as follows:

"Before I knew about the IDM (Integrated Developmental Model), I was using strength perspective and person-centred approach (PCA) because they made sense to me in working with a supervisee." (P-1)

"The theories that I'm using are based on what I have learned at school. They include models on leadership and the person in the environment, because of their interdependence…This is because I cannot supervise someone that I do not understand. I also use what I have learned about emotional intelligence during supervision." (P-2)

"Approaches that I use daily is the person-centred approach (PCA) and the systems approach because we are working in a team environment, and we need each other to accomplish tasks. For example, if one part of the system the supervisee, supervisor, and manager, is not functional then that disrupts the whole system, and psychodynamic. Evidence-based because every interaction is evidence-based to reflect the services that have been conducted." (P-4)

“I personally use PCA approach, evidence based, person in the environment approach, generalist approach, and the resilient approach when we discuss individual cases with the supervisee. The choice depends on the relevance of the approach at the time.” (P-5)

“I have not exposed myself since my appointment to acquire books or knowledge on supervision. I just apply theory that I learned from school, which is PCA because the main objective is to develop [the supervisee]. Mainly this is based on my familiarity with theory from school.” (P-6)

From the preceding voices, most participants indicated that they apply a variety of perspectives and models in their practice, notably highlighting the use of the Strengths Perspective, Evidence-Based Practice, Systems Theory, Person-Centred Approaches and others, which significantly shape their supervision methods and approaches. This suggests that participants integrate theoretical knowledge into their supervisory roles, aligning their methods with recognised supervision practices.

Contrary to the above though, Ncube (2019) noted in his study that there is apparently poor understanding of how to integrate the Developmental Approach into supervision. This is despite its centrality in South Africa’s service delivery framework as outlined in the White Paper for Social Development. A large number of the participants identified the strength-based approach which is one of the principles of the developmental approach. This confirms Engelbrecht (2010) and Nortje (2022) argument that the principles of the Developmental Approach are inherently embedded in social work supervision and models, because this approach emphasises placing social workers at the centre of their development, focusing on their strengths, capacities, and empowering them to become self-reliant and less dependent on supervisors. Therefore, this suggests that, although participants in the study did not explicitly articulate the Developmental Approach in practice of supervision, its principles are entrenched in the models and perspectives they identified, thereby challenging Ncube’s (2019) assertion that the Developmental Approach is sparsely applied in supervision.

Furthermore, Nortje (2022) confirms this through her research findings, which indicate a belief that the Developmental Approach is indeed applied though not dominant in supervision. The study also confirms a lack of explicit recognition of this approach by participants, indicating a need for a richer understanding of how various supervision models and perspectives are linked to the developmental approach. Moreover, it was understood that many of the approaches adopted by participants are influenced by the theories they were exposed to during their university education. This underscores the critical role of academic training in shaping the professional identity of social work supervisors, as their theoretical grounding was largely acquired through formal learning.

The extracts also suggest that supervisors used theoretical frameworks during case discussions with supervisees, a phenomenon which has been previously highlighted by Kadushin and Harkness (2002).

4.4.1.2 Theme: 2 Training as a supervisor

In this regard the participants were asked to describe training and professional development they received to prepare for the role as supervisor. This was because to ensure effective supervision, it is essential that social workers are supervised by competent and skilled supervisors. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of both the employer and the appointed supervisor to ensure that the supervisor receives relevant training to perform their supervisory role effectively (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). In Australia, supervisors are required to obtain specialised certification before they can be appointed to supervisory positions, highlighting the emphasis placed on professional competency through formal training (AASW, 2014). However, in South Africa, such certification is not currently a mandatory requirement, which may impact the standard and quality of supervision practices.

4.4.1.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1 Supervision training

One of the principles of the developmental approach, as espoused by Midgley (2005), is the rights-based approach, that recognises supervision as a professional right of social workers, therefore placing the supervisee at the centre of development. This is reinforced by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP,

2007:5.4.1[f]), which states that social workers must be supervised. Furthermore, the regulatory body mandates that supervisors must be competent (SACSSP, 2007:5.4.1[a]), and that employing organisations are responsible for ensuring adequate resources are available to support proper supervision (SACSSP, 2007:5.4.5[c]). This places an obligation on employing organisations to provide relevant training opportunities for supervisors to ensure the delivery of effective supervision. The Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa (SACSSP & DSD, 2012) reinforces this right, emphasising that supervisors must possess the necessary qualifications and experience, thereby holding employers accountable for upholding professional standards in supervision.

Competency in delivering effective supervision is strongly linked to the formal training that supervisors receive, through which they acquire the necessary skills and theoretical knowledge to carry out their roles effectively (NASW, 2012). This view is supported by various scholars who argue that fulfilling supervisory roles and responsibilities requires a sound foundation in theory (Bradley, et al., 2010; Hair, 2012; Shokane, 2016 and Ncube 2019). In alignment with this, the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) emphasises the critical importance of training for supervisors to ensure quality supervision. Therefore, the participants were asked to reflect and describe training and professional development they received to prepare for the role as the supervisor. Their responses confirmed the following experiences:

“I attended some workshops that capacitated me on supervision of students. So, from there I was able to use that knowledge that I gained from those workshops to be able to supervise the social workers in the department. When I was appointed, I never received formal supervision training from the Department.” (P-1)

“I have never received any form of training prior to the position, by the department. I had no idea how to supervise. I attended one seminar on supervision about supervision of students and the difference between student supervision and social work supervision is vast.”(P-2)

“I attended training every year while I was supervising students, where I was equipped on how to assist students with the integration of theory into practice. I also attended external training facilitated by Jo’burg Child Welfare. However, recently I have not attended any form of training, beside that I also have a mentor who is assisting me if I have any challenges with supervision.” P- 7

No formal training was received to prepare myself for my current position. However, I have been a supervisor for a long time and my experience have since given me skills and knowledge to be effective in the supervision role.”(P-8)

Based on participants’ responses, it emerged that some knowledge of supervision was acquired during their undergraduate social work training but that primarily for the purpose of supervising social workers. The training did not prepare them enough because of the difference between training and practice. In line with this, the Social Work Accreditation Advisory Board (SWAAB, 2017) recommends that supervisors should at least attend a preparatory course on supervision. However, the training received by participants outside of the employment organisation was found to be more relevant to student supervision rather than professional social work supervision. This echoes the persistent gap in formal training for supervisors in their professional roles which is raised in most recent research by Nortje, (2022) and Rambulana-Ndzula, (2022). The participants' accounts align with Engelbrecht’s (2010) case study, which confirmed that many supervisors lacked formal education in supervision, and Mokoka (2016), who argues that supervisors in the current research setting were not adequately capacitated to deliver effective supervision. Similar results in a study by Shokane (2016) highlight the lack of supervision skills and knowledge by supervisors who frequently rely on modelled experience from previous supervisors to provide this crucial role acknowledged by Tsui (2005). Ensuring that training is received is both the responsibility of the employer and the supervisors.

Over and above the presented findings, participants also highlighted specific areas they particularly viewed central to supervision knowledge, which is presented as subtheme 2.

4.4.1.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2 Training on the supervision framework

Norms and standards on supervision have been developed in various countries to define the scope, functions, and purpose of supervision, thereby promoting standardisation and consistency in practice (Engelbrecht, 2013; SWAAB, 2017). In South Africa, the Supervision Framework for Social Worker Profession was introduced to standardise, support, and strengthen supervision. These norms and standards are set to guide implementation of supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). This initiative was a response to longstanding concerns about the poor quality and lack of structured supervision within the profession (DSD, 2006). To explore the alignment aimed at improving supervision objectives, participants were asked to describe training received to familiarise themselves with the standards of supervision as outlined in the supervision framework. The following experiences were shared:

“Yes, I went on a 2 day training where the administrative part of the framework was explained and it focused on the forms rather than the how part of supervision.” (P-2)

“No training received to prepare me for the position.” (P-3)

“I attended the supervision framework training, which was for the period of three days, I refer back to the framework during supervision on what the framework expects.” (P-4)

"We were invited for training on the framework, but the facilitator changed the training agenda.” (P-6)

"Yes, I have received the training on the framework for 3 days. It assisted me with the administrative expectation of my role as the supervisors I also learned about the supervision report that I submit quarterly report.” (P-7)

“I remember attending a training. I’m not sure if it was on supervision or the supervision framework. We learned about the administrative forms, how to do the contract, and developmental plan.” (P-8)

A majority of the participants indicated that they were trained on supervision framework. Most of the participants attended 2-3 days training on the supervision

framework and the training was on the administration of the framework. This, therefore, confirms the notion that frameworks are sometimes developed as tools for monitoring by administrators, in most cases ignoring the intention of the framework and using it as a monitoring tool for performance and compliance (Engelbrecht, 2013). Consequently, relevance of the training should be maintained to encourage understanding and better implementation. Kadushin and Harkness (2014) also support and emphasise the importance of developing and training on supervision policies, highlighting that effective supervision is grounded in clearly defined frameworks.

Similarly, Stui (2005) reinforces this view by stating that such training should be both systematic and include cultural orientation. This approach could ensure that context of the organisation is embedded in policy to navigate diverse workplace dynamics, ultimately enhancing the quality and consistency of supervision practice. On the contrary, Participant 8 seems to be unclear whether the training was on supervision specifically and participant 3 reported categorically that they have not been trained on the framework, which raises a concern as to their supervision deliverables.

4.4.1.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3 Peer supervision as a form of training

According to Egan (2016) effective supervision practice requires the support of co-existing systems of professionals to help the profession resist the pressures of neo-liberal approaches. This is in spite of the reality that the supervisor is regarded as middle management (Bradley, 2010) often appointed without formal training or mentorship. This is despite the expectations outlined in the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa that requires supervisors to possess the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively carry out their responsibilities. In light of participants' earlier expressions of concern regarding the lack of training on supervisory roles, they were asked to elaborate on how they navigate their responsibilities in the absence of formal training and preparation for the supervision role. Participants were therefore requested to share their strategies and experiences in managing this critical function.

"Learning from others, through observation of the supervisors that I found in the field, at times I chose what will work for me when supervising. I also consult a lot with my

colleagues… some of them were my supervisors before my appointment therefore their experience does assist."(P-6)

"Well fortunately enough we do have a structure in the department, which is the supervisor's learning forum, whereby the needs of supervisors are assessed, and training are planned and organised …We have attended a couple of trainings that were provided by the forum and learn[t] good practices from peers." P-9)

"I engage mostly with my peers, for instance I am placed in a cluster and do not get to interact with my manager regularly but supervisors who came before me are there to assist when I am confronted with a situation that I am unable to address alone. As supervisor we also have a supervision forum where we share challenges that empowers me." (P-11)

"Our managers are always busy and unavailable in most cases. I have my colleagues as a support system, whom I can discuss challenges that I may be experiencing with my supervisee or difficult cases that needs further consultation before intervention." (P-12)

To address the lack of formal training and knowledge in supervision, participants reported relying heavily on peer supervision for orientation and support. Peer supervision is characterised as collegial support between employees, often where one has more experience than the other, allowing for the exchange of professional experiences, struggles, and strategies for resilience (Phillip, 2021). Tsui (2005) emphasises that collegial consultation forms a central component of workplace interaction, reinforcing the value of peer-based learning. Phillip (2021) further notes that peer support has been increasingly formalised in social services, highlighting its authenticity and reassuring nature. According to the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) peer supervision can be a facilitated, planned activity among colleagues of similar experience levels, allowing for mutual learning and knowledge sharing. This was affirmed by Participants 6, 11, and 12, who acknowledged learning from peers based on the skills and expertise their colleagues possessed where the other co-worker needed support. While this collegial learning helps bridge some training gaps, it should not be seen as a substitute for structured training mainly because even the mentor did not receive formal training.

4.4.1.2.4 Sub-theme 2.4 Continuous learning

Empowerment through learning is encouraged in the developmental approach thereby promoting self-resilience and overall well-being (Midgely, 2005). The learning principle is emphasised by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) underpinning the need for continuous learning by all professionals to pursue training opportunities for self-development. The SACSSP hence mandates supervisors to accumulate thirty CPD (Continuous Professional Development) points over a three-year period (SACSSP). This is envisaged to assure that professionals keep abreast with knowledge development to remain responsive to the dynamic of socio- economic, and political changes affecting service delivery. Participants were then asked to share how they ensure continual learning and development, and their responses are outlined below.

"I do attend training organised for supervisors. However, nominations are not enough for all of us. At times you do not get the opportunity because of limited space. We have supervisors learning and support forums at least. There you get to attend because the trainings are open to everyone. Since COVID, we have been receiving training mostly online, facilitated in conjunction with other departments and I take opportunity to attend those because the trainings are conducted online and there are no challenges for traveling."(P-6)

"Not specifically for supervision however, I have other personal developmental interests that I equip myself with as a professional social worker because I do not see myself as a supervisor in the near future. Therefore, I'm equipping myself in other careers of interest which are not social work related."(P-7)

"*There are training [sessions] that I would like to attend for myself; however, I have not proceeded because those training [sessions] have financial implications. From the department, there are trainings i.e. on management some are not relevant to my supervision role. However I try to attend those that seem to be relevant, the forum also has yearly planned trainings." (P-*8)

In alignment with the approach adopted in the study, participants expressed a personal obligation to pursue ongoing learning, particularly as many had not received formal

training for their supervisory roles. Out of the 12 participants, eight acknowledged the importance of self-development and reported actively engaging in training to enhance their supervisory capacity. However, three participants indicated that their self-development efforts were not aligned with their current roles, as they were motivated by intentions to exit the profession. One participant noted that the training opportunities available were irrelevant to their supervisory responsibilities, highlighting a gap between professional development offerings and actual supervisory needs. Generally, a need for learning was strongly shared by participants, with the employer facilitating information though not always on supervision.

4.4.1.3 Theme 3: Significance of the Supervision Framework for Social Worker Profession in South Africa

In the social work profession, supervision is regarded as the foundation for professional development and of effective practice (Engelbrecht, 2019). This is because social work supervision supports supervisees in developing their professional identity and gaining independence in their intervention processes. Botha (2002) asserts that to prevent supervision from being conducted in an unstructured and unprofessional manner it must be systematically planned and professionally executed by supervisors. In response to this need, the Supervision Framework for Social Workers professionals in South Africa was developed in 2012 aimed at promoting professional, consistent, and accountable supervision. Aligned with the goals of the Retention Strategy for Social Workers (2006), the supervision framework sought to professionalise supervision by establishing norms and standards (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) that needed to be operationalised nationally.

The study participants were thus asked to share insights based on their personal experience in what way the supervision framework has been meaningful for supervision. In a range of their responses, they shared that the framework was significant because it offers planned, professional and structured guidance; ensures managing of human capital and workload; and assures frequency of supervision.

4.4.1.3.1 Subtheme 3.1 Professional, planned, and structured guidance.

As alluded to above, the Supervision Framework for Social Work Professionals in South Africa was established to standardise supervision practices and ensure consistency across the profession. Watkin (2021) defines such frameworks as blueprints designed to guide and structure supervision, ultimately empowering social workers to make critical decisions when faced with complex situations and enhancing their professional autonomy. Therefore, supervision should have a purpose and be professionally structured with a clear plan for both supervisor and the social worker. Planning ensures consistency and professional accountability (Kadushin and Harkness, 2014; Engelbrecht, 2019). In this study, participants were asked to detail their experiences with the framework. The majority of 10 out of 12 participants described it as a guideline and tool that promotes professionalism and ensures structured supervision. The structured mechanism promoted consistency of supervision practice. Their responses highlighted several key insights as shared blow:

"For me the framework ensures that there is some supervision conducted with social workers. At least there is some professionalism, and most importantly [it] ensures that I (supervisor) am doing what I am supposed to do. It provides reference in terms of how to provide supervision specifically on the administrative of documents, the education aspect of it and the support part of supervision. The supervision framework gives some confidence and self-reflection on what I need to improve on as the supervisor after a session." (P-3)

"The framework has assisted me to have a baseline on where to start with supervising which I think was not the case with my supervisors then. They were expected to supervise; however, [they] were not provided with the guidance or an idea of where they start with supervision. Instead, they focus on locating files without any instruction." (P-4)

"It helps me to start somewhere but we are not supervising the same. We just use the forms, but we don't understand it the same way." (P-7)

“The framework introduces structured supervision by incorporating planned sessions, enabling supervisors to assess the supervisee's strengths, ensuring accountability through documentation, that we follow-up on plan even though it is not always the case because of other work challenges.” P-8)

“I manoeuvre to do supervision because the framework expects me to have a structured session with social workers and [it] guides me unlike during my time there was no structure.” (P-11)

Participants in the study demonstrated a shared understanding of the supervision framework, acknowledging its role in promoting structure and professionalism within the supervision process. Their responses support existing literature, which asserts that supervision frameworks help avoid disorganised practices and foster a coordinated approach to service delivery (Carpenter et al., 2012). Kadushin (2014) also emphasises that structured supervision enhances accountability for both supervisors and supervisees in line with the goals of supervision, ultimately benefiting the organisation and service users.

It can therefore be deduced from the findings that the participants viewed the supervision framework as a valuable tool that guides the supervision process and enhances their confidence in performing their roles. They expressed that the framework provides a blueprint to supervision subsequently improving their confidence in their role. Supervisors indicated that the supervision process encourages them to reflect on their own roles, gain new insights, and improve their supervisory skills. This aligns with Bernard and Goodyear’s (2014) view that reflection fosters ongoing learning and growth for supervisors.

Participants further confirmed Kadushin and Harkness’ (2014) assertion that supervision is mutually beneficial, offering learning and development not only for the supervisee but also for the supervisor. As suggested by the developmental approach, supervision enables supervisors to continuously adapt their skills and strategies to better manage both their supervisees and workload.

However, although the participants identified the supervision framework as an important tool for planning and structuring supervision sessions, and for addressing structural challenges such as reducing the number of supervisees allocated to each supervisor, as discussed in 4.4.1.3.2 Subtheme 3.2 below.

The framework appears to prioritise structural compliance over the developmental and clinical dimensions of supervision. In the main, the emphasis is placed on ensuring that supervision sessions occur in a structured and accountable manner, with these activities largely administrative in nature. Consequently, the framework seems to maintain a predominantly administrative orientation, as similarly argued by Engelbrecht (2013), Ramabulana-Ndzuta (2022), and Daughter (2023). Such an approach risks marginalising the educational and supportive functions of supervision, particularly critical aspects such as assessment, intervention planning, reflective practice, evaluation, and the development of critical thinking skills.

The neglect of these clinical dimensions may weaken supervisees' competence and confidence in managing complex cases effectively. In turn, inadequate professional support may expose supervisees to increased levels of stress and secondary trauma associated with social work practice, ultimately contributing to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Davys & Beddoe, 2020).

4.4.1.3.2 Subtheme 3.2 Managing human capital and workload

In view of the theme above, it is vital for supervisors to manage fewer social worker to ensure that practitioners receive adequate, regular and individualised attention further to that fewer ratio may minimise burnout for the supervisor considering that supervisors have other managerial roles (Kadushin and Harkness, 2014). The Supervision Framework for Social Work Profession in South Africa (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) stipulates the supervisor to social work ratio as 1:6 when the supervisor has additional managerial responsibilities, 1:10 when managerial duties are excluded, and 1:15 for supervisees under consultation. However, a study conducted by Mokoka (2016) highlights that supervision is often not conducted due to the excessive number of supervisees assigned to supervisors. In the current study, the supervisors reported overseeing an average of 6 supervisees. In light of the structured support highlighted,

the participants were asked whether they were able to conduct structured supervision sessions with their allocated number of supervisees, and they provided the following responses:

“I used to supervise 26 officials. With the employment of new supervisors, my unit was divided into 4 sections. Now I can have planned structured supervision with the 5 social workers that I have. Most of the time I must postpone supervision because I have to attend to meetings and other responsibilities.” (*P-1)*

“The number of supervisees is manageable with the 2 social auxiliary workers and 4 social workers. Also, the individual social worker case load that I have to monitor is reasonable. I am able to conduct monthly supervision and record the sessions. However, added to supervision role, most of my work involves management responsibilities.” (*P-2)*

“With the number of supervisees that I have it is manageable. I am able to have monthly supervision. However, supervision is also not about work. At times you have to supervise human personalities and characters.” (P-3)

“ The number of supervisees has been reduced. However, in my case, I work in an area with a lot of social ills mainly children who are in need of care and protection which require not only removing a child but a whole lot of services including working [with] families, community awareness to curb the scourge of neglect.”(P-10)

Participant feedback suggests that the Johannesburg Region has largely adhered to the supervision ratio as outlined in the supervision framework. This marks a notable improvement compared to previous findings by Mokoka (2016) in their study exploring the experiences of social work supervisees in relation to supervision within the Department of Social Development in the Johannesburg Region who found that unmanageable workloads in the same research setting often hindered effective supervision, because supervisors were overwhelmed by the number of social workers under their guidance. Similarly, Bhuda (2019) in her study on supportive supervision in Mpumalanga Province of South Africa, as well as Nortje (2022) in her study on the implementation of supervision using a Developmental approach in five South African

provinces, also reported that supervisors were overstretched, resulting in burnout and inadequate support for social workers. This development reflects a positive shift toward more sustainable and effective supervision practices that align with the framework's standards. Even with the identified improvement of the manageable human resources, supervisors were still occupied and overwhelmed with managerial responsibility as noted by participant 1 and 2 which is notable in other studies including Engelbrecht (2019) highlighting supervisors do not always have control of supervision due to other organisational issues.

4.4.1.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Frequency of supervision practice

The Supervision Framework for Social Workers recommends that newly qualified social workers should be supervised bi-weekly whereas the supervision timeline for a social worker with three years' experience is at the discretion of both the supervisor and the supervisee (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). In contrast, the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW, 1993) provides more specific guidance, recommending weekly supervision for newly appointed social workers and fortnightly sessions for more experienced practitioners. (Midgley 1995) argues that to foster deliberate human change that is empowering, it is therefore required for the supervisor to conduct regular sessions, organise and plan supervision that is goal oriented. As a result, the subtheme aims to explore frequency of supervision practices in the Johannesburg Metro Region. The participants were thus asked how often they conduct and manage supervising with the number of supervisees. The participants reported different experiences regarding supervision frequency in accordance with the areas of work:

The participants who worked in intake reported the following:

"I have contracted on planned monthly supervision with supervisees. However, sometimes I find myself or the social worker postponing the planned supervision due to other work commitments. My team knows that I'm always available on the phone if they need urgent support for any a case."(P-1)

“We have a lot of informal supervision, and we do not record most of this interaction and that session cannot wait for formal supervision because the supervisee needs my guidance immediately. (P-3)

In contrast, those who were responsible for monitoring of children in alternative placement and children presented responses that are apparently in conflict with the law.

“We normally have the scheduled supervision at least twice a month to discuss the cases. However, the plan does not usually materialise because of the hectic schedule and responsibilities of supervisors and social workers. We do have regular or daily consultation that needs attention and for me to provide support to the social worker is important.” (P-7)

“I’d rather have monthly supervision that is structured, but due to other things like last week we had an unplanned extended management meeting and now you have to move things around and not stick to the date.”(P-10)

“I have divided the social workers into two groups those that I see on monthly basis and those that I see quarterly because they have different needs and developmental calls. This includes monthly structured sessions, structured quarterly sessions and in between we also do frequent walking consultations.”(P-11)

Supervisors in the study reported varying frequent informal sessions of supervision depending on their areas of practice. For instance, those working at intake indicated that they conduct weekly to daily supervision, often unplanned supervision due to the traumatic and sensitive nature of the cases that social workers handle on a daily basis. In contrast, supervisors responsible for monitoring the placement of children in alternative care and those in conflict with the law reported having supervision on a monthly and quarterly basis.

This finding aligns with Wilkins’ (2021) research, which confirms that social workers in certain fields of practice require more frequent supervision to meet their emotional support needs and assistance with complex decision-making. Added to lack of

standardised and often unstructured frequencies of supervision, the study conducted by Khosa (2022) also confirms that unstructured supervision is a general occurrence in the child protection services because of critical decisions that the social worker must make. Therefore, ad hoc consultation with the supervisor appears to be a common practice, to ensure that supervisees receive immediate support in cases where they have to make difficult decisions. The open-door policy facilitates accessible supervision but may lead to a lack of documentation due to time constraints. Engelbrecht (2019) argues that this form of supervision cannot be defined as supervision. The absence of records during supervision hinders accountability and systematic tracking of professional development, potentially undermining the effectiveness and consistency of support provided. The practice of prompt supervision appears to have evolved into an informal custom that is insufficiently documented within existing supervision records. This lack of systematic recording undermines the objectives of progressive developmental assessment, as it limits the ability to monitor practitioners' growth, identify learning needs, and ensure continuity in professional support. Consequently, supervision risks becoming a procedural exercise rather than a reflective and developmental process aimed at enhancing professional competence. Furthermore, although supervisors are expected to fulfil their professional responsibilities in guiding and developing practitioners, many may themselves require capacitation and ongoing professional development to perform this role effectively.

4.4.1.4 Theme 4: Determination consultation as a method of supervision

The researcher asked participants to outline the number of supervisees under their supervision and indicate how they assess whether the supervisee is empowered to function independently. It was necessary to understand how consultative supervision is determined in practice because one of the goals of supervision is to develop independent practitioners (Kadushin and Harkness (2002). Learning developmental stages determine the purpose, form, and structure of the supervisory process (Jacques, 2019). Consequently, professional autonomy and identity is achieved through educational inputs of the supervision process. Participants were asked in this regard how they determined if the official should transfer regular supervision to consultative phase of supervision and they had this to say:

“Some of the social workers have years of experience and they believe that they do not need supervision while they actually do because of their response to cases.” (P-4)

“Most of my supervision are on consultation wherein the supervisee requires immediate support from me and I cannot postpone or ask them to see me at a different time because supervision has to be planned and structured. I have to respond instantly to their need and most of these sessions are not recorded resultantly because the session was not recorded it may seem as though supervision was not conducted.” (P-6)

“ I have two supervisees on consultation, and I only have supervision with them when the supervisee request advice. This we regard as consultation. Social workers always need advice and support from the supervisor.”(P-9)

“Most of my supervisees are above 10 years of work experience and therefore do not need structured supervision. We only discuss cases that they consult me on which is not often. We mostly meet when I have to appraise their performance for evaluation purposes.” (P-11)

Supervisors' assumptions about consultation are interpreted differently. For instance, participant 6 appeared uncertain about the supervision framework guidelines on consultation as a supervision activity. Engelbrecht (2013) confirms that varying understandings and interpretations of consultation often lead to role confusion, which has significant implications for practice. Participant 6 thus confirms the findings of a study conducted by Bhuda in (2019) that social workers were not oriented on the expectations on the framework therefore creating the misunderstanding in practice. On the other hand, participant 11 based the decision to conduct consultation on years of experience rather than on the competency of the social worker, despite the recommendations of the supervision framework DSD & SACSSP (2012) and Botha (2002) emphasising that independence and autonomy should be derived from knowledge and skills wherein the supervisee is primarily responsible for continual professional development and not the years of experience (Tsui, 2021) while the

supervisor remains responsible for overseeing the supervisee work in relation to the South African Ethical Code of Conduct for Social Work (SACSSP, 2007).

Differing views emerged regarding the balance between efficiency and competency in consultation methods of supervision. Research findings indicate that some participants equate consultation with unplanned supervision, whereas consultation is intended to be an advanced form of supervision for experienced social workers. This disparity underscores the need for clearer guidance for supervisors, especially when managing experienced practitioners. The developmental approach provides models for assessing growth at various stages from beginner, intermediate, and advanced with advanced practitioners characterised by self-awareness, independence, and a drive for continuous learning (Stoltenberg, 2014). However, participants seem to struggle in accurately evaluating these competencies, highlighting gaps in both their assessment methods and overall supervision practices. To foster progressive development that ultimately leads to consultative supervision, frequent and consistent supervision by the supervisor is essential. Based on the confusion expressed by the participants above it was important to understand the challenges experienced in supervision practice which are addressed as theme five below.

4.4.1.5 Theme 5: Challenges with the implementation of the supervision framework

Various authors, including Engelbrecht (2012), Donnarie (2012), Shokane (2016), Mokoka (2016), and Khosa (2022), have consistently identified ongoing issues and challenges within the practice of supervision in social work. These challenges include poor working conditions, structural limitations, inadequate training of supervisors, and a lack of resources. In response, the Retention Strategy for Social Workers, adopted in 2006, positioned supervision as central to improving service delivery (DSD, 2006). Although the Supervision Framework was introduced in 2012 to standardise and enhance supervisory practices, its implementation and the specific challenges faced in the Johannesburg region specifically remain undocumented. The participants were thus asked about their challenges in implementing the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa. Some of the challenges shared by the participants are contextualising standards emanating from the framework, monitoring

of supervision and lack of collaboration among stakeholders of the supervision process.

4.4.1.5.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Contextualisation of supervision policy

When asked about the challenges they faced with the supervision framework, the participants reported that they find it difficult to contextualise the supervision norms and standards. In South Africa, following the development of a policy, norms and standards are also developed to operationalise the new policy (DSD, 2017). Norms and standards, according to NASW (2013) and DSD & SASSP(2012), refer to setting practical and clear requirements for practice or operationalisation of a policy by setting a framework that promotes uniformity. Further to this capacity, there is need to ensure understanding and compliance. The participants thus shared the following:

“Even though the purpose of the framework is to guide and standardise supervision, the framework is still open to individual interpretation and implementation which takes it further away from standardization. Further to that competing responsibilities makes it challenging to complete tools that we are expected to do as evidence that supervision took place." (P-1)

“The framework is not aligned to [the] South African context. The ratio does not apply in reality because of the weight or complexity in one case. I also have a problem with the contract in the framework. It should give me and the official [space] to add because there are some things that needs to be individualised."(P-2)

"The framework is concerned with statistical evidence and compliance. However, there is no verification if indeed supervision was done and its effectiveness."(P-4)

“Ratios in the norms and standards are still not practical to implement the supervision framework efficiently. Also, supervision is not only about the statutory cases. We still need to provide APP programmes. Currently the lesser ratio is based on, if as the supervisor, you travel then you may have lesser supervisees. Six is still a lot and case load of 60 is still unmanageable” (P-5)

“I understand my role of supervision but I’m dealing with a whole lot of complex staff. In supervision, we deal with a lot to a point where we really do not focus or are not even aware what should we be addressing in supervision. The how part of supervision is not addressed in the framework.” (P-12)

One of the concerns raised is the organisational relevance of the norms and standards. Ungura and Sandu (2017) argue that it is essential for supervision to be guided by clearly negotiated frameworks. Given the recurring challenges highlighted by previous research studies regarding challenges in supervision (Shokane 2016, Gumbi 2021, Khosa, 2022), this study aimed to explore the specific difficulties experienced by participants in implementing of the Supervision Framework. Khosa (2022) argues that framework should be based on the organisation settings, culture and needs. This therefore means that the framework should not be the main document used for supervision. However, as required by the Supervision Framework for Social Work Profession in South Africa, each organisation should develop organisation-specific supervision policy (DSD & SCSSP, 2012).

According to the sentiments shared by the participants there is a disconnect and contradiction between the policy and practical application. They all noted the contradiction that the framework aims to standardise supervision while in practice the very framework is open to subjective interpretation. Further, the framework sets standards in line with ratio of supervisor to supervisee, reducing flexibility as these standards do not consider case complexity and geographical context. Researchers (Tsui 2005, O Donoghue, 2016, Shokane , 2016**)** have also found that the context in the development of supervision policy should be considered rather than developing a blanket approach policy which comes with the guidelines. This issue is further corroborated by findings that underscore the importance of adapting supervision policies to fit organisational contexts (Silence, 2017). This gap highlights the need for a more context-sensitive and adaptable approach to supervision policy implementation by developing organisational police aligned to the framework.

Engelbrecht (2013) argues that supervision frameworks often serve as bureaucratic tools intended to produce evidence that supervision is taking place, rather than addressing the actual challenges experienced in practice. The author continues to

argue that standardisation of supervision nationally should not be equated to effectiveness while Bongo & McKnight (2005) maintain that supervision policy is the responsibility of the organisation linked to its mandate. This view aligns with the concerns raised by participants in the study, who felt that the framework is not aligned to their context. The participants further contended that management tends to focus on the quantity of supervision sessions rather than the quality and meaningfulness of the process through evidence reporting. As a result, critical issues such as lack of training, high caseloads, and contextual limitations are often overlooked, despite their impact on the effectiveness of supervision. Monitoring of supervision was highlighted as another difficulty.

4.4.1.5.2 Sub-theme 5.2: Monitoring of supervision process

The Department of Social Development's approach to supervision is largely shaped by a bureaucratic model that aligns with broader public management policies (Engelbrecht, 2013). Unguru and Sandu (2017) assert that supervision practice should be monitored to ensure that it is in line with standards of practice. This is evident in the standardisation of supervision practices that emphasise evidence-based monitoring and accountability (Spolander et al., 2014). The model reflects a structured and data-driven system aimed at tracking supervisory activities. However, scholars such as Kadushin and Harkness (2002), O'Donoghue (2015), and Engelbrecht (2019) argue that effective supervision should go beyond managerial oversight to include educational and supportive functions that foster professional development.

Despite the above perspectives, many supervisory frameworks continue to prioritise administrative tasks, often overlooking the developmental and supportive aspects (Engelbrecht, 2013). This managerial emphasis is not unique to South Africa but is reflected internationally in countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Supervision pioneers like Botha (2000) and Kadushin and Harkness (2014) acknowledge the value of professional monitoring and evaluation; however, they caution against reducing supervision to compliance checks alone. The proliferation of standardised frameworks with measurable indicators has led to a growing focus on proving that supervision occurs, sometimes at the expense of its core functions. In light of these developments, supervisors were asked to share their perspectives on

the monitoring of the supervision within the framework, and they offered the following insights:

“Statistics are important. We will relax because no one will even check if I have provided the correct statistics while I did not actually conduct supervision. At times stats is for compliance, there is not verification if indeed supervision was done. Most important the actual supervision report focus[es] on signed contracts not on the content of supervision. When we have audit, we make sure that we update the supervision notes that we have neglected, even if it’s not audit but submission with the stats as evidence.” (P-5)

“Gauteng has improved in terms [of] the appointment of supervisor and address issues of case load management but it’s the matter of enhancement because we are not on the same page in terms of supervision. Effective monitoring will ensure that the goals of supervision are addressed.” (*P-8)*

“The workplace environment does not always provide the space to conduct supervision but rather a space to report because you have to give evidence of supervision. We just do [it] for adherence at times.” (P-11)

“For me monitoring is failing supervision because if monitoring and evaluation was done it will ensure improvement. In my view, submission of the quarterly supervision framework should be analysed. We also need regular audits.”(P-12)

The participants expressed notable concern regarding the quality of supervision, highlighting that while monitoring is essential, its current implementation often falls short in promoting meaningful oversight. Their views suggest that improving the quality of monitoring could enhance both accountability and consistency, ultimately leading to better supervision outcomes. However, a key critique from Engelbrecht’s (2013) study argues that monitoring practices tend to focus on compliance and reporting referring it as "ticking of the boxes." Egan (2015) supports that the culture of audit and compliance in social services shifts focus from supervision and endorses administration control rather than supporting developmental aspects. This indicates a pressing need to move beyond procedural compliance to ensure that monitoring

serves a more substantive, developmental purpose such that the goals of supervision are reached by integration of all the functions. Monitoring should therefore mean that all stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities in supervision which is another subtheme identified as an impediment to supervision as discussed below.

4.4.1.5.3 Sub-theme 5.3: Lack of collaboration in the supervision

Effective service delivery is facilitated through social worker supervision, which serves as a crucial professional tool (Mabaleka, 2018). As such, supervision should be a collaborative process between the supervisor and the supervisee, as mandated by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (2007). Collaboration in this context involves open communication, respectful dialogue, and the pursuit of shared goals through constructive debate and mutual understanding as pronounced by Kadushin and Harkness, (2014). For this partnership to thrive, supervision must occur in a respectful and conducive environment where both parties are well-informed about, and aligned with, the policies that govern their practice. Such alignment ensures not only compliance but also promotes professional growth and accountability. When participants were asked to reflect on the nature of collaboration in their supervisory relationships, they provided insights based on their lived experiences as follows:

“Supervision is way too personal than developmental. Support is vital however, issues of trust and confidence in supervision, as supervisors we give hope to our supervisee, because we are working with individuals who have diverse issues. It’s also about personality and a matter of trust and issues of confidentiality and not interested in opening up about their personal lives even though their personal issues affect performance.” (P-2)

“Supervision is a shared responsibility because it is about service delivery. Therefore, some social workers do take the same responsibility for instance even if I request agenda for supervision session, they do not contribute towards it and it ends up being your agenda.” (P-3)

“Not all the role players understand their role in supervision; in some cases, it's as if they (social workers) understand but they are not interested in supervision. For instance, we have contracted on our different roles and responsibilities. But plans for

supervision are not adhered to according to the agenda. If there was an expectation to bring the case register and prepare 5 days prior to the planned supervision session, you find that those things do not materialise. It's as though when they come for supervision to be criticised; in actual fact, it's not about judgment but to address what was not done." (*P-6)*

"There is also a fine line between support and focusing on personal issues. Supervisees believe we (supervisors) meddle in personal issues that may impact on work performance."(P-8)

"During supervision sessions we focus more on the case, reflecting on the social workers' intervention and further planning. However, the importance of supervision is not understood, supervisee will postpone supervision more than once." (P-10).

There is lack of understanding the importance of supervision by social workers. At times, it's as though when they come for supervision, it's for criticism. In actual fact, it's not about judgment; however, it's also to address what was not done but also to plan on how we move forward." (P-12)

Mabaleka (2018) referred to social workers' perceptions about supervision as follows: "supervision is about authority and power, it is merely about policing and trying to find fault, criticising the work in a hostile manner." The latter views were confirmed by the supervisors' experiences regarding poor relations in supervision. The shared views of the participants contradict findings by Mokoka (2016), Silence (2017) and Bhuda (2019) that supervisees embrace supervision and prefer regular supervision.

There was a view that some practitioners resist supervision, as noted by one participant. This resistance may stem from the perception that supervisors are positioned in a middle management role (Engelbrecht, 2019), primarily focused on overseeing performance through case management for accountability purposes, rather than fostering a developmental relationship. Sibanda (2015) highlights that the current supervision environment often fails to provide the necessary sense of security for supervisees, which is essential for open communication and professional growth. In line with this, Bissel (2012) argues that supervisors should cultivate a conducive,

empathetic, and non-threatening environment to enable productive and open supervisory interactions.

According to Sibanda (2015), the current supervision environment often fails to provide supervisees with a sense of security, which is essential for fostering open communication, trust, and professional growth. This absence of psychological safety undermines the ideal developmental purpose of supervision. Sithole (2019) reinforces this concern by asserting that the creation of a conducive supervision environment is not the sole responsibility of the supervisor, but a collaborative and reciprocal process requiring active engagement from both partners. This mutual involvement is crucial in building a supportive and constructive supervisory relationship. To enhance this dynamic, supervision should be grounded in the principles of the developmental approach and the strengths perspective, recognizing and utilising the supervisee's roles, strengths, capacities, and resilience as valuable assets for learning, growth, and meaningful participation in the supervisory process.

4.4.1.6 Theme 6: Suggestions on how the framework could be improved to enhance supervision

The difficulties experienced in supervision were identified above; to enhance and mitigate these challenges participants were therefore asked for suggestions to improve supervision. Their responses indicate that the challenges they encountered also informed theme five above. Consequently, the proposed strategies to address these difficulties are discussed below.

4.4.1.6.1Sub-theme: 6.1 Training, collaboration and monitoring

It has been alluded in 4.2.4 and confirmed through research that supervisors are appointed based on years of experience while others are appointed because of their excellent performance as social workers (Mokoka, 2016) and Engelbrecht (2019). Therefore, supervision skills, knowledge and qualification are not a requirement for appointment to this role in practice. To mitigate for the lack of qualification in supervision skills and knowledge, guidelines are developed by professional bodies to address this gap through training. Supervision training must capacitate and provide guidelines on how this important task can be undertaken (Engelbrecht, 2013).

Therefore, participants were asked how the framework could be improved to enhance supervision. The following were the key responses:

"National DSD office should conduct refresher training for all supervisors. I attended the training a while ago and things changed. I'm not sure if I am still doing what the framework is expecting of me". (P-5).

"I guess everyone involved, including managers, supervisors and officials, should be trained for all of us to have the same understanding about the purpose, what is expected and the benefits of the framework. Currently it seems to be only the supervisor who ensures that supervision does take place and our managers are also not familiar with what needs to be done or happen in supervision". (P-8).

"Advocating for the framework and further involving supervisees to ensure that it is aligned with their needs and expectation. Social workers with more years of experiences do not embrace supervision because they view it as undermining their experience and intelligence; therefore training will assist in getting a buy in from them". (P-12)

"Developing self-monitoring tools for the supervisors and managers, currently as a supervisor you submit quarterly report on the activities that were undertaken in relation to supervision. Further to the above consequence management has to be done because we are supposed to provide supervision however not everyone complied with the framework based on the expectation". (P-8)

"Regular monitoring in line with the contract to assess if we are meeting the outcomes." (P-4)

"Supervisee feedback is vital it assist with assessing the effectiveness of the framework". (P-1)

Limited time for supervision can be addressed by prioritising cases and supervision frequency based on the on the case risk level and the needs of the social worker". (P-6)

I think regular group supervision, unlike individual supervision, which is time consuming, considering that most of our time is spent doing managerial roles, to an extent that I don't get to do my supervision administration". (P-3)

From the preceding discussions and responses of the participants, several suggestions emerged regarding the improvement of the supervision framework, with a particular emphasis on the training of all stakeholders, including managers, supervisors, and social workers. Bennett and Deal (2012) highlight that supervision skills are often acquired informally through role modelling and observation of previous supervisors. In contrast, frameworks such as the NASW (2013) provide a structured approach in the framework on supervision, outlining steps from contracting to termination. However, procedural knowledge alone may not sufficiently prepare supervisors for the complexities and dynamic nature of their roles. Therefore, comprehensive training is necessary to bridge the gap between formal guidelines and practical application, ensuring that all stakeholders understand the collaborative and mutually accountable nature of supervision.

The active involvement of supervisees was also emphasised as a critical element of effective supervision. Kadushin and Harkness (2014) assert that active participation fosters accountability, ownership, and consistency, reinforcing ethical practice and improving service delivery to end-users. By promoting engagement and minimising resistance, supervisees contribute meaningfully. Consequently, formal training on the framework should run parallel to supervision itself, equipping all the relevant stakeholders with a clear understanding of the framework's purpose, expectations, and practical application. This dual approach ensures that supervision is executed effectively, fostering professional growth, and enhancing the quality of services provided.

The participants also suggested strengthening evaluation and monitoring systems. Monitoring and evaluation is essential for determining whether an intervention is achieving its intended goals (Basa, 2021). In addition, monitoring can identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, thereby facilitating timely remedial actions. Ramabulani-Ndzuta (2022) emphasises that the absence of consequences for not implementing supervision undermines accountability; thus, committed

monitoring and evaluation can ensure that all stakeholders fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Moreover, insights from monitoring can guide the revision and improvement of the norms and standards within the supervision framework.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study successfully achieved its aim of exploring the experiences of supervisors in implementing the supervision framework for social workers in South Africa in the Johannesburg region. The methodology applied in data collection yielded results that align with findings from other studies, demonstrating consistency and relevance within the field of social work supervision. The research highlighted both strengths and weaknesses in the existing supervision practices, uncovering unique aspects within the South African context that differ from findings in similar studies. Consequently, this study contributed new insights into the phenomenon of supervision, enhancing understanding and potentially informing future practices.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter in the research project is to develop a consolidated portrayal of themes derived from the experiences of the participants and presenting these themes in a narrative format. Taylor et.al, (2016) assert that this format of reporting research generates reflective accounts based on the interviews conducted with the participants.

5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

A summary of each chapter allows this study to reflect on the research process and how the research goals were achieved. The research questions are restated as follows:

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter that provides a comprehensive overview of social work supervision practices. The chapter initiates the study, proffers the rationale for the study, and objectives of the study. The limitations of the study are also highlighted in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 reviews recent and pertinent literature on the supervision phenomenon with reference to its development and global practices. The following topics are covered: historical development of social work supervision in South Africa, supervision policies, conceptualisation of social work supervision, functions of supervision, types of supervision, supervision processes, roles and responsibility of supervisor, supervision challenges and contemporary issues in social work supervision. The chapter culminates in the adoption of the developmental approach as the overarching theoretical framework for understanding how supervision should be applied, given its alignment with national policy goals and its emphasis on building the capacity of social service practitioners to deliver effective, contextually responsive services to vulnerable populations (Patel, 2015).

Chapter 3 provides a justification for the qualitative research method that was useful to gaining in-depth understanding of participants' experiences in social work supervision. This approach, according to Cresswell (2014), ensures full exploration of the participants by contextualising their reality. Topics covered and discussed in the chapter are: the research paradigm, approach and design, population, sample and sampling technique, - recruitment and data collection, data analysis method,data interpretation, ethical considerations and rigour and trustworthiness in research.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data collected from the participants and the discussion centered around the following six themes: theoretical frameworks utilised during supervision, training received, significance of Supervision Framework for Social Work Professionals in South Africa, determination consultation as a method of supervision, challenges with the implementation of the supervision framework, and terminates by proffering suggestions on how the framework could be improved to enhance supervision practices in Gauteng, South Africa.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the study, outlining key findings derived from the data, the conclusions drawn, and the recommendations proposed based on these insights.

5.3 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was designed to:

Explore the experiences of supervisors on the implementation of the Supervision Framework for social workers in South Africa in the Johannesburg region.

The following were the set objectives of the study, crafted to:

- Explore and describe the experiences of supervisors in implementing the Supervision framework for social workers in South Africa.
- Draw conclusions about the supervisor's experiences regarding the implementing the supervision framework.

- Proffer recommendations on the implementation of the Supervision framework for social workers to policy makers and for future research.

The aim of this study was achieved because the experiences of social work supervision on their implementation of the supervision framework were fully explored. The above-mentioned objectives assisted in ensuring the study goals were reached. The following activities were undertaken to achieve the goals:

The experiences of social work supervisors or participants were explored by conducting semi-structured interviews. The data were then transcribed, analysed, and interpreted using qualitative data analysis methods as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2013). Additionally, literature review was conducted to contextualise and validate the findings from the supervisors. Finally, conclusions were drawn, and recommendations made based on the supervisors' experiences, perceptions and feelings regarding the challenges and benefits of the supervision framework in the Johannesburg metro region of South Africa.

5.3.1 Research question

The researcher strove to answer the following research question:

What are the experiences of supervisors on the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work in South Africa in the Johannesburg region?

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The study, amongst others, identified varied experiences of and with the supervision framework amongst participants. While there were participants who reported to have been trained on the supervision framework, there were other participants who had not received training on the supervision framework at the time of data collection for this study.

Also, the participants shared positive reflections on the supervision framework in that the framework does encourage formal and structured supervision as adapted on the germane basis of the individual supervisor's orientation academically and

experientially. The following discussion presents the conclusions drawn from the key themes generated in Chapter 4 from the data analysis.

5.4.1 Conclusions on theoretical frameworks utilised during supervision

Theory in the practice of supervision is seminal because it guides and provides a framework on how to assess and recommend interventions in supervision processes. For the reason that one of the supervisors' functions is to educate the social worker on how to integrate theory in practice, consequently it is necessary for the supervisor to be conversant with theory. Several studies confirm that it is obligatory for a supervisor to be au fait with different approaches, perspectives and models of practice such that they could assist the supervisee in their professional grooming for social work practice.

The study confirmed that supervisors are cognisant of, and actively embed, various theories within the supervision process. This suggests that participants integrate theoretical knowledge into their supervisory roles, aligning with the broader goal of supervision, which is to empower supervisees with recognised social work intervention methods as applied in practice. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the theoretical approaches used during supervision are strongly influenced by the supervisors' own academic exposure. This reliance on personal academic backgrounds not only shapes their supervisory practices but also contributes to the professional identity formation of the supervisees they teach.

5.4.2 Conclusions based on the training received

Knowledge development through training is imperative for a supervisor to undertake their role for different supervisory functions. Supervision training is emphasised by professional bodies, including the South African Council for Social Service Profession. Empirical studies corroborate that most supervisors undertake the role of supervision for career development. Supervision training is also not a requirement for appointment as a supervisor; rather years of experience and performance in interviews determine competency and suitability for this appointment. The study established that most supervisors were unprepared for their transition into supervisory roles, with many expressing low levels of confidence and limited perceived competence regarding their

supervision knowledge and skills. This lack of preparedness highlights the need for more structured support and training.

Participants generally acknowledged the value of continued professional development and self-driven learning, reflecting a positive shift towards self-empowerment and professional growth. This supports existing literature, such as Sewell (2018), which highlights the importance of ongoing self-directed learning in supervision. However, a concerning insight also surfaced as some supervisors pursued training primarily as a means to exit their current roles or to advance personal career ambitions. This motivation could hinder the quality of supervision provided and contribute to higher staff turnover, as it suggests that the developmental needs of supervisees may be sidelined in favour of personal advancement. The findings of the study confirm that prior experience in a supervisory role or as a social worker does not necessarily lead to effective and skilful supervision. Instead, ongoing training was identified as a critical factor in developing supervisory competence.

5.4.3 Significance of Supervision Framework for Social work professionals in South Africa

One positive highlight in the study was that most of the supervisors were trained on the supervision framework. It emerged in the study that the national guidelines on supervision served as a valuable reference point for many supervisors by assisting them in structuring and planning the supervision sessions from the development of supervision contracts to the actual facilitation of sessions. Supervisors viewed the framework positively, noting that it provided a baseline for their practice and contributed to improvements in both the planning and regularity of dynamic supervision sessions.

The participants reflected that during their tenure as social work practitioners, supervision was often unstructured or, in some instances, entirely absent. The introduction of the Supervision Framework marked a crucial shift by facilitating the formal implementation of supervision practices. However, despite the availability of such guidelines, the regularity and consistency of planned supervision sessions

remained a challenge due to competing responsibilities faced by both supervisors and supervisees.

5.4.3.1 Conclusion on the policy guideline as an assistive tool that promotes and offers structured in supervision

It emerged from the study that the national policy guidelines on supervision served as a valuable blueprint for many supervisors because the framework assists them to structure and plan supervision sessions beginning with the development of supervision contracts to the actual facilitation of sessions. Supervisors viewed the framework positively, noting that it provided a baseline for practice and contributed to improvements in both the planning and regular of supervision sessions. The participants reflected that during their tenure as social work practitioners, supervision was often unstructured or, in some instances, entirely absent. The introduction of the Supervision Framework marked a pivotal shift by facilitating the formal implementation of supervision practices. However, despite the availability of guidelines, the regularity and consistency of planned supervision sessions remained a challenge due to competing responsibilities faced by both supervisors and supervisees. It was noted that supervisors had supervision contracts and planned supervision schedules however, conflicting work responsibilities disrupted scheduled meetings, resulting in unplanned and undocumented supervision sessions.

5.4.3.2 Conclusion on workload management

The findings of the study verify that while the Supervision Framework for Social Workers sets a supervisor to practitioner ratio that is perceived manageable by some participants, the ratio of one supervisor to six social workers this standard is not entirely effective in practice. Although the research setting complied with the set ratio, some participants consistently reported that the ratio remains unmanageable when considering the broader context of supervisors' responsibilities.

Supervisors are not only expected to oversee supervisees but also continue to carry human resource management issues and managerial tasks. These overlapping and often burdensome roles place significant strain on supervisors, ultimately compromising their ability to provide regular, structured, and high-quality supervision

as intended by the framework. This indicates a gap between policy and practice, suggesting that simply meeting the numerical ratio does not ensure effective supervision.

5.4.4 Determination consultation as a method of supervision

Although most participants had received training on the Supervision Framework for Social Workers, varying interpretations of the framework were evident, particularly in how the norms and standards are implemented. For example, the consultative activity of supervision was often misunderstood and perceived as unstructured and ad hoc supervision practice, whereby the consultation activity is undertaken by considering the supervisee's years of experience rather than the social worker's developed knowledge and skills which are the outcomes of supervision. Consultative activity in supervision must be determined by the outcomes achieved from the initial supervision contract and appraisal because years of experience do not measure knowledge and skill.

5.4.5 Challenges with the implementation of the supervision framework

5.4.5.1 Contextualisation supervision policy

Given the findings, it is evident that while the Supervision Framework clearly stipulates that each organisation must develop its own supervision policy aligned with the framework's norms and standards (DSD SACSSP, 2012), this requirement is not currently fully implemented in practice. The research findings depict that, while participants acknowledged the positive impact of the supervision framework in promoting structured supervision, practical challenges persist that hinder its comprehensive implementation. Challenges highlighted include that the guidelines is operationalised as an organisational supervision policy and no organisational supervision policy exists. These challenges suggest that Johannesburg region as a case study has yet to develop a tailored, context-specific supervision policy.

This gap highlights a lack of organisational alignment with the framework's guidance, because policies do not adequately consider the unique environments of each organisation. This issue is further corroborated by findings that underscore the

importance of adapting supervision policies to fit organisational contexts (Silence 2017), suggesting a critical need for more customised policy development. Further, this exercise should be a collaborative responsibility by social worker, supervisors and managers.

5.4.5.2 Poor monitoring

There was a notable concern regarding the quality of supervision according to the participants. This is attributed to poor monitoring of the supervision process. The participants highlighted that their supervision practices were not monitored in any systematic way. The participants were of the view that improving the quality of monitoring of supervision practice could enhance accountability and consistency, ultimately leading to better overall supervision outcomes.

5.4.5.3 Lack of collaboration in supervision

Participants in this study expressed mixed reactions and perceptions regarding the openness of social workers to supervision. While some supervisors observed a lack of enthusiasm for structured and planned supervision, often attributing this to limited understanding of the supervision framework and a perception that supervision is about enforcement and compliance over professional development including managers, in the same context other participants noted encouraging signs of engagement. In particular, some supervisees demonstrated a proactive and positive attitude by initiating discussions, setting agendas, and reminding supervisors of upcoming sessions. This reflects a shift amongst some social workers towards a more collaborative and participatory supervision process. These contrasting experiences highlight the need to enhance awareness and understanding of the purpose and value of supervision, emphasising its developmental intent for all involved, including the social worker and the manager. Also, this could ensure that all parties understand the importance supervision and contribute to more consistent and effective engagement.

5.4.6 Suggestions on how the framework could be improved to enhance supervision

To improve supervision, challenges identified in section 5.4.5, strategies and measures to improve supervision were suggested. As highlighted previously in perceptive empirical studies, supervision training and continued professional development for professionals specifically supervisors should be prioritised. Target specific training mainly focuses on technical skills in social work supervision, refresher training on the framework to ensure common understanding among the supervisors to facilitate the development of unit specific supervision policy. Added to this, more training to upskill supervisors should respond to the volatile socio-economic environment that requires skilled and well-informed supervisor's responses to challenges.

The participants indicated that enhancing the quality of monitoring within supervision practices has the potential to improve effectiveness, accountability, compliance, and consistency, thereby contributing to more positive supervision outcomes and improved service delivery. Furthermore, systematic monitoring is essential for identifying supervisors' developmental needs and addressing operational challenges that could hinder the effective implementation of supervision processes and the professional growth of social workers. In addition, monitoring mechanisms were seen as instrumental in identifying both strengths and areas requiring improvement, thus facilitating the continuous enhancement of supervision practices.

5.5 RECOMMNDATIONS

Based on the research findings into the experiences of the social worker supervisors on the implementation of the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa, the following recommendations reflecting their interconnected nature can be made:

- It is recommended that in-service training on supervision be conducted every second year for all supervisors. The training should be a targeted capacity-building, specifically on supervision approaches and models to equip supervisors with the necessary knowledge and skills for effective supervision.

These training programmes should focus on supervision technical skills extending and advancing educational and supportive functions of supervision to achieve the comprehensive goals of supervision. This could assure that supervision is not only focused on meeting targets and evidence for purposes of administrative purposes, which remains the main role of supervision in current practices.

- The study identified poor collaboration and interpretation amongst the participants and parties involved in the supervision relationship, highlighting a critical gap in mutual understanding and engagement. It is therefore recommended that, in addition to the capacitation of supervisors, structured training and orientation be provided to supervisees and managers. This training should focus on building their understanding of the purpose, structure, and benefits of supervision in social work practice and the framework. Enhancing the knowledge and capacity of both supervisors and supervisees and managers should help foster a more collaborative, accountable, and effective supervision process.

- Supervision should be built on a foundation of trust and confidence, fostering a balanced approach between development and support because emphasis tends to fall on administrative responsibilities. To address this imbalance, it is recommended that relationship-building efforts be enhanced through regular team-building activities, creating a safe and conducive working environment in supervision, and reinforcing the core purpose of supervision.

- Common understanding of the objectives of the framework and supervision in general should strengthen implementation and ensure that supervision becomes a consistent and integral component of practice. It is recommended that the Johannesburg Metro Region develop a context specific supervision policy that aligns with the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa. Such a policy should offer clear and practical guidelines on the structuring, implementation, and monitoring of supervision within the organisation.

- Added to the above recommendations, it is advanced that the organisation under study set a sub-unit with different intervention programmes hence the supervision framework should not only address the supervisor-supervisee ratios based on numbers, but also the job weight required for intervention, per programme, should be considered. This may align the supervision ratio to each programme and the nature of services rendered. A uniform supervision ratio may therefore not adequately reflect the diverse demands and complexities of different unit programmes. Thus, a differentiated approach that considers the intensity and workload of each service programme and area is necessary to ensure that the supervision structure is both realistic and effective in supporting social workers across all programmes.

- A key limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size, which restricts the generalisability of the findings. While the data gathered provides valuable insights into the perceptions of supervisors, the limited scope means that the results may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives across all regions in the country. It is proposed that future studies may consider replicating the study on a broader scale among the different regions in the Gauteng province or in all the province of South Africa to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of supervisory perceptions regarding the implementation of the supervision framework considering that the framework is implemented across the country.

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7. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Ethical clearance letter

UNISA

COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

12 February 2024

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
8647577_CREC_CHS_2024

Dear Ms Qhawekazi Nokuthula Nkosi

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 12 February 2024 to 12 February 2025

Researcher(s): Name: Ms. Q. N. Nkosi
Contact details: 8647577@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Dr G. B. Bhuda
Contact details: bhudag@unisa.ac.za

Title: The experiences of supervisors on the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa in the Johannesburg region.

Degree Purpose: Masters

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for one year.

The ***low-risk application*** *was reviewed by* College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

University of South Africa
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APPENDIX 2: Approval to conduct in the Gauteng Department of Social Development

GAUTENG PROVINCE
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: Ms D Mukhathi
Tel: 011 3557 758
Cell: 0798915883
File no.: 04/03/2024

Dear Qhawekazi Nokuthula, Nkosi

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

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

Your application on the research on ***"The experiences of supervisors on the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa in the Johannesburg region"*** as approved by *University of South Africa has* been considered and approved for support by the Department as it was found to be beneficial to the Department's vision and mission. The approval is subject to the Department's terms and conditions as endorsed on the 13th of November 2019.

You have permission to interview departmental officials and beneficiaries, conduct observations and access relevant documents where necessary.

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

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

With thanks

Mr Bongane Ngomane
Acting DDG: Social Welfare Services, Community Regions & Institutions
Date: 25/03/2024

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APPENDIX 3: Participant information sheet

Research title: The experiences of supervisors on the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa in the Johannesburg region.

Researcher: Qhawekazi Nokuthula Nkosi (8467577)
Ethics clearance reference number: Crec-240816-052
Research permission reference number (see attached approval):
30 May 2024

Title: The experiences of supervisors on the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa in the Johannesburg region**.**

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Qhawekazi Nokuthula Nkosi and I am doing research with Dr Gladys Bhuda, a senior lecturer, in the Department of Social work towards a MA, at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: The experiences of supervisors on the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa in the Johannesburg region**.**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?
The purpose of the study is to understand the lived experiences of social work supervisors in the Johannesburg region of the Department of Social Development regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?
The participants in the study are chosen based on their roles as a supervisor. The participant information will be obtained from the Human resource management data base of supervisors in the region for the financial year 2022 to 2023.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

I the participant expect to participate in the in-depth-interview to be conducted by the researcher, based on the interview schedule prepared by the researcher. The interview session is envisaged to be conducted to the maximum of 60 minutes. The interview will be scheduled at the time convenient and agreed by me as the participant and the interview will be conducted at the venue that is safe and convenient for the participant.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. As the participant you reserve the right to participate or not to participate in the study. If you voluntarily participate, you reserve the right to withdraw your participation my at any time during and may refuse to answer questions that you are uncomfortable with during data collection.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The results of the study will contribute to the body on information in space of social work supervision in South Africa by raising the views and experiences of social work supervisors in the implementation of the Supervision framework for social workers in South Africa. The study is envisaged to identify the strength and the weakness of the implement the supervision framework guideline to improve supervision in practice. There will not be no personal financial benefit for participating in the study.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

The research is classified as a low-risk research. Therefore, there are no risk and discomfort that could be brought to the participant by associating with the study, should I experience any form of discomfort the researcher will be informed to organise debriefing with the employee assistance practitioner attached to the Department of Social Development.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Accurately of responses will be insured by using recording and notes will be used by the researcher during the interview. Personal detail of the participants will not be used to protect participants identity and will not be used for the purpose of the thesis. The recordings will be assessed by the researcher and authorised academic staff also that personal information can be released with my permission. Recordings and notes will be capped safe, computerizes information will have password assess known to the researcher. The finding and recommendations will be releases for academic purpose i.e., professional journal, conferences however recordings and personal identity may not be releases unless required by law.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in the researchers place of residence for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Confidential information will not be shares and will be shredded.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

The research project is not funded therefore there will not be any payment or reward offered, by participating in the study. The participants will not incur any cost from participating in the study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has not received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Qhawekazi Nkosi on 079 529 4594 or email qhawekazi1.nkosi@gmail.com.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you



Qhawekazi Nkosi

APPENDIX 4: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

Research title: The experiences of supervisors on the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa in the Johannesburg region**.**

Researcher: Qhawekazi Nokuthula Nkosi

I,…….. (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.
I agree to the recording of the insert specific data collection method>.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname…… (please print)

Participant Signature……..Date……

Researcher's Name & Surname……(please print)

Researcher's signature……..Date……

APPENDIX 5: Data collection tool(s) as per methodology/ design (including questionnaire/ interview guide/checklist)

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Biographical questions

1. What is your field of service?
2. How many years of experience do you have as a supervisor within the Johannesburg region of the Gauteng Department of Social Development?
3. Do you have any other supervision experiences before your current role supervisor?
4. How many social workers do you supervise?

Topical questions

1. Which theories, perspectives and models do you use to supervise?
2. Supervision practice applies different methods and which reflective interactional and development which do you apply and why?
3. How feasible is it to provide supervision to the number of supervisees under your care?
4. In your understanding what is the mandate of the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa?
5. What form of training did you receive I your role as the supervisors?
6. What form and duration of training did you receive to enable you to conduct supervision using the supervision framework?
7. How has the supervision framework improved your role as supervisor and its significant in your role?
8. What are the challenges in practice with the supervision framework and what can be done to improve supervision in the framework?

APPENDIX 6: Editing certificate



Office: 0183892451

FACULTY OF EDUCATION **Cell: 0729116600**

Date: 18th January November, 2026

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

I, Muchativugwa Liberty Hove, confirm and certify that I have read and edited the entire dissertation, **Supervisors' experiences in the implementation of the Supervision Framework for Social Workers in South Africa in Johannesburg Social Development Area,** submitted by **QHAWEKAZI NOKUTHULA NKOSI** to the Department of **Social Work, UNISA,** in accordance with the requirements of the **Master's degree in Social Work.**

Qhawekazi Nokuthula Nkosi was supervised by Dr Gladys B. Bhuda of UNISA.

Appendix 7: Turnitin report

Similarity Report

PAPER NAME	AUTHOR
Thesis final draft.docx	QHAWEKAZI NOKHUTHULA NKOSI
WORD COUNT	CHARACTER COUNT
36622 Words	222845 Characters
PAGE COUNT	FILE SIZE
126 Pages	774.5KB
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Summary

Appendix 8: Turnitin submission details

