

**SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL WORKERS AT RISK:
EXPLORING PATHWAYS TO THEIR RESILIENCE**

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“The only thing necessary for the triumph [of evil] is for good men to do nothing.”

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THIS STUDY IS DEDICATED TO

My mother, Marieta Truter: a woman characterised by quiet strength and exceptional perseverance; a mother who loves and protects her family like a wolf defending her young.

My father, Johan Truter: a loving father, loyal friend and a man of leadership, integrity, and justice.

Every designated social worker who places his or her life on the line for every abused, neglected, or abandoned child.

PREFACE AND DECLARATION

The article format was chosen for the current study. The researcher, Elmien Truter, conducted the research and wrote the manuscripts. Dr Ansie Fouché and Prof. Linda Theron acted as promoter and co-promoter, respectively. Four manuscripts were written and will be submitted for publication in the following journals:

MANUSCRIPT 1: SOCIAL WORK/MAATSKAPLIKE WERK

MANUSCRIPT 2: THE SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER-RESEARCHER

MANUSCRIPT 3: QUALITATIVE HEALTH RESEARCH

MANUSCRIPT 4: SOCIAL WORK/MAATSKAPLIKE WERK

I declare that SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL WORKERS AT RISK: EXPLORING PATHWAYS TO THEIR RESILIENCE is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted are indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Elmien Truter (Student number: 21293236)

5 May 2014



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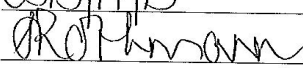
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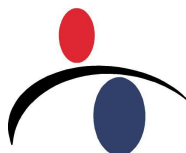
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To whom it may concern

I hereby declare that I edited the PhD entitled "South African Social Workers at Risk: Exploring Pathways to their Resilience", written by Elmien Truter. I am an accredited editor with the South African Translators' Institute (SATI Member No.: 1000193).

Yours sincerely

Hendia Baker

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ABSTRACT

Social workers worldwide play a pivotal role in delivering social services to those in need of such services. Designated social workers (DSWs) deliver statutory services pertaining to the protection of children in need of care and protection. All social workers are confronted by several professional risk factors that jeopardise their well-being; yet risks specifically observed in DSWs support the plea to enhance their resilience. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological inquiry was to explore pathways of resilience among resilient South African DSWs by studying relevant literature and examining South African DSWs' lived experiences. A secondary purpose was to draw on these experiences and literature to develop guidelines for South African DSW supervisors who may encourage the promotion of DSW resilience. Conducting a qualitative research synthesis was the first step and resulted in the confirmation of social worker risk and a deficient understanding of South African DSW resilience. An advisory panel of social work, DSW, and resilience experts assembled and formulated indicators of resilience in resilient South African DSWs, namely: a value-embedded life, having a support network, and having personal strengths, which, next, facilitated the identification of 15 resilient South African DSWs through snowball sampling. These 15 DSWs wrote narratives and were interviewed through semi-structured interviews in order to explore their lived experiences of workplace risks and their resilience processes. The findings concluded that these DSWs adapted to workplace adversities by living a purpose- and practice-informing creed, enjoying supportive collaborations, engaging in constructive transactions, and accentuating the positive. Guidelines for South African DSW supervisors, which emerged from these findings and literature, were proposed to be framed by reflective supervision as a step towards promoting South African DSW resilience.

Keywords: South African, risks, social work, designated social work, child protection work, statutory social worker, qualitative, phenomenological, exploratory, advisory panel, indicator, resilience processes, guidelines, reflective supervision, supervisor, qualitative research synthesis

OPSOMMING

Maatskaplike werkers wêreldwyd speel 'n deurslaggewende rol in die lewering van maatskaplike dienste aan diegene wat sodanige dienste benodig. Statutêre maatskaplike werkers (SMWs) lewer statutêre dienste met betrekking tot die beskerming van kinders wat sorg en beskerming benodig. Alle maatskaplike werkers het met verskeie professionele risikofaktore te kampe wat hul welstand in gevaar stel; tog ondersteun risiko's wat spesifiek in SMW waargeneem word, die pleidooi om hul veerkragtigheid te versterk. Die doel van hierdie kwalitatiewe fenomenologiese ondersoek was om paaie van veerkragtigheid onder veerkragtige Suid-Afrikaanse SMWs te ondersoek deur tersaaklike literatuur te bestudeer en Suid-Afrikaanse SMWs se beleefde ervarings te ondersoek. 'n Sekondêre doel was om uit hierdie ervarings en literatuur te put om riglyne vir Suid-Afrikaanse SMW-supervisors te ontwikkel wat die bevordering van SMW-veerkragtigheid mag aanmoedig. Die uitvoer van 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsintese was die eerste stap en het tot die bevestiging van die risiko vir maatskaplike werkers en 'n gebrekkige begrip van Suid-Afrikaanse SMW-veerkragtigheid gelei. 'n Adviespaneel van maatskaplike werk-, SMW- en veerkragtigheidsdeskundiges het aanduiders van veerkragtigheid in veerkragtige Suid-Afrikaanse SMWs ingesamel en geformuleer, naamlik, 'n waarde-geankerde lewe, die bestaan van 'n ondersteuningsnetwerk en die besit van persoonlike kragte, wat vervolgens die identifisering van 15 veerkragtige Suid-Afrikaanse SMWs deur 'n sneeubalsteekproef vergemaklik het. Hierdie 15 SMWs het narratiewe geskryf, en daar is semigestruktureerde onderhoude met hulle gevoer ten einde ondersoek na hul beleefde ervarings van werkplekrisiko's en hul veerkragtigheidsprosesse in te stel. Die bevindings het tot die gevolgtrekking gelei dat hierdie SMWs by werkplekteëspoed aangepas het deur 'n doel- en praktykgeïnspireerde belydenis uit te leef, ondersteunende

samewerkings te ervaar, aan konstruktiewe transaksies deel te neem en die positiewe te beklemtoon. Riglyne vir Suid-Afrikaanse SMW-supervisors wat uit hierdie bevindinge en literatuur na vore gekom het, is voorgestel om deur reflektiewe supervisie geformuleer te word as 'n stap tot die bevordering van Suid-Afrikaanse SMW-veerkragtigheid.

Slutelwoorde: Suid-Afrikaanse, risiko's, maatskaplike werk, statutêre maatskaplike werk, kinderbeskermingswerk, statutêre maatskaplike werker, kwalitatiewe, fenomenologiese, ondersoekend, adviespaneel, aanduider, veerkragtigheidsprosesse, riglyne, reflektiewe supervisie, supervisor, kwalitatiewe navorsing sintese

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