

# **Guidelines for social work services in high risk schools in the Gauteng Province**

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Magister in Social Work* at the North-West University

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**Examination:** November 2021

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## **DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER**

I, Feeleng Dina Lesesa, hereby declare that the manuscript with the title, “Guidelines for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province” is my own work. All references used or quoted are acknowledged by in text citing, with the full reference provided in the bibliography. I further declare that I have not previously in its entirety, or in part, submitted the said manuscript at any other university to obtain a degree.

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22 November 2021

Date

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The researcher alone could not have successfully completed this study all by herself. It is a great honour to acknowledge the efforts of various personnel who rendered their academic assistance that this study become a reality:

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To every family member, thank you for your support.

## PERMISSION TO SUBMIT

Letter of permission

Permission to subject this dissertation for examination purposes

I, the supervisor, hereby declare that the input and effort of Ms F.D. Lesesa in writing this manuscript reflects research done by her on the topic. I hereby grant permission that she may submit this dissertation for examination in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister in Social Work.



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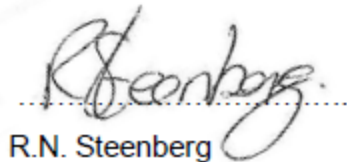
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## **PREFACE**

This dissertation is presented in a full format for a Master's degree as stipulated in the North-West University Postgraduate Faculty Manual (2016).

This dissertation consists of four chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction and orientation to the study

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

Chapter 3: Literature study

Chapter 4: Research findings and discussion

Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions and recommendation of the research study.

These chapters are followed by a complete reference list and annexures. The Harvard Referencing Style (2020) has been used in this document. The authors and sources cited in the dissertation are recorded in the Bibliography. Please refer to Annexure O Turnitin report indicating the similarity index and originality of the dissertation.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research seeks to address the social challenges children experience and the shortage of school social workers, by placing social workers from the Gauteng Department of Social Development (GDSD) in high risk (poorly performing) schools around Gauteng. The collaboration between the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the Department of Education (DoE) where social workers render services to communities through the education spaces high risk is a new phenomenon in South Africa. Social workers employed by the DSD are tasked to provide a broad spectrum of social, emotional, behavioural, school and family interventions using methods of practice of school social work. DSD endeavors to provide psychosocial services and appropriate intervention at different levels to ensure the learning and the development of learners takes place. They do this by identifying psychosocial barriers and providing preventative and developmental care and support of the teaching and learning project. As this was a new initiative and no guidelines were available, challenges were experienced. The study formulated guidelines to assist DSD social workers to render effective social work services in high risk schools in the Gauteng Province. A qualitative descriptive design was employed in this study to achieve the intended outcomes. Data was collected through the use of e-mail semi-structured interviews. Purposive sampling was used to select eleven (11) social workers, 4 social work supervisors from the DSD in Gauteng Province and 2 school social work rendering services in high risk schools from DoE in Gauteng Province. The data was analysed using thematic data analysis.

Notwithstanding the serious challenges social workers experience, the study showed the positive role social workers play in high risk schools. The development of comprehensive intervention programmes is an effective support mechanism to render social work services which need to be integrated in the mainstream education system.

Keywords: Guidelines, High risk school, Psychosocial support, School, Social work, School social work.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>DBE:</b>	<b>Department of Basic Education</b>
<b>DoE:</b>	<b>Department of Education</b>
<b>DSD:</b>	<b>Department of Social Development</b>
<b>GDE:</b>	<b>Gauteng Department of Basic Education</b>
<b>IASSW:</b>	<b>International Association of Schools of Social Work</b>
<b>IFSW:</b>	<b>International Federation of Social Workers</b>
<b>LSEN:</b>	<b>Learners with special educational needs</b>
<b>MOE:</b>	<b>Ministry of Education</b>
<b>SACSSP:</b>	<b>South African Council for Social Services Profession</b>
<b>SBST:</b>	<b>School-based support team</b>
<b>SSW:</b>	<b>school social work</b>
<b>SSWAA:</b>	<b>School Social Work Association of America</b>
<b>SW:</b>	<b>Social Work</b>

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 1 presents the orientation to the research which includes the context, followed by the research problem, the aims and objectives, and listing the research questions that directed the study. Social work plays a critical role in schools and educational settings. Due to the increase in social problems there is currently a shortage of social workers in schools. In order to address the social challenges, the children experience and the shortage of school social workers, social workers from the Gauteng Department of Social Development (DSD) were placed in high risk schools (poorly performing schools) in Gauteng to provide psychosocial support to learners. As this is a new initiative and no guidelines are available and challenges are experienced. The study intends to formulate guidelines that will assist DSD social workers to render effective social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province.

#### **1.2 CONTEXTUALISATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The increase of social ills in schools necessitates social work services to be rendered within the SA education system (Kemp, Kemp, Pretorius & Avenant, 2015:29). Kemp, *et al.* (2015:29), has indicated that increased social issues of child abuse, teenage pregnancy, drugs and child sexual offence create an adverse impact on learning and memory retention in schooling age. Pretorius (2015:29) and Kemp (2014) confirm the need for school social workers in the school system as they are only capable of breaking social and psychosocial barriers and allowing the natural progression of learners

Huxtable and Blyth (2002:2) argue that social workers in schools are indispensable, as they offer support to learners' welfare so that they can be ready to learn. They address barriers to learning, such as physical and psychological problems, addiction to substances, puberty, teenage pregnancy, learning difficulties, gender-based violence, divorce, child abuse, destitution, chronic illnesses, discrimination, and intimidation, while the role of educators is to convey knowledge, skills, and values

(Huxtable & Blyth, 2002:2). The National Association for Social Work in America (NASW) mentions in their Standards for School Social Work (NASW, 2012:1) that school social workers have been offering an important connection between school, home, and community.

Within South Africa, the necessity to have social workers working in schools has been accentuated owing to the rise of social ills within communities which impacts on learners and even causes learners to have more than one social problem (Western Cape Education Department, 2010). Crime and violence in schools are a major concern in South Africa (Bezuidenhout, 2013:80). Cases of teachers being robbed or shot and killed on school premises are reported regularly (Bezuidenhout, 2013:81). Bullying is another manifestation of crime directed at learners; where learners take weapons to school in order to protect themselves (Bezuidenhout, 2013:81). The launch of the School Safety Programme in SA, which involves keeping violence off the school premises, is an indication that there is a problem of violence in many schools (Frank, 2006:39). Jacobs, Vakalisa and Gawe (2011:366) identified several challenges in schools in South Africa that impact negatively on academic and learning performance. These include gender-based violence and intimidation, addiction to substances, truancy, sexual assault, puberty, teenage pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS. Rheeders (cited in Van Sittert, 2016:46) highlight the link between social ills and low learner performance. Socio-economic status also affects families and may lead to learning barriers affecting learner performance at school.

Smith (cited in Pretorius, 2016:69) noted the increased frequency of ill-discipline and other problematic behaviours in township schools. Misconduct and violent behaviour, such as a bad attitude towards the school system, negative behaviour towards educators and peers is often reported by school principals. Types of behaviour that are reported at schools are disrupting teaching and learning, mugging other learners, and bullying them (Bezuidenhout, 2013:81). Learners are at the age where they are experimenting with alcohol, drugs, and premature sexual activities which can lead to unwelcome pregnancies, as well as health diseases such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) (Bezuidenhout, 2013:81).

Learners face a variety of psychosocial challenges and having social workers as part of a team working from diverse disciplinary backgrounds in schools might be a way to alleviate the challenges experienced by learners (Pretorius, 2016:62). When these challenges are overlooked, they contribute to the children's poor performance and furthermore delay educational progress (Pretorius, 2016:62). Children may drop out of school as they believe that they do not have control of their lives and feeling victimised where there is always something that keeps them from moving forward (Dupper, 2003:91).

In South Africa, the necessity for school social work (SSW) is evident with the increase of social problems, however a shortage of SSWs exists. Kemp *et al.* (2015:35) made an application to the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) for school social work services to be recognized as area of specialty. A recent study noted the employment of social workers by the Department of Basic Education as follows: the Eastern Cape and Limpopo Province do not have any SSWs; in the Free State 31 SSWs are employed by the DoE. The offices of these SSWs are at the district offices, as well as the LSEN schools (learners with special educational needs) in the province. The four SSWs employed in Gauteng, as well as Mpumalanga are stationed at the district offices as well as the LSEN schools in the provinces. KZN has 25 SSWs based at the provincial and at the district office. Northwest Province has one SSW at the district office with the Northern Cape having three SSWs working at the LSEN I schools. The Western Cape has 57 SSWs working from the provincial, as well as the district offices (Kemp *et al.*, 2015:35). This shows that the demand for social workers to be employed in schools is high.

In order to address the social challenges children, experience and the shortage of SSWs, social workers from the GDSD were placed in high risk (poorly performing) schools in Gauteng. This was done during the 2012/2013 financial year when the Gauteng Provincial Executive Committee arranged for social workers to provide social work services in high risk schools through the Gauteng Department of Social Development and the Gauteng Department of Education (GDSD and GDoE, 2018). This collaboration offered school managed programmes to enhance children's educational competency. After the formalisation of the partnership between GDSD and

GDE, with a Memorandum of understanding (MOU), services are rendered to all schools that need social work services (DSD, 2021:1).

These social workers, providing social work services to schools, are not school based due to limited numbers. One social worker is responsible for several schools. Social workers visit schools on a weekly basis and most of the visits are conducted on the schools request. The visits include both schools that are regarded as high risk schools as well as schools that are not listed as high risk schools. These schools include primary and high mainstream schools but excludes private schools. This was done to provide psychosocial support to learners and teachers (Gauteng Department of Social Development and Gauteng Department of Education, 2018:2).

Pretorius (2016:69) defines high risk schools as poorly performing schools and the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 define high risk school as a school that is underperforming in relation to the standard of performance of learners and is below the standards prescribed by the National Curriculum Statement. Within these schools there has been a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed which is prejudicing or likely to prejudice the standards of performance or where the safety of learners or staff is threatened. The Department of Education (DoE) defines high risk schools as schools where learners are underperforming, where there is a serious breakdown in governance (School Governing Body is dysfunctional) and management (School Management team is dysfunctional). Safety of learners and staff (educators and other staff members) is threatened- because of incidents of bullying, gangsterism, violence, substance abuse, drug abuse, sexual molestation and learner ill-discipline (Tyawa, 2019). In this context, high risk schools will refer to poorly performing schools due to psychosocial problems.

The head of department (HOD) for the GDSD and the HOD for the Gauteng Department of Education agreed in principle to partner to ensure that schools receive psychosocial support. This partnership would ultimately improve social, emotional, and behavioural problems and assist with any learning barriers that hamper learners' functioning, development and contribute towards the academic performance, as well as the welfare of learners. This support would provide protection towards

circumstances that could prevent learners to fulfil their potential (GDSD and GDoE, 2018:4).

DSD social workers are a strategic tool towards the government's service delivery plan. Placed in these high risk schools, they are able to provide psychosocial services and appropriate interventions linked to social and academic behaviours and at different levels (GDSD and GDoE, 2013). Furthermore, social workers, while identifying the psychosocial barriers and preventing social ills, are able to enrich support system to learners and teachers (GDSD and GDoE, 2013). The DSD social workers were tasked to render the following services at the identified schools: assess learners, as well as conduct inquiries where needed, and refer learners to appropriate organizations when long-term intervention is needed; deliver prevention services to identified needs, such as substance abuse, bullying, gangsterism, teenage pregnancy and behavioural problems.

The DSD social workers placed in schools should also facilitate awareness programmes to learners on a variety of social problems that are faced and identified in the schools. The DSD social workers should identify the common need in their identified schools, develop a plan and implement the programme (Memorandum of Understanding: GDSD and GDoE, 2018:3).

As this is a new initiative, this initiative brought certain challenges to social workers. There is a lack of appropriate tools from DSD and GDE to report and provide evidence of services rendered by social workers in schools; no management at GDE district to manage the program and to ensure integration, no co-ordination of services and multi-disciplinary work; no budget allocation and limited time is provided for awareness, prevention and therapeutic programmes or even individual sessions in schools. There is furthermore limited resources available at the schools, which include office space. The lack of collaboration of work between DSD and DoE and the fact that there are no clear roles and responsibilities between the two departments, result in double reporting as there are also no standard operational procedures on how educators refer cases to DSD (GDSD, 2013, 2017, 2018; Kgomoewana, 2019).

Social workers that are rendering services in schools in Gauteng have never had a defined role to guide their practice parameters. The study therefore intended to formulate guidelines that would assist DSD social workers to render effective social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province.

There are no nationally or international studies that explore social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province. This study is a valuable investigation into this proposed solution.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION, AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

The main research question for the study is: What guidelines can be formulated for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province?

The aim of this study was to formulate guidelines that assist social workers to render effective social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province.

To realise the primary research, aim the following research objectives were formulated:

- To conduct a literature study on social work services in schools to develop a conceptual framework for this study.
- To explore and describe perceptions of social workers regarding services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province as perceived by DSD social workers placed in these schools.
- To explore and describe perceptions of social workers regarding services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province as perceived by social work supervisors.
- To explore and describe perceptions of social workers regarding services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province as perceived by DoE school social workers.
- To formulate guidelines to improve social work services rendered to high risk schools in Gauteng.

### **1.4 CONCEPT DEFINITIONS**

This section provides definitions of the main concepts referred to in this study.



### **1.4.1 School**

School is a place where children are educated; a place where instruction is given in a subject (Waite & Hawker, 2009).

### **1.4.2 High risk schools**

Pretorius (2016:69) defines high risk schools as poorly performing schools or what the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 refers to as an underperforming school. This is explained in Section 58 B, subsection (2) (a) (b) (c) of the Act where it is stated that: “(a) the standard of performance of learners is below the standards prescribed by the National Curriculum Statement and is likely to remain so unless the Head of Department exercises his or her power in terms of this Act; (b) there has been a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed which is prejudicing, or likely to prejudice, the standards of performance; or (c) the safety of the learners or staff is threatened”.

The DoE similarly defines high risk schools as schools where learners are underperforming, where there is a serious breakdown in governance (School Governing Body is dysfunctional) and management (School Management team is dysfunctional). In high risk schools the safety of learners and staff is threatened because of incidents of bullying, gangsterism, violence, substance abuse, drug abuse, sexual abuse, and learner ill-discipline (Tyawa, 2019). In this context, high risk schools refer to poorly performing schools due to psychosocial problems and a serious breakdown in governance.

### **1.4.3 Social work**

According to the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) (2014) and the International Association for Schools of Social Work (IASSW) (2014) social work is defined as: “a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. Social work

in Africa have been observed to have improved life and security concerns (Sobantu, 2021:7). For this study the definition of IFSW and IASSW will be used when referring to social work.

#### **1.4.4 School social work**

Vergottini (2019:37-38) defines SSW as “the application of social work principles and methods within the education system in order to render holistic social work services to learners, parents, educators and the school as community, with the main goal of addressing personal, emotional, socioeconomic and behavioural barriers to learning and create an environment where the learner can reach his or her full potential”.

Kemp *et al.* (2015:10) further define SSW “as a field that is different from other fields such as generic or clinical social work as its emphasis is on empowering learners to be able to address psychosocial barriers to learning”. According to Kemp *et al.* (2015:10) the overall aim of SSW is to liaise with learners, parents, teachers and the community to address obstacles that stop learners to function effectively in school. For this study SSW will refer to the definition of Vergottini (2019:37-38) where SSW is seen as the application of social work principles and methods within the education system in order to render holistic social work services to learners, parents, educators and the school as community, with the main goal of addressing personal, emotional, socioeconomic and behavioural barriers to learning and create an environment where learners can reach their full potential.

#### **1.4.5 Psychosocial support (PSS)**

Psychosocial support is defined as “a continuum of care and support that addresses the social, emotional, spiritual and psychosocial well-being of a person and influences both the individual and the social environment in which people live” (SADC, 2011:13).

Psychosocial support refers to “a continuum of love, care and protection that enhances the cognitive, emotional and spiritual well-being of a person and strengthens their cultural connectedness” (Department of Basic Education, 2021:4)

For this study psychosocial support will include the care and support of learners to enhance their cognitive, emotional and spiritual well-being and strengthen their cultural

connectedness. Psychosocial support is about individual well-being, and the focus is to provide emotional support, to address an individual's state of mind, as well as the spiritual and social needs of the person. These needs arise from traumatic events, such as poverty, illness, death of parents and exposure to violence.

#### **1.4.6 Guidelines**

Leonard (2010:1) defines a guideline as follows: "A guideline is a suggested way of performing a task with a product or service or scope". Within the Department of Social Development guidelines are intended to guide social workers who enter the field of school social work, within the Department of Social Development, in how to perform their task, which is to deliver a service to learners, the school and parents.

#### **1.5 SUMMARY**

Chapter one gave an introductory to the study and presented the following sub-topic for this study: the contextualization and problem statement for the study, the research question, aim and objectives and the concepts definitions. Chapter two will describe the methodological approach used to investigate the research question as well as the research design and -approach, the study setting, the research population, the sampling method that was used and the data collection method. Ethical consideration and the methods of ensuring trustworthiness in this study will also be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, detailed information on the methodology that was used during this study was discussed. This section describes the methodological approach used to investigate the research question as well as the research design that was used. It will furthermore include a discussion on the research study design, the study setting, the research population, the sampling method that was used, the data collection method will be discussed and the data analysis. The procedure and sequence and the nature in which planned actions were executed in this study was discussed and motivation for the execution of different actions and processes was provided.

This chapter furthermore provides details of the methodology employed during the study and information on how the trustworthiness of the study as well as ethical considerations of the study was addressed.

#### **2.2 RESEARCH APPROACH**

In qualitative research, the researcher seeks to better understand the meaning people give to a societal problem (Creswell, 2017:15). Moreover, it attempts to develop how participants make sense of the specific phenomena by examining their perception, thoughts, experiences gained through performing certain tasks in order to explain the phenomena (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:109). This study adopted a qualitative research approach, with a purpose of exploring the participants' perceptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:346) of the rendering of social services in high risk schools in the Gauteng Province. As the qualitative approach is exploratory in nature, the qualitative approach allowed the researcher to better understand the participants' experiences, viewpoints, and voice (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:6). On the other hand, a quantitative research approach may not have been suitable for this study as a quantitative research approach follows statistical calculation and statistical

representation and there is less scope for taking consideration of factors such as people's emotions and -behaviour (Corley & Young, 2018).

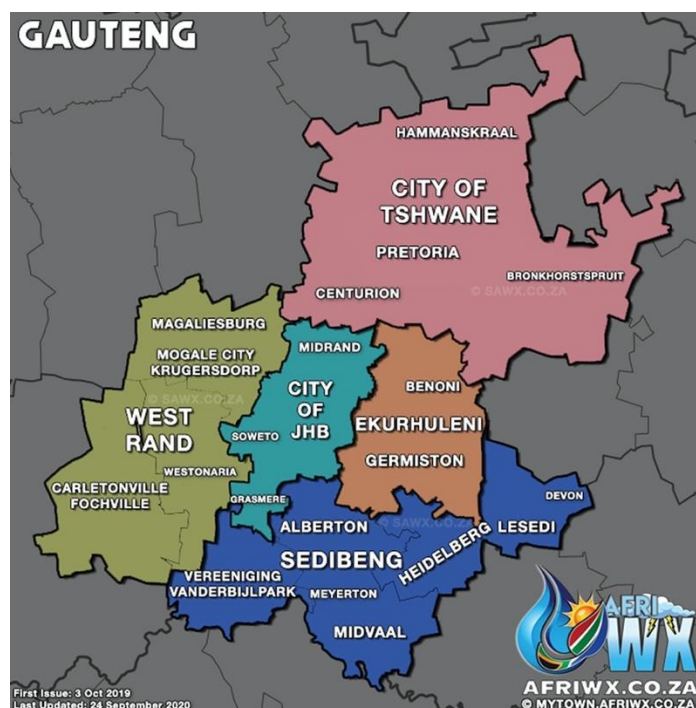
### **2.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

To describe the particular phenomenon, a qualitative descriptive design was employed in this study, as this design allowed for a clear description of the phenomenon by those who experienced the phenomenon (Sandelowski, 2010:79). According to Sandelowski (2010:79) a qualitative descriptive design is less interpretive than other designs and therefore the results are a more accurate reflection of the data. Within this study the researcher wanted to obtain information on social work services in high risk schools and the descriptive design allowed the researcher to give a broad summary of the experiences of working in high risk schools, with less interpretation. Although the rendering of school social work services in schools in South Africa is not a new phenomenon, the collaboration between the DSD and DoE in which DSD render services in high risk schools is a new phenomenon in South Africa and the qualitative description design is seen as ideal for studies which aim to better understand a new phenomenon from the participant's perspective (Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017:23).

### **2.4 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

This study was conducted in the Gauteng Province. The Gauteng Province was selected for this study as the initiative of placing DSD social workers in high risk schools was done in the Gauteng Province. Gauteng Province is the smallest province in South Africa but also the richest and most crowded province (Stats SA, 2011). Gauteng Province consists of three vast metropolitan municipalities which are: Tshwane, Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni and two vast city districts of the West Rand, and Sedibeng as shown in Figure 1 below (Landau & Gindrey, 2008:5).

**Figure 1: Map of the Gauteng Province (AFRIWX.co.za)**



The Gauteng Province is surrounded by the Free State, Northwest, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga provinces. Although the Gauteng Province is the smallest province in the country, it is the most populated with about 24.1% of the national population living here (Stats SA, 2020).

Table 1 below illustrates the different regions and the education districts in the Gauteng Province.

**Table 1: Number of schools in Gauteng**

Region	Districts	No of Schools
Johannesburg	5 Districts	1199
Ekurhuleni	3 Districts	288
Sedibeng	2 Districts	112
Tshwane	4 Districts	703
West Rand	3 Districts	123

From table 1 it is evident that Johannesburg region has the most districts with 1199 schools followed by Tshwane with four districts and 703 schools. The Sedibeng region is the smallest with two districts and 112 schools.

## **2.5 POPULATION**

The concept “population”, according to Gravette and Forzano (2012:138) in the context of research, refers to people to which the research results are to be applied. There were three populations in this study, namely:

### **2.5.1 DSD social workers**

This population of the study are the social workers employed by DSD and rendering social work services in high risk schools in the Gauteng Province. There are currently 110 social workers from DSD placed in high risk schools: Tshwane region has 30 social workers, Johannesburg region has 24, West Rand Region has 20, Sedibeng region has 19, and Ekurhuleni region 17 social workers. These social workers are responsible for 160 high risk schools in the Gauteng Province which are identified by the Gauteng Department of Education for each academic year. Schools not identified as high risk schools are serviced on request. As the researcher is a supervisor to social workers in the Johannesburg region, this region was excluded from the study to avoid conflict of interest.

The DSD social workers are tasked to render the following services at the identified high risk schools: They collect, examine and link information about learners and provide short term investigation; refer learners to relevant services within the department or refer to other organizations where long term intervention is needed. The DSD social workers furthermore render prevention services according to the needs of the learners, such as the abuse of substances, bullying, gangsterism, teenage pregnancy and behavioural problems, provide awareness programme to learners on variety of social problems that are faced and identified in the schools. The DSD social workers identify the specific common need in their schools and plan and implement the programme (Memorandum of understanding: GDSD and GDoE, 2018).

### **2.5.2 DSD social work supervisors**

Supervisors of social workers employed by DSD and placed in high risk schools in the Gauteng Province were another population in this study. The supervisors manage, encourage and evaluate the professional service rendered by the DSD social workers through a process of supervision. The total number of supervisors from DSD who are rendering social work services in schools is five supervisors, including the researcher. Five regions have one supervisor that oversees the social work services of DSD social workers in schools. The researcher supervises social workers from Johannesburg region. The ratio of a supervisor whose key responsibility is the supervision of DSD employees (social workers, student social workers, social auxiliary workers and learner social auxiliary workers) is 1:13.

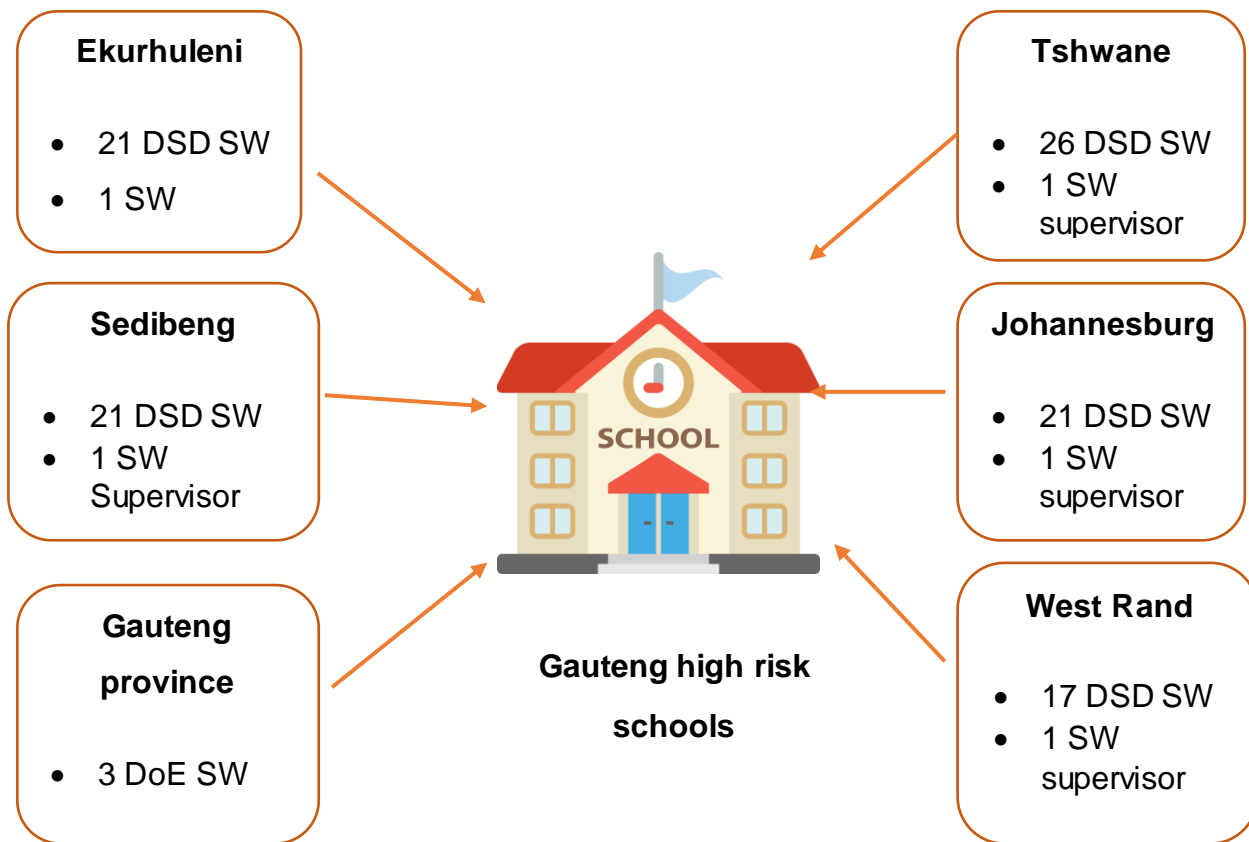
### **2.5.3 DoE social workers**

Social workers employed by the DoE, referred to as SSWs, and working in schools in the Gauteng Province were a population in this study. There are currently three SSWs placed in schools and one SSW manager in the Gauteng Province. They are based at the district office. The role of the SSW's is seen as the development and implementation of social work service policies and the coordination of the provision of social services to schools via the relevant Government departments, Faith-based organisation, and Non-Profit organisations (NGO's). They also manage the first line of social work service support (GDoE Structure, 2017)

Figure 2 provides a summary of the total number of the social workers (DSD social workers and SSW's) rendering services in high risk schools per region.



**Figure 2: Number of social workers per region**



## 2.6 SAMPLING

According to Gravetter and Forzano (2012:144), sampling refers to the process that is applied to select a person to partake in a research study. The sample of participants for this study were selected from the three populations identified above. In probability sampling everybody in the specific population has the same opportunity to participate in the study; whereas in non-probability sampling no systematic method is followed when selecting the sample (Creswell, 2007:125). The researcher used non-probability sampling in this study (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:197) and more specifically, purposive sampling, as the researcher wanted to obtain specific information from the participants (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:198). The researcher chose participants that met the inclusion criteria and were able to offer rich information in terms of education and experience to answer the research question. The sample should produce credible descriptions or explanations on the type of the phenomena that need to be studied (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:85).

### **2.6.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

The specific inclusion criteria for the social workers from DSD participant group were:

- Registered social workers employed by DSD and placed in high risk schools in the Gauteng Province.
- More than three years' experience as a social worker working in high risk schools in Gauteng Province. The reason why three years' experience was a requirement is because the partnership between DSD and DoE started in 2012-2013.

The specific inclusion criteria for the social work supervisor sample were:

- The registered social worker must have at least three years' experience as a supervisor supervising social workers placed in high risk schools by DSD.

The specific inclusion criteria for the school social workers from DoE participant group were:

- Registered social workers employed by the DoE in Gauteng Province.
- More than three years' experience as a school social worker working in high risk schools in Gauteng Province;

As the researcher is a supervisor for DSD social workers, the social workers that receive supervision from her were excluded from the study. This was done to not unfairly influence DSD social workers to participate as they may feel obliged to participate.

### **2.6.2 Sample size**

A sample is described by Creswell (2013:157) as those people that are part of the bigger population but for the purpose of the study, selected to participate in the study. Sampling means choosing a limited number of significant cases (Patton & Patton, 2015:276). A sample of 17 participants were purposively selected for the study as presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Participants table**

Organisational level	Position	Participants
DSD	Social Workers	11
DSD	Social Work supervisors	4
DoE	Social workers	2
<b>Total number</b>		<b>17</b>

The sample included 11 social workers from the DSD, 2 social workers from the DoE and 4 social work supervisors from the DSD.

- DSD social workers

There are 106 DSD social workers placed in schools to render social work services. For this study three participants were drawn from each region and the total sample for this group consisted of 11, whose participation was voluntary. The saturation of themes was reached (Bryman, 2012:426) after 11 participants were interviewed

- Social work supervisors

The total number of supervisors from DSD who are rendering social work services in high risk schools consists of 5 supervisors, including the researcher. Each region has one supervisor that oversees the social work services of DSD social workers in schools. As the population only consists of 4 supervisors (excluding the researcher) the whole population was invited to participate and all of them agreed to participate in the study.

- DoE social workers

There is a total of four social workers appointed by the DoE in Gauteng. That includes one social work manager, and three school social workers. Although the population was small a sample still needed to be drawn from this population. A smaller sample is considered sufficient when the population is homogeneous and only when a few

variables are examined on that time (Neuman, 1997:222). As the population only consisted of four the whole population was requested to participate, but only two participants took part. This represented 50% of the entire population and was therefore deemed adequate for the purpose of this study.

### **2.6.3 Recruitment of participants**

The DSD social workers are not seen as vulnerable as they are adults and professional social workers. The regional directors acted as gatekeepers for the study to provide access of the researcher to the participants. The regional directors are situated in Johannesburg region, Ekurhuleni region, Sedibeng region, Tshwane region and West Rand Region. The gatekeepers were presented with a letter which explained the purpose and the aim of the study. The regional directors acted as gatekeepers and requested the social work managers, of the component where the social workers are placed, to act as mediators. The mediators were requested to provide all the social workers with an information pamphlet about the research project. This information document explained the aim of the study, as well as what was expected of them. It also provided information on aspects such as confidentiality, privacy, and voluntary participation.

This information document was e-mailed to the social workers. The social workers could decide if they wanted to take part in the study and indicated this by putting their name and contact number in a box that was situated at a central point (social work supervisor's office). The social auxiliary worker of each region opened the box to identify participants that were interested. The researcher then contacted the appointed social axillary worker to get the names of the interested participants.

- *Sample recruitment of DSD social work supervisors*

The participants in this study are not seen as vulnerable as they are adults and professional social work supervisors. The regional directors acted as the gatekeeper for the study to provide access of the researcher to the participants. The regional directors for DSD are situated in Johannesburg region, Sedibeng region, Tshwane region, West Rand Region and Ekurhuleni region. The gatekeepers, regional directors, requested the social work managers, of the component where the social

worker supervisors are placed to act as mediators. The social work managers were requested to act as mediators and requested to recruit the social work supervisors. The gatekeeper and mediator were provided with a letter which explained the purpose and the aim of the study as well as all the necessary information pertaining to the study. The mediators were requested to e-mail this letter to the social worker supervisors.

This information document explained the aims of the study as well as what was expected of them. It also, provided information on aspects such as confidentiality, privacy and voluntarily participation. They had to decide if they want to participate in the study and indicated this to the mediators via e-mail. Then the researcher contacted each mediator to check which social work supervisors are interested to take part in the study.

- *Sample recruitment of DoE social workers*

The participants in this study were not seen as vulnerable as they are professional social workers and could make an informed decision to participate.

The director for psychosocial support acted as gatekeeper for this participant group to provide access of the researcher to the participants. The gatekeeper was provided with a letter which explained the purpose and the aim of the study. The gatekeeper requested the manager situated in the provincial office in Johannesburg to act as mediator. The mediator was requested to assist with the recruitment of the participants. The mediator was requested to provide all the social workers with an information pamphlet about the research project. This information document explained the aims of the study as well as what was expected of them. It also, provided information on aspects such as confidentiality, privacy and voluntarily participation. This information document was e-mailed to the social workers. They could decide if they wanted to take part in the study and indicated this to the mediator via e-mail. The researcher followed up with the mediator, who then gave the researcher contact numbers of the participants willing to participate.

#### **2.6.4 Obtaining informed consent from the DSD social workers**

After the participants had agreed to participate in the study, the researcher informed the mediator about the content of the consent form and provided the necessary training to them to inform the participants. The mediator was requested to provide the willing participants with a consent form, explain the consent form to the participants and make sure that they understood the information. The participants had five working days to decide if they wanted to participate and were then requested to sign the consent form with an independent person present during the signing, who was the personal assistant of the regional director per region. The participant was then handed a copy of the signed consent form.

#### **2.6.5 Obtaining informed consent from the social work supervisors**

After the participants agreed to take part in the study, the researcher informed the mediator about the content of the consent form and provided the necessary training to them to inform the participants.

The mediator was requested to provide the willing participants with a consent form, explain the form to the participants and make sure that they understood the information. The participants were then given five working days to decide if they want to participate and then be requested to sign the consent form in the presence of an independent person, who was the personal assistant of the regional manager per region. The participant was then handed a copy of the signed consent form.

#### **2.6.6 Obtaining informed consent from the DoE social workers**

After the participants, had agreed to take part in the study, the researcher informed the mediator about the contents of the consent form and provided the necessary training to them to inform the participants. The mediator was requested to provide the willing participants with a consent form, explain the form to the participants and make sure that they understand the information. The participants had five working days to decide if they wanted to participate and were then requested to sign the consent form in front of an independent person, who was the administrative person at the manager's office. The participant was then handed a copy of the signed consent form.

### **2.6.7 Pilot study**

Pilot study refers to a procedure of trying out questions on participants and is described as the “process in which a trial run is conducted to weigh the feasibility of the methods to be used on the bigger study” (Leon, Davis, & Kraemer, 2011). The researcher created an interview guide that comprises of applicable questions. The researcher pre-tested the interview guide (Annexure G – Interview guide) in a pilot study carried out with two social workers from the Johannesburg region. The Johannesburg region was chosen for pilot testing to limit the participation of the social workers and social work supervisors who work in the four other Gauteng regions from being part of the final sample, thus preventing exposure to the pilot study from influencing the participants’ responses and the whole study. The researcher did not include the data from the pilot study in the final data analysis of the study. The researcher did not amend any questions post the pilot study; however, she found the exercise fruitful as the pilot study ensured that the questions were clear and appropriate.

## **2.7 DATA COLLECTION**

Data collection is getting together all the facts in order to answer the research questions. This process is an integral part of any research. The aim of any study is to obtain input from participants that can be utilized in addressing the research questions.

### **2.7.1 Method of data collection**

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the researcher had to change the data collection method for this study from using face-to-face semi-structured interviews to e-mail semi-structured interviews. The primary objective of using e-mail semi-structured interviews was to explore social work services in high risk schools. Bertram and Christiansen (2014:85) describe an interview as a direct discussion between the researcher and the participants. In the study the researcher opted to use semi-structured interviews, where the researcher had pre-determined open-ended questions which the participants had to respond to via e-mail and which would allow for a conversation to take place (Jamshed, 2014:87). The use of e-mail semi-structured interviews seemed appropriate as it offered a convenient and practical alternative to face-to-face interviews. Walker (2013:18) states that e-mail interviews are seen as a substitute to overcome environmental obstacles, as well as financial

concerns which may hamper face-to-face interviews. In this case the barrier would be the restrictions due to the lockdown and social distancing. Fritz and Vandermause (2017:1642) also found that an advantage of the use of e-mail interviews is that access to participants is increased and that greater participation of working adults is encouraged, which in this study was social workers. Hawkins (2018:497) also found that an advantage of the e-mail interview method is prolonged engagement with the participants. Greeff (2020:3) states that “the e-mail interview takes place in a single electronic screen-based script and is asynchronous in nature. It consists of several interactions over time and it takes place ‘at a distance’”. Telephonic interview, as another form of interview, were not used due to certain disadvantages of telephonic interview. Various types of disadvantages are associated with telephonic interview methods. In the telephonic interview process fixing a suitable time is difficult and participants may not be available when the research participants are available. Therefore, the coordination between the researcher and the participant is difficult in the telephonic interview process. On the other hand, conducting the interview process through email, the conversation is quite easy for the researchers because in this case the participant can receive the email and can reply in the same email by filling the answers to the open-ended questions before the stated time limit (Rahman Islam & Sutradhar, 2018).

Participants were sent an e-mail to indicate their willingness to participate and where they could give informed consent. The e-mail interview was initiated by an explanation of the aim and purpose of the interview and stating the interview questions (Greeff, 2020:3). The interview questions (See Annexure H, I & J) were developed in consultation with the study leader. The participants then had the opportunity to answer the set of questions via e-mail and return it back to the researcher in a reply e-mail. The researcher was available to give clarifications or expansion on the probing questions. This procedure continued until the interview was exhausted (Greeff, 2020:3).

Since the interviews were not face to face, the researcher indicated to the participants that she was readily available to the participants to clarify issues, if they had any. This ensured that participants knew they could reach out to the researcher to avoid any



misinterpretation and request clarity where relevant. This ensured that the response rate was high. The e-mail semi-structured interviews was seen as an effective way to collect data as the researcher was not allowed to have personal contact with the participants, due to the lockdown and restrictions. The method also allowed for a wider reach of study participants. A disadvantage of this method was that the researcher was unable to determine non-verbal cues of the participants.

## **2.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

In qualitative research, data analysis is “the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the data collected” (Schurink, Schurink & Fouché, 2021:39). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:177) describe data analysis as “the process by which analysis carried out by the researcher is documented”. The researcher reviewed collected data and linked it to the suitable themes, relations, trends, and patterns in order to understand and give meaning to the data that has been collected (Schurink *et al.*, 2021:39).

Thematic data analysis as described by Tesch (in Creswell 2014:186) was used to analyse the data. To start data analysis the eight steps in the coding process were followed:

1. At first the researcher was able to overview the 17 data transcripts, by reading through all 17 transcripts and making notes of themes as they emerged.
2. The researcher then chose one transcript and concentrated on the meaning of the information and kept writing any views in the margin of the transcript.
3. After repeating this activity for several of the transcripts, the researcher compiled a summary of all the topics and grouped them together. The topics were then grouped together into columns that were written up as key topics, exceptional topics and left-over topics.
4. Next the researcher took the summary back to the data where the topics were labelled with codes and a code written next to the appropriate segment. In this way, a preliminary organizing scheme simplified the process as to the emerging of new categories and codes.
5. The topics were reduced in terms of importance and relevance and drawn into categories by drawing lines between to indicate the relationship between them.

6. Each group was given a final abbreviation and alphabetized into codes.
7. The last step included the putting together of the data material that fell under one category or theme and thereafter a preliminary analysis.

Preceding this thematic analysis as identified above, the researcher collected all the e-mail responses from the participants. This was followed by verification and clarification of information with the participants after which the researcher imported all the data onto a Microsoft Word document.

The subsequent steps were the seven steps outlined above. Once this process was completed, the researcher organised the data into themes and subthemes which formed a collective idea (Creswell, 2013:184).

The researcher also used a co-coder who assisted with the coding of the data. The co-coder was a MSW graduate. The co-coder did his own data analysis and followed the same process as the researcher. After the coding had been completed the researcher and the co-coder compared the codes and discussed the codes in order to formulate the guidelines. Aspects identified from the collected data and the data analysis process was identified and written into guidelines. The data was then presented in the findings of the research report.

## **2.9 ETHICS**

Ethical considerations informed this study, therefore moral research ethics were recognised and tracked to ensure that research was ethically conducted (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007:41).

### **2.9.1 Legal authorisation**

Ethical clearance to carry out the study was attained from Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University (Annexure A) with ethics number NWU-0472-19-A-1.

After ethical clearance was received from HREC, permission to conduct the research was attained from GDSD, Provincial level (Annexure B) as well as the Gauteng DoE, Provincial level (Annexure C). The legal authorisation was requested from those in

authority by e-mailing a letter in which the needed information of the research was made clear and requesting permission to conduct the study. Goodwill permission was requested from the Regional Directors of each region. A permission letter for each region was e-mailed to each regional director. Each region referred the researcher to the DSD Provincial office who indicated that the permission letter from the Deputy Director General (DDG) is sufficient to show the university that the researcher is granted permission by the Department; and should enable the researcher to access participants within the Department.

In compliance with the North-West University's policies and regulations on the performance of study with human subjects, the following ethical issues were considered throughout the study process:

### **2.9.2 Protecting participants from harm**

It is an important ethical rule for a researcher to ensure that no harm befalls study participants during research (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:121). There were minimal risks for social workers participating in the study. The social workers are professionals and were able to make an informed decision if they want to participate in the study.

### **2.9.3 Informed consent**

Babbie (2010:66) sees informed consent as when a participant decides to voluntarily participate in research based on the fact that they understand the possible risk involved in participating in the research. After the participants have agreed to participate in the study, the mediator e-mailed the informed consent document to the participants prior to their participation in the study (Annexure D, E and F Consent form). The mediator explained in detail the risks and the benefits of participating in the study to the participants. The participants therefore made informed decisions as to whether they wanted to participate in the study or not. The participants were also informed about the aim of the study, as well as the type of questions that they would be asked and in which manner the data would be stored and utilized (Bolderston, 2012:73). The participants were also informed that participating in the study was voluntary and they had the right to discontinue their part in the study at any time and that their data would be removed (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:121; Flick, 2007:69).

All the participants are social workers and had access to the internet, as well as e-mail facilities. As recommended by Greeff (2020:3), the researcher then made an appointment with the participants telephonically to discuss the research process. For all the participants' appointments were made telephonically.

During the signing process, Greeff (2020:3) recommends that the researcher be present when the participant signs and have another observer to co-sign and view the signing process. To assist with this: for DSD social workers, their supervisors and a social worker who was not part of the study were present to witness the signing; for social work supervisors, their managers, and manager from other directorate were available for the co-signing and witnessing of the signing process. The same process was followed by DoE participants. Then each participant scanned and e-mailed their consent form to the researcher. The researcher obtained signed informed consent document for all participants. Immediately after the researcher received a scan informed consent document from each participant, she printed the document and put a signature on the document and filed it.

#### **2.9.4 Confidentiality, Anonymity and Privacy**

*Confidentiality* means that, whatever information shared by the participants is to be protected and remain private. To ensure confidentiality, participants were informed before they agreed to take part in the study, that whatever information they shared would not be shared with anyone. Only the mediator and researcher, would have access to participants' names. The researcher used pseudonyms in the write up of the report to protect the identity of the participants. Participants were also informed that their transcripts and data would only be viewed by the researcher and study leader. Moreover, interviews were e-mailed to participants' private e-mail addresses. All data was safeguarded by storing it in a lockable cabinet in the locked offices of the researcher.

To maintain *privacy*, interviews were e-mailed individually to each participant. This was a form of one-on-one interview as only the participant and the researcher were aware of the interview and had access to the e-mails.

*Anonymity* refers to the fact that participants may not want information about themselves, or their views and attitudes to be linked to their names (Walford, 2018:523). The researcher reassured the participants that their names would be removed from the transcripts. All the participants' personal details were kept confidential. The researcher also informed the participants that through anonymity their names were written as pseudonyms to protect their identity.

### **2.9.5 Voluntary participation**

All of the participants were informed before the study commenced that if they decided to participate in the study, it was voluntarily, and therefore they were free to withdraw from the study at any stage and their data would be destroyed. They could also choose not to answer a question. The participants were not forced or threatened to participate in the study and were informed that no harm could result from non-participation (Vanclay, Baines, & Taylor, 2013:246).

### **2.9.6 Incentives/reimbursement**

The participants in this study did not receive any reimbursement for taking part in the research. As all the interviews were conducted via e-mail the participants did not have any expenses. Participants were provided with "thank you gifts" as a token of appreciation, each participant received data to the value of R60.00. After receiving responses via e-mail from the participants, the researcher acknowledged the e-mail by thanking the participants and then requested their mobile network in order to send them data. The researcher also followed up with participants telephonically as most of them used their work e-mail address and could only access it when they were at work.

### **2.9.7 Keeping and managing data**

The participants' e-mailed responses were saved on the password protected laptop of the researcher and an external hard drive which was locked in a safe. After the research was finalised and the thesis submitted, all the data (hard copies of e-mail interviews) would be couriered to the office of the Centre for the Child, Youth and Family Studies, NWU, where the responsible person would destroy the data after five years of safe keeping. Any copies on the laptop would be deleted.

## **2.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

The criteria of generalizability, reliability, validity, and objectivity which are utilized in quantitative research to measure the quality of research, are not good enough to use in qualitative research. In qualitative research, the trustworthiness of a study is determined (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:2) through transparency (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012:66). The best-known criteria for measuring the trustworthiness of a qualitative study is confirmability, transferability, credibility and dependability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:2).

### **2.10.1 Credibility**

Credibility in qualitative research “is equal to validity in quantitative research and its concern is truth value” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:297). Credibility includes the degree to which the study findings, include the perceptions, feelings, as well as the actions of the participants are presented accurately (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:297). To ensure credibility of the study, the researcher was aware of the personal biases which came from the fact that she was a social work supervisor working in the DSD in the Johannesburg region. To mitigate this, the researcher discussed her role as a researcher and the possible biases that may come as a result. The researcher also mitigated any form of biases by extensively engaging with the data before drawing any conclusions and presenting the results to the study participants to verify whether they agreed with the information.

### **2.10.2 Transferability**

Transferability is seen as the degree to which findings of a study can be used in a different context and with different participants and still get similar results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:296). Qualitative research cannot be generalised and transferred to a different population, unlike quantitative research. However, to ensure transferability the researcher described in detail the sample and research methods used in the study allowing those reading the opportunity to determine whether the results can apply to their population (Colorafi & Evans, 2016:9; Korstjens & Moser, 2018:3). The research findings were described clearly so that the reader can decide whether the findings and recommendations can be applied to the populations under the study (Farrelly, 2013:149-151).

### **2.10.3 Dependability**

Dependability is described as “the stability of findings over time” (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:121). Dependability was ensured by the researcher by including her notes of her data analysis and taking photos of the coding and other processes. She provided comprehensive descriptions based on participant responses. A co-coder was also used during the data analysis to verify the conclusions drawn and assumptions made. The limitations of the study are also indicated in the final report.

### **2.10.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to a process whereby outcomes of the study can be confirmed by other researchers. To be certain that the responses are from the participants, the researcher makes use of an audit trail that can be linked to the responses of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:298). To ensure confirmability it is essential that the findings are unbiased and from the data, and not researcher bias (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:3). To achieve confirmability, the researcher gave a detailed account of the approaches, processes and research methods used in the study, thus allowing other researchers to confirm the findings through access to the data (Colorafi & Evans, 2016:9). The researcher also used direct quotations from the participants to illustrate the points raised by the participants’ responses.

## **2.11 RISK AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY**

There was minimal risk for participants in the study. The social workers are professionals and could therefore make an informed decision if they want to participate in the study. There was a possibility of psychological harm due to feelings of embarrassment, being upset or anxious, stress, or feelings of guilt. In order to reduce these risks, participants were informed beforehand about the option to withdraw from the interview at any time. Their participation was voluntary. A debriefing session was also made available for participants if they felt the need to discuss their feelings about the research project immediately after the session. The debriefing was done by the Employee Health and Wellness programme unit from DSD. Details of the Employee health and wellness programme were also provided to participants. This support was at no cost to participants. There were no direct benefits for the social workers. The

indirect benefits included that the participants were given an opportunity to talk about their experiences of social work services in high risk schools.

## **2.12 POSITION OF THE RESEARCHER**

It is important that researchers reflect on how their biases, personal backgrounds, values like gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, may influence how they interpret findings of the study (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:127). When doing qualitative research, the researcher becomes part of the research process, as they engage with the participants through data collection and analysis. Researchers in qualitative research are therefore often criticised of being biased which may have an influence on the data collection and the data analysis (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas, & Caricativo, 2017:430). To mitigate researcher biases, as the researcher is a supervisor to social workers in the Johannesburg region, this region was excluded from the study. Prior to data collection the researcher kept a reflective journal in which she recorded the motivation for conducting the study, her assumptions with regards to the research, her values, and all potential role conflict with the study participants (Creswell, 2013:216). This as well as the bracketing method, assisted in ensuring that the researcher's biases did not interfere with the study as it allowed her to reflect and examine her engagement with the data (Creswell, 2013:216).

With regards to professional competency, the researcher has a Bachelor of Social Science Degree in Social Work. The researcher is also registered as a social worker with SACSSP with the council no: 10-22494. Currently the researcher is employed as a social worker at DSD in Johannesburg Metro Region rendering social work services in schools around Johannesburg Metro Region. For the past nine years, she has worked as a statutory social worker. Her work entailed conducting investigations for the Children's Court, rendering social work services with regards to foster care applications, foster care supervision and family reunification, and providing continuous support, counselling, guidance and advice to individuals, groups, families and communities. Research that she conducted during her Honours degree included perceptions of foster parent in raising related foster children. Although the researcher is trained to conduct interviews and group work with children and adults, the researcher attended ethics training that was offered by the NWU in 2018 in order to



gain knowledge and skills required for research. The researcher was also supervised by a study leader who is knowledgeable having extensive experience in the field of research.

### **2.13 CONCLUSION**

The methods of analysis and the rationale for the research approach were explored in this chapter. The focus of the discussion was on the analytical approach of how data was collected and interpreted in order to answer the research questions raised in the study. It started with the contextualisation of the study to set the margins for the study and justify its importance and relevance, tracing it in the South African context. The next part discussed the research design and the approach. This was followed by the description of participants and data collection methods and data analysis to determine how the required data was handled and conclusions generated from the different participants' views. The next phase discussed the ethics and the consideration made about the study and trustworthiness. The chapter closed with the risk and the position of the researcher in the study; discussing potential biases and areas of concern. The next chapter is the literature review which provides an overview of the available literature.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The focus in this chapter is on school social work and social work services in high risk schools. This literature review focuses on providing an overview of the most important concepts. The chapter starts with a discussion on social work and how social services developed to include school social work (SSW) within the profession. Different international and national perspectives will be explored. As this research focused on formulating guidelines for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province, a discussion of the South African school context and problems facing the school system in South Africa is required. It is against this backdrop that the social work services in high risk schools, the roles and functions of social workers is explained. This chapter outlines legislations and policies that guide service delivery in schools.

#### **3.2 DEFINING SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**

In this next section, two key concepts that guide the study on social work services is discussed.

##### **3.2.1 Defining social work**

Different definitions exist for social work. The IASSW and the IFSW (2014) define “social work as a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work”.

The NASW define social work as “the professional activity of helping individuals, groups, or communities enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and creating societal conditions favourable to this goal”.

Definitions of social work should act as guidelines for social workers as they should be committing themselves to the value and vision of the described preferred

outcomes (Kirst-Ashman, 2010:5). The study is guided by the global definition of social work.

### **3.2.2 Defining school social work**

Learners around the world are continuously faced with complex and a wide variety of problems, which act as an obstacle to their learning. Social workers assist them with the use of the systems thinking approach to holistically assess the learners' lives to identify the areas which affect their learning, as well as possible solutions (Huxtable, 2013:3-4). SSW was established and introduced in many countries to help schools handle barriers to education and to handle problems like discrimination, bullying and conflict with teachers (Huxtable, 2013:2). SSW is a specialty within the broader social work profession, and a critical area of specialisation which aims to support learners in the school environment (SSWAA, 2013:1). They also connect families, schools, and the community in a unified effort to support learners in the educational setting.

For the literature review it is important to identify a practical definition of school social work. A review of the literature indicated no universal definition of school social work, but rather that scholars base their definition on their research context (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020:127). This means that the scholars based their definitions on how school social work is practiced in their countries or regions, and the same principle applies in South Africa.

Vergottini (2019:37-8) defines school social work as: "school social work is the application of social work principles and methods within the education system in order to render holistic social work services to learners, parents, educators and the school as community, with the main goal of addressing personal, emotional, socioeconomic and behavioural barriers to learning and create an environment where the learner can reach his or her full potential".

According to this definition school social work involves the application of social work methods and principles within a school context and holistically giving support to learners with learning barriers (Reyneke, 2020:159). Kemp *et al.* (2015:10) add to this by stating that school social work is integral to the education system by assisting

learners in the improvement of their overall well-being, as well as academically, in a space where they feel safe and protected.

### **3.3 SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK**

SSW has been practised for more than 100 years and is well established as a specialist field in the social work profession (Kemp *et al.*, 2015:9). SSW is recognised internationally as a mechanism for schools to better deal with learning barriers; some of which include inequity, socio-economic factors, physical and mental health issues (Huxtable, 2013:2).

To explore how and where social work as a profession fits in the education system in South Africa, this section discusses the international and national development of school social work.

#### **3.3.1 The development of school social work in the international context**

School social work originated in New York in 1906 (Kemp, 2013:21) and was influenced by laws which required compulsory school attendance for children and identifying children as individuals by educators and other service providers (Allen-Meares, 1996:203). According to Costin (1969: 439) social work services in schools were developed to make education more relevant by linking schools to the lives of the learners. Dupper (2003:13) points out that the mental health movement of the 1920s was a great influence in the introduction of school social work. At this time, social work was considered an important therapeutic tool in schools especially during the Great Depression. Social workers in schools provided shelter and food to families in need (Allen-Meares, 1996:203).

Between 1940 and 1950 there was a dynamic shift towards an emphasis on the individual child over social casework, advocacy, and societal reform activities (Dupper, 2003:13). This saw a change in the methods and goals of school social work, with emphasis placed on working with parents and at-risk students, conducting research on the school social workers' roles working in schools and studying the school practices and policies which had adverse effects on learners (Allen-Meares, 1996:203).

Between 1970 and 1980 the United States began debating their quality of education and educational legislation supporting social workers to work in schools were passed, whilst the National Association of Social Work developed the first standards for social workers working in schools (Allen-Meares, 1996:203). Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the United States saw a need to reform schools to address the growing number of underperforming school children, eliminate violence and substance abuse, the need for sex education and awareness on AIDS, and addressing alternative schooling and pressure for parental choice (Allen-Meares, 1996:203). Currently school social work is being practised in approximately 49 developed and developing countries globally (Kemp, Pretorius & Avenant, 2015:44).

### **3.3.2 The development of school social work in South Africa**

In South Africa, school social work came about using school psychological services employed by the DoE (Rocher, 1977:82). Rocher (1977:82) postulates that in the 1920s the DoE employed various psychologists to conduct IQ tests. The then Transvaal and Natal Departments of Education, employed special teachers to deal with learner welfare needs in 1948, and these teachers were by 1955 required to not only have a teaching diploma, but to also hold a social work, sociology or psychology qualification (Kemp, 2014:11). It was in the 1940s that South Africa identified the need for social workers in schools (Swart, 1997:17).

In 1958 school counsellors with a qualification in education were employed, which however proved to be a challenge as these counsellors had to deal with learners with a myriad of behavioural and emotional issues (Lanesman,1987:14). The counsellors were then withdrawn from the schools in the then Transvaal in 1971 while a course in school counselling was being developed (Rocher, 1977:82).

The apartheid era saw the creation of a fragmented education system based on racial groups, non-white learners from special schools were moved from the church special schools to the education departments which had been created for each race (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020:130). As with many countries, the predominant political, philosophical, and cultural influences of the time had an impact on South Africa's development of education (Naicker, 2006:2). Formally, the necessity of social workers to render services in schools was identified in 1973, and the development of school

social work was recommended, but with a focus on special needs children (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020:129).

In South Africa, it was academics in the social sciences who campaigned for social workers to be assigned in schools (Kemp, 2014:11). The beginning of democracy in South Africa saw a transformation in the education system with every learner declared to having a right and equal access to basic education (OECD, 2008:38; Constitution of South Africa, 1996:S 29(1)). Since then, the Department of Basic Education has been advocating for inclusive education which enables all learners an opportunity to quality education, including all previously disadvantaged groups (DBE, 2001:10; WCEFA, 1990:38). The Education White Paper 6 identified various learning needs amongst school children which may be influenced by factors such as mental, physical, sensory, development and neurological deficiencies, as well as psychosocial instabilities, differences in intellectual ability, life experiences and socio-economic deprivation (DBE, 2001:17). The White Paper therefore states that educational support services are needed to support the education system in its response to these needs and these are professional psychosocial services provided by educational and other psychologists, as well as social workers (DBE, 2018:17; DBE, 2014:33)

In South Africa the first school social worker was appointed in 1983 in Kwa Zulu Natal after which the other provinces followed and only in 2009 school social work was identified as a possible specialized field by SACSSP (Kemp, 2013:4).

### **3.3.3 Roles and functions of school social workers**

Globally, the concept of school social work is not considered new, but it remains a challenge to universally define the role of school social workers, as school social workers perform different activities in schools (Gherardi & Whittlesey-Jerome, 2018:36). The fact that the psychosocial needs of schools are unique and contextual to where the school is located means that school social work is different from social work in general even though school social workers still employ the universal social work processes (SACSSP, 2016:4). While social workers adhere to the principles of social work, school social workers also need to adhere to school social work principles, which require them to address the learners' psychosocial needs, promote a culture of learning, and being part of a multi-disciplinary team (SACSSP, 2016:14-15).

School social workers are employed in various roles to ensure access to adequate social work services that enhance learners' academic achievement and address social barriers to learning (Pretorius, 2016:62). They have multiple functions (Constable, 2008:25), such as individual counselling, group counselling, and consultation with administrators and teachers (Agresta, 2004:152). Dupper (2003:11) supports this by stating that school social workers play a significant role in schools by providing counselling to individuals and groups, running activities within the classroom, and implementing school-based prevention programmes.

Franklin (in Pretorius, 2015:322), states that the various functions of a school social worker include:

- Being a consultant: One with specialised knowledge and an expert to whom other people will turn for guidance and information.
- Counsellor: One who can provide clinical intervention to individuals, groups, and communities on emotional, behavioural, and social matters;
- Educator: One who teaches relevant skills and provides information.
- Advocate: One who mediates, protects, or recommends a way of action on behalf of one or more people; and
- Facilitator: One who guides the group process, ensuring that learning, growth, and development take place among members, improving their functioning and well-being.

### **3.4 SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSION**

The South African Council for Social Service Profession (SACSSP) is a statutory body and was established in terms of Section 2 of the Social Service Professions Act No. 110 of 1978 (as amended), which “promotes and protects the integrity of the social service professions, as well as the interest of the public” (Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978:3).

The objectives of SACSSP are as follows:

- “To determine the standards of professional conduct of social service professions (social workers, social auxiliary workers, child and youth care

workers, students in social work, social auxiliary work, as well as child and youth care work in which professional boards have been established (Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978:3).

- To define its powers and functions, and for the registration of social and associated workers.
- For control over the profession of social work and associated professions; and for incidental matters.
- To strive for social justice through the promotion and enhancement of developmental social welfare.
- To determine strategic policy regarding the profession under the Council's auspices with regards to matters such as finance, education, registration, ethics and professional conduct, disciplinary procedures, inter-professional matters, and maintenance of professional competence.
- To coordinate the activities of the social service professional boards and act as an advisory and communicatory body for such professional boards; control and exercise authority regarding finances; promote and regulate inter-professional liaison between social service professions in the interest of the public.
- To assist in the promotion of social services, protect and promote the interests of the social service professions; consult and liaise with relevant authorities on matters affecting the professional boards in general; control and exercise general authority in respect of matters affecting social service education and training” (Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978:3).

The SACSSP is the umbrella structure for two professional boards which are the Professional Board for Social Work and the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Work.

The mission of the SACSSP “is to serve the best interests of the social service practitioners, professions and service users by regulating, leading and promoting the social service professions in an innovative and responsive manner.” Social workers who want to practice as a social worker in South Africa must be registered with the SACSSP (SACSSP, nd:5). There are several sub-disciplinary areas in social work,



including Forensic Social Work, School Social Work, Social Work Supervision, Psychiatric Social Work, Social Work in Health Services, Investigative Social Work, and Adoption and Probation Work.

### **3.5 THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Looking at Africa's colonial history, it is necessary that every African country develop their own education system to enable all children to go to school and access equitable quality education (Herbst & Mills, 2012:155). This will enable children to not only enter the labour market, but also contribute to the economy which would in turn attract investors (Herbst & Mills, 2012:155).

As the South African government continues to grapple with the apartheid legacy, the country's education system remains in a process of transformation as the government tries to balance risks and future opportunities (Zewotir & North, 2011:27). Post democracy, the transformation saw public spending on education being targeted towards the poor instead of being unequal on the basis of race (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011:21). Grant, Jasson and Lawrence (2010:83) stated that most of South African schools inherited the "legacy of dysfunction". When South Africa gained its democracy, it was necessary for immediate reforms in governance, administration, as well as funding for education (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011:12). The controversial curriculum reform was a strong shift from the apartheid education system as it aimed at advancing problem solving and critical thinking (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011:21). Despite all these efforts to transform the education system, the government is still struggling with the resilient legacy from the past which is the poor quality of education in the historically disadvantaged parts of the school system (Mouton, Louw, & Strydom, 2013:3).

While some schools manage to thrive under these circumstances, a majority remain dysfunctional. Anderson-Butcher and Ashton (2004:39) state that there are significant variables hindering the development of teachers and learners. These include unemployment, high levels of poverty, political violence, faction fighting, gang conflict, as well as social problems, which are seen as contributing factors (Christie & Potterton, 1997:239). These variables have a negative effect on the learners as they are left traumatised, which impacts on their learning abilities (Mouton, Louw, & Strydom, 2013:31).

Another concern in South Africa is the decline in the educational standards and has resulted in government's revision of the matric school-leaving requirements (Capazorio & Thakali, 2012:1). Jansen (2012:4) states that the devaluing of education in South Africa can only result in high levels of educational and social illiteracy, which would result in social chaos. Hartley (2012:4) further argued that those learners who are fortunate to make it through school, struggle to get into universities and those who make it to universities struggle to find employment opportunities. Jansen (2012:4) further argues that while there is no short cut to social transformation, a social revolution is necessary which places education at the centre for change where the people take charge and address the challenges within the education system.

Bezuidenhout (2010:80) states that most schools, especially those in townships, lack essential resources to function effectively, such as basic infrastructure, school fences and water pipes, toilets which are often vandalised or stolen, windows are broken, gaping holes in ceilings, and barren concrete school grounds. Most of these schools have main entrances and even school classrooms having heavy security gates, to keep children in school and criminals out (Bezuidenhout, 2010:80). Not only do schools have a lack of resources but they are also faced with limited resources, with one social worker and one psychologist who have to attend to the psychosocial needs of approximately 100,000 children in a district (Jalamba, 2009 cited in Mouton *et al.*, 2013:32). Schools also encounter crises because of behavioural and mental issues of pupils, which calls for the help of social workers (Gilbert, 2001:7).

In order to attain their educational target, schools need to cooperate with other educational agencies such as the DSD, the SAPS, the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Health, the Department of Justice and Correctional Care and the Department of Labour (Department of Basic Education, 2018:22; Department of Basic Education, 2014:32). Schools also learned that to maintain successful cooperation, all participants of a team must connect with one another (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004:40).

### **3.5.1 Challenges within the school system of South Africa**

School is important in the lives of learners, as it plays a critical role in their learning and socialisation, and therefore should be a safe environment for learner development

and authentic learning (Ngqela & Lewis, 2012:88). One of the goals of the Ministry of Education (MOE) is to make sure that a school is safe and free from accidents, harassment, and assault (DBE, 2011:47). Although the school environment should be a safe environment this is not the reality in schools in South Africa as the learners face several challenges.

### **3.5.1.1 Challenges learners have to face**

Due to the complex social problems in South Africa, too many children face social challenges outside the classrooms (Pretorius, 2016:61). There are various factors which affect learners in schools depending on their context. Some of these include poor living conditions, lack of basic services, poor parenting, poverty due to HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, socioeconomic factors, school violence, and low parent participation within schools (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2013:31).

While violence in schools is not an exclusively South African phenomenon (Schoeman, 2010:337), it is a daily challenge in numerous South African schools as demonstrated in the daily newspapers and the social media platforms in South Africa. Unfortunately, “this has become a sad pattern in South African schools” (Mampane, Ebersöhn, Cherrington & Moen, 2014:158). Fighting is another manifestation of crime in school where students are attacked by other learners and need to defend themselves (Bezuidenhout, 2013:81). Evidence shows that school violence continues to increase despite efforts by the schools and Department of Basic Education to put preventative measures in place (Fishbaugh, Berkeley & Schroth, 2003; Human Rights Commission, 2006; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013).

The high learner dropout rate is another challenge experienced in South African schools. Dropping out of school limits the chance of an adolescent to develop social skills and chances of getting employed are very slim (Bezuidenhout, 2010:83). The school dropout rate in South Africa has continued to grow and has reached an alarming rate. It is estimated that about 60% of learners who go into grade one will dropout before they complete grade 12, whilst by grade 12 only 52% of the age-appropriate learners would still be enrolled (Department of Basic Education, 2015). Jones (2011 cited in Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2013:34) states that the Department of Basic Education has initiated several incentives and initiatives to encourage

learners to attend school and reduce drop out such as no-fee schools, giving textbooks and workbooks, and school nutrition programmes.

The current COVID-19 pandemic had a further negative effect on learners (Abrams & Dettlaff, 2020:2). In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools closed for a period of time as a contingency plan was designed to minimise the spread of COVID-19 pandemic (Department of Basic Education, 2020:12). Teaching and learning was disrupted. Learners who had access to meals at schools had to rely on food banks (Abrams & Dettlaff, 2020:2). Those without internet access had no opportunity to school, while those who had access to internet were continuing with their education (Abrams & Dettlaff, 2020:2).

Another challenge experienced with regards to learners is late coming, absenteeism and truancy from school. According to Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013:33) learners leaving school early, wandering around the school grounds, and coming to school late is not uncommon in South Africa. Fredericks (2011 cited in Mouton *et al.* (2013:33)) argues that this is due to lack of adequate supervision and it is more common especially during examination times.

Sexual activity and teenage pregnancies are also a serious school concern and contributing to the high drop-out rate of learners (Kirst-Ashman, 2010:412). Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of children born to teen mothers in South Africa has increased by 60% (Save the Children, 2021). Between April 2020 and March 2021, more than 23 000 girls under the age of 18 years gave birth and of this 23 000, 934 were younger than 14 years of age; compared to the 14 577 girls (aged 19 and under) who had babies in the same period a year earlier (Gauteng Department of Health).

The use of alcohol and drugs by learners is another challenge facing learners and schools. The national survey of high schools for learners from Grade 8 to Grade 11 indicated substance abuse prevalence rates as follows: alcohol 50%, 30% for learners who smoked cigarettes, 13% for learners who had used cannabis, 7.4% for mandrax and 12% had used inhalants of various sorts (Soul City, 2016). The use of alcohol and

drugs by learners may lead to mental illness, such as depression and it may also be associated with aggressive behaviour (Department of Basic Education, 2013:11).

### **3.5.1.2. Challenges facing educators**

Educators are also affected by the violence in schools, as they experience robberies and killings at their workplaces (Bezuidenhout, 2013:80-81). Working in such school environments negatively affects the health of the teachers individually, as well as the school system (Mouton *et al.*, 2013:32). Educator morale are affected by the quality of teaching and the poor teaching environment in the educational system of South Africa, and this has an impact on the standard of education. Matoti (2010) (cited in Mouton *et al.*, 2013:32) indicates that most educators are not sure about their own future in education. They furthermore feel uncertain and concerned about the political and economic situation in the country. Other aspects that are of concern is the changes in policy, as well as the curriculum. There is a high rate of attrition, role conflict, low teacher morale, unsafe school environments, unsatisfactory working conditions, the decline in the quality of education, poor school management and leadership in schools, unprofessional conduct of educators, as well as a lack of accountability (Matoti, 2010 (cited in Mouton *et al.*, 2013:32). Educators also experience challenges such as the resource shortage of instruction materials, relevant textbooks, unresourced libraries and equipment. Furthermore, educators face steep challenges in limited facilities, no job security leading to the loss of competent staff with no teaching-learning strategies. There is a shortage of teaching staff of appropriately trained educators with discipline. This resource crunch leads to a huge issue in the educational system (Legotlo, 2014:7).

## **3.6 SOCIAL WORK SERVICES IN SCHOOLS**

Social work in schools worldwide have been identified to have primarily considered the development of educational aspects and address mitigation of possible harm and relevant factors in the social development of learners. According to Beddoe, de Haan and Joy (2018:46), increasing educational funding, recognising priorities of students with differentiated communities, developing learning and “emotional well-being” followed by involving stakeholders to facilitate support in school and educational activities on time are primary aspects of social work in schools. The impact of social

work in schools therefore can be stated to be implemented to effectively address above mentioned aspects and increase further development of the same aspects to support educational and social development.

According to Mann and Sun (2021:4), in the US, 31% of elementary students and 34% of students in middle schools have started to attend schooling supported by social workers. In South Africa, “special education needs (SEN)”, equal educational treatments and addressing emotional and social well-being of students in school are fundamentally prioritized as social work services (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019:4). In addition to this, it is also observed that “district-based support teams” as social service workers are also deployed for effective support for schools. Reduction in educational productivity as an impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has also increased social work services for schools and the deliverance of education. As observed by Black, Spreen and Vally (2020:56), “the national department’s intention to ‘save’ the academic year also featured prominently”. This referenced idea has been cited to effectively evaluate the impact of implemented social services in schools of South Africa following the decision of reopening and providing adequate support to students for learning. The impact of school social services in South Africa and the rest of the world depicts that educational development and student well-being are fundamental considerations.

In schools, the primary goal of social work is to support youth in changing their attitudes towards health and education in collaboration with their families and society at large (NASW, 2012). Social workers are professionally qualified to address a range of educational problems that often present themselves in schools (Alvarens, Bye, Bryant & Mumm, 2013:236). Social work services in schools are furthermore seen as a social work specialisation, attempting to address psychological and social barriers experienced by learners (Government Gazette, 2020:75). Social workers are considered professionals within the field of social work and aim to give guidance to children, families, and schools to remove barriers to learning and increase social outcomes (GDSD and GDoE, 2018).

### **3.6.1 The focus areas of social work services in schools**

According to Dupper (2003:88-93), societal conditions have become more complicated and have grown worldwide, which leads to the increase of learners becoming victims of these social ills and which affects their position and potential as learners. Therefore, social workers have to attend to the social and mental wellbeing of adolescents and their families or relatives (GDSD and GDoE, 2018). The following focus areas are identified:

#### **3.6.1.1 Child abuse and neglect**

Child abuse refers to “any form of harm or ill-treatment that has been deliberately inflicted on a child, including exposing a child to behaviour that may harm him or her physically, psychologically, and emotionally” (DSD, 2012:8). Social workers have experience and knowledge on the signs of child abuse, negligence, and exploitation (DSD, 2016:126), and are able to recognise symptoms of abuse that educators may not recognise. It is essential that social workers perform an accurate assessment to determine whether the child is likely to be in immediate danger of serious harm. This could require intervention for the child's protection (DSD, 2016:126). Within the school environment, social workers and other professionals, such as educators, pastors and child protection organisations, serve on the frontline of abuse prevention and intervention (DSD, 2016:126).

Social workers rendering services in schools furthermore have a very important role to play in the development, as well as the empowerment of educators in the management of legislation relating to the protection of children. This includes informing educators on relevant legislation such as the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters Amendment Act 32 of 2007) and the requisite obligation to report child abuse and sexual offences against children (DSD, 2016:126).

This legislation clearly states that school social workers and social workers rendering services to schools need to make referrals to designated child protection organisations and the South African Police Service to report such incidents (DSD, 2019:61). For this reason, school social workers and social workers rendering services in schools not

only require contextual knowledge of legislation, policies and documents, as highlighted above, but also require specific skills, insight and expertise gained in the respective field to ultimately address social barriers to learning (Kemp, 2014).

### **3.6.1.2 *Mental health disorders and suicide***

Youth suicide in South Africa is on the increase and could soon become more widespread (Schmist, Lanchini, George, Koller & Weist, 2015:18). Even though the reasons of suicide remain unclear and varies between individuals, an extensive amount of concerns, such as abuse, family difficulties, and lack of friends are significant factors in considering suicide (Schmist *et al.*, 2015: 25). In recent years, a significant cause of suicidal thinking by high school learners has been cyberbullying (Slovak & Singer, 2011:8). Social workers are the people that take constructive positions and aim towards decreasing suicidal rates by learners (Schmist *et al.*, 2015:22).

Mental disorders have been found to affect all manner of personal, social, emotional, and educational outcomes. It is similarly important to implement behavioural wellbeing initiatives (Bezrin, Brien, Frey, Alvarez & Shaffer, 2011:133). A social worker in school can check for signs of mental disorder, direct the learners to mental health facilities, and assist the professionals with mental health facilities in handling the learner's mental disorders.

### **3.6.1.3 *Problematic behaviour***

Corcoran (2006:72) refers to behavioural problems as displaying hostility against peers and parents, rebellion against teachers, and creating issues among classmates at school. Some learners are often susceptible to utilising narcotics, for instance, marijuana and other substances (DoE, 2013:i). Behaviour that contributes to misbehaviour in school is any behaviour that stops learners from studying well, whatever they may be attempting to learn or accomplish (Auciello, 2006:4). The conduct is often made up of resentment, hostility, dissatisfaction, and stubbornness. Most of the children referred to are habitually expelled or suspended from school due to behavioural problems: disruptive behaviour in class, not doing schoolwork, fighting,



shouting at teachers and having a high rate of absenteeism (Clough, Garner, Pardeck & Yuen, 2005:155).

It is important to practice social work to distinguish between levels at which behaviour problems affect the child in their immediate family system and community. The less serious behaviour can still be effectively dealt within the family, but the more serious behaviour will necessitate that social worker explore possible legal intervention for the child. Legal intervention includes psychological assessment, counselling and possible referral to Child and Youth Care Centre (CYCC), formally identified as industrial schools.

The role of social workers in addressing problematic behaviour is to involve learners in prevention programs that will enable them to manage their behaviour in a way that might assist them to avoid disciplinary action or referral to a Child and Youth Care Centre (Kelly, 2008:101). By understanding children presenting socially unacceptable behaviour, the focus should rather shift from the behaviour and problem-solving to a focus on the self of the person (Rogers 1987, in Grobler and Schenck, 2010:71). Social workers need to enable children to accept responsibility, and also to act responsibly. They also provide life skills training to enable children to manage anger, stress and maintain good interpersonal relationship (Bezuidenhout, 2010:163).

#### **3.6.1.4 Bullying**

Bullying can be considered as a repeated verbal, physical, psychological, or social aggression by a person or group with a purpose of causing harm or distress to the victim (Dupper, 2003:45). Mishana (2003:514) states that bullying includes assaults, abuse, and the taking of another person's possessions by intimidation. It involves several behavioural patterns, including physicality or the victim being excluded socially, as well as emotional intimidation that may trigger intense and overwhelming feelings of victimisation (Mishana, 2003:514). There are different types of bullying which are:

- Verbal abuse - include name calling, insulting and negative remarks;
- Physical abuse - include hitting, kicking, pinching punching and spitting;

- Social bullying - include spreading rumours, gossiping and exclusion from social group;
- Sexual bullying - include forced sexual behaviour, passing inappropriate remarks and starting rumours of a sexual nature (Department of Basic Education, 2012: 4).

Bullying has caused many serious and life-threatening problems for the person being bullied (Department of Basic Education, 2012:9). It is also the most common form of school violence. The person being bullied lives in a state of constant fear and their academic and mental health suffers accordingly (Dupper, 2003:45). Bullying is also a form of peer violence that involves a hurtful and aggressive pattern of behaviour perpetrated repeatedly by one or more individuals against a less powerful victim (Huddleston, 2015:94). Cyberbullying is any behaviour performed through electronic or digital media by an individual (Huddleston, 2015:95). According to Cilliers and Chinyamurindi (2020:1), "The victims of cyberbullying are at greater risk to experience poor psychosocial adjustment as they are typically already socially isolated". This implies that cyberbullying has developed significant issues with student social interactions and has also affected the development of educational development in schools of South Africa.

Social workers play a very important role in the prevention of bullying through the growing awareness of bullying interventions to pupils, teachers, and parents (Dupper, 2003:43). In addition, clear rules to combat bullying must be drawn up, and the victims must be supported and protected. Learners can also partake in conversations on school bullying problems. Social workers will also work with the victim of the bullying, their parents and with the bullies (Dupper 2003:141). Social workers also need to advise educators to endorse anti-bullying measures in compliance with their standards of ethics in schools (Bezuidenhout, 2013:49).

### **3.6.1.5 Crisis intervention**

A crisis can be described as an individual's interpretation or experience of an incident as an unacceptable issue (Schenk *et al.*, 2016:103). Crisis management is a short-term intervention that seeks to harness the individual's inner power and

energy so that they can solve the crisis and strengthen their ability to cope (Teater, 2010:196). Three types of crises are identified:

- Developmental crisis

This form of crisis is triggered by a person's natural growth, when a person has inner tension because of life changes (Teater, 2010:196). The individual cannot cope at this point.

- Situational crisis

That is attributed to a drastic shift in the life of a human (Teater, 2010:196). These are unpredictable scenarios that are destructive throughout the life of the person. The crisis impacts the person as they are not prepared for the shift in their circumstances.

- Existential crisis

This crisis happens when a person has inner confusion about their role and intent in their life. This is due to a person regretting many of the earlier decisions in their life that cannot be reversed (Teater, 2010:196).

As educational outcomes are strongly linked to learners' holistic health, social workers in schools must be prepared to assist in any crisis which hinders the learners' growth and progress.

### **3.6.1.6 Substance abuse**

Substance abuse is another complex social problem contributing to the challenging social context of many children in South Africa as it affects their school performance (Pretorius, 2016:73). Substance abuse amongst learners is recognised as a significant barrier to teaching and learning, and a big concern as it has a negative impact on learners' academic performance, aspiration and linked to school dropout (DoE, 2013:i). Substance abuse and excessive alcohol use may also contribute to violence and crime (Bezuidenhout, 2013:73). In addressing substance abuse, the role of social workers is to provide prevention, early intervention, referral to treatment centres and reintegration services to individuals, families and communities affected by substance

abuse (DSD: National Drug Masterplan, 2019:41). Social workers are also responsible for coordination of services and ensure the wellbeing of individuals.

### **3.6.1.7 Parental and family involvement**

Parental engagement fulfils an essential part in the success of a learner and is necessary as it helps parents to understand how to manage their children's behaviour (Walton, 2011:243). The social worker can also empower parents in building a positive relationship with their children (Walton, 2011:243).

In Bowen's (1999:106) view social workers have the requisite know-how to support parents to take responsibility of their children at home. Social workers can assist parents by monitoring the progress and emotional outbreaks of their children, particularly if they are prevented from learning effectively (Drolet, Maryse & Soutyrine, 2006:204). They also can refer them to family counselling and social services, which allows them to cooperate with external stakeholders to offer learners more effective strategies for their problems (Drolet *et al.*, 2006:204).

## **3.7 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY GUIDELINES TO INFORM AND INFLUENCE SERVICE DELIVERY IN SCHOOLS**

The following subsections are brief outlines of the main legislation and policies that regulate service delivery in schools:

### **3.7.1 The Children's Act, 2005 (Act 38 of 2005)**

The Children's Act, 2005 (Act 38 of 2005) is the legislative basis for South Africa's introduction of child safety and health programmes. It is an Act that aims to include the appropriate treatment, security, and support for kids to grow to their highest capability (DSD, 2015). Child security services provide resources given in compliance with Section 150 of the Children's Act, 2005 (Act 38 of 2005) where a child is at risk (abuse, neglect) and in need of treatment and safety (RSA, 2005).

### **3.7.2 Child Justice Act, 2008 (Act 75 of 2008)**

The goal of the 2008 Child Justice Act (Act 75 of 2008) is to create a framework of child justice for minors who are in dispute with the law (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2017). This Act aims to ensure that juvenile justice

problems are addressed in a rights-based way and to support children accused of causing crime(s) to transform their life and become active citizens of the community by interacting with the child in initiatives of restorative justice, rehabilitation and other alternate sentencing (DSD, 2017:35). When children are in conflict with the law the child justice process is followed and not the normal criminal court procedure which are used with adults (DSD, 2017:35).

### **3.7.3 Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 2007 (Act 32 of 2007)**

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 2007 (Act 32 of 2007) attempts to guarantee that children are not held responsible for participating in consensual sexual acts with each other. The National Register for Sex Offenders comprises of names of person who have been convicted of a charge of sexual offences against a child. The DoE needs to check whether a potential employer is fit to work with children (DoE, 2018:11). The potential employee should disclose to the potential employer if they have previously been convicted for a sexual offence against a child (DoE, 2018:11).

### **3.7.4 Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependency Act, 2008 (Act 20 of 2008)**

This public legislation aims to address substance addiction by interventions to decrease availability, demand and damage incurred by narcotics. It also acquaints the regulatory structure with the right strategies for minimising, avoiding, reducing the demand for and the abuse of illicit drugs (DSD, 2017:35).

### **3.7.5 Domestic Violence Act, 1998 (Act 116 of 1998)**

This Act seeks to “afford victims of domestic violence the maximum protection from domestic abuse that the law can provide” (DSD, 2017:35). A social worker plays a role by providing psychosocial support to victims.

### **3.7.6 The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996)**

This Act is applicable to learning environments in the Republic of South Africa. The Act establishes a standardised framework for the organisation, governance, and

financing of schools by creating a Government Schools Board (The South African Schools Act, 1996).

### **3.7.7 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996)**

The Constitution of South Africa specifies that a child should be able to possess the maximum measure of his or her rights and obligations. Children have the right to live, schooling and social care, meaning they should be safe from being violated, ignored, and maltreated (RSA, 1996).

### **3.7.8 The White Paper on Families (2013)**

This policy attempts to support and strengthen families by reducing situations which have a negative effect on families, such as poverty, unemployment, child abuse, gender-based violence, inequality and domestic violence (DSD, 2017:35).

### **3.7.9 National Policy Framework and Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Management of Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation**

This policy seeks to reduce and ensure the effective management of the incidents of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation in South Africa. It prevents the further maltreatment of the children concerned (DSD, 2017:35).

## **3.8 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY SOCIAL WORKERS RENDERING SERVICES IN SCHOOLS**

The role of social workers in schools is to promote and support the educational process. They provide professional services, both social and emotional and participate in professional development activities of learners, and know how to modify the school environment for the best interest of the children (Dash & Mohan, 2015:550). For this to be accomplished, social workers need to work with the learners, learners' parents, teachers, schools, and the community at large. A study in India found that social workers and social organisations struggled to involve teachers in their activities for the interventions to be more sustainable (Dash & Mohan, 2015:551). The findings from Dash and Mohan (2015) further showed that in many cases when social workers are addressing the whole class, the teachers consider the social workers their replacement and go on to attend to other work; they also found that the teachers are

not clear on the social workers' roles and expect them to assist with administrative work. Another study by Mishana, Muskat and Cook (2012:4) also found that social workers in schools mostly find it challenging to collaborate with teachers and parents because they lack awareness of the role of social workers in schools.

According to Mishana *et al.* (2012:6), as teachers and social workers come from different professional backgrounds, teachers do not place the same importance to social issues as do social workers and may not always see the need to address these issues. A study by Dash and Mohan (2015:551) also found that it is a challenge to get buy-in from teachers regarding their methods and activities. Furthermore, some teachers are prejudiced against Non-profit organisations (NPO) and are not always keen to work with people coming from these organisations.

Mishana *et al.* (2012:6) is also of the view that due to the high workload that teachers have, they are often not keen to and have limited time to explore learners' social issues. They also fear coming across as being vindictive to the parents in cases where they are asked to testify in court.

According to Washburn (2016:148), there is also sometimes a power struggle between social workers and the teachers or school administration, especially when the teachers ask for information about a learner, and when a social worker may not provide such information due to confidentiality issues, despite the school having good reasons for needing that information.

The findings from Mishana *et al.* (2012:6) study shows that parents can also hinder collaborative efforts with social workers in schools. One of the issues is that parents are often suspicious of social workers. Too many parents, social workers in schools are linked to the child protection unit and this leads to a fear of having their children removed by the state (Mishana *et al.*, 2012:4). Due to lack of education on the importance and need of social work services in schools, most parents do not find the services necessary. Additionally, in some cases there is stigma attached to receiving services from social workers (Mishana *et al.*, 2012:4).

Evidence from various studies (Kelly, Thompson, Frey, Kemp, Alvarez, & Berzin, 2015; Kelly *et al.*, 2010:138) show that social workers working in schools often feel unsupported in their schools because they have high caseloads and other requirements that they need to be compliant to. According to Nhedz and Makofane (2015:355) in most cases social workers' inability to cope with the work demand stems from having multiple responsibilities. Social workers often fail to cope with the demand of their work effectively because they are stretched in the delivery of their services (Landman & Lombard, 2006; Mashigo, 2007).

Studies by Dlangamandla (2010) and Strydom (2010:192) also found that social workers are left to struggle with high caseloads which are often all crisis oriented making it difficult to provide adequate services to clients. Social workers in schools have also reported that they lack tools and evidence-informed practice, and that they lack prior training to be able to use data to show the impacts of their work (Kelly, Bluestone-Miller, Mervis, & Fuerst, 2012:250).

Resource constraints are often a challenge for school social workers as they should ensure that they render services to all their clients while working on a limited budget and resources (Washburn, 2016:148). A study by Strydom (2010:193) revealed that many organisations have insufficient resources, such as vehicles, which is an obstacle to the provision of adequate services by social workers. Most organisations do not have adequate funds for social workers to initiate, run and maintain programs but still at the same time these organisations expect social workers to initiate programmes, even though there is a lack of funds for implementation (Strydom, 2010:194; Dlangamandla, 2010).

### **3.9 HIGH RISK SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**

Pretorius (2016:69) views high risk schools as poorly performing schools. The best way to emphasise the definition of high risk schools is to link it with what has been described in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 as an underperforming school. This is explained in Section 58 B of the Act as follows: Section 58 B, subsection (2) (a) (b) (c) of the Act where it is stated that: Subsection (2) (a) "the standard of performance of learners is below the standards prescribed by the National Curriculum Statement and is likely to remain so unless the Head of Department exercises his or



her power in terms of this Act; (b) there has been a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed which is prejudicing, or likely to prejudice, the standards of performance; or (c) the safety of the learners or staff is threatened". Therefore, a high risk school is a school where learners are underperforming due to psychosocial issues and where intervention is required and support for the learners (GDSD and GDoE, 2018). The National curriculum statement included a new section that focuses on the performance of learners and reflects on the core competency of the subject and the evaluation of the performance after learning each subject (The National Curriculum Framework, 2012:12). According to Wang (2019), each subject has a standard of performance which denotes the performance level of a student. The Policymakers revealed that the performance standards are developed for assisting the learning, teaching and assessments process (The National Curriculum Framework, 2012:12).

### **3.9.1 The establishment of social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng**

Clarke, Harris, and Reynolds (2007:7) share the view that high risk schools (underperforming schools) function in very challenging circumstance which include difficult social as well as economic challenges, poverty, and difficult intercultural relations. Criminality and terminal illness such as HIV/AIDS put additional burden on schools (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003:38). The GDoE and the GDSD have therefore developed and implemented various strategies to improve this situation.

In the absence of social work capacity in the GDoE to deliver psychosocial services and support to learners and families in high risk schools, the Gauteng Executive Committee resolved that social work services to schools should be provided through the GDSD. The provision of psychosocial services in schools is perceived to be the solution to the prevention and the reduction of many challenges within the school system (DSD and GDoE, 2018).

During the 2012/2013 financial year, the Gauteng Provincial Executive Committee arranged for social workers to provide social work services in high risk schools through the GDSD (GDSD) (GDSD and GDoE, 2018). This collaboration offered school managed programmes to enhance children's educational competency. After the

formalisation of the partnership between GDSD and GDE, with a Memorandum of understanding (MOU), services are rendered to all schools that need social work services (DSD, 2021:1). This MOU is valid for 3 years (2018-2021) (DSD, 2021:1).

Social workers, employed by the DSD, are thereby assigned to high risk schools (DSD and GDoE, 2018). For the current financial year 160 schools were identified as high risk schools in Gauteng (DSD, 2021:13). These social workers offer service to learners who are recommended by educators or principals of schools who act as School Based Support Team (SBST) coordinators and aim to decrease the rate of at-risk school children (DSD and GDoE, 2018). Schools that are not identified as high risk are serviced on request. The social workers form part of the multidisciplinary support team that renders psychosocial support services to high risk schools (GDSD and GDoE, 2018).

Social work services furthermore assist in the forming of an environment which is conducive for learning (GDSD and GDoE, 2018). The social workers act as learning facilitators and counsellors, helping students overcome attitudes, conflict solving, frustration management, and problems of low self-esteem (GDSD and GDoE, 2018).

The social workers also render psychosocial services which include the early identification of psychosocial barriers and the provision of preventative, early intervention, and promotive, educational, therapeutic crisis intervention and family support services (GDSD and GDoE, 2018). Social workers furthermore often have a role to play in the support of the educators, as well as influencing parents to be more active in ensuring that the children receive quality education (Pretorius, 2016:64). They also are involved in motivating educators through raising awareness of the legislation governing the safety of children, such as the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007, which obligates educators to report child exploitation and sexual offences against children.

These social workers that are deployed in the high risk school are placed under the supervision of a social work supervisor and their line manager is a social work manager (DSD, 2016:215). The social workers receive daily supervision from social work supervisor and only a registered and competent social worker may supervise

social workers (DSD, 2016:215). Social work supervision is “an intervention provided by a senior member of the profession to members of the same profession” (DSD, 2016:215). The purpose of supervision is to monitor the way professionals render services to clients (DSD, 2016:215). It is linked to ongoing learning and performance (DSD, 2012:18).

In order to have a clear picture of the social work services in schools and school social work, it is important to distinguish between social workers working in schools and school social workers (SSW). SSWs are employed by the DoE or by school governing bodies and are based in a school setting. While social workers rendering services in schools (DSD social workers) are employed by the DSD and they are based in the DSD. Their focus of service delivery is early intervention and prevention. They visit schools on a weekly basis and apply crisis intervention when required. DSD social workers are also involved with statutory work, youth development, social crime prevention, substance abuse, poverty alleviation program and HIV and AIDS programmes (Pretorius, 2016:2016).

### **3.9.2 Services and interventions targeting high risk schools**

Social work interventions involve procedures and patterns that have been clinically validated and learned during which they are implemented by social workers (Miley & DuBois, 2010: 235). The programs that are being introduced in schools are for the improvement of academic and behavioural outcomes (DSD, 2016:105). Interventions in high risk schools are done on different levels; which include preventive, early intervention, promotive, counselling, clinical and crisis interventions, and family support programmes (DSD and GDoE, 2018). Early intervention aims to support children who are at risk of being vulnerable (DSD, 2016:106). These services intend to limit the impact of risks and the development of social problems. Services that are rendered in these interventions include: behavior modification, parenting skills, family visits and diversion (DSD, 2016:109).

Therapeutic counselling systems allows children and their families to solve developmental problems and include individual counselling, emotional and behavioral problems, individual counselling – bereavement/grief support, referral for specialized

services and support, group counselling - trauma debriefing, and family counselling (DSD, 2016:109).

Prevention aims to strengthen the child and thus prevent any further deterioration in the development of problems for the child and the family. The following programs are offered to families and children to avoid problems and provide information on: bullying, substance abuse, child abuse, teenage pregnancy, crime prevention, resilience, self-care, sexuality education, positive cognitive and social emotional skills and mental health (DSD, 2016:109).

Education and awareness aims to provide information and educational programs to learners and parents (DSD, 2016:109). The aim of this intervention is to uplift and encourage learners to make healthy choices and include programs, such as girl and boy empowerment, parenting skills during parents meetings, motivational talks, coping mechanisms, study methods, as well as mentorship to Grade 12 learners (DSD, 2016:109).

Crises intervention or rapid response includes incidents such as learner deaths, child protection, abuse and neglect, trauma debriefing, bereavement, violence, depression, and attempted suicide (DSD, 2018:2).

### **3.10 GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK SERVICES IN HIGH RISK SCHOOLS**

“A guideline is a suggested way of performing a task with a product or service or scope” (Leonard, 2010:1). The purpose of developing guidelines, in this study, is to assist social workers rendering services in high risk to classifying their terms of reference, expand and carry out programs and interventions to assist learners in meeting their educational goals, and assist them to make meaningful decision about their circumstances by providing information and support in addressing their needs within the school setting.

The National Association for Social Workers (NASW) approved significant guidelines for the rendering of social work services in schools (Openshaw, 2008:2). These guidelines are projected to provide social workers with direction, tools and terms of reference to inform their practice and provide assistance in rendering services to high

risk schools. The standards are designed to enhance awareness of skills, knowledge, values and methods for social workers to work effectively in a school setting (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:6).

The following standards define the term of reference for social workers rendering services in schools:

### **Standard 1: Foundations of social work practice**

Social workers provide information on what services and support are available for their clients. Hence they are a link between families, the school and the community. They encourage and support learners to achieve their educational goal. Social workers know which channels of communication to follow in order to assist learners to attain their developmental milestones. In accordance with the NASW (2012:6), social workers are directed by the Social Work Code of Ethics, which includes the following, respect, accountability, dignity, confidentiality creativity, equality and empathy.

In addition, social workers know and understand human behavior in the social environment. They use various approaches to plan and implement their intervention strategies

### **Standard 2: Education and learning systems and organisations**

Social workers know and understand the nature and range of the education system. They are in a position to encourage healthy growth and development in the learning environment (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:11). They improve the quality and effectiveness of the learning environment and support activities to overcome institutional barriers to the equal treatment of all individuals (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:11)

### **Standard 3: Collaboration**

The partnership of social workers and other stakeholders in a school setting is very important as it promote teaching and learning in a school environment (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:13). They work together with families and the community to identify resources to meet the needs of the individual. Family inputs are integrated in order to develop plans and interventions that will address the needs of

the learners. They also link learners with resources in order to enhance the functioning of families, and to promote a comprehensive prevention program (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:13). Social workers empower families to effectively use and gain access to educational and community services and communicate with school personnel regarding family and community influences and learners' performance (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:13).

#### **Standard 4: Assessment**

Social workers form part of a team from diverse disciplinary backgrounds which works together to collect information using several techniques and skills to identify the needs of the individual. In order to interpret the nature of the issues affecting the individual, they work together the school, family and the soundings of the community. These methods of systematic assessment assist social workers in planning and implementing interventions and evaluating the results (National Association for Social Workers, 2012: 9).

#### **Standard 5: Intervention**

Social workers coordinate intervention plans with individuals, families, the school and any other stakeholders or role players in the community to achieve the set goals. Various intervention strategies are applied to improve the functioning of the learners and their families. Interventions strategies are based on what the individual has done and on what the individual has learnt from their experiences (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:4).

Social workers know and understand the levels of intervention, namely prevention, early intervention, statutory intervention and reintegration services (DSD, 2012:22). The interventions of social workers are based on various theoretical frameworks such as behavioral, cognitive, psychodynamic, family systems, strength-based, ecological, crisis intervention and conflict resolution (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:4). Social workers take immediate action to intervene in a crises situation. They partner with other stakeholders, in order to develop interventions strategies to help learners to address their unmet needs (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:4).

## **Standard 6: Professional development**

Social workers should maintain proficiencies in the area of their service provision by attending training to enhance their own development and skills. They keep themselves up to date with current skills and best practices in SSW; and maintain credentials and a knowledge base in SSW (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:11). They monitor and evaluate services that are rendered to clients in order to improve their own knowledge and to create their own professional development (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:11). Supervision as part of professional development enables social workers to grow and develop within the profession (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:11). They also ensure competent professionals by supervising student social workers, student social auxiliary workers, social auxiliary workers and social workers (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:11).

### **3.11 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework for this study is the ecological perspective. The ecological perspective is an inclusive approach that allows people to be viewed within their environment and experience in a holistic way (Maguire, 2002:90). The individual is viewed in the context of their cultural and social context. To understand this concept, it is best to consider the person and the environment consistently transacting, influencing, moulding, and altering one another. The ecological perspective engages peoples' thinking, shortcomings, and their reality (Kirst-Ashman, 2010:20). The perspective is of the view that people are unique, people are not the same.

The focus of the ecological perspective is to determine what characteristics of the environment match with the functioning of the individual (Zide & Gray, 2001:9). As a results people do not only react to environmental forces but act by making choices of their lives. According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010:40), Bronfenbrenner (1977) divided the individual's environment into five different systems which are interconnected and stimulate the child's development. The child relationship is determined by his or her surroundings. The five systems are as follow:

- Microsystem

Microsystems involves the most basic system, with which the child has “direct contact” with in their immediate surroundings, such as, their biological father and mother, caregivers, brother and sister, educators and fellow learners. Relationships are influenced by the other people in their surroundings (Donald *et al.*, 2010:40).

- Mesosystem

The mesosystem is a more generalised system, where the individual is influenced by others as they interact with other people (Donald *et al.*, 2010:40).

- Exosystem

The exosystem includes other formal and informal social structures, which a child is not directly involved with, but it happens that the child’s microsystem is affected. For instance, a parent or a caregiver may come home and have a short temper with the child as a result of something that occurred at work, or due to high workload that causes a negative impact on the child’s development.

- Macrosystem

The macrosystem pays attention to factors affecting the individual and the family functioning. Culture affect individual functioning as it shapes our way of viewing things and it provides important social and economic benefits that may affect a child's development (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010:41).

- Chronosystem

The chronosystem comprises of events that has occur to individuals and how these events have influence an individual’s life. These events are considered to be very serious as they affect a person’s life. It includes major life transitions, such as parents getting divorced. These changes may affect the child’s progressive stages and development (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010:41).

According to Kelly, Berzin, Alvarze, Shaffer and O’Brien (2010:205) social workers working in schools should have a clear and comprehensive understanding of the environment which is seen as the child’s ecological system and includes the school,



community, and family. With such an understanding of the social environment the social worker can address the needs of the client. It is important to consider what these social environments consist of. The concepts of "collective mental state" and "coping" are two crucial ways in which the social environment affects one's state of mind (Kelly *et al.*, 2010:207). The social environment is made up of the conditions, circumstances, and the interaction among human beings, individuals, to live and act, and must be equipped with healthy interaction with their environment (Kirst-Ashman, 2010:20). The social roles determine how a person behaves in a position, as well as how others (such as the public) behave towards that person (Kirst-Ashman, 2010:20).

From the perspective of social workers, when they engage with persons (individuals), families (groups with a family atmosphere), cultures (groupings with culture and tradition), communities (collective groups) and policies (systems with policy processes), a better understanding of how to improve the transactional processes between these systems becomes possible. As holistic thinking can provide a model for understanding, it could also provide a model for understanding the system and its interaction (Kirst-Ashman, 2010:20). The focus of this perspective is on meeting the needs of an individual with development of tasks which require sufficient resources in the environment and the positive interaction between the person and the environment.

Considering an individual's environment, such as a lack of resources, insufficient resources, or using up all the resources, they may not be able to fulfil their client's needs (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, & Strom-Gottfried, 2013:17). Thus, when this occurs, psychological functioning will be hampered. In this situation, the focus should be on meeting the needs of the individual to improve the fit between the person and the environment (Hepworth *et al.*, 2013:17). This perspective enables social workers to broaden their conceptualisation of learner's social problems, as in this case gaining a better understanding of their social needs.

Social workers' working in schools based their focus on factors that influence learners' school climate, then look at safety measures and other environmental factors within the school, that can lead to positive and effective dynamics (Trickett & Rowe,

2012:127). They help learners to meet their need by linking them with resources so that they can be able to cope with environmental forces.

The most important advantage of the ecological perspective, is that it gives social workers tangible tools to explain long standing notions to guide and give direction to social work practice. It sensitizes the social worker to be always concerned with the total environment (Hepworth *et al.*, 2013:17). The perspective provides social workers with a framework to conduct a reliable and valid assessment of learners. It provides strategies for intervention in order to remove barriers to learning (National Association for Social Workers, 2012:9). Change in a person does not only rely on that individual, but also on the relevant system.

The ecological perspective is useful in producing more effective clinical interventions. It helps social workers to see that all aspects of the individual's problem involves circular connection between the individual's environment, leading to a transactional focus for practice that is consistent with social work's dual concern with the person and the environment (Kirst-Ashman, 2010:20).

### **3.12 CONCLUSION**

Social workers who are linked to educational settings play a significant role in the lives of children and their communities by offering help and encouragement. This chapter demonstrates a comprehensive overview of the advent of the social work profession in schools and offers an informative review of its history, current and future trends.

The goal of social worker services in high risk schools is to provide resources to learners, parents and the schools facing issues linked to psychosocial conditions, such as anxiety and depression. Social workers offer resources and support for schools that are at-risk. One of the reasons for social workers' rendered services at high risk schools is the increase in social problems that have placed strain on the educational system. There is also a decrease in teaching or learning practise. Social workers play an integral role in supplying high risk schools with social safety programmes and offer support to learners facing difficulties at school. They engage people and organisations to resolve situations. The programmes and intervention offered by social workers in

high risk schools include specific cases, case conferences, and community work among other aspects. Provision of psychological counselling facilities in high risk school assist learners and teachers avoid and cope with different issues within the educational environment.

The research study is informed by the ecological perspective as it provides a better understanding of social ills that affect learners' well-being and obstructions to them perform well in school. The ecological perspective recognises an individual's behaviour is determined by a multiple range of influences. An individual is viewed in the perspective of their circumstances by working with parents or caregivers, communities, and society. As a result, it lessens problems that learners face. School social workers and social workers rendering services in schools attempt to provide a conducive learning environment for learners. In the next chapter, the researcher presents the research findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 the study findings which emerged were placed into themes and subthemes during the data analysis phase and are presented and discussed here. The aim of the study was to formulate guidelines to assist social workers to render effective social work services in high risks schools in Gauteng Province. These findings highlight the participants' responses and how these responses could contribute to the development of guidelines for social workers rendering social work services in high risk schools.

#### 4.2 BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

As indicated in Chapter 1, the participants for this this study included 11 DSD social workers placed in schools, 4 social work supervisors for social workers placed in high risk schools and 2 DoE school social workers.

##### 4.2.1 Biographic information of DSD social worker participants

As outlined in Table 3 below, 11 DSD social workers participated in the study.

**Table 3: Overview of DSD social worker participants**

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Region	Years of experience
PESW DSD	Female	29	Ekurhuleni	5 years
PJSW DSD	Male	29	West Rand	6 years
PPSW DSD	Female	33	Tshwane	9 years
POSW DSD	Male	34	West Rand	8 years
PGSW DSD	Female	31	Sedibeng	8 years
PHSW DSD	Female	30	West Rand	12 years
PDSW DSD	Female	36	Tshwane	13 years

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Years of experience</b>
PDSW DSD	Male	35	West Rand	11 years
PNSW DSD	Female	28	Ekurhuleni	7 years
PBSW DSD	Female	29	Sedibeng	7 years
PASW DSD	Female	39	Tshwane	12 years

Nine of the participants are female while three of the social workers are male. Their work experience ranges from five to thirteen years. Social workers from this study were from Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, Sedibeng and West Rand regions.

#### **4.2.2 Biographic information of the social work supervisors**

As outlined in Table 4 below, four social work supervisors participated in the research study. Each region (Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, Sedibeng and West Rand regions) has one supervisor that oversees the social work services of DSD social workers in schools. Therefore, as the population only consist of five supervisors the whole population was invited to participate and four took part in the study. Their work experience ranges from eleven years to twenty-one years.

**Table 4: Overview of social work supervisors**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Years as a supervisor</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Years of experience</b>
PPNSWS DSD	Female	44 years	6 years	Ekurhuleni	16 years
PFSWS DSD	Female	49 years	6 years	Tshwane	21 years
PPMSWS DSD	Female	46 years	7 years	Sedibeng	16 years
PVSWS DSD	Female	49 years	3 years	West Rand	11 years

#### **4.2.3 Biographic information of the DoE social workers**

As outlined in Table 5 below, two DoE social workers participated in the study.

**Table 5: Overview of DoE social workers**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Years of experience</b>
PMSW DoE	Female	52 years	Ekurhuleni & Sedibeng	21 years
PKSW DoE	Female	46 years	Tshwane	17 years

The two participants are both female and their work experience range from 17 to 21 years. DoE social workers from this study, oversee schools in Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, Sedibeng and West Rand regions.

### **4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This section presents a discussion of the four themes that emerged from the data: (1) The social workers' role in high risk schools; (2) Social workers' challenges working in high risk schools; (3) Strategies for effective social work services in high risk schools; (4) The integration of social work into the mainstream education system, as shown in Table 6 below. Relevant literature was used to support the study findings. Additionally, findings on guidelines are based on the application of four above mentioned emerging themes, which substantially forms the crux of discussions.

**Table 6: Summary of themes and subthemes**

THEME	SUBTHEME
<p><b>Theme 1: The social workers' role in high risk schools</b></p>	<p>Subtheme 1.1: DSD social work services seen as an essential service to high risk schools</p> <p>Subtheme 1.2: To render psychosocial support services</p> <p>Subtheme 1.3: To conduct assessments on children</p> <p>Subtheme 1.4: Support to learners who have barriers to learning</p> <p>Subtheme 1.5: Offering early intervention and prevention programmes in high risk schools</p> <p>Subtheme 1.6: Fulfilment of multiple roles</p>
<p><b>Theme 2: Social workers' challenges working in high risk schools</b></p>	<p>Subtheme 2.1: Insufficient / Lack of resources</p> <p>Subtheme 2.2: High caseloads and lack of support</p> <p>Subtheme 2.3: Challenges of working with school-based support teams (SBST)</p> <p>Subtheme 2.4: Different perceptions on the definition of high risk schools</p> <p>Subtheme 2.5: Lack of recognition of social workers working in schools</p> <p>Subtheme 2.6: Shortage of DoE social workers</p> <p>Subtheme 2.7: Lack of cooperation between DSD social workers and DoE social workers</p> <p>Subtheme 2.8: Lack of guidelines on social workers' roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Subtheme 2.9: Shortcomings in training and experience of DSD social workers</p>

THEME	SUBTHEME
<b>Theme 3: Strategies for effective social work services in high risk schools</b>	Subtheme 3.1: The development of comprehensive intervention programmes in high risk schools Subtheme 3.2: The provision of resources for the effective implementation of social work services Subtheme 3.3: Permanent placement of social workers in high risk schools Subtheme 3.4: The empowering and training of social workers Subtheme 3.5: The provision of adequate supervision for social workers
<b>Theme 4: The integration of social work into the mainstream education system</b>	Subtheme 4.1: Effective multi-stakeholder collaboration at all levels Subtheme 4.2: The improvement of the report structure Subtheme 4.3: Develop guidelines for school social workers' management

#### **4.3.1 Theme 1: The social workers' role in high risk schools**

Reyneke (2018:79) states that although it is not a norm to find social workers working in schools in South Africa, it is indicated that social work services are needed in schools. It is impossible for teachers to play the educator role and provide psychosocial services to the learners; ultimately negatively affecting the quality of education provided. Although not many social workers are employed to work in schools, they have a role to play in high risk schools. Theme 1 has six subthemes which illustrates the roles DSD social workers play in high risk schools in the Gauteng Province.

##### **4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: DSD social work services seen as an essential service to high risk schools**

When asked how the participants perceive the role DSD social workers play in rendering services in high risk schools, the majority of the participants stated that they see their role as an essential service to high risk schools. The quote of these participants emphasizes the importance of this service:



*“I’m of the opinion that the school social workers [DSD social workers] are playing a big role in the school system, and the core function of the DoE which is teaching and learning is achieved through social worker’s intervention.”*  
**(PGSW DSD)**

*“DSD social work services plays a critical role in high risk schools.”* **(PESW DSD)**

*“The social worker’s role is very crucial in the balance between academics and psychosocial development of the learner, to ensure the optimal functioning of the learner.”* **(PV, SWS DSD)**

*“DSD social work services have gradually become a fundamental service over the years due to the rising numbers of school violence, and other psychosocial problems faced by learners which educators were unable to deal with. Most of the high risk schools identified by GDE could not hire social workers due to lack of finances and thus, most of the learners were left neglected with their own problems to deal with. Which further contributed to more social problems and less performance at schools.”* **(PP, SW DSD)**

Using the ecological perspective, which asserts that participants constantly interpret meaning and process information against their environment (Kirst-Ashman, 2010:20), the researcher could assess that the importance of social workers in schools cannot be ignored. This participant not only emphasized the importance of the service in schools, but also the important role the social workers play in the lives of the learners:

*“The social workers are perfectly placed in high risk schools to bring about transformation in the lives of the learners, so they can improve their social functioning and strive to achieve their full potential. It is necessary to have such services at schools because that is the environment that is conducive for most for a child’s growth and development.”* **(PK, SWS DSD)**

*“They [DSD social workers] also manage to offer services that would not be offered to learners in case those services were not available; services such as poverty alleviation, behaviour change programs, child protection, substance*

*abuse, victim empowerment (rape victims), human trafficking, bullying and parental programs and services focusses on crises intentions (trauma debriefing, and grieving) .... Respond to all cases that require social services and provide necessary support.” (PE, SW DSD)*

As social workers and educators are obligated to report child abuse the DSD social workers in high risk schools in Gauteng Province play a crucial role in the development and empowering of educators with knowledge of legislation relating to the protection of children, such as The Children’s Act (38 of 2005) and Sexual Offence Act (32 of 2007).

The use of these Acts relates directly to the benefit of using the ecological perspective in this study because it allows for the matching of functioning and environments with the resources (Zide & Gray, 2001:9), with the Acts being the resource.

*“The legislations obligates educators to report child abuse and sexual offences against children. Furthermore, these legislations require social workers to make referrals to designated child protection organisation and SAPS to report such incidents in compliance to the South African School’s Act (SASA, 1996) where focal point dates to school management matters. Since DSD Social workers are custodians of legislature and policies, they are capacitated with legislations relating to children for protecting and acting in the best interest of the child within the educational context.” (PM, SW DoE)*

From the above assertions, it is evident that the social work services delivered by DSD are seen as an important and essential service in schools. According to Masilo (2018:340) social problems are a common phenomenon in schools and social workers are more qualified to deal with them as compared to teachers. Vergottini and Weyers (2020:132) state that it is the social work methods social workers use, such as group work, case work and counselling which enable social workers to play a supportive role to learners and their families. Masilo (2018: 340) further emphasizes the importance of having social workers in schools.

#### **4.3.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: To render psychosocial support services**

Psychosocial support is perceived as crucial to a learner's well-being. The ecological framework, which is adopted in this study, provides a clear view to understand learners' backgrounds and to be able to identify learners who are at risk. Social workers rendering services in schools will look at the learner's environment, family and the community in order to address issues that have a negative effect on learners. As a result, services that are provided by DSD social workers in high risk schools are seen as an essential service. This service responds to the much-needed need for psychosocial support services within the school environment as shown by participant PJ, SW DSD and PK, SW DoE below:

*"The rationale behind putting social work services in schools is valid. Children needing psychosocial support should, ideally, be able to access those services within the school environment, without parents having to take a day off work to take the child to a service point." (PJ, SW DSD)*

*"Creating such services for learners in schools was a step towards the right direction because it enables learners to directly access psychosocial services and many other important services they might need within their school premises. This helps learners not to miss school and go the DSD offices to get access to services that they need, the school social workers go to the schools and attend to the learners' cases as per request by the educators." (PK, SW DoE)*

Despite some challenges, most of the participants experience the psychosocial services as effective.

*"The social work services in high risk schools in our province are effective although there are challenges. Psychosocial service intervention is effective as the learners attended individually and holistically." (PA, SW DSD)*

Due to the rising number of psychosocial problems experienced by learners, the social workers strive to holistically address these problems to be able to meet the learners' needs. This psychosocial support is offered from a holistic approach:

*“The social workers are able to bring the child’s circumstances to the school and allow for a holistic service rendered to the child.” (PM, SW DoE)*

*“The services we as Social Development are offering, it’s a holistic approach, we address issues from the root, looking at the learner and his/her background environment, life stage and the things he is exposed to with the intention to permanently empower the client and facilitate change. A child whose all needs are met is able to focus and excel in her/his schoolwork.” (PH, SW DSD)*

The service that is rendered, in the form of psychosocial support, also provides feedback to the school and educators as to what the barriers to learning are in a child.

*“The process that we follow in rendering psychosocial support to the identified learners is to do assessment which assist in identifying all the barriers to learning. After the findings, we therefore give feedback to the relevant educators to make them aware of the issues hampering the learner’s progress in their studies.” (PG, SW DSD)*

The provision of psychosocial support in schools is a critical role in academic performance; as highlighted by Reyneke (2020: 158) who notes that for an excellent educational programme, schools ought to not only provide physical resources (for physical health and safety) to learners and educators, but that psychosocial support is an essential resource for an emotionally safe environment for both educators and learners. This is even more evident in South Africa where school going children are affected or infected with HIV/AIDS and may suffer from behavioural and psychosocial disorders making interventions in schools necessary (Sharp, 2014:873).

#### **4.3.1.3 Subtheme 1.3: To conduct assessments on children**

A role that the DSD social workers working in schools fulfil is to conduct assessments on learners. Assessment is a way of obtaining relevant information about a client’s problem so that decisions can be made regarding possible solutions (Kirst – Ashman, 2010:102). The Children’s Act (38 of 2007) describes the assessment of a child as a “process of investigating the developmental needs of a child including his or her family environment or any circumstances that may have a bearing on a child’s needs for

protection and therapeutic services” (RSA, 2007). Social workers also focus on systems the learner’s come in contact with, such as the family, school and the environment. They assist learners to cope with problems in the school setting environment.

*“We do proper assessments by assessing the child within the school, family and community environment. After proper assessment, we then refer the child to relevant stakeholders to further assist the child concerned.” (PB, SW DSD)*

*“Their services are able to discover family challenges that lead to the risk and behavioural problems learners are experiencing at school.” (PE, SW DSD)*

While social workers hold many roles and responsibilities, conducting assessments is one of their main tasks. Social workers form part of the school team, and their role is to evaluate the learning needs of children (Balli, 2016:176). This means that for all the challenges learners may experience at school, the social workers can assist in ascertaining what the problem is and assist the learner and their family in solving it (Reyneke, 2020:160). This is an important task because it provides interdisciplinary teams in school settings that are able to collate well rounded and adequate information about the learners (Openshaw, 2008:2). Openshaw (2008:2) further argues that proper learner assessment and treatment is at the centre of rendering adequate services in schools. It is therefore important that school social workers be able to “conduct assessments of student needs that are individualized and provide information that is directly useful for designing interventions that address behaviours of concern” (NASW, 2002).

#### **4.3.1.4 Subtheme 1.4: Support to learners who have barriers to learning**

Some participants indicated that social workers are needed in schools to support learners who have barriers to learning.

*“School based social worker is postulated that social work services are needed in grass roots level and they help a lot especially for learners with barriers to learning. Learners with learning disabilities tend to accept their situation better*

*after social worker's intervention. As a result, they adjust to new coping techniques and progress well with learning.” (PE, SW DSD)*

The social workers are able to interview learners who have challenges and are not performing well academically in school so as to understand their world of experience in relation to their academic performance. These learners are then able to be referred to the correct resource, such as a psychologist.

*“...After gathering those aspects, we then identify the core of their problem and address it appropriately either by referring the learners to the psychologist for special concessions.” (PG, SW DSD)*

*“...and refer and link learners to other service providers such as Nicro, Department of Health, Department of Justice, SAPS and other professionals within the DoE. Respond to all cases that require social services and provide necessary support.” (PE, SW DSD)*

If a learner needs more intervention other resources are also utilized.

*“At times the learner will request more attention from a specific educator due to lack of understanding of a particular subject. We also do study methods and motivation with the assistance of the ISS [Inclusive to Special schools] officials and the District psychologist.” (PG, SW DSD)*

Most high risk schools frequently experience violence such as vandalism, bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment, drug dealing, gangsterism, swearing or vulgar language which have an impact on learners' learning. Social workers are then called in to assist with these social problems in schools.

*“The violence influences both learners and educators as there is loss of concentration; poor academic performance; bunking of classes; and depression. Learners who experience or witness incidents of violence may become depressed, and this may affect their ability to learn in a negative manner.” (PA, SW DSD)*

Mestry, Moloi and Mohamed (2007:28) state that emotional and behavioural barriers to learning are a serious concern in South African schools, as it negatively impacts teaching and learning in the mainstream schools. The DoE has developed several educational policies to address barriers to learning and one policy of note is the Psychosocial Support Strategy for Learners in the Educational System of South Africa, 2015-2020 (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020:133). These policies have assisted in the identification of barriers to learning and thus social workers in schools play a very important role in addressing these barriers (Vergottini & Weyers, 2020:133). In South Africa, the role of school social workers is to address learners emotional, behavioural, and social barriers to learning (Van Sittert & Wilson, 2018:2).

According to Fischer *et al.* (2007:56) it is essential that social workers utilize their knowledge in order to support learners with emotional barriers to learning, thus creating a supportive school environment. This can be done through social workers' compassion and empathy to the learners' situation and discussing the learners' emotions which creates a safe environment for them (Compton, Galaway, & Cournoyer, 2005:24). To support the participants' views, inclusive education educators are expected to accommodate all learners in the same classroom. This can be challenging for an educator who have several learners who have barriers to learning in the normal classrooms. This also highlights that teachers have limited knowledge on how to manage the behavioural and emotional needs of such learners in schools (Potgieter-Groot, Visser, & Lubbe-de Beer, 2012:60). These views highlight the need and the important roles that social workers play in ensuring that adequate teaching and learning can take place in high risk schools.

#### **4.3.1.5 Subtheme 1:5: Offering early intervention and prevention programmes in high risk schools**

Participants stated that one of the roles of the DSD social workers placed in high risk schools is to offer early intervention and prevention programmes to the learners. While initially the target group for these intervention programmes was learners at risk, the early intervention programme could include some of the learners that are not at risk.

*“The programme is accommodative to both groups for children at risk and children not at risk. The school social worker renders the empowerment and*

*support programmes aimed at preventing the need for the children and their families to receive intensive services from professionals.” (PA, SW DSD)*

The responses by the participants show that the early intervention and prevention programmes offered by social workers in schools are supportive towards both learners and educators.

*“As educators felt some relief as they previously carried all the burden and had to focus on the curriculum. Similarly, learners also felt that at least someone neutral from outside the school was willing to assist them. So, everyone was winning.” (PP, SW DSD)*

The findings above indicate that social workers have a definite role to play in high risk schools which involves the implementation of various prevention and intervention programmes to support learners. Masilo (2018:340) states that social workers are an important profession to have in schools as they can create intervention programmes that address most of these social ills, in both a preventative and palliative way. Zastrow (2017:90) argues that social workers have adequate knowledge on evidence-based interventions which can be used to assist their clients deal with their challenges. Masilo (2018:340) supports this by stating that the only way to propagate peace between learners and their school environment is for social workers to implement interventions which positively contribute to the learning environment as opposed to bullying, alcohol use and drugs. School social work interventions can therefore play an important part in the academic support of the learners (Van Sittert & Wilson, 2018:2).

#### **4.3.1.6 Subtheme 1.6: Fulfilment of multiple roles**

From the data received from the participants it was evident that they fulfil multiple roles when placed in the schools:

*“The social worker then takes measures to assist the child, including counselling, mediation, prevention and early intervention services, family reconstruction and rehabilitation, behaviour modification, problem solving and referral to another suitably qualified person or organisation.” (PA, SW DSD)*



*“...Social workers serve as a crucial role and function as a mediator, negotiator, consulted and advocates for what is in the best interest of the child.” (PM, SW DoE)*

The social workers also play an important role in disciplinary cases:

*“Social workers advocate for learners especially those that are recommended for expulsion and or expelled by the HOD. They respond to all cases that require social services and provide necessary support.” (PE, SW DSD)*

This corroborates Openshaw’s (2008:1) statement that school social workers play multiple roles, and they can use their skills, values and knowledge to better the lives of students. The heterogeneous social worker role means that they have various responsibilities and functions in their role as school social workers (Openshaw, 2008:2). Balli (2016:148) argues that the role of school social workers is complex and broad; in all the complexity they bring the school, social services, and families to support learners academically and socially. With reference to the role that social workers play in disciplinary hearings, the South African School Act (84 of 1996) makes provision for the process of a hearing before the learner may be suspended or expelled from the school by the school governing body (Department of Basic Education, 2012:41). A learner is disqualified from school only if they are guilty of serious misconduct and after disciplinary proceedings. Therefore, supportive measures, such as counselling should be offered after disciplinary proceedings (Department of Basic Education, 2012:41). The school code of conduct promotes the role and responsibilities of various stakeholders, such as social workers, in creating a conducive learning environment in schools (Department of Basic Education, 2012:41).

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Social workers’ challenges working in high risk schools**

Sherman, Payton, Hernandez, Greenfield and Dapretto (2016:1027) postulates that social workers have been the backbone of the education system for centuries. Sherman *et al.* (2016:1028) further wrote that it was because of societal problems which began infiltrating the school environment that social workers were considered the best to address the needs of the learners and to deal with behavioural issues. Despite holding such an important role in education, social workers are marginalised

in school settings and experience various problems in their work settings (Sherman *et al.*, 2016:1028). Theme two is a discussion of the views the participants had on the challenges that are experienced in the delivery of services in high risk schools in the Gauteng Province.

#### **4.3.2.1 Subtheme 2.1: Insufficient or lack of resources**

Most of the participants stated that DSD social workers are trying to provide services to schools by visiting schools when the need arises. However, at times it is difficult to perform such duties as social workers are stationed at DSD offices and a lack of resources hampers providing this service. For instance, a lack of transport for social workers to go to high risk schools was highlighted as a challenge.

*“We do not go to schools every day because the section only has two cars; however, we do try to attend to the cases when they are reported and provide feedback.” (PB, SW DSD)*

*“The issue of transport, we were using one GG car [Government Vehicle] and utilized by eight social workers. The other thing is that most of cases referred to the social workers are crisis, and they need immediate attention, so it becomes a big challenge in service delivery. The transport also come from DSD not DoE. It was going to be easy if we were able receive another car of DoE.” (PG, SWS DSD)*

*“Transport is also a challenge especially during examination time as education officials are given priority.” (PPM, SWS DSD)*

*“With DSD social workers servicing schools, so far what I have noticed is the lack of resources that are required to ensure that the service is speedily available and rendered. Responding time is crucial because some cases are high risk and require crisis intervention which determines responding time.” (PK, SWS DSD)*

Another participant said their challenge was the lack of office space in schools and their safety being compromised.

*“The schools don’t provide a proper office and safety for social workers.” (PF, SWS DSD)*

*“Very risky as safety of social workers is sometimes compromised. Most of reported cases are attended without informing the supervisor and getting guidance.” (PPM, SWS DSD)*

The lack of resources, as well as human resources at the commencement of the social work services in high risks schools programme, caused less visible impact. This was due to the fact that there were more schools which needed social work services.

*“Since the social workers have a vast number of schools requiring psychosocial services, attention to schools in question tend not to benefit from the services due to limited human resources.” (PE, SW DSD)*

*“Schools were hoping that social workers would be based at schools on a full-time basis as they felt the scheduled visits were not enough due the number of incidents reported at the schools, but because the DoE could not hire social workers on a full-time basis, a practical solution had to be established and agreed on between the two departments. There is no doubt that SW services are making a difference in the wellbeing of learners and the entire school. However, more resources and manpower are needed to make the service more impactful.” (PP, SW DSD)*

The participants’ responses above indicate that the unavailability of resources for service delivery is a huge challenge. A study by Skhosana, Schenck and Botha (2014:223) found that a lack of funds hampered services rendered by social workers to children. Kruger (2020:69) also found in her study that, shortage of resources in the workplace had a negative impact on work fulfilment, causing inefficient productivity. Nonexistence of tools of trade, such as desktop or laptops, printers, landline or cell phones, internet access, 3G modem, transport to conduct school and home visits, and to attend in-service training and meetings causes stress and an inability to render quality services to beneficiaries or society at large (Kruger, 2020:69). Based on findings from Alpaslan and Schenck (2012:374-376) it can be deduced that it is difficult

for social workers to be effective in the workplace if resources that are needed to perform tasks are not available. As a consequence, social workers cannot do their work effectively.

#### **4.3.2.2 Subtheme 2.2: High caseloads and lack of support**

Participants are of the view that performance is affected due to high workloads and work pressure.

*“I have also noticed that the cases are not being dealt with effectively due to social workers being allocated too many schools.” (PF, SWS DSD)*

*“It is a challenge because I’m overloaded with workshops, workflow and report writing, meetings which I have to attend as they are part of my daily activities.” (PG, SW DSD)*

*“There is a lot of pressure from district officials on social workers.” (PPM, SWS DSD)*

Most participants highlighted that although they have high caseloads and work pressure, they feel overwhelmed and they do not always receive the necessary guidance and support.

*“It is a challenge because in Tshwane the social workers are based at district offices and the supervisors are at the region (DSD office) .... Most reported cases are attended without informing the supervisor and receiving guidance. Referral procedure not followed.” (PPM, SWS DSD)*

It was clear from the statements of the participants that heavy workloads lead to undesirable results and impacts on the value of service delivery to clients. This is supported by TMS Africa (2019:1) who states that due to high caseloads, social workers are compelled to delay in responding to emergencies and focus on crisis instead of prevention and early intervention programmes. Calitz, Roux and Strydom (2014:157) also support the data by stating that social workers are bound to experience work related stress due to heavy workloads and a lack of resources which all result in insufficient time to complete tasks.

#### **4.3.2.3 Subtheme 2.3: Challenges of working with school-based support teams (SBST)**

School based support teams (SBST) are “established by schools as a school level mechanism whose primary function is to put coordinated school, learner and teacher support in place” (Department of Basic Education, 2020:4). The participants indicated that they work together with the school-based support teams. This has its own challenges. A challenge experienced by social workers working in schools is that educators do not value the importance of confidentiality:

*“Often in school social work, there can be a power struggle between the social worker and teachers. When a teacher or principal asks for information regarding a learner, the social worker is not always allowed to provide that information due to confidentiality issues, even if the educator asking has a good reason for needing it.” (PD, SW DSD)*

Other participants stated that the social workers often experience a lack of cooperation from educators.

*“The teachers at schools do not cooperate with the school social worker [DSD social workers]. This due to a lack of collaborative planning between schools and SSW and a lack of cooperation to implement programmes.” (PA, SW DSD)*

Another challenge is that principals and educators usually report cases after they have already acted and made their decision regarding a learner, therefore excluding the social worker.

*“In other cases, is when the child is already suspended or expelled from school. As a social work based in schools, I would like to be involved from the beginning until the end.” (PD, SW DSD)*

Another participant also said that schools do not follow the required referral process.

*“Schools refer cases that are not supposed to be referred to social workers, because they are lazy to refer to the proper service provider. Because the social workers are not part of the school, the social worker don’t get consulted in terms*

*of how the school handles case, before referring to the department.” (PF, SWS DSD)*

Participant B perceived that some of the challenges they experience could be addressed by having social workers permanently placed at schools.

*“Service delivery to learners could be better delivered if a social worker is stationed in every high risk school. If a social worker is stationed at school at least challenges that the school is experiencing could be attended to immediately.” (PB, SW DSD)*

Strong teamwork with school-based support teams is important in social work as they influence the quality of social work service delivery (Kirschbaum, 2017:5). The participants’ responses show that there are challenges within this relationship. The importance of collaboration is emphasized by The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) who emphasise that social workers should collaborate with educators, educational psychologist, and school counsellors to address the needs of learners and families (NASW, 2002).

#### **4.3.2.4 Subtheme 2.4: Different perceptions on the definition of high risk schools**

The DoE and DSD have very different definitions of a high risk school.

*“There is a challenge in defining high risk schools. DSD perceives high risk schools as schools with more challenges and GDE [GDoE] perceives high risk schools as schools with lower performance rate. Reported high risk schools are not always high risk for social workers when they do their assessment. Most cases identified from schools that are not listed as high risk.” (PPM, SWS DSD)*

*“Social development will be more on the social issues that are affecting learners at school, be it abuse in all levels; disruptiveness of the learner in class, bullying, expelled learners due to un-acceptable behaviour or fights, stealing etc.” (PH, SW DSD)*

To gain a comprehensive understanding of high risk schools it is crucial to formulate a definition of a high risk school. Pretorius (2016:69) views high risk schools as poorly performing schools. Currently there is no exiting definition of high risk schools internationally and nationally. The best way to emphasise the definition of high risk schools is to link it with what has been described in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 as an underperforming school. Therefore, a high risk school is one where learners are underperforming due to psychosocial issues.

The DoE defines high risk schools as schools where learners are underperforming, where there is a serious breakdown in governance (School Governing Body is dysfunctional) and management (School Management team is dysfunctional). The safety of learners and staff (educators and other staff members) is often threatened because of incidents of bullying, gangsterism, violence, substance abuse, drug abuse, sexual molestation, and learner ill-discipline (Tyawa, 2019). The definition from both departments differs because of the focus on the psychosocial well-being of a learner, which includes: individual emotions, social, mental and spiritual needs (Department of Basic Education, 2020:4). The escalating incidences of violence, cases of sexual abuse, substance abuse and other antisocial events happening in schools brought the two department to define high risk school as schools that need psychosocial support.

#### **4.3.2.5 Subtheme 2.5: Lack of recognition of social workers working in schools**

The participants felt that social workers working in schools are not recognised. According to participant M, the GDoE does not recognise the social workers in schools:

***“GDE not acknowledging/recognising social workers deployed in schools.” (PM, SW DoE)***

The lack of recognition of social workers in the educational context is due the fact that school social work is often affected by the changes in the education policies, research as well as practice models which are dynamic (NASW, 2012:1).

#### **4.3.2.6 Subtheme 2.6: Shortage of DoE social workers**

It was evident that there is a shortage of DoE social workers placed in the schools.

*“The schools that the social worker is rendering services to in my area, do not have school social workers from DoE.” (PA, SW DSD)*

*“The DoE social workers do not have statutory powers; therefore, they are limited in the services that they can provide for learners. ...The issue of one social worker being responsible for a whole district is ineffective. It is due to this dilemma of understaffing that some learners fall through the cracks.” (PJ, SW DSD)*

The GDoE appointed social workers to render psychosocial services in 2000. For nearly 15 years there was only one social worker responsible for psychosocial services in the GDoE (Pretorius, 2016:68). In 2015, three additional social workers were appointed at the national level to render social work service in schools. Twenty-four social workers were appointed by School Governing Body (SGB) to render social work services in special schools (Pretorius, 2016:69). The estimated number of learners is  $\pm 1000$  in primary schools and in secondary schools is  $\pm 1500$  learners. The numbers of DoE social workers rendering services is only three social workers and one social work manager.

#### **4.3.2.7 Subtheme 2.7: Lack of collaboration between DSD social workers and DoE social workers**

The study findings highlight that there is poor collaboration between the social workers from DSD and social workers from the DoE. This may be due to social workers from DSD feeling unsupported by the social workers from DoE. This is highlighted by participant B below:

*“I have never, personally, experienced collaboration with the social workers from the DoE. Our goals should be aligned because we serve the same community, the level of collaboration should be so natural and constant that there should be no room for it to be questioned.” (PJ, SW DSD)*



*“DoE social workers have never attended programmes organized by DSD social workers except for [Name withheld]”. (PB, SW DSD)*

The lack of collaboration between the two departments while working in schools was worsened due to the fact that each department has its own referral procedure, and therefore their working procedures differ.

*“Referral procedures is a huge problem when one is working at school as a social worker. Education has its own referral system, while DSD has its own too. Most of the time the referral procedures are overlooked by both the departments.” (PE, SW DSD)*

Services are often duplicated due to a lack of communication between the social workers from DSD and DoE, as well as from the district offices.

*“Another challenge is proper communication from district to schools has not been properly done to inform them of the memorandum of understanding between DSD and DoE, hopefully they are working on that.” (PB, SW DSD)*

*“To an extent that sometimes we do duplication of services. Due to the fact that the relationship is not existing between the two departments. From my experience the DoE only contact DSD when there is huge crisis in that school. Or, when the authority figure visiting the community or the school. I know I sound like a critique; however, this is our reality. There are challenges when it comes to communicating with the psychosocial team from DoE. They take long or do not respond at all.” (PN, SW DSD)*

*“Working in isolation with other directorates in the two departments while rendering a service to the same client.” (PM, SW DoE)*

The data received from the participants indicates that social workers from DSD tend to receive work that ordinarily should be for DoE social workers. The sentiment therefore is that DSD social workers perceive DoE social workers to be throwing all the work at them despite the work being for the DoE’s attention.

*“DoE refers cases to DSD even if they need their attention or other appropriate resources for example a learner who is expelled from school and without involving SSWS [DSD School Social Work Supervisor] in their disciplinary process.” (PV, SWS DSD)*

The study findings show that there is a lack of collaboration between the social workers from DSD and the DoE due to several aspects which hampers the social work services rendered to schools (Meilaq, 2014: 69). Collaborations between different sectors are a global phenomenon as an effort to address the social and developmental needs of communities and these collaborations are endorsed by the National Development Plan between government departments, the private and public sector, as well as civil society (Pretorius, 2020:147). Pretorius (2020:148) furthermore states that the DoE and Social Development are key allies in ensuring quality education and addressing the social needs for children in South Africa.

#### **4.3.2.8 Subtheme 2.8: Lack of guidelines on social workers’ roles and responsibilities**

Most of the participants indicated that there has not been a clear explanation and clarification of the role of social workers from DoE in schools as all cases were being referred to social workers from DSD.

*“I remember when there was death of a learner in a certain school, DSD social workers were called in to assist with trauma debriefing, however DoE social workers did not render those services, instead it was rendered by DSD social workers.” (PB, SW DSD)*

*“Their [DoE social workers] role or job description is not clearly defined. They perform their duties differently. Not clear when they attend to cases and up to which level, when and why they refer.” (PPM, SWS DSD)*

There is furthermore a role confusion with regards to the social workers employed by the DoE provincial office. DoE social workers have no defined role to guide their practice parameters.

*“The social workers are currently at the level of supervisor; however, their job description requires them to be more operational. There are no social workers under their span of control. Thus, they depend on the social workers at DSD to support them and provide them with reports.” (PI, SW DSD)*

A participant explained that DoE social workers have limited roles with regards to the service rendered to children and due to this role confusion might happen.

*“DoE social workers appear to have limited roles in servicing children, for example, removal and placement of children at risk, in need of care and protection, then confirming the Form 36 at court. The struggle is also on finding suitable placements for children in need of care and protection immediately a risk is reported. Most often the social workers would service the schools to some extent and then refer the case to DSD or NGO even though they have the statutory powers. At times, they struggle to make recommendations or come up with proper plan of action or intervention plans, because of lack of resources like proper administrative tools and social work supervision.” (PK, SWS DSD)*

There are no guidelines on how the social workers from DoE and DSD need to work together.

*“Absence of standard operating processes and structure. Lack of flow in referring and receiving feedback on cases. Not having clear role clarification of GDE and DSD social work” (PM, SW DoE)*

Only one participant stated that while there had been role confusion in the past, this had been addressed and they had not experienced anymore challenges.

*“But, previously there used to be confusion of roles in terms of who is doing what and to which extent. As I would sometimes receive direct referrals from GDE social workers requesting for non-statutory services. But currently the referral process that was agreed on at the engagement has since took effect and no further challenges were experienced.” (PP, SW DSD)*

For some participants, the fact that they must report to two government departments (DSD and DoE) only adds stress and increases their workload.

*“The biggest challenge in rendering service in DoE is reporting to two Departments.” (PG, SW DSD)*

*“First challenge will be having to report to two departments, and it is most of the time different templates. Your monthly report, quarterly and sometimes enquiry about a certain learner from the above. Our own reports that need to be in a file. Our admin is a mess due to us having to be reporting everything we are being asked to produce some form of a report showing that you did support.” (PH, SW DSD)*

Participants are of the view that if there were guidelines with systematic instruction on referral process between the two departments especially in matters where child abuse cases need to be addressed as a matter of urgency e.g. removal or medical examinations.

*“We experience cases of “passing the buck”, not realising that the greatest injustice is being caused to the child.” (PJ, SW DSD)*

Pretorius (2020:147) supports the fact that there is no consistency in delivering services in schools and there is confusion about the different roles of the two departments. It has been established, from the participants that the availability of guidelines in rendering services to high risk schools could be useful as they could have a clear understanding of what type of services they should render to the learners in schools because whenever there is a case concerning a learner in school it is often the DSD social workers that respond to the cases of the learners in schools. According to DoE and MIET South Africa (2010:40), “Well defined partnerships, with clearly articulated parameters, expectations, roles and responsibilities are a prerequisite for the realization of the care and support objectives in schools”. What this means is that while the partnership between the DoE and DSD might be to address social challenges

and learning barriers in South African schools, there is a need for clear guidelines on how social workers in schools must conduct themselves (Pretorius, 2020:148).

#### **4.3.2.9 Subtheme 2.9: Shortcomings in training and experience of DSD social workers**

Lack of adequate training for social workers rendering service in high risk schools was cited as a challenge. DSD realised a need for specialised training in the field of school social work and collaborated with WITS Enterprise to offer a short course in school social work. WITS Enterprise is owned by WITS University, formed to coordinate, and administer external training on behalf of the University. The course runs over a period of 14 weeks. Since DSD pays the cost of the training, the number of DSD social workers who attends this training is limited.

*“...They need further training other than the social work degree. There are certain challenges that require speciality in the field or some form of training so proper processes can be followed for the benefit of the child client and her/his family. Newly appointed social workers are also a challenge because the crisis encountered at high risk schools requires experience in the field and immediate response and thinking.” (PK, SWS DSD)*

*“Since they are working together with another department (DoE) they must be equipped with more knowledge so that they are able to impart more knowledge with educators when addressing challenges in schools.” (PM, SW DoE)*

The need for social workers rendering services in schools to have working experience in the field before they are placed in schools, was also highlighted by the participants below.

*“DSD social workers play a crucial role in Education, however it will be better if they have statutory background (Social workers who has experience). In my region social workers are fresh from the university. They are not yet ready to implement and apply DSD policies. They are still not yet ready to do thorough assessment and they rely to their supervisor to assist them to make decisions. As a result, they become overwhelmed of what is expected from them”. (PM, SW DoE)*

SACSSP needs social workers to feel that they have confidence in their abilities to attend to the needs of their clients, it is therefore essential that social workers are engaged in ongoing in-service training to keep well-informed of the current trends and development in the social work profession (DSD Circular, 2019:2). TMS Africa (2019) found that inadequate personal development programmes hinder social workers' progressions in their careers and any form of specialisation.

#### **4.3.3 Theme 3: Strategies for effective social work services in high risk schools**

There has been a vast increase in the psychological and social barriers to learning in schools; barriers which are mostly addressed by social workers, either on an individual, family or community level (Kemp, 2014:2). This emphasizes the importance of social work services in schools. Theme 3 is a discussion of how participants see these social work services can be made effective.

##### **4.3.3.1 Subtheme 3.1: The development of comprehensive intervention programmes in high risk schools**

Some participants indicated that the list of high risk schools is reviewed annually by GDE. The schools which show improvement in psychosocial problems are removed from the list and new schools are added to that list. The schools that are removed, are placed on standby, and they don't get the priority of the social worker. Unfortunately, the psychosocial problems soon emerge due to various reasons. Social work intervention services "incorporates developmental and intervention programmes, such as prevention and early intervention services, protection of children counselling, care, rehabilitation and therapeutic programmes" (DSD 2007:112).

The findings from the study indicate that participants perceive the development of comprehensive intervention programmes as an effective support mechanism to render services in schools. They perceived that the intervention programmes should be tailored for individuals, group work, family work and community work depending on the needs of the school and the learners.

*"The social worker recommends high impact intervention going forward such as behaviour modification intervention. Sport for the learners and other*

*extramural activities. Religious intervention must be strengthened to deal with social ills like Satanism. The social worker must involve the child and parent in a therapeutic programme. The Therapeutic intervention will in turn promote healing from a trauma and strengthen the child's resilience and thus reduce possible exposure to further risk factors." (PA, SW DSD)*

In support of the above, another participant stated that school interventions should be a preventative service.

*"First and foremost, our intervention in schools should be preventative and not reactive. Social workers shouldn't be showing up at schools only when educators can no longer handle the situation." (PJ, SW DSD)*

*"The social worker must involve the child and parent in a therapeutic programme. The programme may serve as a significant prevention intervention to ensure the well-being of children." (PA, SW DSD)*

Participant J emphasized the importance of primary intervention:

*"The services that DSD provides in schools are reactive. Often, we will go to schools to put out fires. We wait for a child to be raped, to be abused, to bully his learners, to start distributing marijuana in a way that influences another learner to be disruptive before we are called. There is very little primary intervention, and we are only called in when secondary or further intervention is required." (PJ, SW DSD)*

Others felt that interventions should also focus on improving relations between the educators, social workers, and learners.

*"Educator-learner-SSW relationships need to be developed in order to provide psychosocial support services to learners." (PV, SWS DSD)*

According to Allen-Meares (2010:253) the social workers' education puts emphasis on the teaching and understanding of young people with psychosocial problems. Similarly, the participants feel that they need to implement comprehensive

interventions which do not only focus on the individual learners, but also target the educators, community, and the families in order to be able to fully address some of the arising problems. There is a need for the social workers rendering services in schools to not only react to the learner's behaviours but rather implement preventative interventions. Preventive interventions are important in social work practice as they allow social workers to deflect problems and negative behaviours from happening which tends to affect learners in the school environment (Benbenishty, Astor & Estrada, 2008:82). Prevention interventions programmes are used to ease any psychological problems at their early stages before they become social problems (Walker, 2005:17). Considering the above, social workers working in schools are expected to implement evidence-based interventions to address specific problems (Allen-Meares, Montgomery & Kim, 2013:260). Prevention is viewed as a set of strategies. It is the first response of intervention which aims to strengthen the child and thus prevent further deterioration for the child (Department of Social Development, 2016:102). Social workers need to intervene at this level as they are then better able to address problems that are bound to occur in the child life or family. Social workers try to divert children from the childcare system and the criminal justice system. Early intervention services are provided to vulnerable children or children at risks, as well as the families of these children (Department Social Development, 2016:104).

#### **4.3.3.2 Subtheme 3.2: The provision of resources for the effective implementation of social work services**

One of the major challenges that social workers experience in rendering services to schools is the lack of resources. It was therefore recommended by the participants that private spaces be provided to social workers to conduct interviews.

*“It is highly recommended that the DoE provides practice space at school for school social workers that will ensure privacy and confidentiality.” (PA, SW DSD)*

The participants also stated that they need transport services which would help them provide adequate services in schools.

*“Transport be made available always.” (PPM, SWS DSD)*



*“...more cars so they can be able to attend to more cases and proper and effective support.” (PE, SW DSD)*

*“Availing required resources” (PM, SW DoE)*

Others felt that there is a need for more human resources in the form of social workers, as well as improved communication between the two government departments.

*“More social workers so that we can be responsible for less than five schools, manageable because it is important to build relationship with the learners where you provide services. People who are responsible for us from two departments, need to constantly communicate to make the referral of cases much lighter and to allow the supervisor to advise and delegate accordingly.” (PH, SW DSD)*

*“...If the program can be prioritised with more manpower (Social worker's, Social Auxiliary workers and Social work supervisor's) and resources (Subsidized cars or more GG cars [Government vehicle] and access to internet while outside the office) Social Workers will have less schools to respond to and more time to spend at the identified schools...” (PP, SW DSD)*

*“The ideal would be that each social worker from DSD working in schools, is responsible for delivering services in multiple schools. The ideal would be for every school to be allocated a social worker. This will assist in the social worker focusing on a school and consistency is maintained, as opposed to having to deal with numerous schools, with varied priorities and programs. It will also ensure the availability of the social worker, whenever needed by the schools.” (PPN, SWS DSD)*

There should be an existing budget for various interventions with learners.

*“A budget should be allocated to allow social workers to create programs for learners in schools or any projects that may require funding that can be beneficial for the students.” (PK, SW DoE)*

Standardised programmes are also essential, as stated by this participant:

*“Having directorate and standardise programmes.” (PV, SWS DSD)*

The lack of funding and resources directed at social work services coupled with other factors has an impact on the quality of the services rendered in schools. Learners coming from poor families and communities are greatly affected by this as their families cannot afford private social work services. The lack of funding can also result in poor intervention programmes, lack of educational tools to use during interventions and the social worker’s inability to follow up on all their cases due to high workloads. Insufficient funding and human resources can also lead to work related stress which can lead to high staff turnover, low morale, and low motivation is a common challenge (Govender, 2016:37).

#### **4.3.3.3 Subtheme 3.3: Permanent placement of social workers in high risk schools**

Most of the participants indicated that one of their many challenges was having to move from one high risk school to the next to render social work services in these schools. They feel that appointing social workers to be permanently placed at schools would ensure that they provide adequate services. This view is highlighted by the participants’ responses below:

*“In terms of services delivery I believe the DoE does see the importance of psychosocial support and must structure a proper section in ISS unit [Inclusive to Special schools] with the focuses on hiring social workers to place them in school to work there, full time, as it is done in private school around the country.” (PF, SWS DSD)*

*“The best service delivery that I believe can be much more effective is to have a social worker stationed in high risk schools so that they are able to provide crisis intervention immediately, develop intervention strategies to increase academic success and furthermore assist with any social ills or challenges affecting learners.” (PB, SW DSD)*

Participant PK, a social work supervisor, further added that social workers rendering services in high risk schools, should focus on these school services only instead of being involved in multiple programmes.

*“These social workers must also be focused on only school social work services and not be entangled in other programmes so this service can be given priority at all times. There are cases that require urgent attendance by social workers and being nearby is advantageous for the benefit of the learners in need of these services.” (PK, SWS DSD)*

While others did not necessarily advocate for social workers to be placed in schools, they argued that the number of schools a social worker represented needs to be reduced for effective service delivery.

*“To ensure effective and quality service delivery in schools, social workers should not be given more than 10 schools per person. They must be given few schools to attend to so that they can be able to offer intensive counselling to learners and their families by being able to meet with them at least once per week.” (PE, SW DSD)*

Very few schools can afford to permanently employ a social worker. In public schools, it is the school governing body which appoints a social worker; that is if the budget allows (Reyneke, 2020:124). This means that many schools depend on psychosocial services provide by the DoE, where social workers are employed to render these services to learners who need them (DBE, 2018:19). The challenge with this kind of arrangement is that a single social worker is responsible for multiple schools often creating an overwhelming workload due to the demand for social workers (Reyneke, 2020:124).

Reyneke (2020:125) further argues that the dignity of learners who do not receive adequate social services can be compromised; particularly those who come from neglected and poor families. The study shows that because social workers are not based in schools and have too many schools to service, they find themselves in a difficult position when they fail to provide learners with adequate care and protection as is expected of them professionally. The image of the social workers as professionals is also affected as they can be seen as not contributing towards a better learning environment for children in schools (Reyneke, 2020:125).

#### **4.3.3.4 Subtheme 3.4: The empowering and training of social workers**

One of the challenges mentioned by the participants while working in schools was that they need more training to be able to adequately deal with the various cases they experience. To address this challenge the participants articulated the need for further training beyond their social work qualification.

*“School social workers need to be equipped with relevant training and be supported with resources they require. The school social worker needs leadership that has knowledge in the field of school social work. The school social worker needs to be recognised as a speciality field in the school of social work.” (PN, SW DSD)*

*“Continuous training and development of social workers working with learners in schools within the Gauteng Province and training of the social workers regarding the DoE operations, since they are providing a service for DoE, they need knowledge about the departments structural protocols.” (PK, SW DoE)*

The training of officials of the DoE (Educators) was also highlighted as a need.

*“Capacity building of all education officials on matters and legislative framework affecting children.” (PM, SW DoE)*

One of the needs and requirements repeatedly indicated by the participants is the training of social workers rendering services in schools. Due to this shortcoming Govender (2016:115) found that guidelines are very important as a source of knowledge for those who are new in the field and for those already in such specialty positions; meaning that new and experienced social workers could use the guidelines on how to render services in schools.

#### **4.3.3.5 Subtheme 3.5: The provision of adequate supervision for social workers**

Supervision is critical for social workers and the participants highlighted the importance thereof. Supervision would provide SSWs with the needed support, as highlighted in the statement below:

*“School social workers based at DSD offices will be able to allow their emotional disturbance, be felt within their offices. DSD social workers will be able to acquire adequate supervision from their supervisor. They will have an ongoing emotional support required to deal with range of challenges on daily basis.”*  
**(PK, SW DoE)**

*“Housing of social workers to be in either department’s offices with their supervisors to allow for immediate support, mentoring, management, recording of cases and observation of case flow on a regular basis.”* **(PM, SW DoE)**

*“They also require constant supervision and debriefing sessions to ensure that they do not burnout due to the high rate of cases reported and the nature of cases they deal with.”* **(PK, SWS DSD)**

As supervision is a legislative requirement, it is compulsory for social workers to have supervision. Only social workers can act as a supervisor for social workers (SACSSP, 2012; NASWA, 1999; Social Service Profession Act, no 110 of 1978). This requirement is essential as there are certain social work services and ethical matters like case management, record keeping, and monitoring of workload; all which require professional supervision of a registered social worker (Kemp 2014:3). In Tshwane region DSD social workers are based at the DoE district office and the social work supervisor is not based at the district, she is based at the DSD regional office. This imposes a challenge for social workers to receive immediate supervision. Due to distance to meet with the supervisor, the social workers often report to different structures within the education settings such as a cluster manager, psychologist, or even principals. However, evidence by DSD (2006:16) indicates that the productivity as well as the quality of the social work services deteriorates when supervision or line management was provided by non-social workers.

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4: The integration of social work into the mainstream education system**

Kemp (2014:150) states that the employment and use of social workers in schools differs across the nine provinces. In some provinces social workers are only available at provincial level while for others, they are only available at district level be it for

special schools or mainstream schools. Theme 4 is a discussion of the participants' views on how social workers can be incorporated into the mainstream education system.

#### **3.3.4.1 Subtheme 4.1: Effective multi-stakeholder collaboration at all levels**

In order to address the challenge of poor collaboration amongst various stakeholders, DSD and DoE should hold regular meetings to discuss the social work services rendered in various schools. The two Departments should work together and foster a strong working relationship amongst the school district, GDSD officials and learners in order to ensure the well-being and improvement of quality of education. The participants expressed that:

*“Meetings between DSD and Education be constantly conducted to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the services provided by the School Based Social Workers. Referral procedures be followed by both DSD officials and GDE officials so that proper interventions could be done.” (PE, SW DSD)*

*“Proper coordination and marketing of the service. Clear role clarification, regular meetings between the two departments.” (PM, SW DoE)*

The following participants emphasize the importance of coordination as suggested below:

*“The DSD and DoE need to sign a memorandum of understanding to avoid duplication of services.” (PN, SW DSD)*

*“The only way that the school social workers model can work within the Gauteng Province is when education and social development work together. They should work together in creating a conducive working environment for the social workers dealing with children in schools. Social workers need consultation rooms in schools, they need resources like cars laptops, printers and whole lot more things that will make their work a lot easier.” (PK, SW DoE)*

Others mentioned the need for proper introduction of social workers to schools and the community particularly parents.

*“A proper induction should be conducted for the school officials and the parents to know about the presence of the school social workers in their schools and how they can make use of the services.” (PA, SW DSD)*

Partnerships between different sectors are beneficial as this covers the gaps where the government is failing to reach and address certain issues in society due to the lack of resources and other factors (Banerjee, Murphy, & Walsh, 2020:2). In the case of this study, the DoE does not have adequate social workers to work in high risk schools in Gauteng. Through different sector collaborations there is improved service delivery through efficiency, innovation, cost reduction and networking (Stibbe & Prescott, 2016:3). Collaboration is also an opportunity for different stakeholders to learn from each other. For the collaboration between the DoE, DSD, schools and other stakeholders to be effective it is important for each partner to excel in what they do, so that learners benefit from these collaborative interventions in the long run (Pretorius, 2020:148).

#### **4.3.4.2 Subtheme 4.2: The reporting structure to manage the implementation of social work services from both GDE & GDSD**

The following excerpts indicate that the social workers felt that the reporting structure needs improvement and that social workers should report to one department. It would be an added advantage for the social workers rendering services in schools to be based within the DoE:

*“It will be best if all the school social workers in Gauteng will be given an opportunity to render services at the District level, reporting daily at the District office as it is easier for them to understand DoE policies and the educational settings. It is also easy for networking and for growth and development in the school social workers services, social workers are able to learn new trends, and referral procedures.” (PG, SW DSD)*

*“For SSW services to be effective, DoE should absorb social workers deployed at schools and that social workers at schools should only focus on psychosocial related cases. The monthly reporting templates from DSD are not corresponding or attending the issues that a social work from school should mainly focuses*

*on. Thus it creates difficulties for school social workers to excel on their tasks at schools. For example, in my region I am expected to do foster care services, and removals for which cases that are significant in a school environment are substances use, teenage pregnancies, school dropouts, behavioural issues, gender base violence, bullying and gambling.” (PD, SW DSD)*

*“DoE should hire their own social workers to render services in high risk schools just like they allocate social workers in special schools. Service delivery will be more efficient and effective. Two department working together do not work at all, because they have too many bureaucracies to be considered.” (PF, SWS DSD)*

*“...However, being at the DoE offices seems more viable as it allows for easy access from the education counterparts and inclusion of the social workers in the in-house businesses and interdepartmental liaison in service rendering.” (PM, SW DoE)*

The advantage of having social workers based in the DoE offices is that they would have access to all the resources they need to perform their job.

*“The best model would be for DSD social workers to be placed in DoE offices, for the sake of accessing necessary resources/tools of trade for service delivery at schools. These social workers could be divided amongst the existing circuits in different districts. Placement should also consider the proximity between the office and the schools the social workers are servicing. This is to avoid delays in responding to crisis or emergency cases. Being deployed at schools from DSD has advantages of having access to tools of trade/resources like trainings on relevant skills required, cell phones, office space, office telephone, stationery, laptop, 3/4G modem, administrative tools, a library with access to books that can be used to guide their practice, legislations, manuals and proper supervision by a qualified social work supervisor.” (PK, SWS DSD)*

The study findings show that there is a need for a single reporting structure which can be used by the social workers rendering services in schools. At present, they have to



report and write different reports for the DoE and another for the DSD of which they both have different reporting requirements. This also adds onto the social worker's existing heavy load, which in turn affects the quality of the work provided by the social worker in schools.

#### **4.3.4.3 Subtheme 4.3: Developing operational procedures for social workers rendering services in high risk schools**

The mutual perception from the participants was that there must be specific norms and standards put in place which would guide the service delivery in schools. As stated by these participants:

*"I feel that there must be norms and standards put in place, based on the Children's Act 38/2005, which guide service delivery in schools. The programmes that we do should go through an accreditation process, so that we can ensure that they are in line with the Children's Act 38/2005, they are effective and speak to the needs of learners and also that they are appropriate for the level of development at which the targeted learners are at." (PJ, SW DSD)*

*"Acknowledgement and inclusion of social workers in schools in policy making and other regulations affecting learners. Having standard operating procedures." (PM, SW DoE)*

*"The two departments should create a universal intake process of how the social workers will get cases of learners in schools." (PK, SW DoE)*

*"Approved referral system to be followed by GDE and DSD officials. There is a need to respond on time as a team to reported cases." (PPM, SWS DSD)*

The consensus from the participants is that there is a need for standard operating procedures to guide social workers rendering services in schools. Doing this would set a standard, so that all programmes rendered at schools are the same and are effective in response to the needs of the schools. This would ensure quality of service and assist when evaluating the effectiveness of programmes. Guidelines are necessary to help social workers respond to learner diversity in the classroom (Kemp, 2014:95). The

participants in the study are of the view that with guidelines, they as social workers would be able to improve service delivery and would act as a monitoring and evaluative guide in the management of social workers rendering services in high risk schools in the Gauteng Province.

A study by Kemp (2014:130) found that without guidelines a school social worker's role and functions are not understood, which results in negative service delivery as the social workers end up offering different services which causes confusion. Equally so, the findings show that there is an unclear role clarification and especially variations in differentiating and describing the role of social workers between the DoE and those of social workers from the DSD. Therefore, management guidelines are needed to help not only guide school social workers in their work, but also so that they preserve their integrity by ensuring adequate service delivery.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter was a discussion of the study findings which emerged during data analysis. To support the findings, the researcher used direct quotes and verbatim reports from the participants to document their views and experiences working and rendering services in high risk schools in the Gauteng Province. The analysed data was validated and substantiated by existing literature on school social work. Social work services in schools were overall considered a very critical and necessary role which needs more coordination and support from the Departments of Social Development and Education.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, EVALUATION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE RESEARCH STUDY**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a summary of the study, and also an evaluation, conclusion, and recommendations with regards to guidelines for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province. The outcomes are discussed with reference to the objectives of this research. The study proposes guidelines that would assist DSD Social workers to render effective social work services in high risk schools. Recommendations are made in terms of practice, policy and procedure, as well as recommendation for further research.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION, AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

This section presents answers to the research question based on the primary data, as well as referring to the aim of the study.

##### **5.2.1 Research question**

The main research question for the study was: What guidelines can be formulated for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province? The research question was formulated based on the research problem and answered by achieving the research aim and objectives of this study

##### **5.2.2 Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this study was to formulate guidelines that would assist social workers to render effective social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province.

To realise this aim the following research objectives were formulated:

- To conduct a literature study on social work services in schools to develop a conceptual framework for this study.
- To explore and describe perceptions of social workers regarding services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province as perceived by DSD social workers placed in these schools.

- To explore and describe perceptions of social workers regarding services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province as perceived by social work supervisors.
- To explore and describe perceptions of social workers regarding services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province as perceived by DoE school social workers.
- To formulate guidelines to improve social work services rendered to high risk schools in Gauteng.

The first objective was reached by conducting a literature study. The literature study included literature relating to school social work, policies and regulations pertaining to the educational setting in the South African context, as well as policies and regulations pertaining to child protection. Moreover, ecological perspective as a theoretical framework guided the study.

The second objective was to explore and describe perceptions of social workers regarding services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province as perceived by DSD social workers placed in these schools. This objective was achieved by collecting data through e-mailed semi-structured interviews with open ended questions. Data was collected from eleven DSD social workers.

The third objective was to explore and describe perceptions of social workers regarding services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province as perceived by social work supervisors. This objective was achieved by collecting data through e-mailed semi-structured interviews with open ended questions. Data was collected from four DSD social work supervisors.

The fourth objective was to explore and describe perceptions of social workers regarding services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province as perceived by DoE school social workers. This objective was achieved by collecting data through e-mail semi-structured interviews with open ended questions. Data was collected from two DoE social workers.

The fifth objective was achieved by describing four main themes and the subthemes that emerged during the data analysis. Based on the findings and the themes and subthemes, guidelines are developed and presented in this chapter. The themes and

subthemes were presented as findings in Chapter 4. Literature was used to support these findings.

### **5.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **5.3.1 Theme 1: The social workers' role in high risk schools**

The findings revealed that social workers have a definite role to play in high risk schools. The participants regard psychosocial support as an essential resource for an emotionally safe environment for both educators and learners. Furthermore, they identify and build on the strengths of learners rather than focusing on deficit. They strive holistically to address these problems to be able to meet the learners' needs.

During the intervention process social workers working in schools are tasked to conduct assessments as part of their investigations. A thorough learner assessment is performed to determine the nature and extent of any risks the learners may be exposed to in order render adequate services. Social workers obtain basic and important information to make an informed decision about the learner's current circumstances and assist in the identification and formulation of a relevant intervention plan in the best interest of the learner.

Social workers form part of the school team and their role is to evaluate the learning needs of the learners. All the challenges that learners experience at school, social workers are available to assist and ascertain what the problem is and assist the learner and their family in solving it.

Another role that social workers perform in schools, is the implementation of prevention and early detection programs to address various psychosocial problems that affect learners, such as child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, bullying, teenage empowerment, mental health and suicide, behavioural problems, and crises intervention. Social workers offer these services to learners to avoid the removal of the learners from their families while addressing the above-mentioned challenges. Learners are also diverted away from the child youth care systems (CYCC) and the criminal justice system.

Social workers play multiple roles in schools as they use their skills, values and knowledge to better the lives of learners. They also assist in creating a conducive learning environment.

### **5.3.2 Theme 2: Social workers' challenges working in high risk schools**

The findings revealed that social workers experience several challenges when rendering services in schools: Firstly, the unavailability of resources for service delivery is a huge challenge. Most of the participants indicated that they work in an environment characterised by the lack of offices, inadequate office equipment, shortage of vehicles, high caseloads, and a shortage of staff from both the two departments presenting insurmountable challenges. The lack of funding directed at social work services coupled with other factors has a strong effect on the quality of the services rendered in schools. The lack of educational tools to use during interventions furthermore result in social workers inability to perform their duties.

Secondly, heavy workloads have a negative effect on the participants and impacts the quality of services rendered to clients. They also feel overwhelmed with their workload and do not receive immediate guidance and support from supervisors due to the reason that the supervisors are at DSD offices and they are at DoE District offices. The majority of the participants highlighted that high caseload delay them in responding to emergencies. As a results, they end up attending to the crises only, instead of rendering prevention and intervention programmes.

Thirdly, participants emphasized that part of their work is to work with school-based support teams. A challenge experienced by social workers working in schools is the lack of recognition in the educational context. Social workers also feel that educators do not value the importance of confidentiality. Principals and educators do not always co-operate with due process; reporting cases after they have already acted and made their decision regarding a learner, therefore excluding the social worker from this vital process.

The study furthermore highlighted that there is poor collaboration between the social workers from DSD and social workers from the DoE. Social workers from DSD sometimes feel unsupported by the social workers from DoE. The absence of

collaboration between the two departments while working in schools is due to the fact that each department has its own referral procedure, and therefore their working procedures differ. Services are often duplicated due to a lack of communication between the social workers from DSD and DoE, as well as from the district offices.

Fourthly, the findings revealed that the lack of guidelines on social workers' roles and responsibilities brought confusion with regards to the social workers employed by the DoE provincial office and DSD social workers. There is no consistency in delivering services in schools and this creates confusion about the different roles of the two departments. It was established from the participants that the availability of guidelines in rendering services to high risk schools could be useful as they would have a clear understanding of what type of services they should render to the learners in schools.

Lastly, the findings show a lack of training for social workers rendering services in high risk schools was a challenge. While the GDSD subsidised training by Wits University to assist social workers in rendering services in school was noted as supporting the delivery of a professional social work service to learners, this should be augmented to service all SSWs. Participants highlighted the need for ongoing in-service training so as to be up to date on current developments in the line of work so that they are able to grow and specialise in their careers.

### **5.3.3 Theme 3: Strategies for effective social work services in high risk schools**

Development of comprehensive intervention programmes is perceived as an effective support mechanism to render services in schools. Intervention programmes should be tailored for individuals, group work, family work and community work depending on the needs of the school and the learners. The participants are of the view that they need to implement comprehensive interventions which do not only focus on the individual learners, but also target the educators, community, and the families in order to be able to fully address some of the rising problems. There is a need for the social workers rendering services in schools to not only react to learner's behaviours but rather implement preventative interventions.

Permanent placement of social workers in high risk schools was seen to be the best option. They perceived that appointing social workers permanently placed at schools would ensure that they provide adequate services, and they would then be able to focus on those schools, instead of being involved in multiple programmes. Very few schools can afford to permanently employ school social workers due the allocated budget per school.

While others did not necessarily advocate for social workers to be placed in schools, they argued that the number of schools a social worker represented needs to be reduced for effective service delivery. The study shows that when social workers are not based in schools and have too many schools to attend to, they find themselves in a difficult position when they fail to provide learners with adequate care and protection.

The provision of adequate supervision for social workers was also emphasised by participants. It is very crucial to social workers as it provides them with support and guidance. Productivity and quality of social work services will intensify when supervision is provided by line management or social workers.

#### **5.3.4 Theme 4: The integration of social work services in the mainstream education system**

The study findings show that participants feel that they have great impact through the services that they render to schools. They feel that they need to report to a single structure. Reporting to two departments adds administrative time and hours to the already heavy loads of social workers and it affects the quality of work provided by the social workers working in schools. The consensus from the participants is to have specific norms and standards put in place to guide the service delivery in schools.

#### **5.4 SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK SERVICES IN HIGH RISK SCHOOLS**

“A guideline is a suggested way of performing a task with a product or service or scope” (Leonard, 2010:1). Social workers that are rendering services in schools in Gauteng have not had a defined role to guide their practice parameters. Therefore, guidelines for social workers in DSD rendering social work services in high risk schools



in Gauteng Province are suggested. The guidelines would assist social workers to work and function in a consistent manner.

#### **5.4.1 Suggested guidelines based on the findings of theme 1**

The focus of theme 1 is on the role of social workers in high risk schools. The guidelines for theme 1 was developed from the themes and related subthemes that emerged in this theme. The following guidelines are recommended:

- To provide psychosocial support to prevent problems that learners may come across in future.
- To assess learners in need of social work services in order to have a contingency plan for a learner's current circumstances.
- To consult with parents, educators and the school personnel.
- To promote parental community involvement. Conduct home visit to learners and families with a purpose of providing support to the entire family's set of challenges that affect learners, such as exploitation, child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, bullying, teenage empowerment, intellect well-being and suicide, behavioural problems, and crises intervention.
- The guideline should be read together with the Children's Act 38 of 2005, Section 147 subsection (2) of the Act which entails that arrangement for prevention and early intervention programmes should be implemented to children and families. These programmes include education, information, awareness, therapeutic programmes, family preservation, parenting skills and diversion programmes.

#### **5.4.2 Suggested guidelines based on findings of theme 2**

The guidelines suggested is based on theme 2 which predominantly focuses on the challenges of social workers in high risk schools. The contents of the theme and subthemes guided the development of the guidelines below:

- Social workers rendering services in high risk schools highlighted their challenges and in order to render effective services to learners, these challenged need to be addressed.
- Social workers should be allocated with a budget and necessary tool of trade such as office space, office furniture, stationery, laptops, mobile phone, 3G modems,

data and airtime, and a vehicle to conduct remote services effectively. Allocation of time is also essential to conduct assessment and to conduct programmes in schools.

- Social workers rendering services to schools must be managed by a competent and registered social worker.
- Social workers rendering services in schools should be supervised in order to make sure that they render quality services and respond to learners' needs
- Collaboration between DSD social workers and DoE social workers should be strengthened in educational setting, to plan and develop interventions strategies to address learners' needs.
- Social workers should continue in ensuring that professional development, social work education, and training is maintained throughout. Professional conduct and ethical behaviour must be promoted in order to comply with professional standards and keep up to date with the social trends affecting the lives of learners.

The impact of challenges of social workers has been identified to be a prime concern with social services and social workers. Impact of challenges and risks of social workers in high risk schools have denoted lack of coordination, control availability of necessities, lack of training and lack of supervision. Guidelines suggested under this theme would address management and effective coordination.

#### **5.4.3 Suggested guidelines based on finding of theme 3**

The suggested guidelines under this theme have been provided based on the findings of theme 3. Theme 3 focused on strategies for effective social work services in high risk schools. The following guidelines are developed based on the support of this theme and subtheme and would include:

- Develop comprehensive intervention programmes: Social work services in schools should be exclusively for the protection of learners who are victims of gender-based violence, child abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Each school should be able to provide early intervention programmes where learners are identified as being at risk. All the services that are rendered in schools should be aligned to legislations and policies. Social work services in schools should be evaluated and checked for possible risk factors that might

have contributed to the occurrence of the child's learning barriers and also indicate the protective factors in order to assist learners for optimal performance in their studies.

- Budget and human resources need to be aligned to meet the needs of learners. For social workers to render effective services to learners, a budget needs to be allocated for every programme implemented in school. For instances some of the intervention from the social workers is to assist learners who do not have birth certificates. Social workers have to take a learner and his or her parent to do a DNA test before home affairs can issue a birth registration or identity documents. Social workers rendering services in schools are required to conduct parenting skills, family preservation and awareness programmes with parents. To implement all the programmes a budget is necessary for these programmes to be successful.
- Due to various social ills that negatively affect schools, it is recommended that all schools around Gauteng be allocated with social workers.
- Social workers should be permanently placed in the school setting. When social workers are based at schools, they will have access to tools of trade that will be specifically allocated to them such as office space, office furniture stationery, laptops or desktop, printers, vehicles, landline and cell phones, 3G modem, data and airtime to conduct services remotely.

Guidelines based on findings under this theme have addressed strategies that would increase the effectiveness of social services in high risk schools. In addition to these responses acquired from research findings has depicted that there is a significant underlying issue that is contributed by the impact of efficient strategies implemented for social care and services. Guidelines would support in development and implementation of strategies that would increase social service quality and accessibility

#### **5.4.4 Suggested guidelines based on finding of theme 4**

Theme 4 emphasized the importance of the integration of social work services in the mainstream education system. The theme, with its subthemes, guided the development of the following guidelines:

- Social workers rendering services in high risk schools should understand the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders involved in implementing social work services in schools.
- Collaboration is needed with all stakeholders, such as Department of Health, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Justice and Correctional services, South African Police Services and Non-profit organisation designated to child protection.

The guidelines suggested under this theme have addressed the effective implementation of integration of social services and social care along with mainstream educational services. As observed from the evaluation of findings of this research it is observed that there is a significant issue between coordination and integration of services with social service organisations and educational authorities.

The suggested guidelines have been provided based on evaluated responses from research findings. The impact and influence of these guidelines based on this research could increase the efficiency of social services, works and care in high risk schools. These guidelines could also increase the involvement and motivations of social workers' for social services of high risk schools.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations are based on the findings of this study and are aimed at improving social work services in schools. Furthermore, the findings may also serve as a basis for future research on social work services in high risk schools and to close the gap in this field of knowledge. Recommendations of this research are addressed based on suggested guidelines and evaluated guidelines in this research.

### **5.5.1 Recommendations for policy and procedures**

The following recommendations are made for policy and procedures:

The provision of support and coordinated regulation to Social Service Workers

- Department of Basic Education should motivate for the appointment of social workers in schools.

- There needs to be clear roles for DoE and DSD social workers. Guidelines are very important and can be employed as a source of knowledge for those who are new in the field and for those already in such specialty positions; meaning that new and experienced social workers could use the guidelines on how to render services in schools.

#### Implement Supportive Investments and Stakeholder Involvement

- Social workers must have manageable caseloads in order to render effective services to learners and also be able to follow up on all cases.
- To have a budget coordinated and integrated by the DSD and DoE to ensure adequate resources are allocated for social work services in schools and educational tools for interventions.

#### **5.5.2 Recommendation for Practice**

##### Increase Training, skill, knowledge and Education of Social Workers

- Develop and train social workers rendering services in schools to stay up to date with new knowledge and proficiency.
- Integration of Regulation of social services assisted by social service organisations and mainstream education

The two departments should offer programmes that are individualised and will support each social worker towards their personal as well professional development.

#### **5.5.3 Recommendations pertaining to future research**

Future research may include:

- The exploration of the perceptions of principals and educators on social work services in schools.
- The exploration of the integration of social work services in educational settings.
- In addition, future research studies could potentially develop research-based outcomes that would address psychological care and services in schools based on social services.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The following are the limitations of this study:

- Due to the COVID-19 restrictions the normal processes of data collection were adjusted. The researcher also had a challenge to follow the normal informed consent procedures such as obtaining informed consent and an independent person being present during the signing of the consent form. Lockdown restricted the researcher from travelling to different regions to have face to face interviews as it was not allowed to enter the regional offices where the mediator and participants are based. Therefore, the researcher had to revise the data collection method from face-to-face semi-structured interviews to e-mailed semi-structured interviews. The data was therefore collected through e-mailed semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The researcher was unable to observe non-verbal communication of the participants. Even though the researcher tried to explore other means of online interviews, such as WhatsApp or video calls, Zoom or Teams, it was a challenge for participants as some did not have laptops or compatible desktops and smart phones to use the applications.
- Another limitation of this research could be the exclusion of risks and challenges that could affect social services in schools resulting from governance. The possible risks and challenges that contribute to the governance of schools and the education system in social services were not considered and could therefore be seen as a limitation.

## **5.7 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

The findings of this study contribute to the body of knowledge about social work services in high risk schools. Although the initiative of placing DSD social workers in high risk schools in Gauteng Province was implemented to address psychosocial problems of learners, this initiative also unveiled several challenges. To address these challenges and improve the social work services rendered to children in high risk schools, it is essential to formulate guidelines for social work services in these schools.

Other professionals such as educators, educational psychologist and other stakeholder would gain a better understanding of the role of social workers rendering services in high risk schools.

The findings of this study emphasized that not only high risk schools are in need of social work services, but all schools need social work services as social workers plays a critical role in schools.

## **5.8 CONCLUSION**

The study revealed that social workers working in schools provide a wide range of social, emotional, behavioural, school and family interventions using methods of practice of school social work. Even though social workers that are rendering services in schools in Gauteng have never had a defined role to guide their practice parameters, their role is very critical. Therefore, through the input and feedback from the participants, guidelines could be developed and proposed for social workers in DSD rendering social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a framework of reference for social workers to decide on the best intervention and to implement their intervention methods in rendering services to learners.

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# ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM HREC, NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 086 016 9698  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za/>

**North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC)**

Tel: 018 299-1206  
Email: [Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za) (for human studies)

24 January 2020

## ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC) on 24/01/2020, the NWU-HREC hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-HREC grants its permission that, provided the general and specific conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

<b>Study title: Guidelines for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province</b>																															
<b>Principal Investigator/Study Supervisor/Researcher: Dr L Wilson</b>																															
<b>Student: DF Lesesa-31231195</b>																															
<b>Ethics number:</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>4</td><td>7</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>9</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Institution</td> <td colspan="5">Study Number</td> <td colspan="2">Year</td> <td colspan="5">Status</td> </tr> </table>	N	W	U	-	0	0	4	7	2	-	1	9	-	A	1	Institution			Study Number					Year		Status				
N	W	U	-	0	0	4	7	2	-	1	9	-	A	1																	
Institution			Study Number					Year		Status																					
<i>Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation</i>																															
<b>Application Type: Single study</b>	<b>Risk:</b> <table border="1"><tr><td>Minimal</td></tr></table>	Minimal																													
Minimal																															
<b>Commencement date: 24/01/2020</b>																															
<b>Expiry date: 28/02/2021</b>																															
<b>Approval of the study is provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of an annual monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation. A monitoring report is due at the end of February annually until completion.</b>																															

<p><b>General conditions:</b></p> <p><i>While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The principal investigator/study supervisor/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-HREC:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Annually on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided annually, and upon completion of the study; and</i></li> <li>- <i>without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the principal investigator/study supervisor/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the NWU-HREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.</i></li> <li>• <i>Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for active monitoring.</i></li> <li>• <i>The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.</i></li> </ul>
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- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-HREC reserves the right to:
  - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
  - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
    - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
    - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-HREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
    - submission of the annual monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and/or
    - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- NWU-HREC can be contacted for further information via [Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za) or 018 299 1206

**Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):**

- a. Please provide the NWU-HREC with copies of the goodwill permission letters from the head of each region to be included in the study.
- b. Please provide the NWU-HREC with copies of the goodwill permission letters from the head of the District Office to be included in the study.

As the study progresses the aforementioned conditions should be submitted to [Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za) with a cover letter with a specific subject title indicating "Outstanding documents for approval: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX." The letter should include the title of the approved study, the names of the researchers involved, that the documents are being submitted as part of the conditions of the approval set by the NWU-HREC, the nature of the document i.e. which condition is being fulfilled and any further explanation to clarify the submission.

The *e-mail*, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a *specific subject line* indicating the nature of the submission e.g. "Outstanding documents for approval: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". The e-mail should indicate the nature of the document being sent. This submission will be handled via the expedited process.

The NWU-HREC would like to remain at your service and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the NWU-HREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Digitally signed by  
 Petra Bestor  
 DN: cn=Petra Bestor,  
 o=AFTHAF, ou=NWU,  
 Faculty of Health  
 Sciences,  
 email=petra.bestor@nwu.ac.za, c=ZA  
 Date: 2020.01.27  
 13:30:26 +0200

Chairperson NWU-HREC

Current details (23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.4 Templates\9.1.5.4.2\_NWU-HREC\_EAL.docm  
 20 August 2019  
 File Reference: 9.1.5.4.2

ANNEXURE B: AUTHORISATION FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Enquiries: Dr. Sello Mokoena  
Tel: 082 331 0786  
File no.: 02/09/19

Dear DF Lesesa

**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 "**Guidelines for Social Work Services in High Risk Schools in Gauteng**" 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 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

You have permission to interview departmental officials, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Hartmann".

**Ms Amanda Hartmann**  
**Deputy Director General: Support Services**

Date: 21/10/2019

## ANNEXURE C: AUTHORISATION FROM THE DoE



### GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

#### GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	20 January 2020
Validity of Research Approval:	04 February 2020 – 30 September 2020 2019/363
Name of Researcher:	Lesesa F.D
Address of Researcher:	53 Concorde crescent Crystal Park Benoni 1501
Telephone Number:	011 355 9240/ 072 367 5189/ 079 894 2203
Email address:	Dinah.Lesesa@gauteng.gov.za
Research Topic:	Guidelines for social work service in high risk schools in Gauteng Province.
Type of qualification	Master of Social work
Number and type of schools:	District and/ or Head Office
District/s/HO	All Districts

#### **Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

Handwritten signature and date: 21/10/2020

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1

*Making education a societal priority*

#### Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001  
Tel: (011) 355 0488  
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za  
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za



1. Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
4. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



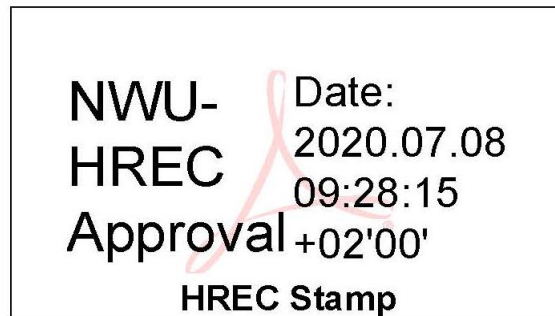
Mr Gumani Mukatuni  
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 24/01/2020

## ANNEXURE D: CONSENT FORM FOR DSD SOCIAL WORKERS



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520  
Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222  
Fax: +2718 299-4910  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>



### INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR SOCIAL WORKERS FROM DSD

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:** Guidelines for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province

**ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS:** NWU-00472-19-S1

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr Lizane Wilson

**POST GRADUATE STUDENT:** Feeleng Dina Lesesa

**ADDRESS:** 53 Concorde Crescent, Crystal Park Benoni

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 072 367 5189 / 0798942203

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of a Masters Degree. Please take some time to read through the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the **Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00472-19-S1)** and will

be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

**Due to the lockdown and social restrictions informed consent will be obtained in the following way:**

- The researcher will make an appointment with you to via telephone or the online platform of your choice (Skype or Zoom) discuss the research process.
- You will then be asked to sign the informed consent document. This will be done by having a person with you during the signing of the document to co-sign and witness the signing process. The researcher will do the same. Therefore four people will be present during the signing process as being visibly undertaken over Skype/Zoom/whatsapp video call.
- The informed document will be resigned when both parties are allowed to be present. This will be arranged.
- This informed consent is therefore a *form of delayed consent* until confirmation in another format will be possible should the lockdown continue.
- After you have signed the consent document you will be requested to scan or fax the signed document to the researcher and keep the original until such time you can meet with the researcher, to obtain the original document. You may also take a photograph of the document on your cell phone and send it via WhatsApp to the researcher.

**What is this research study all about?**

- In this study we want to formulate guidelines that will assist social workers to render effective social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province.
- This study will be conducted in Gauteng province and the interviews will be conducted at the offices where you are placed.
- The interviews will be done by an experienced health researcher trained in interviewing. Interviews will be conducted with 12 voluntarily recruited Social workers from DSD, 5 social work supervisors and 4 school social workers from DoE.

**Why have you been invited to participate?**

- You have been invited to be part of this research because you are a registered social workers currently employed by DoE in Gauteng province, have more than three years' experience as a school social worker working in high risk schools in Gauteng province and fluent in English

**What will be expected of you?**

- You will be expected to take part in an e-mail semi-structured interview.
- This will happen in the following way:
- You will receive an e-mail from the researcher after you have given informed consent. The email will include the purpose of the interview as well the interview questions. The questions will be as follow:
  - Tell me about how you perceive the social work services that are rendered by DSD social workers in high risk schools in Gauteng?

- In your view, what would be the best service delivery practice for effective school social work services by DSD social workers in high risk schools in Gauteng?
- You will then have the opportunity to answer these questions via email and send it back to the researcher in an email.
- The researcher may then reply with probing questions and requests for clarifications or expansion. This process will continue until the interview is exhausted.

**Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?**

- There will be no direct gain for you to participate in the study but sharing your experiences will assist in the improvement of social work services in high risk schools by developing guidelines for social workers rendering services in schools.

**Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?**

- The risks in this study is minimal.
- There might be a possibility that you may be affected by the discussions of the topic and may experience some stress. You will not be forced to answer any questions and you will have the option to not answer a question if you feel not to or feel uncomfortable.

**How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?**

- The information you share with the researcher during the interview will be kept confidential. Only the researcher and the project leader will have access to this information.
- Pseudonyms will be used in the final report in order to ensure anonymity.
- All the documents with information will be safely locked in the researcher's office and only she will have access to it and on her password protected private computer.

**What will happen with the findings or samples?**

- The information that you share will only be used for this study and no other studies.

**How will you know about the results of this research?**

- We will give you the results of the study when the study is completed. All the participants will each receive a summary of the research study once the study is complete. This will be emailed to you.
- You will be informed of any new relevant findings by vial telephone or emails.
- The results of the study will also be shared with both the provincial Department of Social Development and the DoE. This will be in anonymised format.

**Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?**

- You will not receive any reimbursement to participate in this study. As the interviews, will be conducted via email you will not have any expenses. You will also be provided with "thank you gift" as token of appreciation, which will be a data to the value of R60.00.

**Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

- You can contact. Feeleng Dina Lesesa at 0723675189 / 0798942203 if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206 or [carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za) if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.

**Declaration by participant**

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in the research study titled. Guidelines for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province.

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of participant**

.....  
**Signature of witness**

**Declaration by researcher**

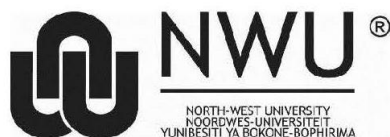
I (*name*) Feeleng Dina Lesesa declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to ..... **or** I had it explained by ..... who I trained for this purpose.
- I did/did not use an interpreter
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them or I was available should he/she want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that he/she had time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of researcher**

## ANNEXURE E: CONSENT FORM FOR DSD SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520  
Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222  
Fax: +2718 299-4910  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>



### INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:** Guidelines for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province

**ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS:** NWU-00472-19-S1

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr Lizane Wilson

**POST GRADUATE STUDENT:** Feeleng Dina Lesesa

**ADDRESS:** 53 Concorde Crescent, Crystal Park Benoni

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 072 367 5189 / 0798942203

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of a Masters Degree. Please take some time to read through the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the **Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00472-19-S1)** and will

be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

#### **What is this research study all about?**

- In this study we want to formulate guidelines that will assist social workers to render effective social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province.
- This study will be conducted in Gauteng province. The interviews will be conducted at the regional offices in a consultation room in the following regions. Johannesburg region, Ekurhuleni region, Sedibeng Region, Tshwane region and West rand region for DSD Social worker.
- The interviews will be done by an experienced health researchers trained in interviewing. Interviews will be conducted with 12 voluntarily recruited social workers from DSD placed in the high risk schools in Gauteng, 5 social work supervisors and 4 school social workers from DoE.

#### **Due to the lockdown and social restrictions informed consent will be obtained in the following way:**

- The researcher will make an appointment with you to via telephone or the online platform of your choice (Skype or Zoom) discuss the research process.
- You will then be asked to sign the informed consent document. This will be done by having a person with you during the signing of the document to co-sign and witness the signing process. The researcher will do the same. Therefore four people will be present during the signing process as being visibly undertaken over Skype/Zoom/whatsapp video call.
- The informed document will be resigned when both parties are allowed to be present. This will be arranged.
- This informed consent is therefore a *form of delayed consent* until confirmation in another format will be possible should the lockdown continue.
- After you have signed the consent document you will be requested to scan or fax the signed document to the researcher and keep the original until such time you can meet with the researcher, to obtain the original document. You may also take a photograph of the document on your cell phone and send it via WhatsApp to the researcher.

#### **What is this research study all about?**

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- This study will be conducted in Gauteng province.
- The interviews will be done by an experienced health researcher trained in interviewing. Interviews will be conducted with 12 voluntarily recruited Social workers from DSD, 5 social work supervisors and 4 school social workers from DoE.

#### **Why have you been invited to participate?**

- You have been invited to be part of this research because you are a registered social worker with at least three years' experience as a supervisor supervising social workers placed in high risk schools by DSD and fluent in English.



### **What will be expected of you?**

- You will be expected to take part in an e-mail semi-structured interview.
- This will happen in the following way:
- You will receive an e-mail from the researcher after you have given informed consent. The email will include the purpose of the interview as well the interview questions. The questions will be as follow:
  - Tell me about how you perceive DSD social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng.
  - In your view, what would be the best service delivery practice for effective school social work services by DSD social workers in schools in Gauteng?
- You will then have the opportunity to answer these questions via email and send it back to the researcher in an email.
- The researcher may then reply with probing questions and requests for clarifications or expansion. This process will continue until the interview is exhausted.

### **Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?**

- There will be no direct gain for you to participate in the study but sharing your experiences will assist in the improvement of social work services in high risk schools by developing guidelines for social workers rendering services in schools.

### **Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?**

- The risks in this study is minimal.
- There might be a possibility that you may be affected by the discussions of the topic and may experience some stress. You will not be forced to answer any questions and you will have the option to not answer a question if you feel not to or feel uncomfortable.

### **How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?**

- The information you share with the researcher during the interview will be kept confidential. Only the researcher and the project leader will have access to this information.
- Pseudonyms will be used in the final report in order to ensure anonymity.
- The interviews will also be in a private room where only you and the researcher will be.
- All the documents with information will be safely locked in the researcher's office and only she will have access to it and on her password protected private computer.

### **What will happen with the findings or samples?**

- The information that you share will only be used for this study and no other studies.

### **How will you know about the results of this research?**

- We will give you the results of the study when the study is completed. All the participants will each receive a summary of the research study once the study is complete. This will be emailed to you.
- You will be informed of any new relevant findings by vial telephone or emails.
- The results of the study will also be shared with both the provincial Department of Social Development and the DoE. This will be in anonymised format.

**Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?**

- You will not receive any reimbursement to participate in this study. As the interviews, will be conducted via email you will not have any expenses. You will also be provided with “thank you gift” as token of appreciation, which will be a data to the value of R60.00.

**Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

- You can contact. Feeleng Dina Lesesa at 0723675189 / 0798942203 if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206 or [carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za) if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.

**Declaration by participant**

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in the research study titled. Guidelines for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province.

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of participant**

.....  
**Signature of witness**

**Declaration by researcher**

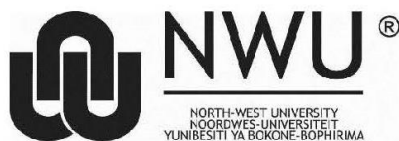
I (*name*) Feeleng Dina Lesesa declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to ..... **or**  
I had it explained by ..... who I trained for this purpose.
- I did/did not use an interpreter
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them  
or I was available should he/she want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research,  
as described above.
- I am satisfied that he/she had time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to  
do so.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of researcher**

## ANNEXURE F: CONSENT FORM FOR DoE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520  
Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222  
Fax: +2718 299-4910  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>



### INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:** Guidelines for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province

**ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS:** NWU-00472-19-S1

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr Lizane Wilson

**POST GRADUATE STUDENT:** Feeleng Dina Lesesa

**ADDRESS:** 53 Concorde Crescent, Crystal Park Benoni

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 072 367 5189 / 0798942203

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of a Masters Degree. Please take some time to read through the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the **Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00472-19-S1)** and will

be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

**Due to the lockdown and social restrictions informed consent will be obtained in the following way:**

- The researcher will make an appointment with you to via telephone or the online platform of your choice (Skype or Zoom) discuss the research process.
- You will then be asked to sign the informed consent document. This will be done by having a person with you during the signing of the document to co-sign and witness the signing process. The researcher will do the same. Therefore four people will be present during the signing process as being visibly undertaken over Skype/Zoom/whatsapp video call.
- The informed document will be resigned when both parties are allowed to be present. This will be arranged.
- This informed consent is therefore a *form of delayed consent* until confirmation in another format will be possible should the lockdown continue.
- After you have signed the consent document you will be requested to scan or fax the signed document to the researcher and keep the original until such time you can meet with the researcher, to obtain the original document. You may also take a photograph of the document on your cell phone and send it via WhatsApp to the researcher.

**What is this research study all about?**

- In this study we want to formulate guidelines that will assist social workers to render effective social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province.
- This study will be conducted in Gauteng province.
- The interviews will be done by an experienced health researcher trained in interviewing. Interviews will be conducted with 12 voluntarily recruited Social workers from DSD, 5 social work supervisors and 4 school social workers from DoE.

**Why have you been invited to participate?**

- You have been invited to be part of this research because you are a registered social workers currently employed by DoE in Gauteng province, have more than three years' experience as a school social worker working in high risk schools in Gauteng province and fluent in English

**What will be expected of you?**

- You will be expected to take part in an email semi-structured interview.
  - This will happen in the following way:
  - You will receive an e-mail from the researcher after you have given informed consent. The email will include the purpose of the interview as well the interview questions. The questions will be as follow:
- Tell me about how you perceive social work services rendered by the social workers from DSD in high risk schools in Gauteng.

- In your view, what would be the best service delivery practice for DSD social workers to deliver school social work services in schools in Gauteng?
- You will then have the opportunity to answer these questions via email and send it back to the researcher in an email.
- The researcher may then reply with probing questions and requests for clarifications or expansion. This process will continue until the interview is exhausted.

**Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?**

- There will be no direct gain for you to participate in the study but sharing your experiences will assist in the improvement of social work services in high risk schools by developing guidelines for social workers rendering services in schools.

**Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?**

- The risks in this study is minimal.
- There might be a possibility that you may be affected by the discussions of the topic and may experience some stress. You will not be forced to answer any questions and you will have the option to not answer a question if you feel not to or feel uncomfortable.

**How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?**

- The information you share with the researcher during the interview will be kept confidential. Only the researcher and the project leader will have access to this information.
- Pseudonyms will be used in the final report in order to ensure anonymity.
- The interviews will also be in a private room where only you and the researcher will be.
- All the documents with information will be safely locked in the researcher's office and only she will have access to it and on her password protected private computer.

**What will happen with the findings or samples?**

- The information that you share will only be used for this study and no other studies.

**How will you know about the results of this research?**

- We will give you the results of the study when the study is completed. All the participants will each receive a summary of the research study once the study is complete. This will be emailed to you.
- You will be informed of any new relevant findings by vial telephone or emails.
- The results of the study will also be shared with both the provincial Department of Social Development and the DoE. This will be in anonymised format.

**Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?**

- You will not receive any reimbursement to participate in this study. As the interviews, will be conducted via email you will not have any expenses. You will

also be provided with “thank you gift” as token of appreciation, which will be a data to the value of R60.00.

**Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

- You can contact. Feeleng Dina Lesesa at 0723675189 / 0798942203 if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206 or [carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za) if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.

**Declaration by participant**

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in the research study titled. Guidelines for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province.

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of participant**

.....  
**Signature of witness**

**Declaration by researcher**

I (*name*) Feeleng Dina Lesesa declare that:

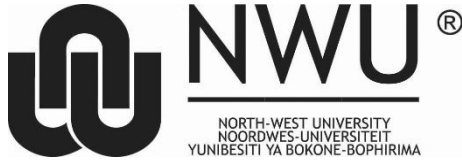
- I explained the information in this document to ..... **or**  
I had it explained by ..... who I trained for this purpose.
- I did/did not use an interpreter
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them  
or I was available should he/she want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research,  
as described above.
- I am satisfied that he/she had time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to  
do so.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of researcher**



## ANNEXURE G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DSD SOCIAL WORKERS



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Fax: +2718 299-4910

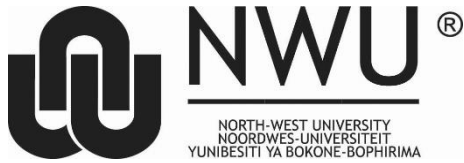
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Research question: What guidelines can be formulated for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province?

The interview questions for DSD social workers are as follows:

1. Tell me about how you perceive DSD social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng?
2. What challenges do you experience as social worker with the social work services rendered by DoE school social workers?
3. In your view, what would be the best service delivery practice for effective school social work services by DSD social workers in schools in Gauteng?

## ANNEXURE H: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DSD SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS



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Fax: +2718 299-4910

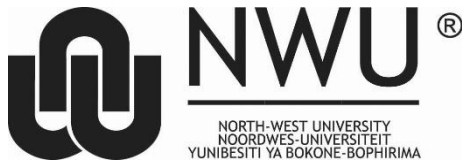
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Research question: What guidelines can be formulated for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province?

The interview questions **for DSD social work supervisors** are as follows:

1. Tell me about how you perceive DSD social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng?
2. What challenges do you experience as social work supervisor with the social work services rendered by DoE school social workers?
3. In your view, what would be the best service delivery practice for effective school social work services by DSD social workers in schools in Gauteng?

## ANNEXURE I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DoE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS



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Fax: +2718 299-4910

Web:<http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Research question: What guidelines can be formulated for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province?

The interview questions for the school social workers from DoE are as follows:

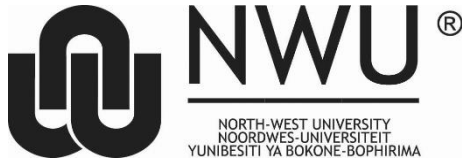
1. Tell me about how you perceive social work services rendered by the social workers from DSD in high risk schools in Gauteng.
2. What challenges do you experience as a school social worker from DoE with the social work services rendered by DSD social workers?
3. In your view, what would be the best service delivery practice for effective school social work services by DSD social workers in schools in Gauteng?

## ANNEXURE J : SUMMARY OF THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

THEME	SUBTHEME
<p><b>Theme 1: The social workers' role in high risk schools</b></p>	<p>Subtheme 1.1: DSD social work services seen as an essential service to high risk schools</p> <p>Subtheme 1.2: To render psychosocial support services</p> <p>Subtheme 1.3: To conduct assessments on children</p> <p>Subtheme 1.4: Support to learners who have barriers to learning</p> <p>Subtheme 1.5: Offering early intervention and prevention programmes in high risk schools</p> <p>Subtheme 1.6: Fulfilment of multiple roles</p>
<p><b>Theme 2: Social workers' challenges working in high risk schools</b></p>	<p>Subtheme 2.1: Insufficient / Lack of resources</p> <p>Subtheme 2.2: High caseloads and lack of support</p> <p>Subtheme 2.3: Challenges of working with school based support teams (SBST)</p> <p>Subtheme 2.4: Different perceptions on the definition of high risk schools</p> <p>Subtheme 2.5: Lack of recognition of social workers working in schools</p> <p>Subtheme 2.6: Shortage of DoE social workers</p> <p>Subtheme 2.7: Lack of cooperation between DSD social workers and DoE social workers</p> <p>Subtheme 2.8: Lack of guidelines on social workers' roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Subtheme 2.9: Shortcomings in training and experience of DSD social workers</p>

THEME	SUBTHEME
<p><b>Theme 3: Strategies for effective social work services in high risk schools</b></p>	<p>Subtheme 3.1: The development of comprehensive intervention programmes in high risk schools</p> <p>Subtheme 3.2: The provision of resources for the effective implementation of social work services</p> <p>Subtheme 3.3: Permanent placement of social workers in high risk schools</p> <p>Subtheme 3.4: The empowering and training of social workers</p> <p>Subtheme 3.5: The provision of adequate supervision for social workers</p>
<p><b>Theme 4: The integration of social work into the mainstream education system</b></p>	<p>Subtheme 4.1: Effective multi-stakeholder collaboration at all levels</p> <p>Subtheme 4.2: The improvement of the reporting structure</p> <p>Subtheme 4.3: Develop guidelines for school social workers' management</p>

## ANNEXURE K: EXAMPLE OF AN INTERVIEW



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Research question: What guidelines can be formulated for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province?

The interview questions **for DSD social workers** are as follows:

4. Tell me about how you perceive DSD social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng?

DSD social work services plays a critical role in high risk schools. Their services are able to discover family challenges that lead to the risk and behavioural problems learners are experiencing at school. They also manage to offer services that would not be offered to learners in case those services were not available; services such as poverty alleviation, behaviour change programs, child protection , substance abuse, victim empowerment (rape victims), human trafficking, bullying and parental programs and services focusses on crises intentions (trauma debriefing, and grieving) and refer and link learners to other service provider such as Nicro, Department of Health, Department of Justice, SAPS and other professionals within the DoE. Social Workers advocates for learners especially those that are recommended for expulsion and or expelled by the HOD. Respond to all cases that require social services and provide necessary support.

School based social worker is postulated that social work services are needed in grass roots level and they help a lot especially to learners with barriers to learning. Learners with learning disability tend to accept their

situation better after social workers' intervention. As a result, they adjust to new coping techniques and progress well with learning.

5. What challenges do you experience as social worker with the social work services rendered by DoE school social workers?

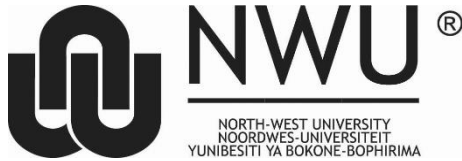
Since the social workers have a vast number of schools requiring psycho-social services, attention to schools in question tend to lack due to limited human resources. Referral procedures is a huge problem when one is working at school as a social Worker. Education has its own referral system, while DSD has its own too. Most of the time the referral procedures are overlooked

by both the Departments. Work cohesion is a challenge between the two Departments, there seems to be no proper accountability especially when it comes to supervision. Most Supervisors do not have knowledge about the GDE policies; therefore, it creates unnecessary challenges that hinders service delivery.

6. In your view, what would be the best service delivery practice for effective school social work services by DSD social workers in schools in Gauteng?

To ensure effective and quality service delivery in schools, Social Workers should not be given more than 10 schools per person. They must be given few schools to attend to so that they can be able to offer intensive counselling to learners and their families by being able to meet with them at least once per week. They also must be provided with resources such as educational charts for their awareness programmes, more cars so they can be able to attend to more cases and proper and effective support. Meetings between DSD and Educations be constantly conducted in order to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the services provided by the School Based Social Workers. Referral procedures be followed by both DSD officials and GDE officials so that proper interventions could be done.

## ANNEXURE L: EXAMPLE OF AN INTERVIEW



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Fax: +2718 299-4910

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Research question: What guidelines can be formulated for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province?

The interview questions for **DSD social work supervisors** are as follows:

1. Tell me about how you perceive DSD social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng?

I perceive the DSD social work services as an essential service that is necessary to have in schools, more especially high risk schools. The social workers are perfectly placed in high risk schools to bring about transformation in the lives of the learners so they can improve their social functioning and strive to achieve their full potential. It is necessary to have such services at schools because that is the environment that is conducive for most of a child's growth and development.

2. What challenges do you experience as social work supervisor with the social work services rendered by DoE school social workers?

DoE social workers are limited in number and cannot service all the schools in all the circuits and districts. They are unable to reach more learners who need the service and that impacts on the response period as well as immediate attendance of cases reported. Especially as high risks cases are to be attended within 24 to 48 hours. DoE social workers appear to have limited roles in servicing children, eg. removal and placement of children at risk, in need of care and protection, then confirming the Form 36 at court. The struggle is also on finding suitable placements for children in need of care and protection immediately a risk is reported. Most often the social workers would



service the schools to some extent and then refer the case to DSD or NGO even though they have the statutory powers. At times, they struggle to make recommendations or come up with proper plan of action or intervention plans, because of lack of resources like proper administrative tools and social work supervision. The resources by education are limited to social work, because it is a secondary field to education, so their resources are channelled to their priority areas/fields. Resources like government owned or subsidised vehicle for conducting home visits, removals and court attendance, telephone/cell phone, office space for confidentiality and private sessions with learners, printers, photocopy machine, photocopy paper, stationery, puppets for play therapy amongst other necessities. Lack of these is limiting the role of DoE school social workers and impacting negatively on case flow.

With DSD social workers servicing schools, so far what I have noticed is the lack of resources that are required to ensure that the service is speedily available and rendered. Responding time is crucial because some cases are high risk and require crisis intervention which determines responding time. Training of social workers rendering this service is another challenge. They need further training other than the social work degree. There are certain challenges that require speciality in the field or some form of training so proper processes can be followed for the benefit of the child client and her/his family. Newly appointed social workers are also a challenge because the crisis encountered at high risk schools require experience in the field and immediate response and thinking. They also require constant supervision and debriefing sessions to ensure that they do not burn out due to the high rate of cases reported and the nature of cases they deal with.

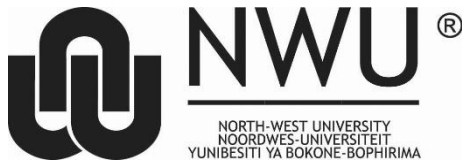
**3. In your view, what would be the best service delivery practice for effective school social work services by DSD social workers in schools in Gauteng?**

The best model would be for DSD social workers to be placed in DSD offices, for the sake of accessing necessary resources/tools of trade for service delivery at schools. These social workers be divided amongst the existing circuits in different districts. Placement should also consider the proximity between the office and the schools the social workers are servicing. This is to avoid delays in responding to crisis or emergency cases. Being deployed at schools from DSD has advantages of having

access to tools of trade/resources like trainings on relevant skills required, cell phones, office space, office telephone, stationery, laptop, 3/4G modem, administrative tools, a library with access to books that can be used to guide their practice, legislations, manuals and proper supervision by a qualified social work supervisor.

These social workers must also be focused on only school social work services and not be entangled in other programmes so this service can be given priority at all times. There are cases that require urgent attendance by social workers and being nearby is advantageous for the benefit of the learners in need of these services.

## ANNEXURE M: EXAMPLE OF AN INTERVIEW



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Research question: What guidelines can be formulated for social work services in high risk schools in Gauteng Province?

The interview questions for the school social workers from **DoE** are as follows:

Tell me about how you perceive social work services rendered by the social workers from DSD in high risk schools in Gauteng.

The social workers from DSD in high risk schools in GP have a crucial role to play in developing and empowering educators with legislations dating to the protection of children such as The Children's Act 38 of 2005 and Sexual Offence Act.

These legislations are obliged for educators to report child abuse and sexual offences against children. Furthermore, these legislations required Social workers to make referrals to designated child protection organisation and SAPS to report such incidents in comparisons to the South African School's Act (SASA, 1994) where focal point dates to school management matters.

Since DSD Social workers are custodians of legislature and Policies, they are capacitated with legislations relating to children of protecting and acting in the best interest of the child within the educational context.

In additions those DSD Social workers form part of multidisciplinary team in GDE to render services in the form of active participation, support, consultation, sharing of knowledge skills and development of programs according to the need assessment.

What challenges do you experience as a school social worker from DoE with the social work services rendered by DSD social workers

Response:

DSD Social workers play a crucial role in Education, however it will be better if they have statutory background (Social workers who has experience). In my region Social workers are fresh from the University. They are not yet ready to implement and apply DSD policies. They are still not yet ready to do thorough assessment and they rely to their supervisor to assist them to make decisions. As a result, they become overwhelmed of what is expected from them.

Since they are working together with another department (Education) they must be equipped with more knowledge so that they are able to part more knowledge with Educators when addressing challenges in schools.

Another challenge is DSD Social workers are not conducting themselves professionally. They arrive late for meetings and events. As a results teacher are undermining their services.

In your view, what would be the best service delivery practice for effective school social work services by DSD social workers in schools in Gauteng?

Response:

Supervisor is regarded as an important part of Social work. School Social workers based at DSD offices will be able to allow their emotional disturbance, be felt within their offices. DSD Social workers will be able to acquire adequate supervision from their supervisor. They will have an ongoing emotional support required to deal with range of challenges on daily basis.

In GDE, Psychologist were based on District level. The school Social workers might be supervised by psychologist which will be non – Social workers. As a result, there might a lack of promotional opportunity, professional isolation and inappropriate evaluation. In some instances, school Social workers could report to different

structures in Education settings such as a cluster manager, Psychologist Principals, etc.

It has been discovered by DSD (2006) that productivity and quality of social work services declined when supervision or line management was provided by Non Social workers. Furthermore, it attributes negative personal, emotional, reduced job satisfaction, OSD decline in service delivery and lack of supervision.

The undersigned is overseeing two GDE Regions i.e Ekurhuleni and Sedibeng Regions. Both Regions, Social workers are based at DSD and supervised by DSD Social work Supervisor. The School social work supervisors for GDE form part of District based support Team (DBST) which consist of other stakeholders, eg, presentative from other departments.

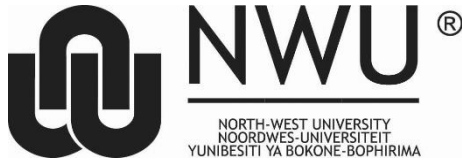
Furthermore, inside the DBST, there is a psychosocial team which consist of Profession such as Psychologists, Nurses, Occupational Therapist, Counsellors, Medical officials in some cases that needs psychiatric evaluation where individual cases are discussed for further intervention services.

In this platform Social workers serves as a crucial role and function as a mediator, negotiator, consulted and advocates for what is in the best interest of the child according to Section 7 of the Children 's Act 2005 within the educational context.

In conclusion "Supervision is a legislative requirement and was declared mandatory for Social workers and only Social workers can Act as a Supervisor for Social workers (SACSSP,2012, NASWA,1999 and Social Service Profession Act, no 110 of 1978)

In my view I feel that DSD Social workers remain at DSD offices, supervision be done by DSD supervisors.

## ANNEXURE N: PARTICIPANTS INFORMATION LEAFLET



**Private Bag X1290,  
Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520**

**Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222**

**Fax: +2718 299-4910**

**Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>**

You have been invited to be part of this research because you are a registered social worker currently employed by DSD/DoE in Gauteng Province, have more than three years' experience as a school social worker working in high risk schools in Gauteng Province and fluent in English

You will be expected to take part in an e-mail semi-structured interview.

This will happen in the following way:

You will receive an e-mail from the researcher after you have given informed consent.

The e-mail will include the purpose of the interview as well the interview questions.

If you would like to participate, please contact DSD/DoE manager of your directorate who will indicate how the process will unfold.

Thank you for reading this information and considering taking part.

Your sincerely

Dina Lesesa



## ANNEXURE O: SUMMARY OF TURNITIN REPORT

23376147:Final\_thesis\_Dina\_Lesesa\_25\_November\_2021\_for...

### ORIGINALITY REPORT

<b>10</b> %	<b>9</b> %	<b>3</b> %	<b>3</b> %
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

### PRIMARY SOURCES

<b>1</b>	<b>repository.nwu.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>2</b> %
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