Resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges

by

LINDIWE PORTIA BOTHA

submitted in accordance with the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF H M WILLIAMS

15 NOVEMBER 2022

DECLARATION

Name: Lindiwe Portia Botha

Student number: 67123414

Degree: Masters of Social Work

RESILIENCY AMONGST RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS IN MANAGING THEIR EXPERIENCES OF WORK-RELATED CHALLENGES

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

_____   15 November 2022
SIGNATURE   DATE

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents Likeleli Ariya Botha and Simon Botha. Thank you for your unconditional love and support. A special thank you to my mother who kept me in her payers and encouraged me to work hard. I have not forgotten the words you have told me since primary school, that if you work hard you will thank yourself later.

I also dedicate this work to my loving, caring and supportive husband Oscar Bhekikhaya Duma. Thank you for being a patient and understanding partner. I know it was not easy surviving the lonely moments. To our daughter Sbahle Duma, I hope one day you will read this and be inspired by this work. Mommy loves you.

To my sister Nomthandazo Charlote Botha you truly are an amazing person and I am blessed to have you as my sister. Please be inspired and never give up in everything you do.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks to the following people who played a major role in helping me complete this research study

- To the almighty God for the wisdom and strength you have given me to complete this research study.

- To my supervisor, Prof HM Williams, for teaching me how to complete a research study step by step and, most importantly, for being non-negotiable with it comes to quality work.

- To the Unisa bursary for financial assistance, it made a huge difference in helping me to complete this master's dissertation.

- To the independent coder, Dr P Schultz, thank you for your efficient and quality work.

- To the editor, Kim Smit for your quality and professional work.

- To the Head of Social Development, Mr SM Mtshweni, thank you for approving the research study.

- To Mpumalanga Mental Health Society, thank you for agreeing to provide debriefing to my participants.

- To my participants who freely shared their work experiences, your contributions helped immensely in this research study, I appreciate you, thank you.

- To my parents, Simon Botha and Likeleli Ariya Botha, to have you in my life is truly a blessing. I am proud to say mama I made it!!!

- To my beloved husband, your love, support and encouragement kept me going.

- To my daughter, Sbahle Duma, seeing your smile and laughter brightens my life. Mommy loves you.

- To my little sister, Nomthandazo Charlote Botha, you are more than a sister, in you I have a best friend. You truly are a blessing in my life, I am grateful.

- To my colleague and friend, Kgaugelo Setabola, I must say this was not easy journey, but you made it bearable and I am proud of us, we made it, partner!!!

ABSTRACT

Background of the study - The notion of resilience was first recognised in the field of psychopathology in the 1970s. The concept can be used to explain the individual responses to challenges and traumatic events which led many researchers to develop an interest in researching resiliency in different fields including social work. This interest was highlighted in the 90s when more social work researchers researched child protection social workers, this was because it was discovered that many social workers experienced high levels of stress due to trauma that is work-related. However, researchers focused more on urban areas and there has been a gap in literature on the resiliency of rural social workers because social work was noted to be a creation of the city as it started and developed its connection to urban matters hence it took many years before it turned to the needs of people living in rural areas, including those of social workers.

Goal - The goal of this research study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the resilience amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges.

Methods - A qualitative research approach was employed to explore, describe, and contextualise the resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. Phenomenology was employed which focuses on the person's experiences, perceptions, and feelings. Piloting the data collection instrument and testing the researcher's interview skills was concluded prior to commencing with the actual data collection phase. Rural social workers meeting the criteria of inclusion were purposively sampled and semi-structured interviews, based on questions reflected in an interview guide, were conducted as the data collection method. The eight steps suggested by Creswell (2014:197) were applied for data analysis, and data verification was based on the model proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Ethical considerations observed in the study are informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, beneficence, management of information and debriefing of participants should the need arise.

Results - Regardless of the challenges, trauma and hardship experienced by rural social workers, their experience in performing their daily duties showed resilience, as they tended to have the ability to look past their challenges to find solutions and possibilities in providing services to their clients and taking care of themselves.

Contribution - This study contributed to the scientific body of knowledge that provides how rural social worker manage their work-related challenges.

Key terms: Resiliency; Rural area; Social workers; Rural social workers; Challenges; Experiences; Manage

NGOKURHUNYEZIWEKO

Umlando werhubhululo – Umbono omalungana nokubekezela wahlonitjhwa kokuthoma emkhakheni weze-*psychopathology* eminyakeni yabo-1970s. Ngokulemuka ukobana leligama lingasetjenziswa ukuhlathulula iimpendulo zabantu ngamunye eentjhijilweni kanye nezehlakalweni ezitsirimezako, kurholela ekubeni abarhubhululi abanengi bona babe nekareko ekurhubhululeni ubudisi bokubekezela emikhakheni eyahlukahlukeneko, kufaka phakathi imikhakha enjengezehlalakuhle. Leli kareko lavezwa eminyakeni yabo-90, lokha irhubhululo elimalungana nabasebenzi bezehlalakuhle ephikweni lezokuvikelwa kwabantwana nabahlangabezana namazinga aphezulu wegandeleleko, ngenca yevalo lemsebenzini. Nanyana-kunjalo, abarhubhululi bebaqale khulu eendaweni zemadorobheni kanti kade kunesikhala emtlolweni wezobukghwari malungana nobudisi bokubekezela kwabasebenzi bezehlalakuhle beendaweni zemakhaya. Ibizelo lezehlalakuhle lathoma belakhulisa ithungelelwano lalo kokuthoma eendabeni zemadorobheni kanti lokho kuthethe iminyaka eminengi ngaphambi kobana liqale iindingo zabantu abahlala eendaweni zemakhaya, kufakwa Phakathi abosohlalakuhle abasebenza eendaweni lezi zemakhaya.

Irhuluphelo – Irhuluphelo lesiifundo serhubhululo kukuzuza ilwazi elingeneleleko elimalungana nokubekezela kwabasebenzi beendaweni zemakhaya ekulawuleni iintjhijilo zabo zemsebenzini.

Iindlela zokwenza (*Methods*) – Indlela yokurhubhulula edzimelele kukhwalithi (*qualitative research*) isetjenzisiwe ukuhlola, ukuhlathulula kanye nokuveza ubujamo obuphathekako bezinga lokubekezela kwabasebenzi bezehlalakuhle beendaweni zemakhaya, malungana nokuphatha iintjhijilo abahlangabezana nazo emsebenzini. Ifenomenoloji esetjenzisiweko ngileyo eqale ilwazi lomuntu laqobe lilanga, imiqondo kanye namazizo womuntu. Ihlelomlingo (*pilot*) lokubuthelela idatha kanye nokuhlola amakghonofundwa wehlolombono lomrhubhululi, kuphethwe ngaphambi kokuthoma isigaba samambala sokubuthelelwa kwedatha. Abasebenzi bezehlalakuhle bemakhaya abakhambisana nehlelo elifaka okuhlukahlukileko, isampula yehloso, kanti amahlolombono ahlelwe ngokwesiquntu, asuselwa phezu kwemibuzo evele kumhlahlandlela wehlolombono, athethwe njengendlela yokubuthelelwa kwedatha. Amagadango alithoba aphakanyiswe ngu-Creswell (2014:197) asetjenziselwe ukutsenga idatha, kanye nokuqinisekisa idatha kususelwe phezu kwemodeli ephakanyiswe ngu-Lincoln bano-Guba model (1985). Imibandela yokuziphatha elandelweko kurhubhululo kusivumelwano esizwakalako, ifihlo, ukungazivezi igama, i-*beneficence*, ukuphathwa kwelwazi kanye nokucoca kwabadlalindima , lokha nakunesidingo.

Imiphumela – Kungaqalwa iintjhijilo, ivalo/ukuthukwa kanye nobudisi obuhlangabezana nabasebenzi bezehlalakuhle bemakhaya, lokha nabenza imisebenzi yabo yaqobe lilanga, bakhombise ukubekezela

lokha nabanande bakhombisa ikghono lokuqalana neentjhijilo zesikhathi esidlulileko, ngehloso yokuthola iinsombululo kanye nalokho okungenzeka lokha amakhasitamu nakenzelwa izenzelwa kanye nokuzitjheja kwabasebenzi ngokwabo.

Igalelo – Leli rhubhululo lifake igalelo ezikweni lezesayensi, okuliziko elitjhoko bona abasebenzi bezehlalakuhle bemakhaya baqalana bunjani neentjhijilo zomsebenzi ngendlela yokubekezelela ubudisi**.**

Table of Content

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Covid-19	Corona Virus Disease
DSD	Department of Social Development
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
NASW	National Association of Social Workers
UNISA	University of South Africa
GPS	Global Positioning System

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The introduction provides a brief overview and background of the study. The problem statement that focuses on what the actual problem is and presents the baseline of what the researcher hoped to achieve. The rationale of the study states why the researcher wanted to conduct the study and the theoretical framework, which supported the research outcome of the study, is discussed. The ethical considerations that were found to be significant, the key concepts used and the structure of the research study are explained before the chapter is concluded

1.2   BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The aim of the study was to find out about the resiliency of rural [1]social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. "Resilience derives from the verb *resile*, which means that when something is compressed, stretched, or bent, it tends to spring back elastically, to resume its former size and shape" (Revilla, Martin & de Castro, 2018:90). Resilience is also defined as the process of maintaining positive adaptation and effective coping strategies in the face of adversity (Rutter, 2012:01). Resilience is more than managing stressful situations, it involves the potential for transformational and personal growth out of adversity (Ungar, 2012:176). The researcher recognises resiliency as the capacity to recover and successfully adapt even though faced with challenges that are expected to cause dysfunction in a person's life.

The concept of resilience was coined in the 1970s in the field of psychopathology, poverty, and traumatic stress. Garmezy (a psychologist) is regarded as the initiator of research in resilience and during his research he focused on the risk factors for children that experienced severe stressors. However, the outcomes were not as expected; the children did not have negative developmental outcomes (Garmezy, 1971:102). Impressed by the outcomes, Garmezy (1971:104) conducted a similar study in United States of children with parents who were diagnosed with schizophrenia, because he was interested whether the protective factors of children would enable the children to have positive development regardless of the risk factors they were exposed to. In his studies he found that 60% of the children that had parents with schizophrenia experienced positive social and academic development and did not have the illness themselves. He concluded that these children were well adapted. The unexpected outcome led to further

---

[1] Rural social work practice is clarified as social work-related activities that involve working with and for people in rural areas to bring about change in their social functioning (Scales, Streeter & Cooper 2013:95). Some researchers refer to rural social workers as social workers practising in rural areas (Alpaslan & Shenk 2012:367). Therefore, for the purpose of this study the researcher made use of the concepts of rural social work and social workers working in rural areas interchangeably.

research in the field of public health, psychology, education, and social work. He defined resilience as "adaption in the face of some type of stress, threat or adversity" (Garmezy, 1971:114).

A similar study was conducted in Sweden in 1947, where the children were exposed to risk factors that could later have negative consequences on their mental health. In 1988, 41 years after the commencement of the research, follow ups were conducted with the participants by Dahlin, Cederblad, Antovsky and Hagnell (1990). The outcome indicated that most participants were functioning well mentally, and they had healthy lifestyles (Dahlin, Cederblad, Antovsky & Hagnell, 1990:229). Such studies created an interest in the field of social work, as there seemed to be an increased number of researchers conducting research about resilience and its relevance to social work (Van Breda, 2018:12).

Developing resilience in a child support social worker is a concept that has been highlighted as far back as the 90s and it was unquestionable that resilience research was needed to develop ways that would help to strengthen child protection social workers when faced with challenges and trauma of work-related challenges (Horwitz, 1998:376). The nature of social work statutory duties includes prevention and early intervention services, protection of rights of children, removal of abused children and finding them a place of safety while at the same time managing children's court proceedings (Horwitz, 1998:376). This shows that social workers are exposed to high levels of stress because, not only are they exposed to danger and trauma, but they also find themselves having excessive workloads, limited resources, and a shortage of staff members (Horwitz, 1998:376). This has been noted as a challenge for rural social workers who occasionally experience feelings of disappointment and frustration due to the everyday trauma they often find themselves having to deal with (Daley, 2021:25). The scarcity of resources and services was also noted to be causing challenges in service delivery for rural social workers (Daley, 2021:25).

The scope of social work resilience: An international perspective

The researcher discovered further research focusing on resiliency, notably an international study about the challenges and protective factors experienced by international graduate students during their studies at United States universities (Park, Lee, Choi & Zepernick, 2017:733). The study took place in 2012 and continued to 2013. Nine students from Korea, China, and Taiwan who were attending classes at Midwestern University participated in the study. The students seemed to have experienced more challenges than those who were originally from the United States, including language barriers and discrimination. However, the outcomes of the study showed that these students demonstrated successful adjustment to the university and performed academically well (Park et al. 2017:733).

The researcher found limited research regarding the topic of resilience and rural social workers and the researcher singled out the United Kingdom and United States because they were one of the few countries that conducted research regarding the resiliency of social workers, but with limited focus on the resiliency of rural social workers.

Studies about social work resilience in the United Kingdom

Social work itself, according to Joseph (2017:05) and Collins (2007:255), seems to be stressful with limited support, poor resources, and a high turnover rate, and these factors seem to deeply affect social workers. Considering the presented challenges, Collins (2007:255) conducted a research study in the UK with social workers aimed at finding out what personality characteristics enabled certain social workers to endure their career and its demands compared to those that left the profession due to an inability to cope. Positive reappraisal, goal-directed and problem-focused work, and infusing ordinary events with meaning were identified as three positive aspects that helped social workers cope with the adversity they came across in their work environment. These three positive aspects were identified as the resilience factors of social workers (Collins, 2007:261).

Another study that focused on the topic was conducted by Grant and Kinman (2014:06) in the UK about the working conditions of social workers, with the aim of determining the resilience of social workers, revealed that the high work-related stress experienced by social workers working in rural areas can be aggravated by the work pressure they experience daily in helping their clients deal with their problems while also dealing with their own personal problems (Grant & Kinman, 2014:07).

Studies about social work resilience in the United States of America

A study done in the United States comparing the challenges that social workers deal with in rural areas compared to urban areas indicates that poverty is one of the leading problems faced in rural areas. In this study Scales, Streeter & Cooper (2013:230, 231) stated that, "the child poverty rate in rural areas was 23% compared to the 20.2 % in urban areas in 2009". Therefore, social workers in rural areas have a bigger role to play in ensuring the wellbeing of people living in rural areas. A similar study was conducted by Brown, Walters, Jones and Akinsola (2017:01) in 2015 in the United States to identify the challenges of rural social work. Job dissatisfaction amongst social workers working in rural areas resulted in high rates of burnout and turnover, and many had the intention to leave the organisation. This resulted in organisations in these rural areas having to recruit more social workers, but many social workers indicated that they were not interested in working in rural areas (Brown et al. 2017:02). When social workers leave their jobs, their work is passed on to another colleague, leading to an increased workload. "About 80% of those social workers are employed in urban areas" (Brown et al. 2017:01).

They concluded that there is a shortage of social workers in rural areas, which makes it much more difficult to work in these areas.

Studies about social work resilience in South Africa

A resilience study was conducted by Van Breda in 2015 (2018:1109) about the resilience factors of vulnerable students transitioning into a South African University. The study was conducted at the University of Johannesburg with second- and third-year social work students. In his studies he found that most students faced hardship when transitioning to university, however some managed to cope better than others. He stated that those who managed to cope were not immune to the challenges, but that they had the ability to make use of the available resources to overcome adversity and those were the students who showed resilience factors (Van Breda, 2018:1110).

A similar study was conducted by Dykes (2016:15) at the University of the Western Cape amongst social work students about the effects of having endured adverse childhood experiences. Her research revealed that the social work students who had endured post-traumatic stress in childhood had coped with their experiences and those experiences had, in turn, given them a renewed appreciation of life. Those students viewed their post-trauma as positive, believing that it encouraged them to be social workers and gave them the zeal to help others experiencing similar problems. She concluded that "many social worker students show resilience in the face of adversity" (Dykes, 2016:29).

Studies about rural social work in South Africa

A South African study was conducted in 2012 where 32 South African rural social workers were interviewed about the working conditions in rural areas (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012:400). The study indicated the dissatisfaction of social workers in rural areas due to inadequate funding, a lack of quality professional supervision, too many cases which concentrate on the quantity of work completed instead of the quality of work provided to clients, and community members complaining about the lack of services. Such challenges make it difficult to keep rural social workers from accepting offers from other countries which may seem better (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012:410). Worldwide the profession of social work has been placed at risk hence there have been calls to prioritise social workers. In response to this call a study was done in 2016 with 15 South African social workers who were regarded as resilient (Truter, Theron & Fouché, 2017:01).

Findings revealed that the lives of these social workers were put at risk due to the work they did such as removal of children, emotional exhaustion, working with aggressive clients, lack of support and financial strains (Truter et al. 2017:01). In the midst of these challenges social workers were still able to cope and continue working regardless of the challenges they were faced with. Support systems, both personal

and professional, and focusing on the positives were found to build their resilience and contributed to the body of knowledge (Truter et al. 2017:02).

The state of knowledge on the topic

Unlike urban social workers, rural social workers face many difficulties in providing services, such as a lack of resources, information, and support from colleagues. This leaves social workers in rural areas frustrated when it comes to rendering services (Ambrosino, Heffernan & Shuttlesworth, 2012:397). Similarly, Kirst-Ashman (2017:142) states that social workers face many challenges, however some problems are specific to rural areas and in turn affect social workers working in rural areas. These problems include lack of resources, shortage of social workers caused by an unwillingness to live in rural areas, poverty and lack of transportation. In agreement with Kirst-Ashman (2017:142), Hessle (2014:43) explains that scarce resources, such as rehabilitation centres in rural areas, leave social workers discouraged when it comes to rendering services to their clients who were psychologically dependent on drugs because they could not receive the rehabilitation services they needed, therefore a social worker's intervention in attempting to assist clients became a challenge.

Rural social workers face many challenges in attempting to help their clients and meet the needs of the community (Scales et al. 2013:95). However, it was revealed that the stress experienced was more related to the employing organisation than the clients. The factors most responsible for causing them to experience high stress levels included a high workload, lack of appreciation when good work had been done, disempowering cultures, and expectations from the community which seemed unrealistic (Shier & Graham, 2013:01)

1.3   PROBLEM FORMULATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement, according to Houser (2018:104), is defined as the first step that clearly states what the researcher aims to investigate. Another term for problem statement is 'research problem', which refers to a generalised research goal within the area of specialisation (Wentz, 2014:129). This is confirmed by Terrel (2016:03) as "identifying a meaningful problem or opportunity about what we want to gain better knowledge or find a solution". The researcher understands the problem statement as identifying a problem that needs to be further researched so that it can be better understood.

The researcher identified a problem that needs to be researched further and therefore the following problem statement forms the basis of what the researcher hopes to achieve when conducting the research study. The problem statement for this research study is looking into the resilience of social workers working in rural areas. There is a lack of knowledge regarding the resilience of social workers working in rural areas and in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. The idea of work

stress has considerable attraction. The researcher hoped to determine the resiliency that enables social workers in rural areas to perform their work regardless of the difficult working circumstances they face, whilst also perhaps having to deal with personal challenges. Work stress has been noted among a wide range of professionals, such as social workers, however there is limited information about the coping abilities of these professionals (Shier & Graham, 2013:03). Many authors noticed deficits in rural areas, such as scarcity of resources, poverty, and inadequate health care, however the strength of rural areas that enable rural social workers to cope with the deficits, go unnoticed (Scales et al. 2013:92).

There are numerous researchers that have written about the difficult working conditions in rural areas, however the matter of resiliency in facing these challenges was not researched. See table below.

Table 1.1: Research regarding rural social work

Authors	Rural social work
Shier & Graham (2013:01) Ambrosino et al. (2012:397)	Rural social workers often lack access to other services, especially more specialised ones, to which they can refer their clients.
Joseph (2017:05); Alpaslan and Schenck (2012:415)	"High caseloads, poor salaries, lack of resources and infrastructure, the vast area to service, community members' lack of understanding of the role of social workers, the lack of support from supervisors and the organisation, and clients' cultural/traditional customs and practices hampering social work service delivery"
Brown, Walters, Jones and Akinsola (2017:01)	Social work practice in rural areas is challenging because it often means having to balance being not only a practitioner but also a community member.
Kirst-Ashman (2017)	Rural social workers face challenges that include a shortage of staff due to high turnover and reluctance to live and work in the rural areas, lack of resources and high rates of poverty.
Pierson (2016:161).	Multiple relationships are unavoidable because of the environment setting; therefore, the privacy and confidentiality also become a problem that rural social workers experience.

This area of research is far from exhaustive as there is still a gap in the research on how rural social workers working in rural areas bounce back when faced with adversity (resiliency). The reason for conducting this research is explained with the rationale in the following section.

1.4   RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rationale is a motivation why the study is important and needed (Wentz, 2014:150). The research study aims to investigate the resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. The researcher herself works as a social worker in a rural area; she has a personal interest in conducting this research. After working for a few months in the rural areas, and experiencing the difficulties, the researcher realised that it was not easy to work in the rural areas. The researcher realised that it was much more difficult to implement the work in the rural areas, because there are many challenges, which differ greatly from those encountered in urban areas.

Productivity and work performance are generally high when first starting in a job, as job satisfaction is experienced (Riebschleger & Piece, 2018:199). Usually after a few months the worker becomes aware of the difficulty of working in a rural area and then becomes demotivated, which affects productivity. It is further stated that workers who have resilience are those that are likely to start readjusting and reorganising their lives (Riebschleger & Piece, 2018:199). In the researcher's experience of working in the rural areas she realised that there was danger and abuse that were experienced by the social workers in the rural areas. Not much is known about it because social workers working in the rural areas were not given a platform to talk about the work challenges they experienced and how they managed to continue working regardless of the challenges experienced. While working with vulnerable individuals who often experiencing trauma, social workers themselves also face the difficult circumstances of working in rural areas and were expected to effectively perform their duties (Ambrosino et al. 2012:258). It is particularly interesting how these social workers could perform effectively even though they faced difficult circumstances common to rural areas.

The outcomes of the research can also assist policy makers to develop new policies and/or amend existing ones on how they can assist in building resilience in social workers working in rural areas. The research aims to provide a platform where social workers working in rural areas can be better understood by the community and their employers regarding the challenges that they experience at work and their resiliency that helps them to manage those challenges. The study is needed to explore the resiliency that enables social workers working in rural areas to cope when faced with adversity. Understanding the resiliency that enables the social workers to cope will help in implementing recommendations to the Department of Social Development (DSD).

In conclusion, studies have not been conducted about rural social workers appointed at DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities, Mpumalanga Province; therefore, the researcher is of the opinion that little is known about these geographical areas and the social workers working in these two municipalities. Social workers in rural areas at times find themselves in danger compared to social workers working in urban areas. Almost everyone in the community knows who social workers are and anonymity cannot be ensured, which leaves social workers with a fear of reporting perpetrators due to known violent retaliation of perpetrators against social workers and their family members because their family members' safety cannot be guaranteed (Pierson, 2016:159; Reamer, 2013:130). The issue of personal privacy, confidentiality and safety in rural areas is confirmed by Corcoran and Roberts (2015:190). The authors further state that social workers working in rural areas have the additional stress of being hated by neighbours in cases of removing a neighbour's child that they believe is in danger and in need of care and protection (Corcoran & Roberts, 2015:190).

Many rural families live in isolated areas, which impacts on emergency response time because rural social workers sometimes find themselves in dangerous home settings which may include uncontrolled pets, violent clients and chaotic homes (Glick, McHale & King, 2020:209). The research study will benefit the municipalities because they will gain knowledge in understanding the challenges that the social workers experience when doing their work and the resiliency that helps those social workers manage those challenges. The recommendations will also help the municipalities in finding solutions that will assist the social workers to manage their work-related challenges.

The researcher believes interviewing social workers working in these two municipalities is helpful in obtaining data about the challenges that are experienced by social workers working in rural areas. Findings and recommendations are suggested to the DSD in Mpumalanga.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is defined as the principle that provides the clarification of the research problem (Wentz, 2014:83). The author further states that the theoretical framework exists in the literature that the researcher uses to support the research outcome of the study (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2014:161). A theoretical framework, according to Ngulube (2020:44), is a theory that supports the research study to help explain the meaning and nature associated with the phenomenon.

A theoretical framework can also be defined as literature that provides background for conducting the study and interpreting the findings (Boswel & Cannon, 2017:247). The researcher understands a theoretical framework as literature that helps the researcher interpret the outcomes of the research study. The researcher is convinced that the following theories, namely, resilience theory and strength-based-

approach, support this study about determining the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. In this study, the researcher proposed using two theories as part of the literature review and for founding and verifying the research findings.

1.5.1 Strength-based perspective

The initiators of the strength-based perspective, Dennis Saleebey, Charles Rapp and Ann Weick, believed that every individual has their own talents, strengths, and capabilities that help them to adapt and survive even though they may be facing trauma (Saleebey, 1997:205). It is expanded that the strength-based perspective is a perspective that strives to look at the positive in people and holds the idea that people, organisations, and communities have existing capabilities (Jones-Smith, 2014:151). The authors explained that the approach holds the idea that individuals have resources and abilities that enable them to resolve their issues and they can learn new skills capabilities (Jones-Smith, 2014:151).

The strength-based perspective states that life presents different challenges to individuals and that everyone is the hero in his/her own life. Therefore, each day involves discovery and learning (Zacarian, Alvarez-Ortiz & Haynes, 2017:35). The approach also focuses on the strength of the person and the available resources in the organisation or the community that allow the person to be able to cope or deal with the difficulties that they may face (Zacarian et al. 2017:117).

The researcher found this approach applicable to the topic because it focuses on the capabilities within a person which enable that individual to resolve issues they may come across. Therefore, the capabilities that the person has and the resources available might serve as one of the resilience factors for social workers working in rural areas.

1.5.2 Resiliency theory

Resilience is based on the concept that some individuals tend to obtain better outcomes when compared to those who have experienced similar challenges (Rutter, 2012:355). Resilience theory according to Van Breda (2018:14) is "multilevel processes that systems engage in to obtain better than expected outcomes in the face of adversity". Resilience theory states that individuals tend to have certain qualities that enable them to make use of their internal and external resources which assist them to cope with distressing situations. In earlier studies, resilience theory was seen as studying the protective factors that enable individuals to cope.

Ellis, Bianchi, Griskevicius and Frankenhuis (2017:261) believe that most early researchers have focused on half the story of what's wrong with children that grew up in harsh situations instead of focusing on what is right with children who grew up in difficult circumstances. "To meaningfully represent this other half of the story, we refer to individuals who grow up under high-adversity conditions as stress-adapted

rather than vulnerable or at-risk" (Ellis et al. 2017:262). This further explains that there are protective factors and resources that enable individuals to successfully adapt to challenging life circumstances

The researcher believes that resilience theory is most relevant to this research topic because it explains how individuals can successfully adapt in the face of adversity. Therefore, the theory will help to explain qualities or protective factors that enable the social workers working in rural areas to cope with working conditions that may be seen as unbearable to other social workers who are working in urban areas. Finding out what enables rural social workers to manage their work-related challenges helped to formulate practice guidelines for the enhancement of resilience amongst rural social workers.

The resilience theory and strength-based perspective complement one another because they both highlight that all individuals have inner strength, as well as talents and resources that enable them to cope with situations that may seem challenging. They both stress the point that some individuals are born with qualities that seem to be protective factors that enable them to cope with adversity and develop themselves. However, it is within the individual to make use of those qualities to allow them to find solutions even during challenges. They are both solution-focused, rather than problem-focused. The resilience theory and strength-based perspective do not ignore the adversity that people face but rather focus on factors that enable those individuals to cope beyond adversity. They both form the framework for this study because they help to explain what enables social workers in rural areas to cope regardless of the difficult working conditions.

Now that the introduction, problem statement, rationale, and theoretical framework for this research study about the resiliency amongst rural social workers in their experiences of managing their work-related challenges have been addressed, it is necessary to give attention to the research question, goal and objectives. The theoretical base of the research methodology and methods, ethical considerations, and key concepts for this particular research study will be presented as well as how the researcher planned to implement these in this particular research study. Note that the actual implementation of the above concepts will be further discussed in chapter 3. An outline of this report will be provided and a summary of the chapter will close this chapter.

1.6   RESEARCH QUESTION, GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The research question, goal and objectives are aligned with the problem statement, rationale, and theoretical framework and in this section the research question, goal and objective for this study are explained.

1.6.1 Research question

The research question provides a description of the problem and gives direction to the investigation being carried out (O'Leary, 2017:65; Flynn & McDermott, 2016:77). A research question is described by Houser (2018:106) as a statement in the form of a question that the researcher specifically wants to answer. Alvesson and Sandberg (2013:25) and Wentz (2014:131) further explain that a research question is phrased in such a way that it can be investigated (an interrogative statement) and is of an experiential nature intending to achieve certain goals for the specific research study. Bearing in mind the definitions of the different authors, the research question is the statement that the researcher wants to answer about the resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges, and it gives the general purpose of the study. The research question can also be understood as the problem that the researcher is interested in researching so that knowledge can be generated. The research question for this study is: What does resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges entail?

1.6.2 Research goal

The goal of the research is defined as an idea that the researcher wishes to develop into a researchable study (Wentz, 2014:117). A goal is also defined as the overall aim of the research study; the goal aims to produce knowledge or to gain a deeper understanding of the topic (Houser, 2018:40). When a researcher formulates a goal, it is important to first state the issue that needs to be clarified, why the study needs to be done, and motivate how the results will be beneficial to the study (Maxwell, 2013:75). The researcher understands the goal as the overall purpose of the research study, meaning it is what the researcher desires to achieve after the study has been conducted. Therefore, the goal of this research study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges.

1.6.3 Research objectives

The researcher regards the research objectives as not only performing tasks to reach a specific goal, but also generating new knowledge (research goal) and solving a research problem (research question). In support of the above discussion, Wentz (2014:131) refers to a research objective as a statement that describes the results based on the investigative goal, methods, or theories. "An objective is the transformation of the research question into behavioural aims by using the action-orientated words such as to determine, to ascertain and to examine" (Kumar, 2019:50). The research objective is also defined as the statement that indicates the key issues that need to be focused on in a research project (Grove, Gray & Burns, 2015:708). The objectives of this research study are formulated as follows:

- To explore and describe the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges, and

- To draw conclusions based on the research findings and share recommendations with employers, role players and colleagues on the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges.

To scientifically execute the research question, goal, and objectives, it is necessary to explain the research methodology related to this intended research study.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is the methods and techniques used by social researchers (Tomal & Schward, 2020:43; Kumar, 2019:4). "A research methodology on the other hand is like an approach or a protocol that outlines the tasks involved, preferably according to the desired sequence and broad nature of method to be used" (Mukherjee, 2019:43). The research methodology provides details and enlightens the reader on how the research study will be conducted (Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2018:187; Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:51). The researcher understands research methodology as the general approach that the researcher takes to determine the resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges when carrying out the research study. The discussion about the research methodology entails an explanation of the research approach and research design, which helps to support the research question, goal, and objectives.

1.7.1 Research approach

A research approach is the methodology illustrating the framework from which the research will be performed, and it includes the steps to be followed from the broad assumption to the detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Lune & Berg, 2017:12; Creswell, 2014:03). The research approach is determined by the nature of the problem being addressed, the audience, and the personal experience of the researcher. The researcher understands the research approach as the framework to be followed for the duration of the research study. There are two main types of research approaches (Lune & Berg, 2017:12; Isaias & Nunes, 2013:314) that are used in the social sciences, namely qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Quantitative research approaches start by having a hypothesis which the respondents either agree or disagree with (Lune & Berg, 2017:12; McClean, 2012:01).

Qualitative research approaches, on the other hand, are non-numerical and tend to focus in-depth on participants narrating their lived experiences (human behaviour for example) by means of interviewing,

focus group interviews, and participant observation (Tomal & Schward, 2020:126; Houser, 2018:140). According to Flick (2018:04) a "qualitative approach intends to understand, describe, and sometimes explain social phenomena 'from the inside' in a number of different ways". This means that the researchers study things in their natural settings in attempting to make sense of how people bring meaning to events.

Table 2 below the researcher summarises how different authors describe the characteristic of qualitative research.

Table 1.2: Characteristics of qualitative research

Characteristics of qualitative research	Authors
Involves using multiple methods. Qualitative research focuses on different approaches to collect data such as focus group interviews, and participant observation. Application to this study: The researcher planned to apply the qualitative research by making use of different methods of collecting data such as interviewing participants and observation of non-verbal behaviour. This allowed the researcher to get in-depth information.	Tomal and Schward (2020:126) Houser (2018:140) Barbour (2014:17)
The researcher focuses on participant's perspectives based on certain events, facts and the meaning they attach to their lived experiences. Application to this study: The researcher focused on participants' meaning of their lived experience. This allowed the researcher to understand how they interpret their lived experiences in relation to working in the rural areas. The researcher had an opportunity to understand their feelings, perceptions and interpretations of their experiences. This was achieved through probing, attentively listening to how they tell their stories and the tone they use to express themselves.	Barbour (2014:17) Creswell (2014:206) Denzin and Lincoln (2017:06) Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011:18)

The researcher is the main research instrument. This means that the researcher is the key instrument for collecting data instead of relying on questionnaires or a structured instrument. Application to this study: The researcher interviewed all the participants as planned. This allowed the researcher to be flexible in amending questions, and explaining questions so that they were more understandable and probing for clarity.	Kumar (2019:166) Mikėnė, Gaižauskaitė, Valavičienė (2013:49) Creswell (2014:206)
Qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting. This means the researcher has had an opportunity to directly engage with the participants in their own setting to understand how the participants behave in their natural setting. Application to this study: The researcher planned to interview the participants in their workplace where they felt comfortable. Interviewing participants in their own setting allowed the researcher to observe how they conducted themselves in their workplace and the condition of their working environment. furthermore, participants chose a time that was most convenient for them which allowed them to freely share their resiliency in managing their experiences of work-related challenges	Grove, Gray and Burns (2015:38) Creswell (2014:205) Maxwell (2013:125)
Qualitative research allows for an emergent design. This means that the initial plan during fieldwork might have to be adjusted. This could include research sites, data collection method and the number of participants to be interviewed. Application to this study: The researcher planned to make use of qualitative because it allowed flexibility. This allowed the researcher to reschedule where it was not possible to collect data at the set place due to unforeseen circumstances, such as Covid-19. It allowed the researcher to	Creswell (2014:186) Silverman (2013:234) Welman, Kruger & Mitchell (2012:192)

change the method of collecting data and opt for Microsoft Teams virtual interviews.	

In summary, considering the goal and the nature of this study, the researcher planned to use the qualitative research approach to obtain information (qualitative data) from the participants regarding their resiliency whilst working in rural areas as social workers. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to understand the lived experiences in relation to work-related challenges as well as their resiliency that helped them to cope with those challenges. This approach allowed the researcher to have direct interaction with participants to obtain in-depth information from them and the participants had an opportunity to talk about their experiences, feelings, and perceptions (Lune & Berg, 2017:12). Next follows the research design, which supports the chosen research approach.

1.7.2 Research design

The research design is the process of selecting the most suitable strategy(s) that will enable the researcher to reach the desired goals and objectives, by applying research methods supportive of the research design (Flick, 2020:131; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:13). Research design is defined by Kumar (2019:154) and Nieuwenhuis (2016a:72) as the clarification of how the questions of the study will be answered and the research design should specify the focus area of the study. It is important that the researcher selects the correct research design, if the researcher wants to obtain manageable, workable, and valid information to achieve the intended outcomes for the research, namely finding out more about resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges.

The researcher understands the research design as the plans that specify how the data will be collected and the strategies that will be used. In explanation of the strategies, Creswell and Creswell (2018:13) present five research designs or strategies of inquiry, namely: case study, narrative research, phenomenology, ethnology, and grounded theory. Looking at the nature of the study of this research and the research designs stated above, the researcher believed that the most relevant research design applicable to this research is phenomenology.

- Phenomenology focuses on the person's experiences, perceptions, and feelings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:13). "Phenomenology is the careful study and systematic reflective of the lived experience" (Usher & Jackson, 2017:02). The researcher focused on attaining an in-depth understanding of resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. The researcher planned to give participants an opportunity to share their unique

experiences of working in rural areas and how they manage to conduct their work regardless of the circumstances they face in these rural areas.

- Phenomenology recognises bracketing as one of the important components that researchers should make use of to uphold neutrality by setting aside preconceptions and biases about the phenomenon that is being investigated (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:78; Chesnay, 2015:147). Bracketing is defined as the process of researchers identifying their own beliefs and opinions and identifying how these could influence the study with personal biases and experiences (Houser, 2018:479; Schneider, Whitehead, Lo Biondo-Wood & Haber, 2012:391). The researcher planned to apply bracketing by keeping field notes based on observations and obtaining viewpoints/feedback from experts and individuals who were not directly affected by the research study (Chesnay, 2015:147). She planned not to influence the study with her own experience of working as a social worker in a rural area. The researcher planned to focus on the unique experiences of the participants regarding their resilience that enabled them to overcome the challenges that they experience whilst working in rural areas.

There are three strategies of inquiry that were used to support the phenomenological research design, namely explorative, descriptive, and contextual research strategies (Grinnell, Gabor & Unrau, 2019:407). The researcher applied these three strategies to support the phenomenological research design.

- An explorative research strategy of inquiry is aimed at discovering knowledge about a phenomenon and not to test or measure (Babbie, 2014:90; Flynn & McDermott, 2016:88; Kumar, 2014:13). Thus, the researcher explored the resiliency amongst social workers working in the rural areas on how they manage their experiences of work-related challenges experienced.

- A descriptive research strategy of enquiry is rigorous and aims at explaining, in-depth the population (social workers) and the phenomenon (resiliency amongst social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges) involved in the research study, rather than investigating causal relationships or testing theories (Flynn & McDermott, 2016:92; Shaw & Holland, 2014:89; Vogt Gardner & Haeffele, 2012:340).

- A contextual research strategy of inquiry is used to truly understand the phenomenon (resiliency amongst social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges). The researcher described and strove to understand the natural and concrete context (the rural areas where the social workers are working) which was not manipulated, as it required the participants to explain their own lived experiences in these rural areas (Burns & Grove, 2021:80; Shaw & Holland, 2014:88; Holloway & Wheeler, 2010:47). The next step towards completing the research study was to explain

the research methods applied to execute the research study focusing on the resiliency amongst social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges.

1.8 RESEARCH METHOD

Research methods are techniques used to collect and analyse data related to research questions and hypotheses (Allen, 2017:04; Kumar, 2014:10). Research methods can either be based on qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods research approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:16; Allen, 2017:04). Research methods mostly entail practical steps, such as sampling, collecting of data including interviewing and observations, data analysis and verification and application of ethical considerations. (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:51). The researcher understands the research methods as the tools for carrying out research. The qualitative research approach and selected research design laid the foundation upon which the steps to conduct the actual research were built and it entailed demarcating the population; applying sampling techniques; pilot testing; and collecting, analysing, and verifying the data. These research methods will be discussed and include how the researcher applied these methods.

1.8.1 The research population

A population is a particular group that the researcher has an interest in researching. A study population according to Jha (Brink et al. 2018:115; Jha, 2014:82) refers to a specific group with certain characteristics in which the researcher is interested and that are related to the nature of the study; the group may consist of people, materials, objects, or documents. Research studies tend to focus on a target population, which is the entire group that possesses certain features that meet the sampling criteria (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:16; Grove, Burns & Gray, 2013:330). Population can also be defined as a group of people from which the researcher selects a sample that most fits the study (Babbie, 2017:202). The researcher regards a study population as a group of individuals that meet the criteria of inclusion stipulated for the specific research study.

The population of this study included all rural social workers appointed at DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities, Mpumalanga Province. The researcher chose Thembisile Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities because they are in the deeper rural areas of the Mpumalanga Province. Due to time and money constraints a sample was drawn from the population. Thembisile Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities that are located within the Nkangala District. There are 57 villages within Thembisile-Hani local municipality, with a population of about 310,458 (Census, 2011). Thembisile-Hani local municipality was named after the late Chris Hani, the General of the South African Communist Party who was assassinated on 10 April 1993. The place is mostly populated by black African individuals with 99.2% speaking Southern Ndebele (Thembisile-Hani

Integrated Development Plan (IDP), 2022-2027). Thembisile-Hani Integrated Development Plan of 2022-2027 indicates that there are active youth between the ages of 15 to 34 years, however nearly half of the youth are unemployed (49,40%). It was revealed that many people living in Thembisile-Hani are employed in neighbouring urban areas such as Middelburg, Witbank and Pretoria (Thembisile-Hani Integrated Development Plan, 2022-2027).

Dr JS Moroka local municipality was named after Dr James Sebe, the medical doctor and president of the African National Congress from 1949-1952 (Green, 2012:67). Dr JS Moroka local municipality is also dominated by black African people with a population of 99.4%, with a total number of 249,705 people residing at Dr JS Moroka local municipality. The 2011 census shows that there are 31 villages. The most spoken languages in DR JS Moroka are Southern Ndebele with 36.2% and Northern Sotho with 30.7% (Census, 2011). The Dr JS Moroka municipal council highlights that the area has a high level of poverty due to unemployment (IDP, 2022-2027:250). The youth unemployment is at 46.6%, meaning there are still lot of youth who are unemployed and disadvantaged because they depend on neighbourhood towns for employment (IDP, 2022-2027:250).

1.8.2 Sampling

A subset of the population selected for a particular study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:16; Grove, Burns & Gray, 2013:249). Daniel (2012:02) confirms that "sampling may be defined as the selection of a subset of population for inclusion in a study". It is confirmed by Waller, Farquharson, and Dempsey (2016:62) that sampling is the process of identifying and selecting participants. The researcher recognises sampling as the process of choosing a group of individuals from a population to participate in the study. Because sampling is closely related to the research question and goal (Brink et al. 2018:115; Padgett, 2017:67), the researcher sampled specific participants, based on the inclusion criteria. The participants originated from the two mentioned municipalities (population).

Considering the nature of this research, the researcher applied the non-probability sampling method. Non-probability sampling does not give all participants an equal chance of being part of the study (Flick, 2018:174; Houser, 2018:169). The non-probability method, according to the researcher's understanding, is the process of selecting a sample that is predetermined in such a way that certain people will automatically be disqualified as they may not possess certain elements needed by the researcher. Therefore, people will not have an equal chance of being selected to become part of the study.

1.8.3 Sampling methods

There are four types of non-probability sampling methods presented by Houser (2018:169), and Maree and Pietersen (2016:197), namely convenience sampling, snowballing, purposeful/ purposive or

judgemental sampling, and quota sampling. Purposive sampling is the technique that the researcher planned to use for this research study. Purposeful sampling is "selecting a sample of observation that the researcher believes will yield the most comprehensive understanding of the subject of the study, based on the researcher's intuitive feel for the subject that comes from extended observation and reflection" (Babbie, 2017:611; Maree & Pietersen, 2016:198).

The participants are chosen based on the researcher's knowledge on who best fits the criteria of inclusion of the research study (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:198; Oakshott, 2014:12). The researcher applied the purposive sampling technique enabling her to select a sample from the proposed population. The researcher accessed potential participants in collaboration with a gatekeeper/s. To get assistance in selecting participants that fit the criteria, the researcher made use of gatekeepers, the gatekeepers in this instance were the social work supervisors. A gatekeeper, according to Silverman (2013:43) and Flick (2017:24), is a leader or person with traditional authority at grassroots level and regarded as central elements of access. Gatekeepers are those who have the authority and power to give or deny permission to the researcher to conduct a study to individuals that are regarded as vulnerable. In other instances, gatekeepers are officials of institutions that are given the responsibility to protect and serve the populations they oversee. They are accountable to determine if the proposed research creates risk for participants and the community they serve. Gatekeepers must be convinced before giving permission that the researcher will offer more benefits than risk to the same demographic (Marland & Esselment, 2018:03). In using the purposive sampling technique, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria applied:

Inclusion criteria

- Participants had to be social workers employed by the DSD at Mpumalanga Province at the time of the research study.

- Participants had to have a minimum of one year's social work experience as rural social workers appointed at DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities, Mpumalanga Province.

Exclusion criteria

- Social work managers and supervisors appointed at DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities, Mpumalanga Province.

- Social workers who had less than one year of working experience or who were on probation.

- Registered social workers not employed by the DSD

- Social workers that work closely with the researcher.

Sample size in qualitative research is determined by selecting a small number of people from the larger population to be studied to get information rich data by collecting individuals' perspectives (Creswell, 2014:158). "Qualitative interviewing distinguishes itself by its ability to get close to people not by including a large number of participants, the aim is not statistical representative but instead the chance to look in detail at how selected people experience the world" (Smith & Sparks, 2016:10). In qualitative research according to Houser (2018:179). and Creswell and Creswell (2018:84) the researcher could not determine the sample size at the onset of the study but rather needed to be guided by the theoretical principal known as saturation. This is confirmed by Grove, Gray and Burns (2015:274) who state that sample size is sufficient when saturation and verification of the data achieve the area of the study. Data saturation is the part at which no new themes or information is observed in the data (Houser, 2018:179; Brink et al. 2018:128).

When determining sample size for qualitative studies it is important to look at the nature of the topic, the scope of the study, the quality of the data collected and the design of the study (Grove, Gray & Burns, 2015:279). For this study, the researcher purposively selected rural social workers appointed at DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities, Mpumalanga Province, for a minimum of one year, as they were able to share about their resiliency in managing their experiences of work-related challenges.

The process of gaining entry to the field was as follows:

The researcher wrote a letter to the Head of Mpumalanga Provincial DSD to request permission to do research and request was granted (see Addendum B).

After obtaining permission, the researcher accessed the social work supervisors, who acted as gatekeepers, with a letter showing that permission was granted to conduct a study by the Department of the Social Development, Mpumalanga. In collaboration with the supervisors, potential participants were identified according to the criteria of inclusion. After the identification of potential participants, the researcher arranged individual appointments with them to explain the rationale of the study; the appointments were made telephonically so as to adhere to the Covid-19 regulations, thus avoiding unnecessary face-to-face contact with participants. The research took place during the lockdown period. The researcher conducted the interviews at a time convenient to participants where they felt comfortable. The researcher conducted six face-to-face interviews, three telephonic interviews and three virtual interviews using the MS Teams platform. The aim was to explain the research project in detail and to obtain informed consent from the participants to participate in the study (see Addendum C and D).

In consideration of the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher provided masks and hand sanitiser so that when the face-to-face interviews took place, the researcher and the participants were protected. The researcher ensured that all research protocols regarding Covid-19 as prescribed by Unisa were adhered to in addition to the lockdown requirements The researcher ensured that masks were worn in a correct manner and that hands were sanitised before the interview began. The researcher also kept a social distance of one metre so that there was not any close contact between the researcher and the participant when the interview took place.

1.9 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection entails the preparation for data collection and the method of data collection proposed for this research study.

1.9.1 Preparation for data collection

In preparing for data collection, the researcher ensured that the criteria of inclusion were correctly formulated for the specific study to reach the goal of the research and that the unit of analysis was appropriate so that information rich data could be obtained (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:92; Trochim, Donnelly & Arora, 2012:22).

The researcher developed the data collection tool beforehand (Addendum E). It was an interview guide, inclusive of biographical questions (based on the criteria of inclusion) and open-ended questions (based on the topic under research) (Addendum E). An interview guide is a tool that helps the interviewer conduct a semi-structured interview, questions were mainly open-ended, however they are not asked in a standardised manner as one would do in a structured interview (Curtis & Curtis, 2019:07; Morris, 2018:02) to allow the researcher, for example, to ask probing questions or request further explanation and descriptions from the participants based on the answers they provided to the questions.

When preparing for data collection, it is significant that the researcher informed the participants about what would happen during the interview, such as what the interview would entail, how long it would last, the research goal, the rights of the participants, how the data would be managed, and the questions that would be asked, as well as what would happen once the data was analysed.

In preparing the participants, the researcher introduced herself and explained the rationale of the study. The researcher then explained the inclusion criteria for participating in the study and that participation was voluntary, and that participants had the right to refuse or to withdraw at any time should they no longer feel interested in participating in the study. The researcher also informed the participants that there was no compensation for participation (O'Leary, 2017:241) (see Addendum B). The researcher explained to the potential participants that the collected data would be analysed by an independent coder

and discussed with the researcher's supervisor. The researcher further explained that the data collected would be published and anonymity would be maintained, and pseudonyms would be used so that they could not be linked with the content of the data collected.

The researcher did not only prepare the participants for the study, but she also prepared herself as guided by Neuman (2014:294):

The researcher prepared as follows:

- Be organised, flexible and rehearse skills. This meant that the researcher had to organise herself by ensuring that she knew how to use the recording equipment, keep a diary for notes and know the questions that were supposed to be asked. The researcher had to be flexible to allow for new directions and make use of the opportunities as they developed.

- Gain access through the gatekeepers and build a relationship. This meant that the researcher had to prepare herself to build a relationship with the gatekeepers and the participants, for the study to run smoothly.

- Make use of the strategies. This implied that the researcher had to negotiate and form new relationships, normalise research and decide how much the researcher wanted to disclose. The researcher had to know how she would manage any stress that she may have faced when conducting the study.

- Apply strategies. This implied that the researcher had to maintain a relationship in the field by adjusting, making use of charm and nurturing trust. It was also important that the researcher appeared interested and made participants comfortable with doing the research by normalising the research.

- Gather and record the data, as the researcher became the primary instrument of gathering data, this implied that the researcher had to prepare herself to experience being in the field by watching and learning.

- Exit the field. This implied that when the project reached a natural end, the researcher had to prepare herself to exit the field, then prepare all members involved for the termination stage.

1.9.2 Method of data collection

There are numerous techniques that are used to collect data in qualitative methods, including participant observation, focus groups, and interviews (Kara, 2020:97). The researcher planned to make use of observation and semi-structured face-to-face interviews to collect data. However, due to the Covid-19 rules and regulations applicable during the period of data collection, the researcher implemented

alternative modes of conducting the semi-structure interviews, such as virtual interviews, face-to-face interviews and telephonic interviews. Six face-to-face interviews, three telephonic interviews and three virtual interviews using the MS Teams platform were conducted.

Participant observation is described by Houser (2018:214) as an observation technique that requires the researcher to visually observe the behaviour (face and body) of the participant and to analyse it. Observation can assist in verifying the validity or trustworthiness of the data collected (McGrath et al. 2019:1003; Houser, 2018:214).

Semi-structured interviews were the data collection technique that the researcher used for this research study. Semi-structured interviews were applied in the qualitative research approach, as it allows a dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee (Ngulube, 2020:64; Leavy, 2019:250; Flynn & McDermott, 2016:125). The researcher made use of probes for clarity while asking the questions and listening attentively to the responses of the participants (O'Leary, 2017:239; Rubin & Babbie, 2017:271). The semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth information, as participants shared their views about how they manage their experiences of work-related challenges as rural social workers.

The researcher used active listening as one of the interviewing skills to reinforce that she was intently interested and to illustrate that she understood the points that the participants were sharing about the work-related challenges they experience and how they manage these challenges. The researcher further prompted participants to elaborate on what they shared by asking 'could you expand on that…' or 'anything else?' (McGrath Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2019:1003; Adams, 2015:502). The researcher observed any social and non-verbal cues of the participants (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019:06; McGrath et al. 2019:1003).

The researcher continued interviewing a number of participants until she notices that the data was saturated. Data saturation is when no new information or insights come to the fore and already collected data is being repeated (Ngulube, 2020:147; Creswell, 2014:189).

1.9.3 Pilot testing

Pilot testing is defined as trying out the data collection instrument by interviewing a small number of participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2012:21), and Ruel, Wagner and Gillespie (2016:114) postulate that in doing so the researcher can determine which questions are clearly understood and answered according to what was asked. Pilot testing serves "as a pre-warning system, because possible errors or difficulties with the measure instrument will emerge during the pilot testing" (Koonin, 2014:257).

The researcher conducted a pilot test of the data collection instrument to ensure that the questions were clear and understood by participants and that the questions were formulated in such a manner that they would extract in-depth and information-rich data. Pilot testing further gave the researcher an opportunity to assess her research interviewing skills in preparation for conducting the actual semi-structured interviews.

The researcher set up appointments with two of the social workers who met the criteria of inclusion for the main study, to pilot test the interview schedule. They worked in the Kwaggafontein area, which is also classified as a rural area and which was not part of the main research study. The researcher provided pilot participants with the interview guide that was prepared for the main study (see Addendum D). The researcher also encouraged the participants to voice their own opinions and concerns about the research questions; this gesture assisted in rounding off the questions to receive information-rich data from the participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2012:20).

The researcher involved her supervisor and peers to assist in checking the practicality and suitability of the questions which enabled the researcher to determine whether the participants understood the questions or whether questions needed to be adjusted.

1.10   METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis aims to summarise and interpret the information obtained by conducting interviews with sampled participants who meet specific pre-determined inclusion criteria (Kara, 2020:76; Babbie, 2017:390). Flick (2017:50) identifies three major aims – to compare information, give an explanation by interpreting the information, and to develop a theory from the analysis. "The process of data analysis involved making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the large meaning of data" (Creswell, 2014:197).

The researcher planned to transcribe the interviews and then follow the eight steps of Tesch to analyse data however the researcher planned to ask an independent coder to assist with data analysis as the independent coder is experienced and specialises in that field. The researcher planned use of the independent coder to help compare and consolidate the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. The researcher did not want to be biased in interpreting data as the researcher herself is a social worker who works in the rural areas at the DSD. Therefore, making use of an independent coder was a way of ensuring that data was not manipulated and that the data was correctly analysed. Data analysis also forms part of the verification as the researcher typed out each interview and, in so doing, the

researcher verified the data word–for-word by listening carefully to the recordings of the interviews and ensuring that they were typed correctly so that correct data could be analysed.

The researcher planned to follow the eight steps of thematic data analysis as introduced by Tesch (cited in Creswell, 2014:197-198). However, to increase credibility and trustworthiness of the study, the researcher planned to hand over data to the independent coder who will also follow the eight steps of thematic data analysis to analyse the data and compare the findings of the researcher and those of the independent coder. The researcher planned to discuss the themes that emerges with the researcher, independent coder and supervisor to have consensus on outcomes. However, the researcher first had to replace real names with pseudonyms before handing it to the independent coder. The researcher planned to follow the eight steps to analyse data introduced by Tesch (cited in Creswell, 2014:197-198).

The researcher examined the data that was gathered during the interviews and reviewed the observed events that occurred during the interviews. Then the researcher commenced with the interpretation of the data by following a systematic process in determining themes, similarities, and differences in responses by participants based on the eight steps of thematic data analysis as introduced by Tesch (cited in Creswell, 2014:197-198). The researcher and independent coder planned to follow the steps of Tesch as follows:

1. To read the whole transcript to make sense of it. This implies that the researcher and independent coder had to read all the transcripts to understand the background information and make sense of it, and then make notes of the ideas as they came to mind.

2. To select one transcript which may be the shortest one or the most interesting one and ask herself what it is all about. While reading, the researcher had to think about the underlying meaning and make notes.

3. After reading the transcripts, the researcher and independent coder grouped similar topics or themes into columns and then compared all the topics that she came across. The researcher then connected similar topics. These topics were grouped as "major topics" or "unique topics" and "leftovers".

4. To shorten the topics or themes into codes and write them in the appropriate sections of the transcripts. This helped the researcher to see if there were any new topics emerging and gave the researcher an opportunity to see whether those topics were relevant.

5. To find the most descriptive wording for the topics. This implied that the researcher reduced the total list of topics by placing them into categories.

6. To abbreviate the codes that were utilised and alphabetised those codes. This helped the researcher not to accidentally use a specific code for more than one topic.

7. When coding was completed, data material was assembled, and the preliminary analysis was performed.

8. Lastly, the researcher recoded the data if necessary.

The process of data analysis was followed by the independent coder to ensure credibility and trustworthy of the outcome. The process of data analysis would not be complete if data verification did not take place, hence it is discussed next.

1.11 DATA VERIFICATION

Data verification is a process of examining the truth and validity of the information (Oliver, 2010:19). The concept of truth is related to the accurateness of the information and there should be evidence to support the data (Oliver, 2010:19). Verification occurs when hunches, theoretical models, and relationships can be confirmed by the researcher (Grove, Gray & Burns, 2015:274). The researcher regarded data verification as the process of checking for accuracy and inconsistencies of findings of the study.

In establishing trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) created four criteria for data verification. The researcher proposed using Lincoln and Guba's model (1985) for ensuring trustworthiness of the research study. The trustworthiness aspects, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, are of importance when verifying qualitative data and to increase rigor. The researcher will introduce the aspects and briefly explain how the researcher employed them in the study.

With credibility researchers established confidence that the results as portrayed by participants are true, credible and believable (Forero, Nahidi, De Costa, Mohsin, Fitzgerald, Gibson McCarthy & Aboagye-Sarfo, 2018:120; Nowell Norris, White & Moules, 2017:03). For the study to have creditability it must be carried out in a way that enhances believability of the study and there should be steps to demonstrate creditability to the reader (Forero et al. 2017:123). For this study to have creditability the researcher did the following:

- Interviewing techniques, such as probing for clarity, summarising to highlight the main points and attentive listening, helped the researcher to listen for understanding.

- Triangulation, according to Roller and Lavrakas (2015:277), is the comparison of multiple perspectives. Triangulation also helps researchers to review data by making use of observation, interviews, or journals. The researcher made use of triangulation by interviewing various participants

from each of the sampled population groups. The participants that were interviewed were rural social workers appointed at DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities, thus the obtained data from the different sources (participants) was triangulated and compared.

- The researcher emphasised confidentiality and anonymity so that the participants could be honest and freely share their experiences.

- Member checking is whereby the researcher provides feedback about the emerging interpretation to obtain the participants' reactions (Allen, 2017:1189). The researcher did member checking with participants to check whether the transcribed emerging interpretation of transcribed data collected during the interviews was what they said and was correctly captured. Dependability is based on the concept that findings should be consistent should the research be repeated with the same participants (Allen, 2017:796). The researcher kept clear records of all research processes followed and executed for audit purposes to ensure dependability of the data, findings, and complete research process (Ferero et al. 2018:123; Nowell et al. 2017:03).

- Confirmability is concerned with establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data not from the researcher's imagination, preference, or characteristics (Ferero et al. 2018:123; Nowell et al. 2017:03). Furthermore, the results should be obtained in such a way that should be the research be repeated then the same results can be confirmed (Dahhl & Kirk-Jenkins, 2016:174). The researcher, as an experienced social worker, has learned the skill of not letting her personal views or biases interfere with the participants own experiences and perceptions. Therefore, the researcher refrained from letting her personal biases influence the study. The researcher planned to conduct the study in such a way that should other researcher do the same study then the same results can be obtained

- Transferability refers to the extent to which the results can be have same meaning to other rural social workers or transferred to other contexts or settings (Ferero et al. 2018:123). The researcher was very careful during the sampling period to purposefully select participants that were able to provide as much information as possible about the phenomenon, thus work-related challenges experienced by social workers and how they manage these challenges. The researcher continued until data saturation was reached, thus making sure that the results could have meaning to other social workers and transferred to other similar contexts (Ferero et al. 2018:123; Nowell et al. 2017:03). The researcher ensured that the information obtained from the data collection could have meaning to other social workers about the resiliency of rural social workers within Thembisile-Hani

and Dr JS Moroka local municipalities and other rural social workers could share the same information as these participants. To ensure that other rural social workers feel represented, the researcher made use of participants of different genders, ages, experiences and from different DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities.

1.12   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics in research is associated with what is right and wrong. It is viewed as a principle of morality and the expectation is that a researcher will uphold principles such as accountability, responsibility, and liability (Babbie, 2017:62; Recker, 2013:141). For researchers to be able to uphold the ethical principles it is essential that researchers remain aware of the ethical issues that may emerge throughout the research process and be prepared to actively address them. Ethics is about following the correct procedures and ensuring that the rights of people are respected and serves as a guide for researchers in conducting their research to ensure that they do not harm participants (Babbie, 2017:62).

The researcher followed the ethical guidelines for the complete research study with the main aim of not harming participants in the process of preparation for data collection, during data collection, and when writing up the research report.

1.12.1   Informed consent

Informed consent entails obtaining written permission from the participants after the complete research study was explained to them. They must be made aware of the implications of partaking in the study and be assured that the intention is for them to not suffer any adverse effects (Shaw & Holland, 2014:110; Hammersley & Traianou, 2012:114; Miller, Birch, Mauthner & Jessop, 2012:71). For the research to be ethical it is vital that the researcher should first obtain informed consent from participants (social workers) before the research is carried out (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012:75). Participants should be made aware that they have a right to withdraw from the research study at any point should they no longer wish to participate or feel uncomfortable continuing with the research. The researcher obtained permission from the gatekeeper/s (see Addendum B) (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012:82) and written informed consent from each participant who agreed to partake in the study and confirmed that they understood the nature of the study and the requirements as explained by the researcher, as well as any risks involved (Luckenbill, 2012:294) (see Addendum C & D).

1.12.2   Beneficence

The ethical principle of beneficence entails ensuring that the participants are not exposed to physical or psychological distress while participating in the study (Schneider et al. 2012:88). It is significant that the researcher identifies potential harm that may be experienced by the participants and state the access to

psychosocial support that will be provided to participants (Schneider et al. 2012:88). Beneficence is based on the point that researchers should conduct research that promotes the welfare of the people and if there are any risks, they should be reasonable and justified in terms of the expected benefits to the community or society to be considered ethical and acceptable (Resnick, Gwyther & Roberto, 2018:103).

The researcher understands beneficence as a way of protecting the participants from harm by identifying possible risks that may harm the participants and preventing or minimising them. The researcher:

- was aware of any potential risks that might have occurred during the study after the pilot test was conducted;
- rephrased questions if the participants seemed uncomfortable during the pilot test of the data collection instrument, as the researcher wanted to ensure that the questions asked did not cause harm to the participants;
- ensured that the environment in which the participants were interviewed was private and conducive to allow the participants to talk freely;
- met the respective participants where they felt safe and secure, for example in a safe venue at their workplace.

1.12.3   Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an assurance from the researcher that the identifying information of the participants would not be shared with others (Waller et al. 2016:48; Hammersley & Traianou, 2012:126). Confidentiality, according to Babbie (2013:66), entails the researcher ensuring that no information that will identify the participants is made public in any way. Confidentiality means that it is only the researcher who will have access to the participants' responses, characteristics, or behaviour (Sibinga, 2018:25). Furthermore, the researcher ensured confidentiality by confirming, in writing, with the language editor and independent coder that the information they have access to would not to be shared with other people.

1.12.4   Anonymity

Anonymity means outsiders will be unable to recognise or link the study to the participants (Mclauglin, 2012:62). Anonymity is defined as the strategy utilised to protect participants from harm such as public, financial, or physical embarrassment (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012:126). In agreement with McLaughlin (2012:62), Sibinga (2018:26) explains that anonymity is achieved when participants' individual responses cannot be identified by the people that are not part of the study from the information that has been gathered. The researcher explained to the participants that no one would know who they were or that they had participated in the study, and that their names and identifying particulars would not

appear in the study or anything linking them to the study. The researcher made use of pseudonyms to ensure that participants remained anonymous, and privacy was maintained.

However, there was no anonymity between the researcher and the participants, since the researcher had to be in direct contact to conduct the semi-structured interviews. The researcher explained to the participants that the research outcomes would be published, and a copy would be given to the DSD without revealing their names or identifying particulars, thus ensuring participants remained anonymous to the public. The researcher used pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants.

1.12.5 Privacy

Privacy is the right to be protected from visibility, access, or intrusion by others (Fisher, 2013:7; Oliver, 2010:45). Privacy refers to a person's interest in controlling the flow of information between themselves and others (Creswell, 2014:94). Privacy according to Ngulube (2020:66) is avoiding intrusion into personal affairs of others. In other words, participants are said to be able to maintain their privacy when they are privy to information about them and who may intrude in their lives. The interviews were done after working hours to ensure that participants had privacy and to avoid being in a place where there were many people as this could intrude on their privacy and may have limited the sharing of information.

1.12.6 Management of information

Data management is the process of compiling data to ensure that the data is understandable and easy to locate during the study or after the study has been conducted (Briney, 2015:72). In other words, data management is about ensuring that the most significant information that is obtained during the study is kept safe and can be accessed when it is needed (Briney, 2015:72). Management of information, according to Briney (2015:72), includes planning, documenting information, organising information, analysing, and improving data, safeguarding sensitive information, ensuring that there is enough space, backing up the information, and finding information that can be utilised in other research studies that the researcher might conduct in future. Management of information should be done in the planning stage, before the research study, during the research study, and after the research study (Pryor, 2012:83).

The researcher planned to manage the data by ensuring that the information shared by participants was kept in safe and a lockable cabinet where it was not easily accessible to anyone. The researcher's password protected all information that was kept on the computer to ensure the safekeeping of all research related information.

1.12.7   Debriefing

Debriefing participants is one of the strategies that is used by researchers to minimise harm that might be experienced by participants (Luckenbill, 2012:294). Debriefing has three functions according to Sibinga (2018:80): it provides significant information about the study, helps the researcher to find out what participants thought the focus of the study was, and assists the researcher in addressing any stress caused by the research process, so that the researcher can provide additional information or refer the participants to employee assistance programme (EAP) practitioners that will provide further debriefing and/or counselling. The researcher must, however, inform the participants that they have the right to withdraw their responses from the study. The function of debriefing participants, according to Allen (2017:357), is to undo the negative consequences that might have occurred during the session. The researcher attempted to return the participants to the psychological or emotional state that they were in before engaging in the study.

Debriefing participants, according to the researcher, means helping participants to deal with any harm that might have resulted from their participation in the study. Should the participants be negatively affected as a result of the study, the researcher planned to refer the participants to the EAP practitioners. Referring the participants to EAP practitioners would help the participants in debriefing about their emotions and unresolved issues (see Addendum F).

1.13   CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Resilience is defined as "the ability to adapt successfully when facing everyday stress, trauma or adversity" (Truebridge, 2014:13). Resilience is also defined as "the multilevel processes that systems engage in to obtain better-than-expected outcomes in the face or wake of adversity" (Van Breda, 2018:04). Resilience is also clarified as individuals that tend to cope better as compared to those who have experienced the same challenges or trauma (Rutter, 2012:355). For the purposes of this study, resilience is described as the strength that enables social workers working in rural areas to effectively perform their work regardless of the work-related challenges experienced.

Social worker - the International Federation for Social Work (IFSW, 2014) defines a "social worker 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's, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing". Social worker can also be defined as "professionals that are highly skilled in helping individuals, groups and communities to

enhance their ability for social functioning" (Kirst-Ashman, 2017:05). "Social work is 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" (SACSSP, 2021:01).

A social worker is also defined as a form of "doctor who assesses an individual, family and prescribes a programme of treatment" (Thompson, 2015:19). For this study's purpose, the definition that best suits this research study is clarified by the IFSW (2014), supported by the SACSSP. For this study all rural social workers appointed at DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities will be regarded as the research population.

A **rural area** according to De Noronha Vaz, Nijkamp and Rastoin (2016:57) is a non-urban place where there is agriculture and large open spaces. Rural areas can be defined as "those areas that are less populated where the chief occupations in agriculture, and where there is livelihoods and the environment encourage the inhabitants to live cohesively with one another and the nature" (Tsutsui, 2018:477). Similarly, Mouraviev and Avramenko (2020:75) state that a geographic area that has less population and development compared to an urban area, and it is often characterised by limited resources that are mostly relevant to social work, such as social and health services. For the purpose of the study, a rural area is identified as the Thembisile Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities that are located in Mpumalanga Province.

Challenge - the Collins English dictionary (2018) defines challenge as something that requires great effort and determination. Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2020) explains challenge as a "difficult task that tests somebody's ability and skill". The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2013) confirms this definition and defines challenge as "the situation of being faced with something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person's ability". Thus, work-related challenges in this study refer to tasks that must be executed by the rural social workers that are both physically and mentally difficult, such as a lack of resource and infrastructure, travelling long distance to provide services to clients, community members hampering rural social worker's personal lives and a lack of understanding social worker's role.

Experience - the Collins English dictionary (2018) defines "*experience* is knowledge or skill in a particular job or activity, which you have gained because you have done that job or activity for a long time". The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2013) offers a similar clarification, the term experience refers to "the process of going, seeing, getting knowledge or skills from or feeling things". In this study, experience refers to the accumulation of knowledge and skills from working as a social worker

in rural areas. Experiences can be defined as practical contact with and observation of facts or events. It is the knowledge or skill acquired by experience over a period of time, especially in a particular profession by someone at work (Delves-Yates, 2021:123).

1.14   CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The researcher structured the research as follows:

Chapter One - Introduction. This chapter gives a general introduction that provides an orientation to the research about the resiliency amongst rural social workers. The chapter further outlines the problem statement; the rationale of the study, the theoretical framework proposed for this study, the research question, goal, and objectives; research approach and design, population, sampling, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations; clarification of key concepts; and the outline of the research report.

Chapter Two - Literature review. This chapter will focus on the literature review that was conducted on the topic of the resilience of social workers, inclusive of a discussion on the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

Chapter Three - Research methodology and methods. This chapter presents how the researcher applied the research methods for this research study.

Chapter Four – This chapter gives the reader a discussion on the findings of the study. The chapter also introduces themes along with subthemes and discusses the themes in detail incorporated with a literature control.

Chapter Five - Conclusions and recommendations. The chapter five is the last chapter that provides the reader with a summary of the conclusions made regarding the outcomes of the study and offer recommendations based on the findings of the study.

1.15   SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter served as an introduction and orientation for the reader about the whole research study investigated by the researcher, starting with introducing the topic, stating the background of the study, problem statement, rationale of the study, research question, goal and objectives, the research methodology and how the research process was planned. In the introduction the researcher introduced the topic titled; Resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges. The researcher first introduced the word resilience which derives from the word '*resile*' and was coined in the 1970s in the field of psychopathology. The introduction covered how resiliency had developed internationally, then moved to the South African context.

The researcher brought forth the studies that were done with regards to rural social work to give the reader an understanding of what rural social work entails, how rural social workers operate, and their roles and challenges. The research problem presented the baseline of what the researcher aimed to achieve. Moreover, the researcher explained the rationale of the study and what motivated the researcher to conduct the study. The main goal and objective that guided the research study were introduced. Furthermore, the researcher explained how the study would unfold by introducing the research methodology and identified the qualitative research as its approach. The phenomenological research design was applied, supported by explorative, descriptive, and contextual strategies. The research methods gave details on how the participants were identified and recruited for data to be collected, analysed, and verified.

The researcher further gave details on the ethical principles that were considered and clarified the key concepts. Lastly, the researcher outlined the format of each chapter that would be discussed and then concluded the chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The chapter gives an overview about social work resiliency and introduces rural social work. The background of resiliency from an international perspective to a South African perspective receives attention first, followed by the unpacking of the challenges experienced by rural social workers, then the discussion moves to how rural social workers manage their work-related challenges. The chapter also provides literature on research done by other researchers with regards to resiliency and rural social workers. Numerous researchers have conducted studies about resilience and working conditions of social workers working in rural areas however few studies have been conducted about the resiliency of rural social workers. The aim is to unveil the resiliency that enables rural social workers cope when working in unfavourable conditions and thereby encourage or recommend ways in which rural social workers can cope better.

2.2   OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL WORK RESILIENCE

The concept of resilience has generated a lot of research interest, especially about resiliency and social work practice (Grant & Kinman, 2014:18). Resilience is defined as personal characteristics that are inherent in people who can sidestep the work-related stress and its demanding environments and be able to function well regardless of the stress and challenges, they experience (Kapoulitsas & Corcoran, 2015:88). Resilience is referred to as the dynamic and common interactions between an individual and his or her surroundings that helps an individual to have a positive adjustment despite the adversity they might be exposed to. Resilience is influenced by time, background, and culture (Rutter, 2012:1). "Some refer to resilience as something intrinsic to the individual, while others refer to it in a more holistic sense. Some refer to resilience as the competencies or capacities of people, while others refer to it as positive functioning in the face of adversity (Van Breda, 2018:54). The researcher interprets resilience as the capacity of an individual to cope and continue living their best lives even though faced with challenges that are expected to cause disruption in their lives.

Resilience can be considered as the umbrella term that incorporates capabilities, behaviours and competencies that only assist individuals to manage difficult circumstances but to gain strength from such experiences (Grant & Kinman, 2014:19). The heart of resilience research is the protective resources or the resilience processes which enable individuals to attain better than expected outcomes in the face of adversity (Van Breda, 2018:07). Resilience was formerly understood as a personality trait that is stable and fixed. However, research findings have revealed that there are many factors that play a major role in building resilience such as attachment styles in childhood which seem to be a predictor in later life,

quality of family life and relationship with friends (Kinman & Grant, 2014:263). Personal attributes/characters and behavioural implications were highlighted according to Collins (2017:86) as key role players in improving resilience, such as self-esteem, resourcefulness, flexibility, adaptability, and a repertoire of coping strategies. Other characteristics that were perceived as those of resilient people include a sense of control, self-confidence, emotional intelligence, hardiness, optimism, persistence, hope and an ability to assess problems as challenges (Van Breda, 2018:07; Collins, 2017:86; Grant & Kinman, 2014:264). There is no universal definition of resilience, this is because many authors present different definitions of resilience. According to Unger (2013) and Truter et al. (2014:306) social work is a creation of city life. The profession was born and developed in the city, and it developed its connection to urban matters (Williams, 2016:01).

Rural social work has been in existence since the 1900s and it continues to play a very important part in helping individuals and families, yet because social work was rooted in urban areas it took many years before the profession turned its attention to the needs of people living in the rural communities (Daley, 2021:01). To this day the needs of rural practice have been overlooked in the United States and Canada. Rural social work and the needs of people living in rural areas have often been neglected because their needs are not understood, and the practitioners find it difficult to address the needs of rural people while they have their own challenges in rural practice (Daley, 2021:01).

Social workers working in rural areas face unique challenges, yet many social workers are not prepared for the high demands of the field. Social workers often find themselves having to adapt to cultural norms which may come as a shock because they are trained in urban settings with the model of one size fits all which usually is not applicable to rural practice (Daley, 2021:02).

Furthermore, rural people tend to be forgotten with their desires and unique needs because they are often far from media centres (Daley, 2021:02). In the United States there are a lot of people living in rural areas and they are dispersed across vast areas of the United States (Riebschleger & Piece, 2018:08). According to the United States census the rural population continues to represent the minority (18.21%) of the total population in the United States, but the minority continues to suffer in rural service delivery (Daley, 2021:05). In 2011, 18.9% of the Canadian population or approximately 6.3 million people lived on over 90% of the land. As for 2010 nearly 25 million Australians were categorised as rural with most of the population living in a few coastal cities (Riebschleger & Piece, 2018:08).

Responding to the challenges faced by people living in rural areas, social workers have a significant role to ensure the psycho-social health and the overall wellbeing of people living in the rural areas. The rural social workers continue to be faced with numerous challenges that may not be experienced by social

workers working in urban areas (Scales et al. 2013:297). The unique challenges that rural social workers have to deal with on a daily basis include limited resources and infrastructure, lack of support from supervisor and clients' cultural/traditional customs and practices hindering social work service delivery" (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012:367).

2.2.1 An overview of social work resilience in international perspective

Looking at the resilience of social workers from an international perspective the researcher discovered a study about the relationship between personality characteristics and the development of resilience in the context of social work. The study was done in 2016, with 479 participants from Spain; of these 304 were social workers and 175 were students who were studying a three year-degree course in social work at Malaga University (De las Olas Palma-García & Hombrados-Mendieta, 2017:19). The results of the study conducted with practising social workers and social work students revealed that during rendering social work and training, positive personality traits developed among practising social workers and the students. The positive personality traits were associated with openness, consciousness, and extraversion. It was also shown that practising social work has an association with the personality traits that make subjects more resilient (De las Olas Palma-García & Hombrados-Mendieta, 2017:29).

It is essential that social workers develop resilience to assist them in coping with their job however it seems as though resilience is apparent in some social workers but not all. Despite the stress that negatively affects social workers, some social workers continue to report high job satisfaction and are functioning well (McFadden, Campbell & Taylor, 2015:1548). It is interesting that some social workers seem to be immune to the negative effects of stress. The research further suggests that "even where negative indicators are evident 50-70% of the study participants remained without symptoms or dysfunction" (McFadden et al. 2015:1548). Moreover, individuals who make use of engaged and active coping methods such as problem solving and cognitive restructuring, tend to cope better with work demand than those who make use of disengaged methods such as absenteeism and withdrawal.

It is essential that social workers develop internal resilience by being involved in personal and professional developments to develop active coping methods and practices (McFadden et al. 2015:1557). This implies that there are certain traits that social workers develop when practising, which helps them to cope better than others. The results clearly state that even though some social workers experience high levels of stress in their workplace, the outcome of such events will depend on the meaning they attach to their experiences and whether they detach themselves from the problem or try to find a solution to the problem. This study suggests that individuals who coped better in their working

environment are those who are actively involved in problem solving than those who side-lined themselves (McFadden et al. 2015:1557).

The need for resilient social workers is widely emphasised, however little is known about the support structures and abilities that reinforce resilience (Grant & Kindman, 2014:605). The scarcity of literature about the resilience of South African social workers exposes the professionals making it challenging for the promotion of resilience in South African rural social workers (Truter, et al. 2014:306). Social work is unquestionably rewarding however social workers tend to find themselves encountering situations that are stressful and emotionally demanding. Their stress arises from organisational constraints, occupational and coping with rapid change and cultures (Grant & Kinman, 2014:607). This may force social workers to leave their jobs, hence it is significant that social workers become resilient for their day-to-day emotional tasks that require them to think clearly and still be able to apply empathy and warmth (Greer, 2016:02).

This further explains that social workers constantly need to solider on and give their full attention to their client's problem even though they are exhausted and preoccupied with their own problems and at times feel that they have little to give (Greer, 2016:03; Grant & Kinman, 2014:607). The authors propose that social workers who are most resilient are those who have developed different strategies which can be used to deal with different kinds of situations. The need for social workers to develop resilience is significant so that they can provide quality care and, most importantly, for their own wellbeing (Grant & Kinman, 2014:606).

The researcher came across a study conducted about the resilience of General Practitioners who were employed in the rural areas of Australia, where 479 participants were invited to participate representing the diversity of the group in terms of marital status, gender, age, country of origin and location of partner (Walters, Laurence, Dollard, Elliott & Eley, 2015:02). The six main themes that arose from the interviews that helped the GP registers cope with their work were as follows:

- tension between clinical caution versus clinical courage: associated with feeling accountable to ensure that quality of care is provided

- tension between persistence versus flexibility: GP registers were re-evaluating strategies to ensure that they maintained some flexibility and let go of strategies that could not reach their goal.

- tension between reflective practice and task-focussed practice: GP registers reported focusing on one task at hand and taking advantage of reflecting on their own experiences and the

experiences of their patients, they made an example of walking in to someone's else shoes to understand their experiences better.

- tension between personal connections versus professional commitment: GP registers believed that encouragement and support from family members and friends helped them to maintain resilience and cope better with work related challenges.

- skills for balance: improved resilience includes having an ability to balance all the activities that are happening in one's life which means the ability to balance the demands of professional and personal life. This means being able to take care of yourself such as getting enough sleep, leisure activity and exercising.

- finally support versus stretching by supervisors: having a good support system was identified as helpful in building resilience in rural areas this included professional mentorship, debriefing with others and social support from community members.

2.2.2 An overview of social work resilience in South Africa

To understand resilience in South Africa, the researcher consulted a study conducted by Truter, Thero and Fouché (2014:309) about the resilience of South African social workers. Their study was done in 2012 with social workers who were regarded as resilient by community members and associates. Their study found that South African social workers have personal strength, lived values, support networks and value-embedded life that help them become resilient (Truter et al. 2014:309). "Resilient South African social workers were regarded as to be adjusting well due to the strength within themselves and their environment. However, the personal strength was not emphasised above support networks in their social environment, or vice-versa therefore it is significant that there is an understanding of resilience as an interaction between South African social workers and their environment and how they relate to one another in shaping an individual's resilience" (Truter et al. 2014:320). Furthermore, the results extended to supportive workplace enhancement of resilience to newly appointed social workers who were still trying to find their feet. Emotional support from family members was also reported as enhancing resilience in social workers (Truter et al. 2014:320).

Social environment is a larger part of the relationships that play a role in resilience. For example, Van Breda (2018:06), categorised resilience processes into Person In Environment (PIE), those that are in the social environment, for example with friends and family, and the environment (such as community safety and family financial security), and those that are interactional (the 'I' in PIE), referring to processes that link the person and environment, such as teamwork and empathy. He explained that those that can never be separable and are interactional. The value of PIE focuses on the fact that people are interrelated

and interconnected with their environment (Van Breda, 2018:08). The explanation of person in environment is that resilience does not depend on the environment alone but rather the interaction of individuals and their environment.

This implies that people are shaped by the people they interact with and the environment they grew up in or places they spend their time in. However, it is argued that resilience is the outcome of a combination of personal and environmental factors, further resilience depends on the individual's capacity for positive development under high levels of stress (Ungar, 2012:15). However, Van Breda's research study and all the other research authors that the researcher came across did not explain the resiliency of rural social workers as they focused on resiliency of social workers who were working in urban areas and challenges faced by rural social workers, nothing is said about the resiliency of rural social workers therefore there is still a gap in literature about the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their experiences work-related challenges.

2.3 CHALLENGES OF RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS

To understand the resiliency of rural social workers, the researcher started by introducing the background of rural social workers and unpacking the challenges faced by rural social workers on a daily basis when doing their work. For this study's purpose, a detailed breakdown of the challenges faced by rural social workers are presented, namely lack of resources, travelling long distances to provide services to clients, and a lack of supervision.

2.3.1 No resources and infrastructure

Scales et al. (2013:297) explain that rural communities pose unique challenges in delivering services because of the low number of professional social workers. Many rural social workers find themselves unable to provide comprehensive care as they face multiple social barriers in their work of improving services as there is shortage of health providers, transportation problems and health care systems that are not responsive to rural poverty (Huble, Lewis, Scott & Herzog, 2013). Another significant challenge that mostly affects rural social workers is being expected to do more work with limited resources. This not only affects rural social worker's intervention but also affects the level of trust that clients have in social workers (Noyoo, 2021:114). In supporting the above statements, Alpaslan and Schenck (2012:374) state that the challenges that were expressed by social workers practising in rural areas were related more to a lack of resources which encompasses a lack of office space, shortage of vehicles or. if there are any. it is usually vehicles that are not road worthy and a lack of office equipment.

Rural social workers face many of the same challenges as urban social workers including gang activity, drugs, homelessness, and racism, however most rural social workers have the added problems of

addressing limited resources (Segal, Gerdes & Steiner, 2016:169). This was supported by Humble, Lewis, Scott & Herzog (2013:250) in that not only do rural communities lack the resources to provide quality services to clients, but this affects the confidence of rural social workers in service delivery with limited health care providers and health care systems that are unresponsive to those in poverty, putting social workers under pressure as all these cases are reported to them (Humble et al. 2013:250).

A South African study was done at the DSD at Ethekwini Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal with 10 individual in-depth interviews and one focus group with 21 rural social workers. The study indicated that a shortage of resources created tension, division and fighting that resulted in an intolerable atmosphere amongst social workers. Some indicated that others resorted to stealing cars on the days that they were allocated to someone else because they felt pressure to meet targets (Dlamini & Sewpaul, 2015:461).

The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997:32) clearly states that some provinces are better resourced than others in terms of infrastructure and personnel. The distribution of resources is uneven within provinces, making other provinces under-resourced, particularly provinces such as Northwest, Mpumalanga, Cape Town and Eastern Cape. This causes overreliance on social workers and a need to expand human resource capacity through the employment of other categories of social service personnel, such as child and youth care workers, community development workers, social development workers, and volunteers (White paper, 1997:32).

2.3.2 Travel long distance to provide service to their clients

Social work practice in rural areas routinely involves travelling long distances making it time consuming to deliver services and doing assessments is a challenge because there are too few resources to which rural social workers can refer their clients (Schmidt, 2020:59). Public transport is often scarce or non-existent which leads to long travel times for social workers and their clients further emphasising the need to have one's own vehicle (Schmidt, 2020:59). This was supported by Joseph (2017:43) who found that rural social workers not only struggle with government cars, but they also face the challenge of limited services, such as treatment centres, which forces them to travel long distances when placing their clients into treatment centres. The cars and roads they had were unsafe and poorly maintained which put the lives of the social workers at risk. To add fuel to the fire, social workers not only struggle with limited resources but their safety was a concern in travelling long distances with unmaintained cars (Joseph, 2017:43). Another challenge that is regarded as unique to rural social workers is a lack of support from supervision.

2.3.3 Lack of support from supervisor

Social worker's responsibilities continue to grow as each social worker must do micro and macro work. As the needs of our environments pull and stretch the resources, it becomes more and more difficult for social workers to find mentors (Noyoo, 2021:114). To keep practitioners happy and productive it is essential to ensure that they have time to talk to others about their experiences to avoid work-related stress because the work that social workers do is hard, and they end up dealing with a lot of difficult experiences which they might end up connecting with their past traumas (Noyoo, 2021:114). It is "suggested that a supportive relationship with supervisors can provide a secure and buffering effect to protect staff from the stresses of the job. Research on turnover has repeatedly shown that supervisor and co-worker support can buffer the effect of burnout and turnover" (McFadden et al. 2015:1555).

"Findings from this review further support the importance of supervisory support as a factor in the retention of rural social workers. Employees who were satisfied with the managers and supervisors were more satisfied in their positions overall. Consistent recognition of employees by supervisors and managers was also identified as an important factor in job satisfaction, burnout, and retention" (Brown et al. 2017:10). This means that a lack of supervision and supportive colleagues to discuss work-challenges with may push social workers into discussing their work challenges with people outside of work (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012:382)

2.3.4 Community members hampering on personal lives

Practising social work in rural areas is challenging because it means having to balance being a practitioner and community member (Brown et al. 2017:01). This may be a challenge for social workers who did not grow up in the rural areas (Brown et al. 2017:02). Rural social workers who wish to maintain a professional distance may have difficulty because they live in the same areas as their clients, this means that all their personal information may be in the open, such as their marital status, where they stay, their phone numbers, and their children (Pierson, 2016:161). The lack of anonymity may cause issues regarding confidentiality and privacy. Some issues affecting rural social workers are based on the assumption of community members which may have a negative impact as information quickly spreads from one person to another (Pierson, 2016:161).

Lack of privacy and confidentiality affects not only rural social workers but also nurses practising in rural areas. Being a nurse in rural areas has been described as living a life in a fishbowl where you are monitored and recognised on and off duty (Winters, 2018:22;54). Moreover, nurses working in rural areas also faced difficulty, not only with keeping their personal lives private, but their patients faced similar problems as the community members usually knew everybody's business (Winters, 2018:22;54).

Providing services to such communities often involves multiple relationships with clients and professional boundaries become blurred.

This puts professionals in a position of possibly of providing services to associates or acquaintances because of limited organisations providing services (Piché, Brownlee & Halverson, 2015:58). Furthermore, rural social workers who choose to work in their community of origin could struggle a lot to manage dual relationships with friends, community members and immediate family members (Piché et al. 2015:65). Social workers who are staying in the same town as their clients may face great difficulty in separating their personal and professional lives because they interact with the same people in multiple roles as the same clients are their neighbours, relatives, and parents of children at the local schools. Therefore, rural social workers find themselves attending the same church and shops therefore dual relationships are unavoidable and community members eventually know a lot of personal information about their social workers which at times may disturb social workers who are trying to be discreet about their personal lives, leaving them uncomfortable being themselves in the community as there is a certain expectation of how a professional should conduct themselves (Dziegielewski, 2013:307).

The National Association of Social Workers NASW (2021) code also recognises that social workers could find themselves in multiple relationships as they are unescapable, however the NASW makes it clear that it is the responsibility of social workers to set clear boundaries so that their clients can be protected (Section 1.06c). However, it does not state how social workers can be protected from clients interfering in their personal lives.

2.3.5 Lack of understanding about social worker's roles

A lack of understanding of different professional roles is often described as a hindrance to service delivery and to productive professional relationships amongst stakeholders (Hughes & Wearing, 2013:95: Shier & Graham, 2013:01). Social workers need to recognise that they are human, and they have emotions hence it is important to keep boundaries between their personal and professional lives. However, to some community members it may be unusual to see a social worker participating in activities within the community that involves entertainment, forgetting that social workers are human beings too who also need to have personal lives (Dziegielewski, 2013:306). In support of the above, Shier and Graham (2013:02) state that community members may have unrealistic expectations of social worker's roles although they might not understand the pressure that social workers are placed under in dealing with work-related challenges, nevertheless they are expected to provide care and high-quality service and portray this in their personal lives.

Looking at the existing literature as stated in this section it clearly shows that there are numerous researchers who have conducted studies about working conditions of social workers working in rural areas, however few to zero studies have been conducted about the resiliency of rural social workers especially in South Africa. Hence it is essential that the researcher fills the gap that has been left open regarding the resilience of rural social work and what helps them to manage their work-related challenges.

2.4   COPING STRATEGIES OF RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS

It is no secret that rural social workers find themselves facing many challenges in providing services to their clients. However, it seems as though rural social workers have better coping mechanisms that allow them to cope better than others. The fact that rural areas are calmer, safer, and social workers' clients seem to be more appreciative and more responsive to social workers' services seemed to be a motivation to continue working in rural areas regardless of the challenges faced (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012:373). Rural social workers who worked in rural areas were originally from the rural areas and believed that working in the rural areas were part of giving back to their communities as they were of the opinion that rural social work is where a real need of the social workers' services is needed the most (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012:374). Furthermore, having family in the rural areas had sense of positive feelings and belonging that they are making a difference to people who need it the most and that they have no adaptation issues and know that lifestyle better (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012:374).

Positive feelings of working in the rural areas were highlighted by Matheson, Robertson, Elliott, Iversen and Murchie (2016:508) in a study that was conducted with health care professionals working in challenging rural settings in 2015. The study was conducted in Scotland, and 20 participants participated in the study. The participants consisted of pharmacists, nurses, and practice managers. There were certain characteristics that were identified which enhanced resiliency amongst the health care professionals. The characteristics of health care workers that developed resilience were identified as follows.

Optimism seemed valuable in enhancing resilience in that it helped health care workers in focusing more on the positives than the negatives, this meant looking at things in a positive light. This gave them strength knowing that although they were experiencing many problems, there were some positives that they could find to keep them going, such as making a difference to the most disadvantaged and having their family members as a support system (Matheson et al. 2016:509). Optimism, according to Kirts-Ashman and Hull (2018:84), plays an important role in helping both the social worker and clients to stay positive. They explained that social workers, when planning an intervention, should always keep in mind

that people are capable of positive change and that most behaviours, thought processes and behaviours are learned and can be unlearned.

Flexibility and adaptability, this means that rural health practitioners had to be prepared to deal with whatever came up, this means treating patients first-hand without having access to their medical history and dealing with the constant rescheduling of working time. This was classified as important for all professional health care roles. Rural health practitioners called this being a 'Jack of all trades' (Matheson et al. 2016:509).

Tolerance, which means having the "ability to focus and deal with a problem, then move on, or 'bounce back', was important in the face of adversity, as was noted by a GP participant (Matheson et al. 2016:509).

Organisational skills, including the ability to balance between the high workload, ensuring that patients receive the best medical treatment while at the same time having a personal life (Matheson et al. 2016:510). Being a team player was found to be very helpful in helping professional health workers in the rural areas cope better with their work by having good relationships with their colleagues, helping one another, and helping instead of isolating themselves when facing difficult tasks (Matheson et al. 2016:510). In cases, instances when problems arise, family, associates and community are often the ones who provide emotional support when one loses his or her hope and focuses on the problems that they have come across (Golightley & Goemans, 2020:122).

Keeping within **professional boundaries**, played an important role in separating personal and professional life and setting boundaries as most professionals tend to find themselves associating with clients' afterhours as they stay in the same communities (Matheson et al. 2016:510). Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2018:135) added that professional boundaries are essential to be able to maintain their personal lives, to keep a safe working environment and ensure that both the client and social workers are protected from physical and psychological harm.

Confidence means having confidence to accept one's professional limitations and being comfortable in saying no, this means having to accept that you are not a hero. This is learning to say at times, "I have done all that I can do and that's it" (Matheson et al. 2016:512). When social workers understand their roles and responsibilities within the communities, they gain confidence in both themselves and their clients (Golightley & Goemans, 2020:29). Furthermore, for social workers to enjoy their work and have better coping mechanisms is to understand the value of cross-cultures and to build on their community's strengths, however it is vital that social workers recognise and accept their professional and personal boundaries (Golightley & Goemans, 2020:29)

Humour, was not only identified as helping individual professionals but also had a positive impact on colleagues and clients (Matheson et al. 2016:512).

A sense of self-worth was considered important in professional health workers as believing in their experience and knowledge was identified to be essential in defining their strength and the development of resilience (Matheson et al. 2016:513). Furthermore, the concept of preparedness to learn from colleagues who were more experienced was regarded to boost resilience. This means looking at how they do certain tasks and how they deal with work pressure rather than getting overwhelmed when their schedule changes and suddenly there is a need to leave everything planned and start doing something that was not planned. Observing not only helped professionals learn new skills but also helped them to stay in contact with other professionals (Matheson et al. 2016:512). Moreover, the professional supervision or training was identified as important in building resilience. It was recommended that those trainings should have communication skills, motivational interviewing, and brief interventions.

Social workers who grew up in rural areas were likely to choose to work in rural areas and cope better working in these areas (Matheson et al. 2016:512; Riebschleger & Pierce, 2018:64). In agreement with Matheson, et al. (2016:512), Ashkanani and Shears (2016:21) explain that professional training of social workers was very helpful in assisting social workers to adapt to the work pressure, become aware of the job responsibilities and, most importantly, to be able to cope better with their work pressure. Supervision, according to Kirst-Ashman (2017:264), is essential to assist social workers in learning how to conduct themselves in a professional manner, debrief with clients' cases, and learning professional boundaries and professional roles.

Now that literature from other sources has been presented and unpacked, starting from the history of resilience and moving to the challenges of rural social workers and the coping mechanisms of rural social workers. Looking at this literature from other authors there are many authors who wrote about resiliency and the challenges experienced by rural social workers, however there was no study found that had been done by other authors about resiliency of rural social workers in managing their experiences of work- related challenges.

2.5   SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The literature review has highlighted what other authors have done on the topic of resiliency of rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. The chapter aimed to give an understanding of resilience starting with explaining how social work began in the rural areas from an international perspective to a South African perspective. The chapter also covers the challenges experienced by rural social workers, indicating that rural social workers tend to find themselves

experiencing more challenges in implementing their work than urban social workers. The chapter then moves to the coping mechanisms of rural social workers that helped them to become resilient rural social workers. Coping mechanisms used by rural social workers were having supportive supervisors, family, and colleagues. The study also shows that social workers who grew up in rural areas were likely to cope better working in these areas.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter one introduced how the researcher planned the complete research study starting by stating that a qualitative research approach was applied with the implementation of a phenomenological research design supported by explorative, descriptive and contextual strategies. This all happened within a theoretical framework consisting of the strength-based perspective and resiliency theory. The particular focus of chapter two is to draw attention to how the research methods were actually applied and implemented by the researcher.

The researcher came across recent definitions of research methodology by Kryvinska and Greguš (2020) and felt it was important to include these to recap what research methodology entails. Research methodology "comprises the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. Typically, it encompasses concepts such as paradigm, theoretical model, phases and qualitative techniques" (Kryvinska & Greguš, 2020:195). Furthermore, methodology does not provide solutions however it provides support in understanding which techniques should be used for the study (Kryvinska & Greguš, 2020:195). Mukherjee (2020:20) points out that research methodology reflects and absorbs special features of the research that are considered for the study. Thus, research methodology can be explained as the superstructure while the research methods can be understood as the bricks that are used to build the building (Mukherjee, 2020:20). Furthermore, research methodology is a strategy that encompasses the techniques, procedures, processes, and principles used to seek out a solution to an identified research problem (Mukherjee, 2020:20).

The research methodology assisted the researcher in determining the best research approach that was most relevant in investigating the resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. The discussion about the research methodology entails an application of the research approach and research design, which was supported by the research question, goal, and objectives. The researcher will explain how the pilot test was conducted, followed by determining the target population, how the sampling technique was applied to attain the correct sample of participants, the method of data collection and the preparation for data collection unfolded as well as how the data was analysed and verified. The application of the ethical considerations will be addressed last.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION, RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

3.2.1 Research question

A research question gives the researcher a direction of how to go about doing the study (Remenyi 2014:162; Jansen 2016:3). A research question should be articulated in a way to develop the main purpose of the study (Brink, van der Walt & van Rensburg 2018:70). A research question should be clear and easily understood by participants so that the researcher can get correct and desired answers as according to the goal of the research study (Tully 2014:31). As alluded to in chapter one the research question indicates the general purpose of the study was based on the problem that the researcher was interested in investigating so that knowledge could be generated about the research topic. In this case, the research question: What does resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges entail?, assisted the researcher to remain focused on investigating and generating knowledge about the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. The researcher also became aware that the research question was clear and gave the general direction of the study which aligned towards the goal of the study.

3.2.2 Research goal

Research goal is what the researcher intends to accomplish (Flick, 2022:148 & Creswell, 2017:15). Research goal forms significant part of the research study that informs the research design. Pepe and Mays (2020:20; Kuykendall; 2020:83)) point out that research goal is anything that inspires the researcher to have a desire to carry out a research project. Research goal forms significant part of the research study that informs the research design. The goal of the research is to ensure that the research study is worth doing and the researcher can justify execution by clarifying why the outcome and conclusion are significant (McFarlane & Lim 2018:105; Creswell, 2016:94; Bjorn, Laurent, Mowsianiak & Olsen 2018). Having a research goal, enabled the researcher to maintain focus on the overall purpose of the study - to gain an in-depth understanding by exploring the resiliency of rural social workers in managing work-related challenges. The goal ensured that the researcher did not deviate from the original intention of what was to be researched as it served as a reminder of what the researcher desired to achieve after the study was conducted. The researcher managed to collect data to specifically speak to the goal by collecting information-rich data so that an in-depth understanding could be reached about the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges.

3.2.3 Research objectives

Research objective it is what the researcher hopes to achieve providing detail explanation (Hunt, Pollock, Campbell, Escourt & Brutton, 2018:3; Parahoo, 2014:51). Objectives refer to as the steps taken to reach

the goal of the study. The objectives should be measurable, achievable steps connected to a time frame that will be taken to achieve the goal (Carey, 2017:19). Research objectives are the details that needs to be specifically taken to ensures that all the measures and resources are available to achieve the goal (Kumar 2019:86; Doody & Bailey 2016:22). Research objective can also be defined as "clear, concise, declarative statements that are expressed to direct a study" (Grove et al 2013:708). The research objectives gave the researcher guidelines for the steps that needed to be taken so that the overall purpose could be achieved. This gave the researcher a structured mode to address the key issues that needed to be focused on in this research study. Thus the research objectives guided the researcher to remain focussed on exploring, describing, drawing conclusions and providing recommendations based on the findings about the resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. Most importantly these objectives were considered when the research interview questions were developed as it provided guidance on what the open-ended questions should contain so that rich data could be gathered about this phenomenon.

The scientific execution of the research question, goal, and objectives, necessitated an in-depth discussion on the application of the research methodology and methods related to this intended research study.

3.3   APPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.3.1 The qualitative research approach

As explained in chapter one, there are two main types of research approaches that researchers make use of, namely, qualitative and quantitative approaches. After an in-depth analysis of the nature and purpose of the two approaches, the researcher found qualitative approach to be the most suitable. The researcher was aware that she was the key instrument for collecting data hence it was important that the researcher made use of her skills to get as much information as possible. This approach allowed the researcher to ask open-ended questions to gather rich data from the participants because the researcher was more concerned with the quality of information than the quantity of social workers who were interviewed. This approach gave the researcher in-depth information because little was known about the resiliency of rural social workers, furthermore the researcher was able to listen to the meanings that participants attached to their lived experiences. Furthermore, the researcher engaged with some participants in their natural setting which gave the researcher an opportunity to understand how participants behaved in their natural settings

For the researcher to be able to carry out the task effectively, the researcher introduced the research design most appropriate for the study.

3.3.2 Research design

The phenomenological research design was introduced in chapter one and it was explained how the researcher planned to apply it as the most appropriate research design. In this chapter the researcher explains how phenomenology was actually implemented during the research process.

The researcher chose the phenomenological design because the researcher wanted to attain an in-depth understanding of the resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges by focussing on the participants' experiences, perceptions and feelings about the phenomenon. Each participant was given an opportunity to share their unique experiences of working in rural areas and how they managed to conduct their work regardless of the work-related challenges they faced.

In adhering to phenomenological principles, the researcher applied bracketing. Meaning that when she was collecting data, she ensured that she "bracketed out" her own experiences. During the interviews when the participants were sharing their experiences, the researcher did not interfere by also sharing her experiences or asking leading questions to the participants based on what she already knew about her own challenges or coping mechanisms in doing rural social work. During the interview the researcher remained focused on the experiences, perceptions and feelings of the participants. The researcher observed the environment of participants in their workplace at DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembislie-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities without interfering with her knowledge or assumptions to minimise bias. The researcher also ensured that she did not interfere by mentioning things that she had observed and felt were supposed to be mentioned during data collection. However, the researcher's observation skills helped her to correlate what participants were saying and their realities. This also allowed the researcher to observe the emotions participants attached to their experiences

As part of the original plan, the researcher applied the three strategies of inquiry to support the phenomenological design, namely, explorative, descriptive, and contextual research strategies of inquiry.

Explorative research strategy of inquiry - in continuation of chapter one on the discussion about the explorative research design, the term is known for the studies that are undertaken to collect information where little is known about the phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:78; Grove, Burns & Gray, 2013:370). In case of this research study – little was known or documented about the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. "This approach typically occurs

when a researcher examines a new interest or when the subject of study itself is relatively new" (Babbie, 2017:91).

As mentioned earlier, the researcher struggled to get literature about the resiliency of rural social workers locally and internationally and no research studies could be traced to the rural areas such as at the DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and JS Moroka municipalities. Rural social workers are not a new phenomenon, but the resiliency in managing their experiences of work-related challenges in rural areas are less researched as not many research studies could be found. By applying the explorative research strategy of inquiry, new and in-depth knowledge about how rural social workers manage their experiences of work-related challenges were obtained. Therefore, the researcher felt that the research strategy of inquiry helped to close the gap as the researcher was able to acquire information that had not been researched before. During the interviews the researcher encouraged the participants to freely share their experiences, challenges and coping strategies. The researcher asked open-ended questions and listened attentively to the participants when they were responding and asked follow-up questions where clarity was needed or where participants could elaborate more. The researcher felt that the new information that was gathered during the interview was significant because it brought knowledge and understanding with regard to the resiliency of rural social workers.

Descriptive research strategy of inquiry – "Descriptive studies answer questions of what, where, when, and how" (Babbie, 2020:92). The researcher managed to gather data because she allowed the participants to describe their perceptions in relation to their experiences of managing their work-related challenges. The researcher to examined the perceptions of the participants as they were sharing their views and opinions with regard to how they managed to cope with their work-related challenges. Using this research strategy of inquiry, helped the researcher to better understand the challenges and how they managed to cope with their challenges with a comprehensive account and activities as the phenomenon happened in the natural settings of the participants.

Contextual research strategy of inquiry - as explained in chapter one, to truly understand the resiliency of rural social workers' in managing their experiences of work-related challenges, the researcher strived to understand the natural settings, that is a real-life situation which happen naturally and cannot be manipulated by the researcher (Grove, Gray & Burns, 2021:97). As planned the researcher made use of the contextual research strategy of enquiry to contextualise and observe the natural setting of where rural social workers work.

During data collection face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants at their preferred venue, however due to the Covid-19 regulations in place at the time of the data collection phase, not all

interviews were done face-to-face. Some interviews were done virtually and others were done telephonically. Social distancing was observed with the interviews that were conducted face-to-face. This helped the researcher to understand the environment in which the social workers worked, and it was achieved through observing how they expressed themselves. The researcher conducted the research in the participants' natural settings which cannot be manipulated. For example, the researcher had an opportunity to see the challenges that the rural social workers came across while conducting their jobs. For example, the researcher noticed their working conditions such as poor infrastructure. Most importantly the researcher was able to better understand the realities of the challenges that participants were faced with.

The research methods that were applied to perform the research study will be discussed next.

3.4   RESEARCH METHODS

As explained in chapter one, research methods refer to action steps taken to execute the research (Porche, 2021:160; Grove et al. 2021:31; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Research methods can also be defined as procedures and plans that provide the details of the research study to be carried out (Ngulube, 2020:171; Creswell, 2017). "The method used should be in line with the approved or recognised ways of carrying out a research study" (Rees, 2016:112). The procedures, techniques and actions steps on how the researcher executed this research study will unfold next by addressing the population of the research, sampling methods, data collection, data analysis, data verification and ethical considerations.

3.4.1 Population

The population for this study was informed by the research question: What does the resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges entail? Thus, all rural social workers appointed at the DSD, Mpumalanga Province were included in the population. Because it would have been time consuming and expensive, the researcher opted for drawing a sample from the two more rural DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities.

3.4.2 Sampling and sampling methods

Due to the nature of this research study the researcher chose non-probability sampling and applied the purposive sampling technique. In non-probability sampling, as explained in chapter one, the population do not have an equal chance of being selected for the sample. The researcher was not interested in studying the whole population, but rather rural social workers working at the DSD district offices within the boundaries of Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities.

The researcher had clear criteria of inclusion and purposive sampling was applied to select suitable participants. A specific sample of rural social workers working at the DSD district offices within the boundaries of Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities were purposively selected to partake in the research study. The sampling was conducted in two stages. First selecting the district offices and then selecting participants. The purposive sampling technique seemed to be more appropriate for the study as it fitted well with the aims and objectives of the study. This type of sampling helped a lot because the researcher was able to gather in-depth information from the participants because all the participants were able to understand the nature of the study hence they were actively engaged during the interviews.

The researcher purposefully selected the participants with the assistance and permission of their supervisor as it was believed that they were best suited to be able to express themselves and, more importantly, give in-depth information regarding the research topic. The researcher first explained the research study, its goal and objectives to the supervisors. The supervisors then explained the research study to their social workers and those who were interested in the study gave permission to be contacted by the researcher. The researcher contacted each of them and explained the research study to ensure that they gave their consent to something that they fully understood and that they met the criteria of inclusion.

Purposive sampling was implemented as planned to meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria. As explained in chapter one the inclusion criteria were as follows:

Inclusion criteria

- Participants had to be social workers employed by the DSD at Mpumalanga Province.

- Participants had a minimum of one year's social work experience as appointed rural social workers at the DSD district office within the boundaries of the Thembisile Hani Municipality and Dr JS Moroka Municipalities, Mpumalanga Province.

Exclusion criteria

- Social work managers and supervisors appointed at DSD and working within the boundaries of the Thembisile Hani Municipality and Dr JS Moroka Municipalities, Mpumalanga Province.

- Social workers who less than one year's working experience or who were on probation.

- Registered social workers not employed by the DSD.

- Social workers who had worked closely with the researcher, were automatically disqualified from being part of the study.

Upon determining the sampling method of the study the researcher had to determine the sample size of the research study. "The qualitative researchers deliberately select subjects and determine their number and characteristics in relation to in-depth understanding needed for their studies" (Rentala, 2019:202). When determining sampling size to achieve saturation of data according to Grove et al. (2021:447), it is important to look at the nature of the study, the scope of the study, the quality of the data and study design.

The researcher did not plan the number of participants as it was dependent on the data saturation of the study. The researcher kept interviewing participants until the researcher noted that there was no new information arising from the responses of the participants, because data saturation was reached when there was no longer new data subjects on the topic but only repetition of data that was previously collected. The researcher was more concerned with the quality of information received from participants than the number of participants hence the researcher kept on interviewing the participants until she felt the data collected was sufficient.

3.4.3 Pilot testing

In chapter one the researcher defined pilot testing and explained that it would be undertaken. In recapping the meaning, Grove et al. (2021:59) defines pilot testing as a smaller version of the proposed study done with the intention to determine whether the data collection method can identify potential problems that can affect the quality of the results. Kumar (2019:305) and Ravitch and Carl (2016:90) are of the view that a pilot testing is an investigation trial to test if the required results can be obtained through the instrument and whether modification is required, or the method can be used as it is.

The researcher originally planned to organise interviews with two social workers from Kwaggafontein, however organising the interviews took longer than expected. With the first social worker there was a challenge with network. The researcher had to reschedule the interview three times as there were network challenge. The researcher ended up opting for a face- to-face interview with the social worker adhering to Covid-19 regulations. The researcher also provided hand sanitiser to the participant before the interview began. The researcher ensured that there was a social distance of one metre between the researcher and the participant during the interview. During the interview when the researcher was asking questions, the researcher realised that there was a question that the participant was struggling to answer. The participant also confirmed that he felt that the question was somehow repeating itself. The researcher asked assistance from the supervisor to reappraise the question to prevent any unnecessary repetition.

The other pilot interview with the second participant was done virtually and it seemed to have run smoothly. The participant understood the questions and where the researcher did not understand the response of the participant, the researcher asked for clarity.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection refers to applying a suitable method to collect data and it also requires the researcher and participants to thoroughly prepare for data collection (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:37).

3.5.1 Preparation for data collection

The researcher had to prepare and ensure that the participants were well prepared and ready for data collection. Before entering the field, the researcher first obtained ethical clearance from the Department of Social Work's Research and Ethics Committee, University of South Africa (UNISA) for the proposed study. After obtaining the ethical clearance letter from the ethical committee, the researcher followed up with the HOD (Head of the Department) of DSD regarding permission to conduct a research study with DSD social workers appointed at the DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities on the condition that they would only grant permission to conduct a research study once the researcher received an ethical clearance letter.

The researcher emailed the ethical clearance letter along with the proposal and within a few days the researcher received an approval letter from the HOD of the DSD. After receiving the permission letter, the researcher searched for social work supervisors' numbers on the DSD website. The next step according Curtis and Curtis (2019:07) and Morris (2018:02), is that after the approval the researcher should prepare the interview guide and be prepared to do the actual interview. As indicated in chapter one, the researcher developed open-ended interview questions contained in an interview guide with the purpose of soliciting in-depth information from the participants. The researcher did not only prepare herself for the interview but also prepared the participants beforehand.

The researcher opted to call the participants and explain about the research study to them. The researcher asked assistance from the social work supervisor(s) in identifying potential participants who met the criteria of inclusion (as explained with purposive sampling in 3.4.2). The researcher gave the social workers' supervisors time to brief their social workers and those who were interested gave verbal permission to be contacted by the researcher. The researcher opted to make use of phone calls to prepare them for the interviews instead of meeting face-to-face with participants because of the Covid-19 rule stating that travelling should be limited as much as possible to limit the spread of Covid-19. All calls were recorded with the permission of the participants. The researcher explained to participants who were interested in the study and emailed them the interview guides to ensure that they prepared for the

interviews. The researcher believed that the interview guide assisted a lot in preparing the participants because it explained what the research study was about, the research goal, objectives and what would happen to the data that was collected (see Addendum E).

3.5.2 Application of the method of data collection

The researcher implemented the original plan for data collection as presented in chapter one, the decision to continue with the plan was informed by the research objectives which were to explore and describe the resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews as data collection method as the semi-structured interviews allowed participants to freely express themselves. By using semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to probe for clarity. This method of data collection gave participants an opportunity to share their unique experiences of working in the rural areas and it gave them the platform to share their resiliency in managing their experiences of work-related challenges.

The questions allowed the participants to describe, explain and give examples to ensure that they are understood. For example, the researcher asked the question, "*Can you share with me how do you apply resiliency in your work as a social worker working in a rural area*?" This are the types of questions that allowed the participants to freely express themselves about their lived experiences of how they apply resiliency. This allowed the participants to share their unique experiences starting from their challenges of working in the rural areas to how they managed to have resiliency allowing them to continue working in the areas regardless of the challenges they faced. Furthermore, the researcher was able to understand the perceptions they attached to their experiences which had a lot to do to how they behaved and viewed their environment. The researcher was open, and she attentively listened to how they described their lived experiences.

Not all the semi-structured interviews were face-to-face interviews as explained in chapter one because the researcher had to comply with Covid-19 regulations. The researcher was still able to use observation while conducting the virtual interviews. The researcher conducted six face-to-face interviews, three telephonic interviews and three virtual interviews using the MS Teams platform.

During the interview with participants, the researcher made use of the four out of the seven steps proposed by Kvale (1996:81)

- Thematising (the researcher explained to participants the purpose of the study and what it aimed to achieve)

- Designing (consideration of the ethical dimensions)

- Interviewing (conducting interviews with participants)

- Transcribing (interview recording and writing notes of observation)

The steps helped with the flow of interviews because participants were aware of what was expected.

3.6   METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The concept of data analysis was introduced in chapter one, however the researcher came across recent definitions of the concept and felt that it was important not to omit these. Method of data analysis is explained by Anderson (2019:250) and Rossman and Raillis (2012:337) as the process of organising, bringing structure, order and bringing meaning to large amounts of information collected from participants. The researcher ensured that data analysis was implemented as planned in chapter one. After the collection of data, the researcher transcribed each interview word-for-word as planned and ensured that the information was accurate and correct as recorded.

The researcher followed eight steps of Tesch (cited in Creswell, 2014:197-198) as planned in chapter one for analysing data. The researcher categorised the information into themes and subthemes according to the eight steps by Tesch (Creswel, 2014:197-198). After analysing data, the researcher handed over the data to the independent coder to also analyse data using the eight steps of Tesch so the findings of the independent coder can be compared to those of the researcher to increase credibility and trustworthy. Themes that emerged were discussed by the researcher, independent coder and supervisor and consensus was reached on the outcomes.

1. The researcher read the whole transcript to make sense of it. This implies that the researcher read all the transcripts to understand the background information and make sense of them, and then made notes of the ideas as they came to mind.

2. The researcher selected one transcript which was the most interesting one and asked himself what it is all about. While reading, the researcher thought about the underlying meaning and made notes.

3. After reading the transcripts, the researcher grouped similar topics or themes into columns and then compared all the topics that he came across. The researcher then connected similar topics. These topics were grouped as "major topics" or "unique topics" and "left overs".

4. The researcher shortened the topics or themes into codes and wrote them in the appropriate sections of the transcripts. This helped the researcher to see if there were new topics emerging and this gave the researcher an opportunity to see whether those topics were relevant.

5. The researcher found the most descriptive wording for the topics. This implies that the researcher had to reduce the total list of topics by placing them into categories.

6. The researcher abbreviated the codes that were utilised and alphabetised the codes. This helped the researcher to not accidentally use a specific code for more than one topic.

7. When coding was completed, data material was assembled, and the preliminary analysis was performed.

8. Lastly, the independent coder reviewed the codes and where needed recoded certain themes.

Now that the process of data analysis has been discussed, the data needs to be verified hence it is discussed next.

3.7   DATA VERIFICATION

Data verification is empirical so that the results can be fully trusted (Ngulube, 2020:485). The researcher implemented Lincoln and Guba's model (1985) for ensuring trustworthiness of the research study as proposed in chapter one. Lincoln and Guba' model (1985) consists of four aspects, namely, credibility, dependability, member checking, confirmability and transferability. The researcher was of the view that these four aspects were important when verifying data and to increase rigor. The researcher found the data verification easier because she kept notes of everything she was doing throughout the whole study and this gave her an opportunity to correct herself.

Credibility implies that the findings should be demonstrated in such a way that participants feel what is represented is what they have reported (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:123; Rossman & Rallis, 2012:65). The researcher was aware that the whole research study relied on the researcher's credibility hence she ensured that the findings of the data were believable. To ensure that data was credible the researcher made use of interviewing skills, emphasising ethical considerations such as confidentiality and anonymity, triangulation, member checking, and dependability.

Interviewing techniques – can be defined as skills used to discover the truth using ethical standards and law in a way that leaves everyone involved with positive feeling under all circumstances (Comer & Stephens, 2016:30). "Interviewing skills are the primary skills on which all other aspects of social work depend. We can define the interview as a conversation with a deliberate purpose that is acceptable by participants" (Kudushin, 2013:17). The researcher made use of probing skill to clear up any misunderstandings and ensured that data presented on the findings, was what was reported by the participants. During the interviews the researcher listened attentively to the participants to ensure accuracy. The researcher made use of summarisation skill as proposed in chapter one. This allowed the

researcher to highlight the main points and actively listen to participants, not just to hear them but to understand them from their point of view. See the example below of summarisation that was taken from the excerpts of one of the participants:

R690	Oh, okay and how do you manage the work related challenging that you
R691	Experience?
K58	I think what works for me is that is staying positive all the time. I just focus on
K59	the things that I can do because it won't help beating myself for things that I
K60	cannot change. Um I think what also assist me to manage at work is that when
K62	I get tired, I ensure that I get some rest and take a break or leave from my
K63	work and spend my time with the people that I love and that I guess refreshed
K64	My mind.
R692	Oh, okay so its staying positive and taking a break from work and getting
R693	support from your loved ones at home.
K65	Yes, I believe that is helping me.

Emphasizing confidentiality and anonymity - Before the interviews, the researcher assured the participants that there would be confidentiality and anonymity and that their identities would not be revealed and no one would know that they had taken part in the study. This helped a lot because participants became honest and freely shared their experiences, giving the research rich data. The researcher started the interview by explaining to participants what the research was about and that data shared will would be shared with the supervisor, however their identities would be protected and the researcher would ensure that pseudonyms were used to ensure that their identities were not revealed.

Triangulation - The researcher made use of triangulation by making use of multiple perspectives. The researcher made use of observation, interviews, and journals to ensure that data was credible. When the researcher was collecting data she ensured that she observed the environment and observed the participants. This meant that during data collection, the researcher did not only do interviews but observed and wrote notes of what the participants shared and also what was observed by the researcher during face-to-face interviews, however for those who were interviewed telephonically the researcher relied on the sound of their voice when they were talking and the emotions that they attached as they

were sharing their experiences. The researcher looked at their reactions and emotions as they were sharing their experiences this helped the researcher to understand their frustrations when they were talking about their challenges and their excitements when they were talking about how they managed their work-related challenges. However, the observation was limited because the researcher could only conduct six face-to-face interviews, three telephonic interviews and another three virtual MS Team's interviews.

Member checking - Is a credibility strategy whereby the researcher takes data back to the participants for verification if data is a true reflection of what they shared with the researcher during the interview (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:230; Creswell, 2016:279). This strategy is essential to be used to help rule out the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of participants meaning (Merriam & Tisdell 2016:246). To promote credibility and trustworthiness, the researcher used this strategy by presenting the transcripts to participants to confirm if data presented is a true reflecting of what they shared. An opportunity was given to participants to react to the presented data and confirm if they were in agreement with it and whether it was unbiased. The researcher ensured that feedback was given individually to protect each participants' identity. Since the researcher could not organise a physical meeting, the researcher opted for a virtual interview and the themes that emerged on the data collected were individually presented by the researcher to participants.

Dependability refers to the consistency of data overtime (Ngulube, 2020:149). For this research to show accuracy and consistency the researcher employed an independent coder as he is well experienced and specialises in the field. Employing an independent coder was a way to ensure the quality of the work was produced by employing the eight steps of Tesch (cited in Creswell, 2014:197-198) and ensuring that, should the need arise, the process followed would produce the same results. The researcher ensured that the data provided to the independent coder was complete, typed as recorded and all the data was accurate and consistent. The researcher realised that not only would the independent coder help with verification, but he was a skilled person able to help analyse the data. The researcher kept the records of all the processes that were followed so that should the research be conducted with the same participants the same results could be obtained starting from the planning of the research study. This includes notes that were written during observation, how data was collected, the findings and finally the research process. The researcher also asked the same questions to all participants to ensure that there was consistency and that should the same participants be interviewed again they could still answer the same way. The researcher also employed the independent coder.

Transferability is based on the concept that the findings of the study can have the same meaning to others or are transferable to similar situations (Ngulube, 2020:148). To ensure that there is transferability,

the researcher was careful when selecting the sample that would be able to provide as much information as possible about their experiences of work-related challenges and how they manage those challenges. The researcher also continued until data saturation was reached. The researcher ensured that all the participants that were chosen for the study were all rural social workers who were of different genders, from different offices, had different experiences and were of different age groups. This was done intentionally so that every rural social worker felt represented and that the findings of the research could have the same meaning to other rural social workers, this was to further support the inclusion criteria.

Confirmability – relies on the researcher to be able to prove transparency of their studies that others should be able to confirm the findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016: 262; Hays, Wood, Dahhl & Kirk-Jenkins, 2016:174). Confirmability is about ensuring that the findings are shaped by the experiences and views of the participants and not by the researcher's interest, bias and motivation (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:125).The researcher asked for the assistance of the supervisor(s) to read through the transcripts and assess whether the researcher was asking leading questions to participants to satisfy the interest of the researcher, but the researcher ensured that by the time she gave the supervisor the transcripts she had already removed the actual names of participants and replace them with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. The researcher avoided giving ideas to participants such as making examples or sharing the participants' experience, opinions, or views. The researcher kept the record of the activities such as notes that were taken during the interview, transcripts and   that uncured during the research process so that should the research be done repeated then the same conclusion can be reached. As stated by Babbie (2017:39) confirmability can be achieved through confirmability audit trail in a way that allows auditors of the study to be able to trace conclusion, findings and recommendation to their source.

3.8   APPLICATION OF ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics was defined and explained in chapter one, the researcher ensured that ethical considerations were implemented as planned in chapter one. The researcher familiarised herself with the ethical principles to ensure that participants were protected from harm. The researcher also explained to participants the ethical principles of the study. The researcher further explained that should they feel that the study was harming them in any way they had the right to withdraw from the study.

The following ethical considerations were applied by the researcher to complete the research study with the aim of minimising risk and preventing harming participants from the beginning to the end of the research study, especially during the data collection and analysis processes. The ethical considerations

that were applied were: informed consent, confidentiality/ anonymity, beneficence, privacy, management of information and debriefing of participants.

3.8.1 Informed consent implies that the researcher should provide participants with adequate information about the study to enable them to make a well-informed decision on whether they would like to participate in the study (Babbie, 2017:65; Ngulube, 2020:354). The researcher gave participants consent forms to sign to confirm that all the pros and cons of the study were explained and that they agreed to take part in the study (Luckenbill, 2012:294) (see Addendum C and D). The researcher emailed the invitation to participants beforehand so that they could read through it and understand what the research was about. The participants signed the consent form as an agreement that they understood what the research was all about and that they agreed to take part in the interview. However, the researcher ensured that all participants gave verbal agreement at the interview which was recorded before starting with the interview session. All the participants gave verbal consent before the interview took place. The researcher ensured that before each interview with the participant began, the researcher read the interview guide with all the pros and cons out loud. The researcher also asked participants if they gave consent to participate in this study (See Addendum D and E). Participant were also informed that there would be no financial gain or reward for participating in the study.

3.8.2 Confidentiality/anonymity means not disclosing who the participants were that took part in the study or writing the research report in such a way that the identity of the participants is concealed (Ngulube, 2020:355; Babbie, 2017:67). Confidentiality and anonymity were honoured in this study. The researcher explained to the participants the issue of confidentiality. It was for this reason that participants were given consent forms so as to assure them that no identifying information would be shared with anyone. To ensure that participants names were protected, the researcher made use of pseudonyms throughout the research report, this was done in an attempt to keep participants' identities anonymous and confidential. The researcher ensured that anonymity was upheld and that the participants could not be identified and even the researcher herself could not associate the participants with their data.

3.8.3 Beneficence implies that the researcher should have an awareness of the potential harm that may be experienced by participants and try to avoid harming participants (Babbie, 2017:74). Beneficence is based on the belief that potential harm should be outweighed by the likely benefits of the study (Whitehead, Ferguson, Lobiondo-Wood & Haber, 2020:37). "It also means that the participants must be provided with sufficient information to be able to give consent to their participation, this implies that people have the right to be protected and not to be exposed to the possibility of physical injury or discomfort, psychological injury or distress" (Whitehead et al. 2020:37). The researcher made sure a risk

assessment was done and given an ethical clearance indicating that the study was a low risk (see Addendum A and I).

The risk assessment was done to ensure that the study would benefit the participants more than harm them. The researcher also conducted pilot testing to test whether the questions could in any way cause any psychological harm during the interview. The researcher also ensured that the interview took place in a conducive environment where participants were most comfortable. However, because six interviews were done face-to-face, three were done virtually and three were telephonic interviews, participants chose their own places where they felt safe and comfortable to freely express themselves without worrying about other people who might be listening. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the research study was something that benefited the participants rather than harmed them. The researcher realised that the findings would be much more beneficial to rural social workers facing similar challenges, and the DSD to understand what the resiliency of their rural social workers and this would contribute to the body of knowledge.

3.8.4 Privacy, as explained in chapter three, is defined as ethical protection of participants by refraining from disclosing their identity in all ways so that they remain unknown (Ngulube, 2020:355; Whitehead et al. 2020:37). Privacy is to ensure that the reader cannot identify the identity of the participants who participated in the study (Babbie, 2017:71). The researcher also ensured that interviews were done by connecting virtually on MS Teams but due to network problems the researcher resorted to having three telephonic interviews and six face-to-face interviews as well. This ensured that the participants and the researcher were much safer in terms of putting one another at risk by potentially infecting one another with Covid-19. However, due to some challenges with the network the researcher had to improvise in meeting face-to-face to do some of the interviews, however the researcher ensured that the only people in the office were the participant and the researcher to maintain privacy. Having interviews after hours also limited the spread of Covid-19 as there was only the researcher and participant in the office.

3.8.5 Management of information

Data management was implemented as planned in chapter one. After the researcher had collected data from participants, she first organised the recordings and transcripts by creating and saving folders on the computer, then creating passwords so that no other person could access the information. The researcher then made a password-protected backup of the information so that the information was always accessible to the researcher should the researcher's computer be lost or damaged. The notes that the researcher wrote during interviews were kept safe in a lockable cabinet where it was not easily accessible to anyone.

3.8.6 Debriefing

The researcher informed the participants before the interview took place that should they in any away feel that the interview affected them negatively or suddenly remembered any issues that they had not dealt with they could consult at the Mental Health Society that specialises in mental health issues and expertise in counselling (See Addendum F). After the interview the researcher reminded them about the Mental Health Society and gave them contacts and a website in case they would want to debrief with a professional or start attending counselling sessions. The service for debriefing was offered to participants for free and the researcher ensured that those who were considering making use of the debriefing service complied with Covid-19 regulations.

3.9   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Due to the Covid-19 regulations the researcher could not implement the research study as planned. The researcher could not interview all the participants face-to-face as planned because by the time the researcher conducted the interviews, there were strict regulations of avoiding travelling and physical contact with people to avoid the spread of Covid-19.

- Human Resources at Nkangala District indicated that there were 27 social workers at Thembisile-Hani and 28 social workers at Dr JS Moroka, in total there were 55 social workers in the two districts. The researcher managed to interview six social workers in each district. In total the researcher interviewed 12 social workers. This research was conducted in a qualitative approach, meaning that a small number of participants were interviewed therefore the experiences, perceptions and opinions shared did not represent the views of all rural social workers appointed by DSD in South Africa.

3.10   SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This research study was guided by a qualitative research approach – the application of how the research methods were applied and how it unfolded was presented in this chapter. Rural social workers of Mpumalanga Province were the population of this study because the whole population could not be studied, purposive sampling applied based on the criteria of inclusion and exclusion. Data collection took place by using semi-structured interviews, observations and taking notes. This was then followed by a detailed discussion of the data analysis method applied and an explanation of how data was organised after it was collected starting from the large information to getting themes and codes, this was guided by the eight steps of Tesch. The data analysis phase also included the services of an independent coder. An explanation on how the researcher verified the data followed and the ethical considerations applied for the duration of the research study were expounded on.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter four provides the reader with a discussion of the research study findings. The researcher presents the research findings that emerged from the data collection process and data analysis that was conducted by the researcher and independent coder. The researcher starts by presenting the biographical profile of the participants, followed by an introduction of tabulated themes along with the subthemes discussed in detail whilst incorporating a literature control. The results relate to the findings of the resiliency amongst the rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. The findings were based on the results of the thematic data analysis and were closely aligned with the research title, research question, goal and objectives. Thematic data analysis is a qualitative technique that is used to read through transcripts and recognizing pattern derive themes. The researcher plays an active role in putting meaning from the data shared by participants (Allen, 2017:8). Thematic data analysis implies some kind of transformation, starting with large qualitative data then processing through analytic process so that it can understandable, clear, trustworthy, insightful and even original (Gibs, 2018:2). The researcher made use of the verbatim quotation of participants to confirm what they said and supported it with a literature control. Literature is used by the researcher to verify and support or differ from the findings of the research study (Creswell, 2014:196).

4.2 PARTICIPANTS' BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILES

Table 4.1 depicts the biographical information that provides context of the 12 participants that took part in this research study. The reader's attention is drawn to participant's years of experience, length of service in rural areas in years, experience of workload and work description. The researcher is of the opinion that the abovementioned play a role in the resiliency of rural social workers. The information in table 4.1 is derived from the interviews that were conducted with the participants. Pseudonyms were used to protect the names of participants and to uphold and promote anonymity. The biographical information is presented in table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1 Biographical information

Pseudonym	Years practicing as social worker	Length of service in rural areas in years	Experience of workload	Work description
Amahle	5	4	Too high	Generic social work
Bontle	6	4	Too high	Generic social work
Charlotte	13	13	Very high	Generic social work

Dumisani	7	4	High	Generic social work
Entle	11	11	Complicated	Social work with families specifically
Fezile	13	13	High	Generic social work
Goitsimang	11	11	Very high	Social work with families specifically
Happy	7	7	Complicated	Generic social work
Itumeleng	9	7	Complicated	Generic social work
Jabulile	5	4	Complicated	Generic social work
Kamogelo	13	13	High	Generic social work
Lindani	5	4	Very high	Generic social work

4.2.1 Years of practicing as a social worker

The researcher is of the view that years of practice as a social worker has a vast impact on building resiliency, hence the researcher felt it was significant to be included in the research study. This is confirmed by Grant and Kinman (2014:06) who state that social workers' work experience has a strong effect on their wellbeing, confidence in conducting their daily activities and building their resilience. As seen in table 4.1 the work experience of participants ranged from five to 13 years of practicing as a social worker. Three of the participants had been practising social work for five years. One participant had been practising for six years. Two participants had practiced for seven years, one participant has been practising for nine years, two participants had been practising for 11 years and lastly, three social workers had been practising for 13 years.

4.2.2 Length of service in rural areas

The researcher believes that it was significant that length of service in rural areas in years be included in the biographical information of this research study because the study's focus is on rural social workers and their resilience, and they are the most relevant personnel to share their experiences of work-related challenges of working in the rural areas and how they cope with their challenges based on the length they had spent working in rural areas. All the social workers had been practising in the rural areas for more than one year as proposed in chapter one with reference to the criteria of inclusion See page 77. The length of service revealed that six of the participants who were interviewed already had experience practising as social workers before working in a rural area at the current organisation (DSD) and the other six of the participants started working in rural areas at the DSD and they were still working there. Even though half of the participants had one to two years' experience prior working in a rural area, the

table goes to show that all the participants had spent the majority of their employment as rural social workers.

4.2.3   Experience of workload

Participants were asked to explain their workload. Eight participants stated that they had either too high, very high or high levels of workload and four of the participants felt that their work was complicated. The researcher is of the view that since being generic social workers working in rural areas, they were unable to specialise in a DSD programmes because they were required to be able to offer many types of services as guided by the DSD programmes available in communities. It can be one of the reasons why the participants perceived their workload as too high, very high or high. Four of the participants did not have a specific answer for what they were doing hence they felt that their work was complicated, see the example given by Happy, "Um I am a generic social worker providing service to individual, groups and community under child protection, families, substance abuse, older persons, disability, HIV and AIDS um I am not sure what I am living out ooh social relief. If you ask me it is complicated because you don't know what to focus on" (H9-H11).

It turned out that ten participants were doing generic social work and two participants were focused more on rendering services as guided by the family programme of DSD. According to the DSD (2013) social workers should have manageable workloads, it clarifies that a rural social worker should be accountable for 25 000 individuals whereas urban social workers should be accountable for 5 000 individuals. The DSD (2013) further explains that each social worker should be allocated 60 cases monthly with a total of 224 annually. Most participants stated that they had high workloads meaning that they may be performing more than the set standard of the DSD. "A caseload can be defined as the amount of time workers devote to direct contact with clients, whereas workload is defined as the amount of time required to perform a specific task, resulting in work units. Workload takes into consideration all work-related tasks and responsibilities" (Kufeldt, Fallon & McKenzie, 2021:424). Donnellan and Jack (2014:187) define casework as the number cases for which the social worker carries responsibility whereas workload it all the amount of work that the social worker has the responsibility of carrying out.

The researcher made use of the Generic Intervention Processes Tool known as the SW 11 tool to assess the participants' workload. The SW 11, which is a tool that has been developed and used by the DSD to measure the workload of each social worker every month, indicates that social workers within Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka are overworked when compared to the set standard of the DSD (2013). The researcher assessed their SW 11 for the work that was conducted in February 2019 for

Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka and it indicated that one social worker every month has an average of 60 new cases, with an average of 70 existing, active cases that needed the social worker's intervention for the month. Meaning that each month, one social worker had 130 cases that needed the social worker's intervention. Social workers also conducted awareness campaigns each month targeting about 100 individuals. Which brought a total of about 230 individuals who received intervention from a single social worker per month. The researcher is of the opinion that having an excessive workload was caused by a lack of services within the community as indicated by participants who stated that community members tended to rely on the DSD services, putting a lot of strains on rural social workers.

The researcher believes that the amount of workload had a major impact on whether they felt that they were coping with their workload along with the work-related challenges they experienced in the rural areas (see explanation of rural social work in chapter one). This was highlighted by Brown et al. (2017:01) who stated that when an organisation does not hire social workers to replace those who have left or to balance the number of social workers with the growing population, this implies that the remaining social workers end up having to carry double or more amounts of work. This was also noted by Sithole (2017:303) who said that a shortage of social workers causes a strain on other social workers because of high workload.

4.2.4 Work description

Table 4.1 on the work description shows that 10 of the participants were practicing generic social work and only two participants stated that they specialised in the family programme. It seems that most rural social workers are practicing generic social work according to the participants of this study. Generic social work practice is defined as practice with more than one method or system (Bakalinsky, 1982:46). Generic social work practice can also be understood as social worker who is skilled to understand different type of individuals, family, small groups and the needs of the community (Baker, 1975: 193). These kind of social workers are trained to directly and indirectly provide service. Providing direct service means social worker refers to the service offers when in a relationship with clients. Indirect service means when a social worker adapts a role on behalf of the clients such as social activist, advocate, changer, policy influencer, administrator and manager (Baker, 1975: 193). Generic social work practice it is about providing services to individuals, families, groups and community at large. It requires that social worker plays multiple roles such as advocate, broker, teacher, counsellor, mediator and community change agent (Riebschleger et al. 2015:208). Due to a shortage of rural social workers, according to Rapp-McCall, Corcoran and Roberts (2022:980), social workers who live and work in the rural areas must practice generic social work so that everyone in the community can be assisted with their problems as there are not enough personnel to specialise. Sithole (2017:310) explains that it is no surprise that many

social workers are practising generic social work because they are trained from school to practice generic social work, this is because they are not only trained to work at the DSD, but they are trained to also work at other departments, such as non-governmental organisations to cover all the students' interests. Thus, it can be concluded that participants in this study are required to do generic social work as in a rural environment the expectation is that all community members' social work-related needs must be addressed. The shortage of social workers in rural areas further implies that there is less chance to specialise.

4.3   PRESENTATION OF THEMES AND LITERATURE CONTROL

Table 4.2 highlights the breakdown of the themes that were found to be significant in the study. The process of data analysis was done by an independent coder in agreement with the researcher. A consensus of five themes and thirteen subthemes resulted from the data that was collected for this research study. The study focused on the resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. The researcher will introduce and discuss the different themes and subthemes as determined by the independent coding process and as depicted in table 4.2

Themes are key issues that were addressed in this research study whilst subthemes are the responses from participants which seemed to be common amongst participants. The categories are included within the subtheme discussions. The letters represent the pseudonyms used as the participant's name and the number represents the line number of the participant's response. For example, D10 means Participant Dumisani on line number 10 was also talking about positive experiences.

Table 4.2: Themes and subthemes

THEMES	SUBTHEMES	LINES
THEME1: **Experiences of working in a rural area**	**SUBTHEME 1:** **Positive work-related views and experiences**	D10-12, E15-16, F58-60, G13-15, G52-55, I18-21, J20-22, J73-74, K19-21, L13-16
	SUBTHEME 2: **Negative work-related views and experiences**	E92-94, F15-18, F19-22, J13-17, K47-50
	• Impact of work and community	A11-13, B20-22, C13-15, J18-20
	SUBTHEME 3: • Unpreparedness to work in the rural areas	D33-34, R251, L40-42

	• Safety	
		B28-30, K22-27
THEME 2: **Social work challenges faced in rural areas**	**SUBTHEME1:** 3 **Lack of internal resources**	B8-11, A17-19, D13-19, D36-41, E17, G17-23, G30-34, H42-48, I33-38, I40, J24-27, J29-33, L19-24
	SUBTHEME 2: **Lack of external resources**	C18-22, C23-26, E18-23, E30-36, E37-49, E44-46, G25-27, L25-31
	SUBTHEME 3: **Community understanding of social work**	B35-39, B43-47, D23-29, D42-43, J34-38, J39-43, K54-57
	SUBTHEME 4: **Community infrastructure**	F24-29, H33-35, H36-40, L32-39
THEME 3: **Coping mechanisms of social workers in rural areas**	**SUBTHEME 1:** **Personal** • Use own resources	A25-27, G35-37, J46-51
	• Setting boundaries	B48-51, E52-53, E87-91, E99-102, H51-57, H70-72, J52-54, K58-64
	• Involve family	F62, R407, J55-56
	SUBTHEME 2: **Internal factors** • Involve stakeholders	C31-32, K78-83
	• Supervision	I47-49, J65-68, K69-71
	• Colleagues	K72-77, L44-48, L50-52
THEME 4: **Resilience**	**SUBTHEME 1:** **Understanding of resilience** • Bounce back and cope with stress	A28-29, B54-56, C36-37, H60-62, I53-59, K66-68
	• Coping with stress	D44-48, E54-55, F42-47, G40-43, I63-66, L54L56

	SUBTHEME 2: Application of resilience – perseverance	A42-47, C39-41, D50-53, F52-57, H65-67, I67-69, L64-68
THEME 5: Suggestions for social work practice	SUBTHEME 1: Personal • Education • Familiarise with community • Motivation	A48-50, B114-120, I76-79 A52-58, B81-82, B91-99, H80-85, K88-93 F66-71, G58-61, I89-91, J78-81, L69-73
	SUBTHEME 2: Organisational • Networking • Support • Specialisation • Remuneration	A46-47, C50-56, E104-108 D70, D76-78, F72-75, L74-76 C57-59, C65-68 C71-75

4.3.1   THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF WORKING IN A RURAL AREA

This section focuses on the different experiences of participants appointed by DSD and working as social workers in rural areas. This section contains three subthemes; positive experiences, negative experiences, and unpreparedness to work in the rural areas. Participants expressed different views when it came to working in rural areas. Some expressed positives views and others expressed negative views according to their individual experiences. However, it remains unknown how people facing similar challenges have different interpretations of the same event.

This is better explained by Wagenaar (2015:04) who states that the behaviour of a person towards a certain event is influenced by the meaning and the interpretation that people attach to a phenomenon. Furthermore, social influences, upbringing, and the individual's environment also play a major role in people's feelings, experiences and understanding of a certain phenomenon (Wagenaar, 2015:04). This is supported by Van Breda (2018:08) as explained in the literature review chapter that the resiliency of people is not just influenced by the individual's environment but rather how an individual interacts with their environment. This goes to show that people may work in the same environment and experience similar challenges, however they tend to view their experiences differently. It shows that some tend to focus more on what is positive than what is negative. Therefore, this means resiliency amongst rural

social workers is influenced by their positive work-related views and experiences and/or negative work-related views and experiences. The positive and negative experiences will each be discussed as a subtheme.

4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Positive Work-Related Views and Experiences

Rural communities are not just about problems however, they have many strengths and resources that community members may tap into. Despite the many work-related challenges faced by rural social workers, it seems as though there are rural social workers who tend to experience positive aspects despite the work-related challenges faced in practising in the rural areas. The work-related challenges were, as a key concept, explained in chapter one and unpacked in the literature review (chapter two). Therefore, social workers who can look beyond the problem to find opportunities, abilities and solutions in their rural communities tend to cope better with their work-related challenges (Daley, 2021:03). This implies that a person in need may have support from friends, families or inner abilities that may assist a person to solve problems they encounter. Therefore, the strength-based perspective helps to explain how participants are still able to identify positives beyond problems they are presented with daily as they perform their duties (See chapter one - theoretical framework, where the strength-based perspective was unpacked and contextualised for this study). Hence it is vital that rural social workers should be understood by what keeps them positive and strengthened to continue working in the rural areas despite the work-related challenges they find themselves faced with. Below are the positive experiences that were shared by participants of this study.

Dumisani "For me personally I am liking it because it is a community where I grew up in so it also helps that I know the ins and out of it so I can say that it is been great "(D10-12)

Entle "Iyoo its challenging but yet fulfilling knowing that you are closing the gap between the less fortunate and the access to service deliveries" (E15-16).

Jabulile "is not easy as I thought. But practising social work in the rural areas has some positives like the fact that I had a chance to learn more about human diversity and the different culture of people living in this place" (J20-22).

Lindani "Why would I not like it here because I was born and raised in this place. This is my community, and all this are my people. So, I am proud to be working in the rural areas and it makes me happy that I am giving back to my community" (L13-16).

These are some of the experiences that were shared by participants. From the shared views it shows that there is a lot that they are grateful for serving the same community that they grew up in and they understand the dynamics of their community well. It is for this reason that social workers are kept

motivated in continuing to work in the rural areas despite the challenges they face in practicing rural social work. There are five rewards according to Daley (2021:22) that keep rural social workers motivated to work in the rural areas, namely, as noted in the introductory chapter, (1) Reward 1: Independence and autonomy (2) Reward 2: Opportunity and promotion (3) Reward 3: Ability to see one's intervention (4) Reward 4: Recognition, and lastly, (5) Reward 5: Personal rewards. However, not all the rewards are applicable to this study. Based on the responses of participants only three out of the five rewards are relevant for this study.

Ability to see one's intervention, which is reward three, indicates that in small communities where there are no secrets, where members of the community know one another, it becomes easier for rural social workers to see how their progress of intervention has impacted their clients or community members (Daley, 2021:23). This is confirmed by Goitsimang who stated that she becomes happy and proud of herself when she sees children she has assisted going to university and being independent. "*Foster children are struggling some of them are abused in foster families So when you provide the service and see the child being resilient and also go to university come back and be independent is something that makes me content or gives me hope to keep on pushing and helping this client*" (G52-55). Fezile also emphasised that it brings her joy and keeps her motivated when people she has assisted come back to give positive feedback of her intervention. "*Do you know how happy you get when a foster parent comes and says oh social worker I started I started receiving the grant or the other person comes ooh social worker thank you for removing the children after the case I reported to you*" (F58-60).

Recognition, which is the fourth reward, indicates that the social worker's profession in the community is well known and viewed as someone important because they solve people's problems and they tend to be respected because of the position they hold. This tends to make social workers not only feel recognised but gain gratification from their community (Daley, 2021:24). Goitsimang is one of the participants who clearly stated that what she loves most about her work is working in the same community she grew up because she is recognised by her community members and happy that her community members were proud of her and appreciated her work. This was supported by Keitumetse who also felt motivated to work in the rural areas because she felt recognised and appreciated by her community members. "*my community members were proud of me what more could I ask for I felt blessed*" (K20-K21). This clearly shows that as much as it is satisfying for social workers to make people's lives and see their intervention on people's lives making a positive impact but they also have a need to feel recognised and appreciated by their community members. On the other hand, participants talked about being recognised and appreciated for their work by their local communities. Communities can offer social workers a sense of belonging and of occupying a valued place in a greater whole (Pyne,

2020:15). This was also explained by Maslow in his Hierarchy of needs, he explained there are five main levels of hierarchy of needs. Beginning with physiological needs as the most basic need, safety as a second need, belonging third need, self-esteem as the fourth need and lastly self-actualisation as the most basis of human desire need. Maslow (1943:380) believed that once people have met their physiological, safety and belonging needs they tend people have esteem needs. Those needs are related to gaining status, recognition and feel respected. People get to a stage whereby they have a need to feel that they are making a contribution in a society and that their contribution is recognised and valued by others (Maslow, 1943:380). People who feel that they are contributing something in a society tend to feel good about themselves and confident about their abilities (Maslow, 1943:380). On the contrary those who lack respect, recognition and status may feel inferior.

This implies that social workers are in a stage whereby they need to fulfil their need of self-esteem, whereby their job is not only about getting paid but to feel that their work and efforts in trying to make a difference to someone lives is recognised, appreciated and valued in the community they serving. Furthermore, participants have indicated that they clearly have a need to feel that they are contributing value when doing their job and in turn have their efforts recognised either by the community members or supervisors, hence they feel good about themselves when they get recognition and praises from others. This indicates that recognition which tends to make them feel respected and valued serves as motivation to social workers to continue working in the rural areas even though they may be stressed about some aspects work. This is supported by Brown (2017:8), that generally rural social workers prefer working in the rural areas and are satisfied with jobs and prefer their rural lifestyle, though they are stressed by some aspects of their work but they get substantial satisfaction from other aspects such as support from colleagues, supervisors, community member's recognition.

Their efforts to assist heir community brings feeling that they are making a positive impact in the community (Brown, 2017:8). Furthermore, social worker's decision to work in the rural areas played a significant role in their commitment to their work and the community strongly influence their retention and resilience to deal with the challenges they faced working in the rural areas (Brown, 217:8). Social workers who preferred to work in the rural areas associated their current employment with a strongly positive attitude and were of the opinion that working and living in the rural areas had far more benefits than disadvantages for their lifestyles (Brown, 2017:8). Moreover, constant recognition by managers and supervisors was also identified as playing a significant role in job satisfaction, retention and enhancing resilience in rural social workers. This shows that being in a space where one feels appreciated, loved and valued brought positive views and experiences of working in the rural areas.

Personal rewards, which is the firth reward according to Daley (2021:22), is being recognised, appreciated, and having a feeling that you are making a positive impact in the community and can have some sort of personal reward from the community (Daley, 2021:24). Participants spoke about the ways their work and profession were experienced as intrinsically rewarding. Participants talked about loving their work and getting enjoyment and satisfaction from it. Participants found their work personally and socially meaningful (Daley, 2021:24). They valued its purpose of contributing to the lives of others and to the public good. Participants did not just value the outcomes they were working towards but also the interactions and relationships with the people they supported and with other professionals. They talked about feeling honoured and privileged to work with people who use services and described them as 'amazing', 'wonderful' and as 'great people' (Daley, 2021:24; Pyne, 2020:17).

This is confined by most participants, including Entle, Fezile, Goitsimang, Jabulile, Kamogelo and Lindani who clearly stated that they enjoyed working in the rural areas because of the feeling that they knew they were making a difference and giving back to in their communities, therefore this seem to be their personal reward as they have stated that they grew up in the community that are serving therefore they knew the community better, and they felt recognised and appreciated. Participants like Itumeleng clearly stated that they were not motivated by money to do their job but it was because they loved their work and were passionate about helping people. It felt good to them to be making a positive impact to other people and other participants like Itumeleng felt that their working was more than about external rewards but it was more personal to them. "*For me is basically going back to the notion of why I feel in love with being a social worker above everything else it was more about helping people so for me that's where I draw my resilience*" (I67-69). This implies that

4.3.1.2   Subtheme 1.2: Negative Work-Related Views and Experiences

This theme initiated from the question, "*How have you experienced practicing social work in a rural area*?" Although there are many participants who expressed the positives of working in rural areas, there are also participants who highlighted the difficulty of working in rural areas. The work-related challenges that participants expressed mostly led to frustration, a negative impact on work and community, and feeling that they were no longer safe.

As much as many social workers continue working in rural areas and doing their best to serve their community, this does not necessarily mean that they are satisfied with their working conditions. From the answers by the participants, it seems as though being an experienced rural social worker does not mean they are immune to the work-related challenges that they experience. It was noted in the literature review that social workers constantly need to solider on and give their undivided attention to their client's

problem even though they are tired and preoccupied with their own problems and at times feel have nothing to offer (Greer, 2016:03; Grant & Kinman, 2014:607).

The researcher realised that most of the participants who had negative work-related experiences whilst working in the rural areas, were more frustrated by the organisation than their clients per se. Participants did not complain about the challenges that clients presented or being frustrated by the community members they were serving, however, their challenges were mostly related to their growth within the organisation and lack of resources which caused difficulties with service delivery.

This is confirmed by Fezile, "*When I was employed initially 2008, 2009 the department used to take us seriously. With the amount of workshops, they rendered for us, with the amount of equipment they used to provide for us, now we have to wait long period for a simple printer, simple laptop, simple desktop*". (F19-22). This is supported by Abrosino, Heffernan and Shuttles (2015:459), who state that unlike urban social workers, rural social workers find themselves frustrated by the lack of resources, making them feel helpless about assisting their clients who solely depend on them for intervention. As much as a lack of resources causes problems and seems to be the leading challenge in the rural areas according to the participants of the study, a lack of growth was also identified as negatively impacting on social workers who have been working as social workers for a longer period, doing the same thing without being promoted. This was confirmed by Keitumetse, "*So, yah and being stuck in the same position for so long it is tiring honestly maybe if they offered positions such as being a senior social worker just to motivate you that you are moving somewhere instead of being stuck in one position you understand*" (K47-50).

Every person has a need to feel that they are growing and progressing in life, failure to do so leads to feelings of failure and frustration as it may seem that one is stuck in the same position (Santos, 2020:330). This was further explained in that satisfaction with life increases as individuals go up the ladder in their career leading to higher positions (Santos, 2020:330). This was supported by Erikson (1994:56) when explaining the stages of development. He believed that all individuals, as they grow and develop, face crises in life that they must master and mastering these crises leads to traits or psychological virtues that lead to meaning in a person's life or culture. He further explains that as each crisis in a stage ends another crisis begins, opening opportunities for development and growth (Erikson, 1994:56). Therefore, this shows that being stagnant in one stage deprives a person of an opportunity for growth and development. The responses from participants revealed that doing the same thing for a long time is demotivating and frustrating at the same time, however it seems as though many social workers continue staying in the organisation even though they are frustrated because they may feel they do not have a choice.

Erikson's theory proposes that individuals go through stage of development based on how they are able to adjust to crisis they come across in their lives, this gives individuals a signal on how they will handle the challenges and progress in life. Erikson (1994:57) pointed out that people are aware of what motivates them throughout life which makes them capable of making conscious decisions. He further stated that individuals have a need to feel that they are capable individuals who can make contribution to society that they are living a meaningful life (Erikson, 1994: 57). He believed that this is based on what he called the epigenetic principle. The principle is based on the notion that individuals develop through an unfolding of their personality which is determined by stages of psychosocial development, and that the individual's environment and their culture influence how individuals progress throughout these stages (Erikson, 1994: 578). He explained that the stages of psychosocial development play a significant role in the individual's development where progress in each stage is determined the success or the lack of success in all the previous stages (Erikson, 1994: 58).

Social workers being in the same position deprives them from developing and fulfilling the need to feel that they are contributing in society and that they are living a meaningful life. As stated by Erikson (1994: 57) that people are aware of what motivates them in life and it seems that promotion at work is one of the things that social workers find as motivation therefore failure to move to another stage seem to be demotivating. As one of the participants stated that it would be better if they would at least offer them a position of being a senior social worker as they would find motivating instead of being stuck in one position for a long time. Furthermore, inability to progress at work and the frustration they come across at work seem to have an impact in how they experience practicing social work in a rural area. As stated by Erikson (1994:58) that personality of individual continues to take shape throughout live as individuals face challenges. Failure to successfully completing a stage according to Erikson (1994:58) may results in inability to complete other stages and unhealthy personality and sense of self-worth. This helps to explain that social workers being unable to move to a higher position or having a feeling that they are not progressing may have a negative impact in their personality and sense self-worth which may in turn have negative impact in how deal with the challenges they come at face at work.

Rural social workers are negatively affected by their work and community. Working in the rural areas seems to be much more difficult, even for those who grew up in the rural areas, it becomes worse for social workers who did not grow up in the rural areas who may feel that they were never prepared for the challenges that they come across within their working environment and their communities (Riebschleger, Norris, Pierce & Cummings, 2015:212). This goes to show that some rural social workers end up settling for unfavourable working conditions because staying at home is the last resort (Riebschleger et al. 2015:212*).*

This is confirmed by Amahle, "*I grew up here and I am familiar with this place, but It is not easy practising social work in the rural areas as there are many problems or challenges that we experience*" (A11-13). This statement was supported by Charlotte, "*It is very difficult in a sense that we are under resourced and sometimes lack place of safety for children, internet connection as well as poor infrastructure in our working environment*" (C13-15).

Growing up in the rural areas, according to Daley (2021:21), does not automatically mean they will have it easy, although they may have a rural background when entering a new community, they may still have to adjust as each community is unique (Daley, 2021:21). This was noted in chapter one that practising social work in rural areas is challenging because it means having to balance being a practitioner and a community member (Brown et al. 2017:01).

The other challenge that was expressed by participants was their safety. Personal safety is important as it contributes to the wellbeing of social workers (Kim & Hopkins, 2017:06). Personal safety implies that the safety of employees should be regarded as a priority, this suggests that the safety of employees should be a priority over the organisation's reputation, programmes, and assets (Schneiker 2016:50). In the midst of the challenges that rural social workers face, other participants were concerned about their safety.

This includes threats from clients and uncontrolled pets during home visits. Lindani stated that, "*I remember once we were chased by the dogs while doing home visits iyoo I ran away screaming like I was crazy. So, I feel we not safe in doing our work and nothing is being done about that*" (L40-42). Social workers find themselves in danger from time to time when visiting clients' homes or dealing with hostile clients, moreover when the social workers' interventions do not favour them. Social workers tend to find themselves being threatened and living in fear hence it is important that social workers are protected and they are taught basic safety guidelines (Collins, Jordan & Coleman, 2013:192). Though Dumisani did not complain about uncontrolled pets during home visits, he was one of the participants who was concerned about the safety of rural social workers.

He shared that "*in the rural areas limited resources and limited staff make it seem as though they do not want to provide services to them as they should, and this seems to frustrate the clients*". Dumisani further shared that, "*they demand that you assist them and if you don't assist them, they threaten to burn the office, so we are living under threat or working under threat*" (D33-34).

Even though social workers report being unsafe when they are on duty, the NASW put an emphasis on the rights of social workers to advocate for the rights of a safe environment and to be protected (NASW, 2013:07). NASW offers guidelines that should be followed by organisations to ensure the safety of social

workers. These guidelines include making use of security guards, technology promoting safety, panic buttons and GPS that can track the location of cars or cell phones used by social workers (NASW 2013:9-14). However, this is still a problem for social workers practising in the rural areas because rural social workers often struggle with the network. This was confirmed by Pather and Rey-Moreno (2019:04), as many rural areas struggle with network coverage along with many other connectivity issues such as the internet, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth. Miryala (2015:98) is of the view cellular service providers and telecommunication departments should ensure that they extend their network coverage to ensure that rural people have the same access to the internet and connectivity as urban citizens.

In contrast to other research authors, Alpaslan and Schenck (2015:373) state that many social workers tend to prefer working in rural areas because they felt that it was safer, and the pace of working was calmer. But given the fact of safety of rural social workers it appears to be a challenge, and they recommended that the safety of social workers be on the agenda for future research (Alpaslan & Schenck 2012:383). Looking at the South African context, social workers tend to find themselves at risk and becoming victims of physical, psychological, emotional, and verbal harm (Lamothe, Couvrette, Lebrun, Yale-Soulière, Roy, Guay & Geoffrion, 2018:308; Gould, Mufamadi, Hsiao & Amisi, 2017:02). Similarly, Gould, et al. (2017:02) are of the view that social workers are often at risk as they work on the frontline with the most devastated people due to unemployment, poverty, violence, pandemics like Covid-19 and many other social problems.

All this puts social workers at risk of experiencing physical, psychological, and emotional abuse as they are exposed to frustrated people (Lamothe et al. 2018:308). Depending on a social worker's interpretation some may view this as a client seeking attention from them and others may be of the view that this is a cry for help (Lamothe et al. 2018:308). A social worker's job is never easy as their intervention happens when the clients are at their worst and most vulnerable, causing anger, frustration and aggression in the process which may be taken out on social workers (Lynch, 2017:1).

4.3.1.3   Subtheme 1.3: Unpreparedness to work in the rural areas

Some participants expressed that they felt that the approach used during their training as social workers, was not practical when it comes to applying the social work methods in rural areas. They expressed that the belief systems and the cultural values are completely different from what was learned at university, as they find themselves having to adapt to a completely different environment than what they were taught. It was also noted in the literature review that social work started in the urban areas, born, and raised in the rural areas and developed its connection to urban matters (Williams, 2016:1). It is for this

reason that the needs of the rural people have been overlooked and misunderstood hence social workers may feel that they are not ready for rural practice (Daley, 2021:1).

In support of Daley (2021:1), Schmidt (2020:02) noted in his book of social work practice in the remote communities, that social workers admitted that looking back, their social work education did not prepare them for the work in the remote or rural community. They had to learn from their own experience of working in the rural areas. Although facilitators may have discussions about the context, the discussions never included the geographic and physical aspect or context, which the participants believed have an influence in practice (Schmidt, 2020:02). Social workers may not be prepared for the work in the rural setting. They may be underprepared as it turns out that the social work programme tends to prioritise urban issues as more social work programmes are situated in urban areas. For example, welfare policies and ethics are developed and established in urban areas which does not favour the interests and wellbeing of rural areas (Riebschleger et al. 2015:212*).*

Furthermore, social workers tend to take the position of working in rural area without being prepared, hence they tend to view rural social work as a steppingstone and something that will be short-term, hoping to find better positions in urban areas (Riebschleger et al. 2015:212). Therefore, the issues associated with rural social work such as social isolation, slower pace, lack of resources and starkness of geography, all come as a shock because they were never prepared (Riebschleger et al. 2015:212). However, practising in rural areas becomes even harder when the social worker is not familiar with the realities of a rural setting and then enters the field without being prepared by either their employer or the education they received (Pyne, 2020:20).

This is confirmed by Keitumetse who had to adapt to rural social work when she was not taught on how best to deal with rural problems. Keitumetse expressed that "*the only disadvantage is that what we learned from school is more western. So, when you get here things are not as when you learned when you were still at school. For example, communication skills you learned at school mostly would not be applicable here when you speak to elders you lower your voice and it's even worse when you talk to the king because will have to avoid using too much eye contact because it will seem as if you are staring, and it might be interpreted as being rude*".

Keitumetse was supported by Bontle, "*So you need to adjust, adapt rather than what you studied for in the university because what we studied actually the focus is more western but this one is more rural, and you need to adjust*" (B28-30). Like participants of this study, Alpaslan and Schenck's participants also complained about not being prepared to work in the rural areas *"We did a lot of theory but I did not really know what it 'meant' until I started to work ... You got the knowledge but they did not tell you what you*

could expect in rural areas." "Students should be trained for the statutory field of social work as well and not just focus on therapy". This was also noted by Gray, Aglias and Mupedzwa (2017:11) that new graduate social workers who enter the field in the rural areas reported being ill prepared for the reality or 'cultural shock' of placement and the application of social work theory to practice. This implies that when social workers enter the field they have to figure out themselves how they adjust to organisation and communities in rural area, because they were not trained on how to deal with rural problems. Therefore, it poses a challenge in both the rural social workers and their clients because social worker might not have an idea on how to assist their client with their presented problems. Furthermore, due to social work programmes situated in urban areas it becomes a problem for those who will work in the rural areas because they are deprived of opportunities to learn and experience rural lives hence it is important that organisation also take the responsibility of orientating new social workers entering their field.

This was also mentioned by Alpaslan and Schenck (2012:382), social workers entering who enter social service organisation in rural communities must be orientated by social service organisation in the rural areas about knowledge their client's lives including their cultural context not just about the procedures and policies of the agency as it shows that the practice of rural social work differs completely to those of rural areas. This was also highlighted in the literature review that social workers working in rural areas face unique challenges, yet many social workers are made aware or prepared enough for the high demands of the field. Social workers often find themselves having to adjust to cultural norms which may be a challenge because they are trained with the western model of one fits all which is not a case in rural practice (Daley, 2021:02).

Humble et al. (2013:257) pointed out that social workers may like working and living in the rural areas but not prepared for overlap between their personal and professional roles within the community. Therefore, this calls for social workers to prepare themselves before they enter in to the field for differing cultural belief systems, values and lifestyles of rural people. In contrast to these findings, Abrosino et al. (2015:459) argue that the practice of social work is similar in both rural and urban areas and yet completely different. They clarified their statement, saying that the skills, method, and knowledge are the foundation of the social work practice in both environments, however what differentiates the two environments is the nature of the problems experienced that create the unique set of challenges which causes both environments to apply different methods of intervention (Abrosino et al. 2015:459).

4.3.2 THEME 2: SOCIAL WORK CHALLENGES FACED IN RURAL AREAS

This theme is captured by four subthemes, namely lack of internal resources, lack of external resources, understanding, and expectations of social work by the community as well as the general infrastructure of the community. This theme initiated from the question, "*What are the work-related challenges that you experience as a social worker working in a rural area*?" The participants' responses to this question gave the researcher the perspective that rural social workers found themselves experiencing multiple work-related challenges that hindered the day-to-day functioning of rural social workers as well as the kind of service that they offered to their clients.

4.3.2.1   Subtheme 2.1: Lack of Internal Resources

Internal resources are the strength within the organisation which can be tangible and intangible (Plattfaut, 2014:40). A lack of internal resource was listed as a major problem by most participants in this study. Participants complained about a high workload with limited personnel to do the job. They complained that the DSD had not been hiring social workers for the past few years and this caused strain on the remaining social workers who were left to deal with much higher caseloads. The number of unemployed social workers was highlighted as one of the grievances in the memorandum that was delivered to the Union Building during the social workers' and social auxiliary workers protest on 19 September 2016 (Madibogo, 2016:01).

The fact that most social workers were doing generic social work, meant that they did not specialise in anything, leading them to feel that they were treated as garbage bins by other departments with all kinds of unresolved issues. This was supported by Alpaslan and Schenk (2012:367) that social worker's role not being understood in the community tends make them be used as "dustbins" for unresolved problems in the community. Therefore, this led to many participants of the study feeling that they were not providing the best services to their clients as they would like because of feeling under pressure and overworked. This is confirmed by Bontle, "*Mm yah ne I have so much workload because the community that I am serving is very big and it is developing day to day and the Department of Social Development is not adding other social worker so that they could cover the areas that are developing, the same social workers who are employed are expected to cover the new areas* (B8-11).

This was supported by Dumisani, who also felt overworked by the growing community, "*Well like your question says it is a rural area, people are migrating to the rural areas every now and then so it means that the community is growing and when the community grows it also means that the challenges are also growing so with the challenges growing so us as social workers in rural areas we are under staffed so it*

means now we have to work with all those challenges, growing people, growing challenges but no staff growing. We are understaffed so we end up overworked so the caseload adds up" (D13-19).

Happy also shared the same challenge, "*Why do I say work overload because those people rely heavy on social intervention so you will agree with me that most of the information takes time to reach those people in the rural areas so whatever problem they may encounter the first stop will be the social worker even if the problem is not for the office of the social workers but their first stop will be the office and that creates a lot of workload so yes I think that's the challenges that I preserve on my side*" (H42-48).

The internal problems did not stop with the shortage of staff members and high workload according to the participants of this study. They also complained about the infrastructure and the limited number of available government vehicles. By infrastructure they meant the lack or shortage of offices leading them to share offices. This meant a lack of privacy as the clients of each social worker engage with each other. This was confirmed by Jabulile, "*We don't have prosper infrastructure which causes us to share offices and now that there is Covid-19 we have to take extra measures to keep ourselves safe. The other problem is lack of cars in the office. You will find that one person wants to use a car for a whole week, and you end up not delivering services because there are no cars*" (J24-27).

This was also mentioned by Alpaslan and Schenck (2012:376) who state that the consequence of high workloads due to a shortage of staff members and being expected to be a jack of all trades, is that the work is not done properly. The research authors further stated that whenever social workers apply for better social work posts and move away to join other organisations, their work is usually passed on to the remaining social workers, thus leaving them with an even greater workload *(*Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012:376). Workloads and high caseloads, according to Kufeldt, et al. (2021:124), can be challenging for rural social workers given the requirements of their work and the scarce support services.

This was noted in chapter one, that social workers are exposed to high level of stress due to high workload, limited resources, danger and trauma associated with working in the rural areas. This does not only have a negative impact on the service delivery but leave social workers occasionally experiencing feeling of disappointment and frustration. Furthermore, social workers often find themselves having to deal with individuals who are frustrated by lack of service delivery in the community and their own frustrations (Horwitz, 1998:376). This challenge was also noted on the study conducted by Grant and Kinman (2014:6) in chapter one, revealing that high work-related stress experienced by social workers working in rural areas can be aggravated by the work pressure they experience daily in helping their clients deal with their problems while also dealing with their own personal problems (Grant & Kinman, 2014:7).

This was also noted in chapter one, where it was highlighted that when the social workers leave their jobs, their work is passed on to another colleague, leading to an increased workload. "About 80% of those social workers are employed in urban areas" (Brown et al. 2017:01). They concluded that there is a shortage of social workers in rural areas, which makes it much more difficult to work in these areas. It was supported by Sithole (2017:303) that a shortage of rural social workers leads to over-reliance on professional rural social workers. Sithole (2017:303) believes that a solution to this problem is to employ other social service workers such as community development workers, child and youth care workers, social development workers and volunteers.

4.3.2.2   Subtheme 2.2: Lack of External Resources

External resources are clarified as the goods and services that are not offered within the organisation (Plattfaut, 2014:41). There are many challenges that affect people living in rural areas, including a lack of access to information due to limited transportation and limited access to the existing services within the community (Joseph, 2017:05). Four of the participants highlighted the challenge of a lack of external resources within the rural areas. Charlotte was one of the participants who was affected by a lack of external resources in the community which affected the daily functioning of her daily work in providing further services to her clients.

Charlotte expressed the following, *"Lack of referral resources, inaccessible of stake holders such as psychologist, psychiatrist and long waiting response of specialising institution such as mental health and in-patient treatment centres. Those are my experience and difficulties that I experience working as a rural social worker (C18-22).* When the researcher probed for clarity, she elaborated that, "*Indeed, it makes my work very difficult. For example, when you have to take a client that is addicted substance you have to take them to the hospital that is very far about 75 km for the client to get into detox, so it requires more time and energy, and it requires more resources for me to achieve that goal* (C23-26).

This was supported by Joseph (2017:43) in the literature review, that rural social workers not only struggle with limited government vehicles, but they also face the challenge of limited services, such as traveling long distances when placing their clients into treatment centre so get further intervention. This has a negative impact in the service delivery because it makes clients to be heavily rely on few service providers with limited resources. Most rural areas have few services, which may be due to budget constraints that are given to rural areas making it a challenge to make referrals from one organisation to another (Kufeldt et al. 2021:411). It was also noted in the literature review that rural communities lack the resources to provide quality services to clients, but this affects the confidence of rural social workers

in service delivery with limited health care providers and health care systems that are unresponsive to those in poverty, putting social workers under pressure, as all these cases are reported to them (Humble et al. 2013:250). Looking at the challenges that rural social workers face regarding limited resources, and accessibility to other services makes it hard to build trusting relationships with clients and kills their confidence in providing intervention within the community (Spray & Jowett, 2012:50).

4.3.2.3   Subtheme 2.3: Community Understanding of Social Work

It appears that a lack of understanding of a social worker's role by the community members including stakeholders has posed a challenge for rural social workers. Participants have brought up this matter as a challenge, explaining that they found themselves overworked and being used as a "dump" site by many stakeholders. This is confirmed by Alpaslan and Schenck (2012:367) who state that community members in the rural areas often do not understand the role of social workers hence they end up using them as "dustbins" for issues that are difficult to resolve. Not only does the lack of understanding of a social worker's role affect their professional lives but it also has an impact on their personal lives. It turns out that the community not only has expectations of how social workers should live their lives but also expects them to always be available to assist them with their social problems even if they are off duty (Shier & Graham, 2013:01).

This may leave social workers living in insolation as they are expected to keep a certain standard of conducting themselves (Shier & Graham, 2013:01). Expectations that social workers have of themselves and those that are held by the community members and other stakeholders may have a negative impact on the wellbeing of social workers as too much is expected of them while they do not have means to fulfil the expectations of community members, stakeholders, and service users (Shier & Graham, 2013:01). These expectations do not only affect a social worker's quality of work but also their self-esteem leading to self-doubt and interpersonal conflict in the workplace (Shier & Graham, 2013:02).

The other issue that was presented by participants was the lack of privacy when their clients, whom they must keep a relationship professional with, turn out to be their neighbours whom they find themselves associating with socially Hence, they may feel that their lives are too exposed and it becomes difficult to separate their personal and private lives. Participants were of the view that people's expectations of them is unrealistic because they expect them to always be working even in their leisure time. This was confirmed by Bontle, who stated that

"People have certain expectations from you either because you are a social worker, or you are educated in general, so they expect you to present or live a lifestyle that they think you should, practical example they think social workers are not human beings like them. They would expect you to live in isolation or

different behaviour from them, practical example I am a social worker I socialise, I do party I do everything but once they see you doing same other thing their mindset becomes different to them, it is a surprise that thing person is socialising, partying and all those things you understand (J34-38).

Jabulile further stated that, "*The other problem that I personally experienced it is clients who think you work 24 hours. Just because I stay in the same area that I am working in. You find that even when I am off duty or when I am home, they will come and start seeking assistance. When you try to tell them that you off duty, they feel like you don't want to assist them*" (J34-38).

In support of Jabulile's statement, Dumisani said, "*The community that we work in is a community that does not understand the nature of our work. so, us being the only government office here in Moloto It has become a disadvantage because we have become a scapegoat to all the social problems that are here in Moloto not only social problems, but problems related to crime, health, home affairs they all come to us seeking assistance and failure to do that they began to threaten us so I can say that we are not here as social workers*" (D23-29)*.*

In rural settlements a social worker's role is usually not understood or even though it may be understood, due to that the fact that it may be the only office within the community, it then leads to almost everyone relying on the office for solutions to all sorts of problems (Wilks, 2012:11). This was supported by Shier and Graham (2013:02) who highlight that even though the community might be confused about the specific roles and responsibilities of social workers, they have an expectation of a social worker's roles and that is providing quality service. As stated in the literature review, it is important that social workers keep boundaries between their personal and professional lives but they need to recognise that they are humans too and they need to socialise and be active within their community. However, to some community members it may be unusual to see a social worker participating in activities within the community that involve entertainment, forgetting that social workers are humans too who also need to have personal lives (Dziegielewski, 2013:306).

It was also highlighted in the literature review that NASW (2021) clearly state that social workers have the responsibility of setting clear boundaries between their professional and personal lives so that their clients can be protected. However, it seems hard for rural social workers to do that because they are staying in the same town as their clients which places a challenge because their clients tend to be their relatives, neighbours, and parents of children at the local schools. Therefore, avoiding dual relationship or setting boundaries seems to be a challenge hence they may feel that the community is hampering on their personal lives or their roles are not understood within their community. Shier and Graham (2013:01) indicated that inability to u understand different professional roles is usually described as challenge to

productive professional relationships amongst stakeholders and hindrance service delivery and to (Hughes & Wearing, 2013:95: Shier & Graham, 2013:01). This was also supported by Piché et at. 2015:58, in the literature review that social workers struggle to manage dual relationship because they are in apposition of providing to acquaintances because of limited organisations within the community.

4.3.2.4   Subtheme 2.4: Community Infrastructure

The following are the experiences of rural social workers who were frustrated by the community infrastructure that hindered their service delivery to their clients. As discussed in chapter one, rural social workers not only struggle with availability of government cars, but they also face the challenge of limited services such as treatment centres which forces them to travel long distances to admit their clients into treatment centres. The cars and roads they use are unsafe and poorly maintained which puts the lives of social workers at risk (Joseph, 2017:43), thus not only is their safety a concern but so is travelling long distances which must be undertaken regularly. Participants shared the challenges that left them frustrated when practicing in rural settings.

"Is the arrangement of the community whereby you spend a lot of time searching for a certain home because the stand numbers or the residential address are not properly arranged, or you find that there are no street names" (H33-35).

"Also, another challenge is the roads there way the roads are structured they are not well sometimes I have to stop the car here in order to across to the other side and that is time consuming it takes a lot of my time. If I have to conduct 10 home visits for the fact that I spent lot of time looking for one house may actually make me not to reach my target for the day" (H36-40).

"Yes, the other challenge that we have is spending a lot of time looking for one house especially when we are doing home visit. The challenge is you cannot use a GPS to help you find a house number or street name since most of them are not registered so you hunt a house and ask people around. So is just an advantage that I happen to have grown up in this place, so I know my surrounding, but I have seen that my colleagues struggle a lot, and they depend on me to accompany them, and it becomes lot of work for me because now I have to accompany people to do their work and also do mine (L32-39).

On this subtheme the participants expressed a lot of stress when it came to the infrastructure of their community. Social workers face difficulties when doing home visits because it is time consuming because most of the time they have to accompany one another and use roads that are unregistered and unsafe. Sometime social workers found themselves entering the field with the possibility of being at risk (Pye, Kaloudis & Devlin, 2020:09). The research authors explain that the cause of the long travel is due to unavailability of GPS (Global Positioning system) such as Google Maps (Pye et al. 2020:20). Like

participants of this study, Alpaslan and Schenck's participants also mentioned that the "the infrastructure is bad, the roads are disastrous, sometimes there is not even a road, so you have to park your car very far and walk where you have to be" (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012:375). This was explained in literature review that rural social workers face multiple social barriers in attempt to provide services as there is lack of health care providers, health care systems that are not responsive and transportation problems (Humble et al. 2050). It was however explained that it is not only the community members who are facing the transportation challenge, it was noted that rural social workers also struggle with shortage of vehicles, if there's any they not road worthy (Alpaslan and Schenck 2012:374).

The inadequate infrastructure for social work services, such as lack of available transportation and proper roads connecting villages serves as a disadvantage for rural social workers when delivering services (Howard, Katrak, Blakemore & Pallas, 2016:100). The research authors add that rural social workers experience the disadvantages of inadequate community infrastructure while conducting their daily activities, as they find themselves forced to work in a work environment with poorly maintained routes which becomes frustrating for social workers whenever they go out to conduct home visits (Howard et al. 2016:100). Rural areas are often marked by poverty leading to a lack of infrastructure in the community and this has become a norm of for rural area communities lacking resources and having difficulty in accessing services (Rapp-McCall et al. 2022:980). Furthermore, the challenges within the community also include water shortage, lack of proper houses and unsafe routes that are often unregistered (Rapp-McCall et al. 2022:980).

4.4.3 THEME 3: COPING MECHANISMS OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN RURAL AREAS

The main purpose of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the resilience amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. The theme of this section is derived from the question, "*How do you manage the work-related challenges that you experience*?" The participants' responses led to two subthemes, namely personal and internal factors. The two themes are the coping strategies that were shared by the participants of this study to help them continue working and become resilient despite all the challenges. The subthemes are presented through the lens of the strength-based perspective and resiliency theory to help explain how participants cope with their challenges. It is undeniable that bad things happen, however it has become clear that not everyone reacts the same way, some tend to cope better than others. Those who tend to cope better than others are considered to be resilient individuals (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013:386). There are risk factors that cause negativity in an individual's life, however they choose to focus on the protective factors that enable an individual to withstand hardship (Gitterman & Knight, 2016:449). Furthermore, resilience is not defined in terms of challenges, but it should be understood in terms of an ability to cope with deprivation,

stress and adversity (Gitterman & Knight, 2016:449). They further explain that resilience lies in the ability of allowing individuals to adapt and its power of helping individuals to recover from adversity (Gitterman & Knight, 2016:449).

The manner in which people attach meaning to the challenges plays a significant role in their resiliency (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013:386). When people face challenges in their lives they tend to use different coping mechanisms to deal with what they are facing, hence it is not detectable how each person will react to trauma or challenges they are faced with. People have strength that allows them to deal with their challenges and the capability of people to solve their own problems because they understand them better is often underrated (Zacarian, Alvarez-Ortiz & Haynes, 2017:35). As Miller highlights (Miller, 2012:66) no one knows the client better than the client themselves. Meaning that people understand themselves better and they know what needs to be done to solve their problems (Miller, 2016:66). However, it should be noted that resilience is not an individual driven process, resilience depends on how the individual interacts with his/her social ecologies (Truter et al. 2014:14). As Van Breda (2018:07) states, resilience is not a personality trait, there are many factors that play a role in building the resilience of an individual such as their upbringing and the environment of the individual.

4.4.3.1 Subtheme 3.1: Personal

This subtheme depicts how the participants personally managed to cope with work-related challenges. "Personal factors refer to the characteristics of the individual religious beliefs, upbringing, coping strategies, mental and physical health and education" (Dickinson, Trillo & Crossland, 2022:09). Personal factor can also be defined as personal characteristics that inherent which can help an individual to overcome challenges they come across Dickinson, Trillo & Crossland, 2022:09). Personal traits created within a person biologically or psychologically that help an individual to cope or adapt with life's diversity (Yarhouse & Tan, 2014:52). Personal factors include intelligence, self-regulation and social facility (Yarhouse & Tan, 2014:52). Literature review stressed out that personal qualities and behavioural implications were highlighted as key role players in improving resilience, such as self-esteem, resourcefulness, flexibility, adaptability, and a repertoire of coping strategies (Collins, 2017:86). The participants of this study shared the unique ways that helped them to cope with their work-related challenges. Participants mentioned making use of their resources, setting boundaries and obtaining support from family. This was noted in the literature review by Jones-Smith (2014:151) when explaining the strength-based perspective, individuals have resources and abilities that enable them to cope with their issues and learn new skills. When individuals are faced with adversity they tend to tap into those resources in order to survive difficult situations. The strength-based perspective further explains that individuals have the capacity to change and develop their strength and capacities, they have the capacity

to hide their strength from people and most importantly, is that people are experts in solving their own problems (Pulla, 2017:100).

It is significant that rural social workers become resilient because they are exposed to traumatic and stressful situations which may be discouraging and demotivating to continue working as a rural social worker.

It should be noted that occupations like social work can be stressful, however social workers who tend to make use of the available resources and their strength cope better in stressful situations and they are regarded as resilient social workers (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013:386). Participants like Amahle, Goitsimang, Jabulile specifically mentioned that for them to be productive at work and cope better they resorted to using their own resources, instead of complaining and failing to deliver services to their clients. By the way participants responded it became clear that it was not a matter of choice to use their own resources, however for the fact that they did not want to be left behind with their work and at the same time disadvantage clients, they opted to use their own resources such as stationary, cars and internet to ensure that their clients were not disadvantaged. This meant that compromises and acceptance that they would not get the resources they want anytime soon. This was confirmed by Amahle, "*Yes, it does help because sometimes whether I like it or I don't I have to scan some documents I have to use my internet so yah if I don't do that it will backfire on me so by using my own resources it makes things easier*" (A25-27).

Amahle's statement was supported by Goitsimang, "*Eish most of the time I try to compromise even use my own resources, I remember I even bought a laptop when I started working because I felt that my work is not moving fast as much as I wished, so I bought a laptop*" (G35-37). Jabulile also supported the two statements mentioned by Amahle and Goitsimang, "*I just work with whatever I have and most of the time I find myself using my own resources. Um for example, scissors, glue and tipex I have never received that from the department I have been always using mine. In terms of the shortage of the government cars I ended up using my car as a skeem B because I could see that the lack of cars in the office was starting to affect my work. So at least now I use my car anytime and I go anywhere*" (J46-51).

Looking at the different ways in which rural social workers cope shows that every individual is unique and there is strength within each person that helps them to cope with any challenge that they may be face. However, from the responses of participants it shows that it is not only the personality of a person that helps them to cope, there are also many strengths that a person can draw from to cope better, not only with the work-related challenges but with life itself. The participants have clearly stated that as much as social work is all about making a positive change for individuals and ensuring their wellbeing is

enhanced, it should not cause one to lose themselves or forget that they are humans too, not superheroes to solve all the world's problems and that they too need to rest to avoid being miserable. This was noted in the literature review, that rural social workers need to start accepting their limitations and come to a point of saying, 'I have done all that I can and this is where I stop' (Matheson et al. 2016:512).

This was indicated by Bontle, "*Okay myself as I am living almost in the same community, I remind them that I am a human being and if they have other issues, they need to go to the office to receive full service because once I start entertaining them, I will end up depressed or end up not enjoying life and all those things you understand* (B48-51). Bontle's statement of setting boundaries to cope with the work-related challenges was supported by Jabulile, who emphasised that, "*I take it one day at a time, I always tell myself that I cannot do everything at once and I plan for the whole week on what I want to achieve and try my best to stick to it*" (J52-54). Participants explained that setting boundaries is very important because when working in the same community that you live with the clients; they could come at any time to report cases, even during your leisure time or at night. It is for this reason the participants felt that it was necessary to set boundaries and plan their work. As much as participants acknowledged the importance of setting boundaries, they also valued the importance placed on loved ones in helping them to cope and become resilient rural social workers.

Support from family and loved ones was noted to be helpful in participants coping with their work-related challenges. They shared that having a person who understand you better and who you can share challenges with, made them feel better and gave them strength to continue working regardless of the challenges they faced. This was supported by Maslow (1943:381) stated that all individuals need to feel loved, cared for and feel that they belong to a place. He explained in his hierarchy it is significant that individuals fulfil basic needs which are lower level needs before progressing to meet higher ones, even though they cannot be all met but basic needs should be met. Therefore, belonging need is also categories as lower needs. Being acknowledged and loved in their communities they also fulfil their belonging need according to Maslow (1943:381). He explained that individuals are social creatures that have a desire to interact with others. He explained that this level of hierarchy outlines the need for intimacy, friendship, family and love. This was further explained that individuals have a need to feel that they belong in a group, they also have a need to give and receive love.

Fezile and Jabulile were some of the participants who valued the presence of their loved ones because they felt understood and provided them with emotional support. Fezile indicated, "*I guess also having a supportive partner. Someone you get to tell about all the drama you are going through. At home I get to offload my day to him, so it makes things a bit easy I guess* (F62-63). Similarly, Jabulile also stated that

"*having a supportive family, people who are always there for me to provide me with emotional support and who understand the pressure I get from work is helpful*" (J55-56).

Social workers tend to focus on solving problems as it is their job to listen to people's problems every day. Hence, it may seem as though it is in a social worker's nature to solve problems, however social workers today are exposed to the strength-based perspective which encourages social workers to look beyond problems and seek out natural abilities and strengths that exist within a person to help community members solve their own problems (Daley, 2021:02). The strength-based perspective presents a different view of looking at individuals, groups, families, and communities (Saleebey, 1997:02). The strength-based perspective demands that people should not be defined by their challenges or trauma, however they should be seen for their strengths, capabilities, competencies, possibilities, talents, vision, hopes and values. The strength-based approach necessitates keeping records of what people know and what they can do within their families and communities (Saleebey, 1997:02). This implies keeping a track list of resources that exist within a person, in their families and communities.

Individuals tend to find themselves living in difficult situations and the world that they live in is full of problems that cause them to be overwhelmed and have difficulty coping, however it should be noted that people have inner strength that allows them to rise above their circumstance (Jones-Smith, 2014:04). The strength-based perspective states that life presents different challenges to individuals and that everyone is the hero in his/her own life. Therefore, each day involves discovery and learning (Zacarian, Alvarez-Ortiz & Haynes, 2017:35). The approach also focuses on the strength of the person and the available resources in the organisation or the community that allow the person to be able to cope or deal with the difficulties that they may face (Zacarian et al. 2017:117). The strength-based approach aligns with the resiliency theory because they both focus on the positive rather than the negative, they allow an individual to see themselves as full of resources and capable of bringing positive change to their lives. The relationship between the strength-based perspective and resiliency theory is the focus of what is working well (Pulla, 2017:101).

The strength-based perspective and resiliency theory acknowledge that people face adversities but it does not mean they do not lose their ability to come with ideas to resolve their problems or ideas to develop their capabilities (Pulla, 2017:101). Resiliency theory does not focus on the challenges that individuals face but rather draws attention to how individuals grow and profit from it (Gitterman & Knight, 2016:449). In a similar way Van Breda (2018:02) states that one cannot talk about resilience without adversity. He explained that the heart of resiliency theory is the outcome of obtaining better than expected results. Resiliency theory is dependent on the capacity of the individual's social ecology and physical strength to acquire positive development. This implies that for an individual to be resilient it

should be noted that social structure, family relations, culture and services such as welfare, education and health play a significant role in the resiliency of individuals (Van Breda, 2018:09).

Relationships with friends and family tend to have positive adjustment in helping individuals cope better with work-related challenges (Truter et al. 2014:315). Like the participants of this study, Truter et al.'s (2014:315) participants also spoke about the importance of support from a spouse as the deepest source of wellbeing and emotional security. They also spoke highly of close relationships with loved ones and emphasised that if it was not for friendship, colleagues, and support from family members they would not cope with their work (Truter et al. 2014:315). Participants of this study identified many strengths within themselves, their family members, and skills of setting boundaries that they learned over the years to assist them in managing to cope with their work-related challenges. Through their experience they have learned to identify and make use of their strength of knowing what works for them and what does not. More than anything participants were more positive when it came to sharing their strength.

4.4.3.2 Subtheme 3.2: Internal Factors

The participants of this study shared how the internal factors helped them cope better with their challenges. Internal factors refer to these factors that occur within the organisation that affects how the organisation operates (Miah & Yeoh, 2019:258). Internal factors include strategic aspects crucial to the success of an organisation (Miah & Yeoh, 2019:258). "Internal factors can also be factors relate to those contingencies within the organization which are directly controllable by the organization" (Gibson & Hodgetts, 2013: 163). Internal factors were interpreted as all the things that played a role within the organisation to help rural social workers cope better with work-related challenges. It was noted in the literature review that It is critical that social workers develop internal resilience by being involved in personal and professional developments to develop active coping methods and practices (McFadden et al. 2015:1557). Participants believed that having a good relationship with supervisors and colleagues was helpful in being a resilient rural social worker.

Supervision and having a good relationship with supervisors was mentioned as something that helped them cope better at work with their challenges. They expressed that supervision assisted them a lot when dealing with difficult cases or needing to debrief after a traumatic case. Participants felt that their supervisors were better experienced to assist them as they had been in the field for a long time. This was confirmed by Jabulile, "*I also have a very supportive supervisor who always encourages me and helps whenever I feel that I am stuck with my work, she always assists as she has more experience, and she has also encountered most challenges while she was practising as a social worker" (J65-68).* In support of Jabulile's statement, Keitumetse said, "*Um I think what works for me is having a supportive*

supervisor who understand the frustration you are going through and who is there to encourage you" (K69-71).

Humble et al. (2013:252) found that supervision that included mentorship and debriefing was recognised as essential to build the resilience of rural social workers. This is confirmed by Matheson et al. (2016:510) who state that supportive staff members with professional supervision are promoters of resilience in the workplace for many individuals. Resilience is reinforced by connecting with other people who can offer emotional support, and enhance hope and positive adjustment (Gitterman & Knight, 2016:450). Social support from co-workers brings a sense of belonging and forms part of interpersonal coping strategies which enhance the resiliency of social workers (Gitterman & Knight, 2016:450). "When individuals lend strength to others, they strengthen themselves "(Gitterman & Knight, 2016:451). Having support from others who have experienced similar challenges is liberating, validating and empowering (Gitterman & Knight, 2016:451). This experience was referred to as "all in the boar phenomenon" (Shulman, 2012:679)

Having a good relationship, a positive working atmosphere and good supervision were linked to work satisfaction amongst social workers, however that this is all lacking in rural social workers (Humble et al. 2013:252). Supervisors alone cannot take all the credit for creating a good atmosphere, peer supervision conducted by colleagues seems to be crucial in creating a conducive environment and helping other colleagues to cope with their work stress as they tend to often have case-conferencing even though it may be informal (Humble et al. 2013:252). However, participants of this study confirmed that the supervision from their supervisors and peers turned out to have a positive impact.

Participants spoke highly of their colleagues and that they had learnt a lot from them, and it was much easier to share challenges with them because they had a mutual understanding. Therefore, this allowed colleagues to freely share the good and bad times which built a stronger relationship. Keitumetse was one of the participants who valued the relationship and support from their colleagues. Keitumetse indicated that "*other thing that is helpful to me is having a good relationship with colleagues. So, having good relationship with my colleagues is very important because at least I can debrief or do a case conference with them, and they understand exactly what I am going through. Sometimes you find that when you are frustrated about a case, they end up assisting you or giving options on what can work*" (K72-77). This statement was supported by Lindani.

"I think what helps me a lot is that I have good relationship with the people that I work with. Sometimes when I am really tired, and I need to take the client a treatment centre that is far which is more that 300km I have my colleagues who will accompany me or be my co-driver. As much as there are challenges but there are positives or at least we try to make" (L44-48).

"*Um I think another thing that is helpful is that when I have a case that is giving me problem, I know I am not alone, but I have the support of my colleague*" (L50-52).

Peer supervision was listed as important and contributing to the coping strategies at work. Though at times it seems informal, it is alleged that it is helpful to be assisted by someone who knows what you are going through, as participants have mentioned, when they are frustrated, they talk and assist one another with cases. This was supported by Pyne (2020:19) and Ingram (2013:896) peer supervision is highlighted as important because it is often done anytime which may be during lunch time or after working hours. Peer supervision is valuable as it is characterised by mutual trust, experience from experienced colleagues, humour, shared beliefs, and supporting one another (Pyne, 2020:19; Ingram, 2013:896). Furthermore, peer supervision not only helped in continued growth academically but protected and enhanced the wellbeing of a social worker's role (Pyne, 2020:19; Ingram, 2013:896).

In support of these two authors, Truter et al. (2014:315) also emphasises the importance of supervision in enabling a positive impact in adjusting to difficult working conditions and the wellbeing of social workers. Supervision may be overlooked when looking at the resiliency of individuals, however it plays a significant role because the focus is not only on the task but on the emotions enabling a person to think and talk about a distressing event and attach meaning to it (Truter, Theron & Fouché, 2015:221). Supervision has three functions according to Truter, Theron and Fouché (2015:223), to provide support to social workers, education and administration. Providing support to social workers not only helps in coping with stressful tasks but also strengthens and promotes the resiliency of social workers (Truter, Theron & Fouché, 2015:223). This aligns with the strength-based approach by focusing on what is working, and acknowledging knowledge, potential in individuals, connection, skills and communities. It should be noted that strength does not solely lie in the intervention of professionals, but strength also comes from other systems that work together to bring forth the resiliency of an individual (Gitterman & Knight, 2016:458). In support of this statement, Van Breda (2018:02) clarified that resiliency is not influenced by a single trait but there are mediating processes that enable an individual to obtain better results even though faced with many challenges. Hence peer supervision should also be regarded as one of the contributing factors in the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges.

Involve stakeholders (remove when done)

Involvement and good relationship with stakeholders was identified as helpful in managing stress associated with work. Participants appreciated networking having and good relationship with other stakeholders because it made their work easy knowing that they can interact with other professionals who can lessen their work pressure. Through networking they get to learn from one another how to deal

with challenges related to working in the rural areas. Furthermore, having good relationship with other stakeholders allows social to improve service delivery and make referral system easier. This was confirmed by Charlotte who valued working with other stakeholder because it allowed her to network with other stakeholders. "*I am coordinating the programme of substance and drug abuse ne Fortunately, that programme allows me to interact with other stakeholders such as SANCA um and other Department of Health ne*" (C31-32).

Charlotte's statement was supported by Keitumetse who believed that having good relationship with other stakeholders was helpful to because it helps her to have an easier referral system whereby her clients can be assisted with further intervention by being provided other service. "*Another thing that I find helpful is having a good relationship with different stakeholders because it makes my work easy knowing that I can liaise with other stakeholders and knowing that I can always refer clients to them. For example, when dealing with a client with a substance abuse problem it is easier to ask help to SANCA for more information or refer them there for more intervention*" (K78-83). In support of the participant's statements, Truter et al. (2014:320) stated in chapter one that networking and personal strength and how an individual interact with their environment plays a significant role shaping an individual's resilience.

This implies that working well with other stakeholders not only help rural social workers to make referral system easier and learn from other stakeholders how to manage challenges related to work-related challenges but it is beneficial to clients because rural social workers get to provide effective service to their clients and share with them the information they learned from other stakeholders. Participants of this study found it helpful to have good relationship with other stakeholders for support from other professionals who are expects in relevant field and enough experience.

4.4.4   THEME 4: RESILIENCE

This section was guided by the lens of resiliency theory as discussed in the introductory chapter (chapter one). However, to remind the reader of the concept of resilience, it is the capacity to recover after one is faced with stressors of work injury, sickness, or age-related health complications (Wister & Cosco, 2020:10). The participants of this study understood resilience as bouncing back and being able to cope with stress. The main aim of this section was to verbalise social workers' understanding of the concept of resilience as a phenomenon and also allow them to express their experiences of rural social work. This section comprises of two subthemes, namely, understanding of resilience and the application of resilience-perseverance. The following section contains the definitions of resilience according to the participants of this study.

4.4.4.1 Subtheme 4.1: Understanding of Resilience

The findings of this study show that there are two concepts that are related to the concept resilience. The concept that participants related to resilience were concepts such as bouncing back and coping with stress. When participants shared their understanding of resilience it was mostly related to their experiences when faced with challenges and the stress of working in rural areas and how they manage to cope with the work-related challenges. From their definition of the concept of resilience, one does not doubt that rural social workers are resilient because the nature of social work itself is challenging enough, moreover when you must deal with the challenges of being in rural areas. Therefore, one can conclude that rural social workers need to be resilient to be able to cope with rural challenges and effectively provide services to their clients. The definition of resilience according to the participants of the study; is an ability to bounce back and cope with adversity or life stresses. Furthermore, resilience is the ability to rise above the adversities, challenges and stressors and be persistent in growing, courageous, functioning well and coping with the stress one experiences.

This was confirmed by Charlotte when she said, "*When you are resilient it means you are able to bounce back or able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult condition*" (C36-37). Charlotte was supported by Itumeleng, "*For me to be resilient is about bouncing back from the adversities, from the challenges, from the negativities that one experiences from the rural areas or even in life in general. I remember in school they enlightened resilience with sponge whereby you pour water and when you squeeze it out then it bounces back again that's what I took note. Despite what you are facing whether it is positive or negative resilience is an ability to raise above those challenges and be a better social worker working in the rural areas despite everything*" (I53-59).

In support of Charlotte and Itumeleng's definition Kamogelo stated, "*I think resilience means to be able to push in the midst of challenges like not focus on the challenges per se but try by all means to survive even if challenges are there adversity are there do your best like, try to continue growing professionally even if challenges are there. I think that's what resiliency mean*" (G40-43). The definition of resilience is supported by Saleebey (1997:12) who explains that resilience is a continuation of knowledge, growth, qualities, insights that is derived from the world's challenges and demands that one has to face. The definition plainly explains that people are more than capable of taking the necessary steps to overcome their traumas and adversity. Therefore, the resilience concept embraces that people have a way of bouncing back and that they should not be written off (Shokane, Makhubele & Blitz, 2018:223). Resilience was also defined in chapter one by Rutter (2012:01) as the process of maintaining positive adaptation and effective coping strategies in the face of adversity. In support of Rutter, Ungar (2012:176)

explained that resilience is not only about managing stressful situations, it includes the potential for personal growth out of diversity and transformation.

Resilience was further explained in literature review by Kapoulitsas and Corcoran (2015:88), as personal characteristics that people are born with that helps them to function well regardless of the work-related challenges and its demanding environment. Resilience is indicated as the dynamic and common interactions of the individual and his or her environment that assist an individual to be able to adjust positive despite the challenges they might be exposed to. Resilience was further explained is influenced by culture, back and time (Rutter, 2012:1). This implies that there are many factors that play a role in making an individual to develop resilience when facing challenging. As authors and participants have explained that resilience having the ability to cope even though faced with challenges that are expected to cause dysfunction expected to cause dysfunction in a person's life. They associated resilience with positive adaptation, transformation, personal growth, characteristics that are inherent, and interactions of the individual and his or her environment.

This implies that as much as it may seem to be a challenge working in rural areas, it should not be assumed that all rural social workers do not have an ability to cope and that they do not enjoy working in rural areas. This is supported by Collins (2007:100), Grant and Kinman (2014:20), and McFadden (2015:1557) who highlight that resilient social workers are likely to have increased job satisfaction whist ensuring that the values and standards are well maintained. Moreover, resilient social workers are those who can protect themselves from an emotionally demanding job and also avoid burnout (Grant & Kinman, 2014:20; Truter et al. 2014:319). Looking at the nature of work that rural social workers are exposed to it is evident that they are exposed to trauma. However, judging from the participants' responses it seems that they have the capacity, skills and talents to help them to overcome their trauma. This is supported by Truter et al. (2014:320) who state that social workers who can make use of strength within themselves and their environment have the ability to cope better with the challenges they are faced with. Based on the definition of the participants of their understanding of resilience, the researcher is convinced that participants understand what the concept of resilience is and they explained in the next subtheme how they apply resiliency in their work as rural social workers.

4.4.4.2 Subtheme 4.2: Application of Resilience – Perseverance

The focus of this section is based on how rural social workers apply resilience when doing their work. The participants shared various ways which helped them to cope when facing challenges that were related to working in rural areas, including recognising one's owns strength, adjusting, and reminding themselves why they wanted to be social workers in the first place. The researcher will explain the

application of resilience in terms of the strength-based perspective. Strength is anything that helps the individual cope with any difficult situation, such as talent, character, skills and experience (Shokane et al. 2018:224). There are six principles, according to Saleebey (1997) who is the father of the strength-based perspective, that are most applicable to the application of resilience (Shokane et al. 2018:224).

Principle one: Every person, group, community, and family has strength. This implies that every person has strength that enables them to recover from any difficult situation. Nevertheless, those strengths within a person need to be discovered and identified for a person to be resilient and bounce back after they have faced difficulty (Shokane et al. 2018:225). In support of Shokane et al. (2018:225), Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2016:14 reminds us that every individual, group and family holds a key to their transformation that brings positive change, the question is whether the social workers are ready for the change, and if they believe this transformation should start with them and not with their clients. This is confirmed by Amahle who discovered her strength of being persistent and determined in learning. Amahle highlighted that, "*You gather strength to do it I think that is resilience instead of saying no I have done it wrong so many times, so I am giving up like I am not going to do it future. You have to learn then you think of ways to do it proper or like you just learn from those who can voluntarily provide you with training even if its informal" (A42-47).* Being persistent regardless of how difficult the situation may be helped Amahle cope.

This shows that all individuals have strength and capabilities that allow them to cope with any given challenge that they come across. Strength, according to Gray (2014:21), is anything that helps an individual to solve a problem, this can be resources, motivation, experience, intelligence, abilities, and capabilities. Furthermore, strength that allows an individual to have resilience can be found in any person regardless of the challenges they may be facing (Gray, 2014:21). This is supported by Grant and Kinman (2014:13) who state that resilient social workers are those who possess a number of coping mechanisms and are able to select the most appropriate skill that is needed in times of difficulties

Principle two: Life struggles, traumas, sickness, and mistreatment may be hurtful, but they may bring opportunities to an individual's life (Shokane et al. 2018:228). At times the setbacks and the trauma that one experiences come with opportunities and are far more gratifying than expected (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2016:14). Furthermore, Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2016:14), are of the view that disappointments and trauma help us to be tough and give us a much better way of viewing things and people. This is confirmed by Fezile, who developed a new perspective in viewing her work environment and the people she worked with. Fezile showed great strength whereby she no longer thought of herself and the challenges she experienced in doing rural social work only but instead she thought of the vulnerable clients who relied on her for help. Being considerate of her clients served as motivation to

continue working in rural areas regardless of the challenges she faced in working there. Fezile supported this principle by stating that, "*The minute a person comes to the office to ask for help it means they need that protection from you, that's if it's a case of child abuse, child neglect or whatever. So sometimes you just have to be considered of other people apart from what you are feeling yourself. So yah as much as I don't like the place, but I don't hate the people I guess that's what making me to deliver the services to people*" (F52-57).

Principle three: Always presume that you do not know the capacity limit of one to change and grow, hence it is essential to take individuals, groups, and community ambitions seriously. This implies that people should not be limited by their capacity of strength to develop and bring about positive change in their lives. This needs a strength-based mind-set for an individual to see a problem as a problem and not the person as the problem (Shokane et al. 2020:228). Since we do not have a crystal ball telling us what the future holds for us or the opportunities and choices that we will come across, it is important to grasp every opportunity and appreciate the strength we have now (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2016:14). This statement is supported by Itumeleng, who chose to have a positive mindset regardless of the challenges of working in rural areas. Itumeleng chose to see strength of her clients when coming to her office to seek assistance. "*You know for a person to come to our office it takes a lot of strength from that person. So, I draw strength from the clients basically so I would advise other to draw strength from their clients as well because it takes everything to seek help and admit that you have a problem and need help, by the time they come and see a social worker they already know how they would like to be assisted*" (I81-84). The participant recognised that clients are more than capable of solving their own problem, understanding that they know themselves better and they know what needs to be done to solve their problem. This implies that people should not be seen as problems but as individuals who are more than capable to change, grow and develop their lives. This mind-set helps seems to help rural social workers to cope as participant mentioned that when clients come to social workers to seek assistance they already know how they would like to be assisted. Furthermore, the participants did not only identify strength in her clients but that gave her strength and resiliency to continue working even though faced with many challenges in the rural areas.

Principle four: We help our clients better when we work with them. This implies that social workers should not decide for clients, but they should ensure that they participate in decision making to ensure that the service delivered satisfied them. This is supported by Corey (2016:190) who states that no one knows the client better than the client themselves. This means that clients are experts on their lives and they know what is best for themselves. This implies that social workers who work with clients are more likely to cope better with challenges presented by clients because they are already getting solutions from

the clients (Corey, 2016:190). This is supported by Itumeleng "*by the time they come and see a social worker they already know how they would like to be assisted*" (I83-84) this shows social workers should not take the responsibility of deciding for their clients because clients have strength and have the capacity to make conscious decide on what is best for them. Furthermore, to assist client's rural social worker should always remember that they do not work for clients but should ensure that they work with their clients in possible finding solutions for their difficulties As Saleebey (2013:19) we best serve clients our clients by collaborating with them.

Principle five: Every community has resources. When applying the strength-based perspective, it is important that social workers should look beyond the problem, however they should be able to identify and link their clients with existing resources within the community (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2016:14). Using strength perspective shift the viewpoint from lacking to abundance by working with what the environment possesses (Saleebey 2013:20). This is confirmed by Kamogelo identified linking her client with what they needed as a strength and a resilience factor that allowed her to cope. Therefore, the fact that there are services that social workers can make use of services within the community to link them shows that there are services and resources within the community that is useful and benefiting the community members. As Saleebey (2013:20) "every environment is full of resources". As Kamogelo stated "that I find helpful is having a good relationship with different stakeholders because it makes my work easy knowing that I can liaise with other stakeholders and knowing that I can always refer clients to them. For example, when dealing with a client with a substance abuse problem it is easier to ask help to SANCA for more information or refer them there for more intervention (K73-83)

Principle Six: It is essential to show care, caretaking, and context. This principle emphasises the importance of support for social workers since they are constantly involved in risk and emotional trauma. This indicates that lack of support of social workers could have consequences such as decreased job performance, stress and trauma (Shokane et al. 2018:228). "Strong support systems contribute towards building people's capacity to face life's challenges and at times to even use them as opportunities to change the world around them. Therefore, support and collaboration serve as a vehicle for change" (Shokane et al. 2018:224). This is supported by participants who received social support from loved ones and their supervisors whenever they felt that they were dealing with crisis or something difficult handle they resorted to getting support as a form of strength.

Social support and resilience are interconnected to the psychological wellbeing of social workers (Malcok & Yalcin, 2015). Participants found it helpful to have someone who knows what they were going through because they felt understood, furthermore participants who received emotional support from peers, partners and supervisors seem to help in building capacity face challenges they came across at work.

This is supported by Lindani "*Um I think another thing that is helpful is that when I have a case that is giving me problem, I know I am not alone, but I have the support of my colleague*" (L50-52). As much as social work is about showing care and supporting other it does not mean that social workers do not need to be shown care and taken care of. As Saleebey (2013:20) emphasized the importance of "Caring, caretaking and context" in strengths-based social work practice. He explained that care is at the core of what social work is all about and what has been since its beginning.

This implies that social workers to be able to cope with their demanding job they also need to be taken care of and supported in their work so that they can have resiliency to cope with their work related challenges. Though they may have personal strength or characteristics that are inherent they also need to feel they are supported and taken care of. However, this principle does not imply that social workers alone should get emotional support however they should also be able to show care and take care of others. This means that the work social workers do is not about themselves but about helping others and showing them that they care. It appears that being passionate about being a social worker also serves as strength to keep themselves motivated to continue working in rural areas. The participants emphasised that whenever they felt like giving up and felt they could no longer work in rural areas, they reminded themselves of why they wanted to be social workers and the passion they had for helping people also served as a motivation and helped them to have resiliency in managing to continue working in the rural areas.

This is confirmed by Lindani, " This *is my community, and all this are my people. So, I am proud to be working in the rural areas and it makes, me happy that I am giving back to my community*. (L14). Lindani further stated that "*I also remind myself that the reason that I wanted to be a social worker is because I wanted to help people so in a way that helps me keep going.*" (L64-68). This statement is support by Itumeleng who also draws her resilience from helping people and reminding herself why she fell in love with the profession. "*For me is basically going back to the notion of why I feel in love with being a social worker above everything else it was more about helping people so for me that's where I draw my resilience, my strength in going back as a perso*n" (I67-69). This points out that rural social worker's decision to choose to become social workers was more about helping others, showing care and most importantly to make a difference to other people hence so many them talked about having a passion to work in the rural areas. However, even though they have resiliency that helps them to preserve the challenges when doing their work, it does not mean they do not get tired and frustrated.

Participants acknowledged that working in the rural areas is hard even for those who grew up in the rural areas. But the care that they had about their community seems to help them not give up on the people because they know the value they add in their client's lives. However, this goes both ways when rural

116

social workers are taken care of and are supported they become recharged and gain strength to take care of their clients. This is supported by Jabulile "*Whenever I feel like I am not coping, or I don't want to do this anymore I just remember why I wanted to do social work in the first place. I remember that I wanted to make a difference to other people lives especially those who are mostly disadvantaged I also have a very supportive supervisor who always encourages me and helps whenever I feel that I am stuck with my work, she always assists as she has more experience, and she has also encountered most challenges while she was practising as a social worker*" (J61-68).

This clearly shows that social workers decision to work in the rural areas or chose the profession was not about money or satisfying their ego however it was helping vulnerable individuals. Others social workers might not like working in the rural areas however knowing that they are helping vulnerable individuals keeps them motivated to continue working in the rural areas even though faced with many challenges when doing their work. This is supported by Fezile who pointed out that "*telling myself that I mustn't be selfish, as much as I am tired working in this place I took an oath that I will protect the kids, to ensure their safety wellbeing, abused women and older persons. Sometimes you have to put your desires and how you feel aside because it is more like you are doing it for the next person. Um… The minute a person comes to the office to ask for help it means they need that protection from you that's if it's a case of child abuse or child neglect or whatever so sometimes you just have to be considered of other people apart from what you are feeling yourself so yah as much as I don't as I don't like the place, but I don't hate the people I guess that's what making me to deliver the services to people*" (F48-57)

4.4.5 THEME 5: SUGGESTIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

This section was derived from the question, "*What can you suggest or recommend so that other social workers become resilient whilst working in rural areas*?" As is the case with the theme of coping, the suggestions are also depicted on two levels, namely a personal level and an organisational level. The main aim of this section was to verbalise participants' suggestions or recommendations for being resilient rural social workers.

4.4.5.1   Subtheme 5.1: Personal

On this subtheme the participants made recommendations to other social workers that they personally use to cope and believed to be helpful in being resilient in dealing with their work-related challenges. The participants recommended that social workers should educate themselves to ensure that they develop and familiarise themselves with the community they work with. Participants also shared what motivates them towards their work.

Participants recommended that when social workers enter the field of a rural setting they should familiarise themselves with the community and know their surroundings to be able to cope better. Bontle was one of the participants who suggested that people should familiarise themselves with their community to have resiliency. "*Number one I suggest that social workers should um understand their community" (B81-82).* This is statement was supported by Happy, "*I think the first thing is to be aware of the people you are serving, be aware of all the dynamics of your community, all the dynamic of the people who look up to you for help you know, and you must not be afraid of new challenges because new challenges open up doors for knowledge and new development, so you need to be willing to take action*" (H80-85)

Participants are of the view that knowing your community helps you to be resilient when faced with work-challenges. Upon entering the community, it is essential that social workers first study the community along with the community members so that they can better serve their community and knowing the type of community that they are dealing with reduces the stress and builds confidence because they know what challenges they are dealing with and are likely to have better interventions that are more relevant to the service users (Dhavaleshwar, 2016:62). Social workers who know their community, have the support of the community and their neighbourhood contacts were found to be resilient (Ellis et al. 2017:580; Gitterman & Knight, 2016:450).

Amongst other things, education was also recommended by participants of this study. The participants were of the view that rural social workers should develop themselves academically to be able to assist their clients better, to better understand the social problems, and improve the standard of rendering the service to clients. This was confirmed by Bontle when she said, "*So you need to make sure that you update yourself academically you read relevant books, in particular books that relates to our profession maybe your social work books, psychology books, developmental study books then you will be in a position to contribute to the body of knowledge in the profession and even if at some point it cannot be black and white but the service standard or the level at which you are servicing the people in the community it will improve you understand" (B114-120).* This was also indicated by Itumeleng who supported the notion that rural social workers would be in a much better position for coping with challenges if they equipped themselves with knowledge and skills. They hold the view that when social workers equip themselves with knowledge it will not only benefit the social workers but their service users as well. Itumeleng expressed that, *"I would recommend that let's equip ourselves with knowledge and let's not dwell much on the challenges or the negativity because the person behind the desk doesn't know about the logistics of everything all they see is this person who is going to assist them" (I76-79).*

Participants did not only identify their resiliency in having passion for the work they do as it served as a motivation to help them to cope with the work-related challenges, but they highly recommended it to other social workers who were considering working in the rural areas and social workers who are already working in rural areas. Having passion is something that is personal, self-fulfilling, and comes naturally according to participants of this research study. Participants spoke a lot about having passion, reminding themselves why they wanted to be a social worker in the first place, and they believed that social work is a calling. The perceptions and recommendations regarding the coping mechanism that allowed them to become resilient was supported by Dlamini and Sewpaul (2015:478), and Truter et al. (2014:318).

A resilient person is someone who conducts his/her work passionately and believes that it is not just about work or a salary, but it is a calling. A calling is a strong urge towards a certain way of life or career (Truter et al. 2014:318). This meant that the social worker who focuses more on the client will go an extra mile to assist even though the job is challenging but having passion makes one cope better (Truter et al. 2014:318). This is confirmed by a few participants of this study

"You must have passion. It must be within you to want to see change in someone else's life so akere (meaning isn't it) most people don't want to work in the rural areas and we can't all work in towns and townships so if you find yourself being that social worker working in the rural areas you must actually be proud of yourself that you are working in an area where most people are running from so that's a plus for yourself" (F66-71).

"As difficult as it is they must just keep pushing and keep on helping these people. As much as we are professionals, we are doing God's work, we are helping God's people so that they can be able to survive the lives challenges they are facing" (G58-61). Similarly, to Goitsimang, Itumeleng shared the same view that, "*For me being a social worker is a calling. It's not even about what you are paid it's a matter of being passionate about what you are doing so in that way you will rise above the challenges and everything else"* (I89-91).

Lindani is in agreement with the above statements and said, *"My recommendation to other social workers and those who are still considering working in the rural areas is that they should come with the aim of being change agent and aware that they will mostly work with the poorest of the poor. Um they should have passion to work in the rural areas and perform their work out of the goodness of their heart" (*L69-73).

Resilience theory emphasises that all individuals are born with characteristics of resilience that enable them to develop problem-solving skills, social competencies, independence, a sense of purpose, and critical consciousness. It is up to the individual to tap into those characteristics within to allow the

individual to cope with challenging events (Rutter, 2012:338). This means that when individuals are faced with challenges it is within them to make use of the qualities so that they can overcome the challenges that they are faced with. Those qualities, according to Van Breda (2018:04), are protective factors that enable a person to cope with stressful situations.

4.4.5.2   Subtheme 5.2: Organisational

In this section participants made recommendations based on what they think should be implemented by the employer and rural social workers within the organisation for social workers to cope better at their workplace. Participants of this study made recommendations that rural social workers should network with other role players, make use of support within the organisation and they also recommended that the DSD should do away with generic social work and introduce specialisation so that social workers can focus on one programme at a time. Lastly, social workers believed that an increase of salary would have a positive impact on the wellbeing of rural social workers and improve their resilience. The following were expressed by participants as recommendations to be implemented within the organisation for rural social workers to cope better and have more resiliency in managing their experiences of work-related challenges.

Networking with other professionals seems to be a safety net for rural social workers as mentioned by the participants of this study. They highlighted the importance of networking for them as it helped them with getting continued intervention for their clients. Participants of this study indicated that it is important to realise that you need support from others with relevant knowledge and experience because as much as you might be a hard worker and have passion, it is important to accept that you cannot do everything by yourself, and you therefore need help from other colleagues and professionals from other departments. This was confirmed by Entle, "*If you given what you given just work with that and get help where you can and yah and have relationship with other departments. Even if you get have that one colleague who can assist you with cases*" (E104-108). Entle's statement was supported by Charlotte, "*teamwork that will consist of all the relevant stakeholders that is needed to provided effective services rendered by the social work*" (C50-56).

A supportive network emerging from professional to personal, has proven to not only contribute to wellbeing and positive adjustment of professionals but also assists social intervention and a good referral system (Truter et al. 2014:315). When professionals from different organisations unite and share their challenges of working in rural areas, they manage better with stress and assist one another with interventions from different organisations (Pyne et al. 2020:15).

It was also recommended by participants that rural social workers should have good relationships with their colleagues. They mentioned that having good relationships with colleagues is helpful because they help you to offload stress and you have someone who knows exactly what you are going through because you spend more time them.

Fezile, "*basically, be proud of yourself, love what you do, have that enthusiasm to want to see a difference in the community that you are working in and have a good relationship with your colleagues because you can't be frustrated by working in the rural areas and be frustrated by the people you are working with*" (F72-75). As much as there are many challenges when social workers are doing their job, there are also features in the work setting that are positive. This includes having good relationships with colleagues that are supportive in challenging cases and who also share the same passion for making a difference to vulnerable people (Collins, 2017:89). Similarly, Kapoulitsas and Corcoran (2015:96), and Adamson, Beddoe and Davys' (2014:15) studies acknowledged the value of informal support from colleagues as it helps for enhancing skills, knowledge, emotional support, to build resilience and professional development for social workers.

Participants believed that the solution to their workload was to do away with generic social work. They recommended that the DSD should allow rural social workers to specialise in programmes. They believed that doing generic social work was causing them to lose focus because they constantly have to adjust from one case to another while they have not mastered any of them. This was emphasised by Charlotte, who said that the DSD "*should try to do away with these things called generic social work because we end up having a high workload and that high workload leads to underperformance ne*" (C57-59). Charlotte further stated that "*this programme of social workers specialising in that child protection and should be accredited to do that as well as those specialising in substance and drug abuse they should just focus on substance and drug abuse only you understand*" (C65-68). It was mentioned by Rapp-McCall (2022:980) that it does not come as a surprise that most rural social workers are doing generic social work because of the shortage of social workers in rural areas. Therefore, if rural social workers start specialising then there will be an even a greater shortage of specialising social workers.

Lastly, participants suggested that there should be an increase of salary. They indicated that they were not happy with their salaries considering the work that they did. This was confirmed by Charlotte, "*Um one more last thing I would like to add um those social workers who are working in rural area because it is not a favourable condition to work on therefore, they should incentivise, they should get some allowances um just to motivate keep the morale high to make them understand and work in that environment*" (C71-75). According to Alpaslan and Schenck (2013:367) the salaries of rural social workers have always been a concern as they have been underpaid hence many social workers found

that they were forced to leave the country and work for other countries because of poor working conditions and low salaries.

The working conditions of rural social workers remain unchanged even though the recruitment and retention strategy was implemented in 2004 by the DSD to offer incentives to rural social workers hoping to satisfy social workers. However, it seems as though rural social workers are still not satisfied as they remain underpaid (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012:382). This matter was not only identified in this research study but also in a social worker's and social auxiliary worker's memorandum that was delivered to the Union Building on 19 September 2016. Social workers complained of poor and hazardous working conditions. Social workers protested that they were often out there fighting for vulnerable people's rights and the wellbeing of others, but no one heard them when they asked for better working conditions and salary increases (Madibogo, 2016:01).

4.5   SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In summary of the chapter, the researcher presented and discussed the thematic findings of the study. The chapter began with the biographical information of the 12 participants who participated in this study. A brief overview of the five themes along with the subthemes incorporating the literature was given. In a discussion of the first theme participants shared their experiences of working in rural areas and two subthemes emerged of positive and negative experiences. For the second theme participants discussed the challenges of working in rural areas and for the third theme participants shared their coping mechanisms that allowed them to have resiliency working in rural areas. For the fourth theme participants shared their understanding of resilience and how they applied resiliency in their work as rural social workers. For the last theme participants made suggestions for other social workers who were working in rural areas or considering working in rural areas to be resilient whist working there.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This section is the last chapter about the research study that was undertaken. The researcher will present conclusions and recommendations for each chapter covered up to now. This research study was about the resiliency amongst rural social worker in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. The study setting was targeted towards rural social workers appointed at the DSD district offices within the boundaries of Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities. The first part of this chapter presents the conclusions drawn per chapter about the research process that was applied and the research findings. The second part of this chapter will present the recommendations based on the research process followed as well as the research findings.

5.2   CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn for this research study will be presented according to the chapters contained in this research report. This includes the planning of the research, the literature review, the methodology used for this study and the findings of the research study.

5.2.1 Conclusions - Chapter 1: General introduction

Chapter one offered and presented the entire plan for this research study. Starting from the introduction of the topic, the problem statement, explaining the rationale of the study and explaining the theoretical frameworks most relevant for this study. The remainder of chapter one focussed on how the researcher planned to conduct and apply the research process for a qualitative approach. Chapter one, therefore represented the research proposal for which ethical clearance was obtained from the Research and Ethics committee at Unisa. Aspects such as the research methodology, research methods, data collection, method of data analysis and data verification, ethical considerations, and clarification of key concepts received attention. The chapter offered an overview of the resiliency of rural social work as highlighted by other authors. The main aim of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the resilience amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. To reach the goal of the study, the researcher discussed the international and South African perspective of rural social work to understand their resiliency. Challenges and strategies used by rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges were discussed. The researcher concluded that the planning of the research study was necessary to give structure to the entire research study. Starting from introducing the topic, the problem statement, and the goal of the study which gave direction and purpose to this research study. Furthermore, the researcher concluded with the rationale of the study, which gave a clear explanation of why the study of resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their work-

related challenges was necessary. Planning of the research study also covered the theoretical frameworks relevant for this study which helped to give a background of what other authors have said about topic.

Research in resilience began in the field of psychopathology by Garmezy (1971), the initiator of research on resilience, who conducted a study of children who experienced hardship and severe stress but tended to have positive development and adjusted well regardless of the post-traumatic stress. Due to the unexpected results, research in resilience received recognition and interest from many researchers in many different fields, from international to South African researchers, including this researcher. Although this study confirmed that some social workers tended to cope better than others when dealing with work-related challenges due to their resiliency, many of those other studies focused more on urban social workers and those who focused on rural social workers were much more concerned with the challenges of rural social workers than their resiliency in managing their work-related challenges. The researcher concluded that more research was needed that focused more on the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges, as it has shown that there was a gap with regards to the topic.

The researcher had a personal interest in conducting the study because she is a social worker by profession working in rural areas, she became aware that not much is known about the experiences of rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges. The rationale for this research study served as a motivation for this research which helped to formulate the research question which assisted the researcher to remain focused in investigating and generating knowledge about the experiences of rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges. The research goal also helped the researcher by giving direction to how to go about doing her research study and it helped the researcher to focus on what needed to be achieved at the end of the study. This meant that the researcher had to have the research objectives to help with the guidelines of the steps that needed to be done so that the overall purpose could be achieved.

The objectives formed themes to address the key issues of the study, which helped to formulate the research questions of the study. By having the questions, the researcher was able to get information from the participants about how they managed their work-related challenges. With regard to research methodology, the researcher used a qualitative research approach as it allowed the researcher to collect data by means of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions contained in an interview guide. The phenomenological research design enabled the researcher to obtain data from the participants about their lived experiences in relation to their resiliency in managing work-related challenges as rural social workers. In support of the phenomenological research design, the researcher made use of three strategies of inquiry, exploratory, descriptive and contextual research strategies of inquiry. The

researcher demarcated the population as all rural social workers appointed at the DSD district offices within the boundaries of Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities.

The researcher concluded that the objectives and research questions helped the researcher to focus on the information that was important for this study. It can be concluded that the methodology gave clear guidelines of how data was collected and gave the researcher a clear understanding of the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges.

Choosing this population was found to be helpful as these two municipalities are located in rural areas and the researcher found them to be relevant in getting the desired outcome for the study. But because the entire population of rural social workers appointed at DSD district office within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and JS Moroka municipalities could not be studied as it would be time consuming and costly, the researcher planned to use non-probability sampling using the purposeful sampling technique. The researcher concluded that the chosen sampling assisted because the participants who met the criteria of the study were purposefully chosen and were able to share valuable information of their experiences in managing their work-related challenges.

However, before the researcher gathered data the researcher prepared for data collection.

Preparation for data collection

The researcher did not only plan to prepare participants but she prepared herself as well. This process helped a lot because it prepared both the researcher and the participants for data collection. The participants knew exactly what was expected of them when they agreed to take part in the study and how long the interviews might take. The participants knew that taking part in this research study was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any time and they would not be compensated for taking part in the study. In the process of the researcher preparing herself for data collection she made use of pilot testing as a pre-warning system of the difficulties or errors that the researcher and the participants might come across during data collection.

Method of data collection

The methods of data collection that were used was semi-structured interview. The researcher made use of the semi-structured interview because it allowed a dialogue between the researcher and participants, it also allowed the researcher to make use of probes for clarity while asking the questions and listening attentively to the responses of the participants. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth information, as participants shared their experiences and challenges of working in rural areas, as well as their coping strategies in relation to resilience. The researcher also made use of her observation skills as participants were sharing their experiences the researcher could

see the meaning they attached to things that they went through. However, observation was limited because of the Covid-19 rules and regulations. The researcher could not do face-to-face interviews as planned. The researcher concluded that making use of semi-structured interviews was an eye opener for the researcher because it made the researcher aware of what participants went through as they openly shared their experiences of working in rural areas and how they managed their work-related challenges. The researcher further concluded that using semi-structured interviews was helpful in obtaining in-depth information.

It was lockdown when the researcher started collecting information and movement was restricted. The researcher had to rely on telephones and using MS Teams virtual meetings. The researcher made use of three telephonic interview, three virtual MS Teams meetings and six face-to-face meetings after the lockdown was lifted at level 3 and movement was now allowed. Even though the researcher could not do face-to-face interviews with all the participants but she was able use her skills of attentively listening to clients. This meant the researcher was not only listening to hear but she was listening to understand the participants. The researcher continued interviewing participants until she became aware that the data was saturated. The researcher concluded that all participants were interviewed and the questions were consistent.

In preparation to collect the data pilot testing was used to test the data collection instrument prior to the actual data collection.

Pilot testing

The researcher feels that pilot testing was helpful because it allowed the researcher to become aware that there was a question that participants might not understand as the first participant of the study stated that he felt that there was a question that sounded as if it was repeating itself. This gave the researcher time to rephrase the question with the assistance of the researcher's supervisor. The researcher concluded that pilot testing was helpful in restructuring the questions to be more understandable to participants and improving the interviewing skills of the researcher.

Method of data analysis

Data was first analysed by the researcher and then the independent coder with the supervisor facilitating the process. The researcher organised the data by using pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants so that they had privacy and confidentiality. The researcher found that the first part that she did analysing data was helpful because after transcribing the data she had familiarised herself with the data by reading all the transcripts to understand the background and to begin thinking about the possible meanings or outcomes of the study. As planned in chapter one, the researcher gave the independent

coder the data to continue with the data analysis using the eight steps of Tesch (cited in Creswell, 2014: 197-198) as this was his area of expertise and skills and he was more experienced in doing data analysis. The researcher concluded that explaining the information using the eight steps of Tesch was helpful because the large amount of information obtained was explained in simpler terms to be more understandable. Furthermore, the researcher concluded that making use of the eight steps of Tesch assisted because it organised the information and brought structure to the large amount of information collected from participants.

Data verification

To verify the data, the researcher used the four aspects of Lincon and Guba (1985), namely, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability for ensuring trustworthiness of the outcomes of the study.

Credibility - the researcher concluded that the process that was followed by the researcher to ensure that there was credibility worked well in ensuring that the outcomes represent the participants.

- The researcher made use of her interviewing skills such as probing and summarisation to get clarity from participants and she attentively listened to the participants to ensure that she understood what the participants were saying so that the participants were not misunderstood or misquoted.

- The triangulation also helped the researcher to obtain rich data because it allowed the researcher to use multiple methods to collect data such as , interviews and making use of journals. Making use of triangulation helped because the researcher did not only rely on the participants but she also observed to compare what they were saying with what is observed during data collection.

- Member checking was done by the participants of the researcher when she checked that she was still following the planned process of verification and that the findings were not manipulated by the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher gave feedback to the participants individually to check that data presented is a true reflecting of what they shared during the interview. This also gave the researcher an opportunity rule out the misunderstanding and misrepresenting the participants meaning.

- *Transferability* - The researcher ensured there was transferability as planned in chapter one. The researcher ensured that all rural social workers felt that they are represented in this research study. The researcher realised that using participants of different ages and work experience, located at the DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities, helped to ensure that the rural social workers felt that even though they did not take part in this research

study, they were represented. The researcher concluded that all processes were followed to ensure there was transferability.

Dependability - To ensure that there was dependability the researcher ensured that she kept all the records of notes, planning, and complete findings so that should the study be conducted again the same results can be obtained. The researcher is of the opinion that keeping records is important so that should an audit be done the findings are dependable.

Conformability - The researcher achieved this by ensuring that the findings were derived from the participants and not from the researcher. The researcher ensured that she did not become biased or manipulate the findings to suit her personal interests. The researcher found it helpful to allow the participants to state what was on their minds, share their experiences without the researcher interfering by adding her experiences or opinions. Furthermore, the researcher did not ask leading questions to the participants. Therefore, the researcher can conclude that the opinions, perceptions and experiences are those of the participants not the researcher.

The researcher believes that the application of ethical consideration was helpful in protecting participants from potential harm during data collection. The researcher ensured that there was **confidentiality and privacy** so that participants could freely express themselves and they were assured that their identity would be protected. The researcher also ensured that all the participants who volunteered to take part in the study signed the **informed consent** form before the interview took place and that they gave their verbal consent before the researcher started to ask the interview questions. The researcher concluded all participants gave consent to take part in this research study. The researcher further concluded that all participants were protected, and their confidentiality and privacy was maintained.

To achieve **beneficence**, the researcher protected her participants and ensured that the potential harm was out weighted by the benefits of the study. The researcher ensured that the participants would benefit from, rather than be harmed by, this research which aims to ensure that the findings are known on how rural social workers manage their work-related challenges. The researcher is of the view that the findings will benefit the participants and rural social workers, the DSD and add to the scientific body of knowledge. To those participants who may have felt that the research brought up unresolved issues the contacts and website of Mpumalanga Mental Health Society were given for **debriefing**. Therefore, the researcher can conclude that the participants were protected by all means from harm and the researcher ensured that if there were other personal or unresolved issues that may have affected them they could go for debriefing with professionals who are highly trained to do debriefing and counselling.

Management of information - After the collection of data the researcher ensured that the data collected was kept safe and that no one could access it except the researcher to ensure that when it was needed it could be retrieved and that information that had the personal details of the participants or identified the participants was protected. The researcher concludes that the data collected was kept safe.

5.2.2 Conclusions – Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter focused on what research had been done by other researchers with regards to resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing work-related challenges. The literature review was necessary to contextualise the phenomenon under study. In this chapter the researcher started by presenting an overview of social work and resilience, followed by research literature about work-related challenges and resilience amongst social workers from an international and South African perspective. The researcher then presented the coping strategies of rural social workers. Finally, the chapter was concluded by highlighting the key issues that had been researched in the literature review.

Looking at the resiliency of rural social workers from an international perspective and the research that had been done by other researchers showed that practicing social work is not only a demanding profession, but it is challenging due to the pressure and trauma that social workers find themselves having to deal with. To understand the resiliency of rural social workers it is significant to understand what rural social workers have to overcome and still continue to be productive and efficient in servicing their clients and the community as a whole.

For social workers to continue being productive and report to be satisfied with their work even though they face trauma shows that they have coping strategies that allow them to cope. The coping abilities were mostly related to positive qualities, such as optimism, flexibility, and adaption, being a team player, being confident and having a sense of humour. This meant staying and focusing on the positives regardless of the challenges that they experienced when doing their everyday work. This meant focusing on what is right rather than wrong. The literature review revealed that social workers who grew up in rural areas had no adaptation issues and seemed to enjoy working in the rural areas because they felt that they were giving back to the community. Knowing your community was also listed as helpful in coping with work-related challenges because knowing your community meant having confidence with one's intervention because you would clearly know what works in the community and what does not work. Knowing the community also means that rural social workers will know their limitations as well as those of their clients.

Finally, the researcher concluded that the literature review contributed a lot to the research question and goal because it gave the baseline of existing literature from an international to a South African

perspective. Therefore, the literature provided helped the researcher to familiarise herself with the findings from other studies on the challenges that rural social workers face and, most importantly, how they managed their work-related challenges. The literature review also helped to explain the findings from the participants by comparing it with the findings of other studies. However, the literature alone could not meet the goal of the study and could not answer the research question because most studies that were conducted concentrated on the challenges of rural social workers and the few research studies that investigated the resiliency of social workers were mostly based on the resiliency of urban areas, specifically child protection social workers. Hence, the research study still needed to be conducted to close the existing gap on the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges.

5.2.3 Conclusions – Chapter 3: Research methodology

The research methodology was the third chapter of this study that explained the complete process that was followed to answer the research question and meet the research goal. Conclusions made regarding the application of the research methodology will be discussed according to the following outline: the research population, sampling, data analysis, data verification and ethical considerations.

The research question of this study; was the question that the researcher was interested in answering and it also helped to formulate the general purpose of the study. The researcher can conclude that having the research question ensured that the focus remained on the information that was needed to achieve the overall goal and objectives of this research study.

The research goal was the main purpose of the study and thereby it controlled the whole research study and how to go about doing it because it was what was desired to be achieve after the study had been done. The research goal helped the researcher to maintain focus on the overall purpose of the study. Furthermore, the goal served as a reminder not to deviate from what was desired to be achieved.

The researcher can conclude that having **research objectives** helped to get details, resources and measures that were available to ensure that the goal of the study was met. The research objective helped indicate the key issues that needed to be focused on in this research. Furthermore, the research objective helped to generate new knowledge and solve the research question.

5.2.3.1   Application of research methodology

To achieve the goals and objective of this study, the researcher made use of the qualitative research approach to explore and describe the factors contributing to rural social workers' resilience enabling them to manage these challenges, and finally draw conclusions. The qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to get rich data as there was little information known about the resiliency of rural

social workers. This approach allowed the researcher to listen to participant's unique lived experiences, perceptions and meanings they attached to certain phenomenon.

For the research study to be carried out successfully the researcher presented the research design that was most suitable for this study.

The researcher made use of a **phenomenology design** this was implemented because the researcher focused on getting an in-depth understanding of the work-related challenges experienced by social workers and how they managed these challenges. The researcher bracketed out her experiences to avoid being biased so that participants were given an opportunity to share their unique experiences of working in rural areas and how they managed to conduct their work regardless of the circumstances they faced in these rural areas. The phenomenology was complemented by explorative, descriptive, and contextual strategies of inquiry to meet the goals and objectives of this study.

Explorative research design was found to be most appropriate because there was a gap and little was known about the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges. The researcher found that making use of this research design was helpful to explore more on the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges as such studies had not been conducted before. Therefore, the researcher concluded that such a research study had never been done within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities meaning that the findings of this study brought new knowledge.

Descriptive research design - The researcher made use of this design because she was more interested in how the participants described their world and the meaning they attached to it. The researcher was concerned with details hence she made use of this design because it allowed the researcher to ask questions, such as what, where, when, and how. Using this research design, the participants were able to describe the challenges and how they managed to cope with these challenges, furthermore the researcher was able to describe the views, perceptions and opinions as they were sharing their unique experiences.

Contextual research design - The researcher can conclude that it was helpful making use of this design because the researcher was able to understand the environment in which the social workers work, this was achieved through observation. The researcher could also see how they felt about something by the way they expressed themselves through observation of their facial expressions. Furthermore, a contextual research approach was helpful in understanding the perceptions, feelings, and experiences of participants created in a context in which meaning is attached to the phenomenon by the way it is understood by the participants.

5.2.3.2 Research methods

Population

Geographically the population was drawn from all rural social workers appointed at DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities that fall under the Nkangala district in Mpumalanga Province. The population chosen were the social workers employed at the DSD. The researcher can conclude that it was helpful to have chosen this population because not much was known about it and the researcher was of the opinion that they contributed vital information on how they managed their work related challenges. However, the whole population of rural social workers appointed at DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities could not be studied as it would have been time consuming and costly, hence the researcher concluded that sampling should be used in this study.

Sampling and sampling methods

Non-probability sampling - The researcher used the non-probability sampling method and the sampling technique applied was the purposive sampling technique. Choosing this sampling was because the researcher was not interested in studying the whole population of rural social workers appointed at DSD district offices within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities. The researcher had clear inclusion criteria on the group that she was interested in studying and it meant that certain people were automatically disqualified hence it made sense to use non-probability sampling.

Purposive sampling technique - Due to the specific inclusion criteria that the researcher wanted to be met by potential participants, the researcher made use of the purposive sampling technique because of the participants' knowledge and experiences in managing their work-related challenges. The researcher was of the view that the participants that were purposefully chosen were the experts of this research phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher can conclude that the chosen sampling technique assisted in obtaining information-rich data about their experiences in managing work-related challenges.

5.2.3.3 Data collection

Preparation for data collection

The researcher noted that the data preparation went smoothly because both the participants and the researcher were prepared for data collection. The researcher developed a data collection tool in the form of an interview guide that contained all the questions that the researcher wanted to be answered by the participants. The researcher ensured that she prepared the participants so that the required information was obtained about the resiliency of rural social workers in managing work-related challenges. The

researcher found it helpful to have prepared the participants because they understood what the research was about and how it would benefit them as rural social workers. The researcher can conclude that the questions contained in the interview guide proffered the desired in-depth information from participants.

Method of data collection

The researcher made use semi-structured interviews as method of data collection method. Observation and attentive listening as supporting communication skill, allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth information because the researcher did not only rely on one technique to collect data but she observed the environment and how the participants expressed themselves, and the feelings and meanings they attached to certain events that occurred in their work life experiences. Though the researcher could not do face-to-face interviews with all the participants, she managed to make use of other alternatives such as phone call interviews and virtual MS Teams meetings. The researcher can therefore conclude that the researcher was able to get data in relation to the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges. e

5.2.3.4 Pilot testing

The researcher also had an opportunity to practice her interviewing skills when doing the pilot testing of the interview guide, which contained the research interview questions. The pilot testing served as a pre-warning system that allowed the researcher to become aware of the things that might have hindered the smooth running of the research. The pilot testing also allowed the researcher time to amend the research questions and familiarise herself with information that might be obtained from participants. Feedback from these participants was particularly helpful in clarifying whether the interview questions were understandable and produced the in-depth information the researcher was trying to retrieve. Furthermore, the research questions helped the researcher to become aware of the challenges that the researcher might come across, such as network problems in doing virtual interviews with MS Teams meeting. The researcher concluded that pilot testing helped to test her interviewing skills such as probing, summarisation, observation and attentive listening.

5.2.3.5 Method of data analysis

As planned in chapter one and implemented in chapter three, data was analysed by the researcher and an independent coder. The researcher did the first part of data analysis by transcribing each interview word-for-word, and organising the collected data by replacing the real names of participants with pseudonyms and numbering each row in the transcript. The researcher then read all the transcripts to familiarise herself with the content and to get an overall impression of the data. The researcher then gave the independent coder the transcripts to code according to the proposed eight steps of Tesch (cited

in Creswell 2014:197-198) which were applied for data analysis. The researcher is of the view that the data was analysed well as it was done by an independent coder who was highly skilled, trained and well experienced in analysing data. The researcher is confident that the data was not manipulated or biased because it was done by a professional who was not in any way attached or had a personal interest in the findings.

5.2.3.6 Data verification

To verify data, the researcher employed Lincoln and Guba's model (1985) for ensuring trustworthiness of the research study as proposed in chapter one, with the application explained in chapter three. The four strategies, namely credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were utilised for ensuring trustworthiness and that quality work was produced. The researcher is convinced that the Lincoln and Guba's model (1985) helped to verify that the findings are those of the participants and not those of the researcher's imagination, preferences or personal views through confirmability.

Credibility was also used by the researcher to ensure that the findings represented what the participants shared. To ensure that participants were indeed represented the researcher made use of her interviewing skills to probe, summarise and attentively listen during the interview so that the researcher could ask for clarity where need be and to summarise to confirm with the participants that they understood one another. The researcher also made use of member checking by giving the participants the emerged categories and confirming if they agreed whether the findings represented what they had shared. Triangulation was also used to ensure that the findings were to be trusted by making use of multiple tools to collect data such as observations, interviews and writing notes of the whole process of the research study. Furthermore, the researcher emphasised to participants that the information that they shared would be used for study purposes and that their identities would not be revealed to ensure that there was anonymity and confidentiality. Ensuring that there is credibility for verifying data also served as a way of motivating participants to talk freely and share their experiences of their challenges they encountered in their workplace and how they managed to cope with those challenges.

Data was verified using dependability, the researcher carefully recorded all the steps followed to ensure that should this research be repeated then the same results would be obtained. The researcher also ensured transferability so that the collected data could have same meaning to other rural social workers in Mpumalanga is concerned. To achieve this the researcher ensured that the participants were of different genders, age groups, had different experiences and were from different offices. All these processes were purposefully followed by the researcher to ensure that the data this research study produced was quality work and that the findings were trustworthy.

5.2.3.7 Ethical considerations

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Department of Social Work's Research and Ethics Committee, University of South Africa (Unisa). The researcher ensured that the participants were aware of the ethical principles and that they should not feel compelled to participate in the study and that they could withdraw from the research at any time should they wish to do so. The ethical principles were all followed to protect participants and minimise risk as much as possible. The researcher ensured that attention was paid to maintaining principles such as informed consent, confidentiality/anonymity, beneficence, and information management to protect participants from any harm.

5.2.3.8 Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter presented the description of the research process. It provided the information of the method that was used when the researcher was conducting the research study. The research study was guided by a qualitative approach which assisted the researcher to be able to get in-depth information because it allowed open-ended questions and participants could freely share their experiences and express themselves about the challenges they came across as rural social workers and how they managed their work-related challenges. The qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to utilise three research designs namely, explorative, descriptive and contextual. The population for the research study were all rural social workers appointed at the DSD district office within the boundaries of the Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities, Mpumalanga province. This geographic area was purposefully chosen by the researcher because little is known about the place and the social workers working in this area. Because the whole population could not be studied, sampling was chosen for the study clearly explaining the criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of the study. The sampling was purposefully chosen and it was helpful because participants who were chosen were the experts on the topic based on their experiences Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, observation and taking notes. This helped to get rich data from participants because the researcher did not rely on one method to collect data. This was then followed by a detailed discussion of the method of data analysis explaining how data was organised after it was collected starting from the large information to getting themes and codes, this was guided by Tesch's eight steps. The study then verified the collected data. Ethical principles of social research that were considered in this study were getting informed consent, confidentiality, beneficence, and information management.

5.2.4 Conclusion - Chapter 4: Conclusions and findings

This section provides data analysis findings and conclusions as discussed in chapter 4. The data was analysed based on the responses of 12 participants. The research study focused on the participants' years of experience, length of service in rural areas in years, experience of workload, and work description. The participants were rural social workers appointed at the DSD district offices within the boundaries of Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities, Mpumalanga Province. Looking at the biographical information of participants in table 3.1 all the social workers have more than four years of experience practising as social workers which meets the inclusion criteria as planned in the introduction chapter.

Table 3.1 shows that the participants had been practising in the rural areas for between five and 13 years. The table shows that six participants had worked in urban areas and after a year or two they were employed in rural areas. However, another six participants only had experience working in rural areas. Though they have different experiences practising as rural social workers, it seems they all seem to agree that the work in the rural areas they are overworked. Almost all the participants reported doing generic social work, only two participants reported working with families specifically.

The five themes that were discussed according to the participant's responses consisted of experience of working in rural area, social work challenges faced in rural area, coping mechanisms of social workers in rural areas, resilience, and suggestions for social work practice.

5.2.4.1 THEME 1: EXPERIENCE OF WORKING IN RURAL AREA

This theme derives from the question; how have you experienced practising social work in rural areas? In a discussion of the first theme participants shared their experience of working in the rural areas and two subthemes emerged of positive and negative experiences. Some enjoyed working in the rural areas while others shared their negative experiences of working in the rural areas.

5.2.4.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Positive experiences

Looking at the responses of participants made the researcher realise that those who had positive experiences of working in rural areas had skills, knowledge, talents, and capabilities that helped them to manage work-related challenges. Participants shared that when their clients came back to give them feedback it did not only make them happy, but it fulfilled their personal rewards of feeling that they were making a difference in people's lives. Therefore, positive experiences of working in rural areas was also associated with seeing a positive impact of the social worker's intervention at a later stage. This led the researcher to conclude that rural social workers who tend to experience positive experiences regardless of the challenges, trauma, and hardship that they experience in performing their daily duties showed

resilience, as they tended to have the ability to look past their challenges to find solutions and possibilities in providing services to their clients and taking care of themselves.

5.2.4.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Negative experiences

All participants had their own unique experiences that allowed them to be resilient. However, not all participants shared positive experiences of working in rural areas even though they continued working in these areas. The negative experiences that were shared by participants were mostly associated with the challenges, trauma, and frustrations whist delivering services to their clients. The negative experiences of clients had a lot to do with their safety and the negative impact of work and community. Participants were frustrated by a lot of challenges, however, being stuck in the same position for more than a decade seemed to negatively affect them because as much as they saw the positive impact they made in the community, being in one position seemed to give them a feeling that they were not growing and not progressing in life.

They shared that the first years of being employed felt great and at some point, they felt that their needs were taken into consideration however as they spent more time working in the rural areas, they tended to lose their excitement because of challenges within the organisation that delayed their service delivery and being stuck in the same position. The researcher concluded that the first few years of being employed in the organisation seemed to be exciting and fulfilling which felt like a honeymoon stage, however after a few years being in the same position and experiencing the same challenges it seemed to demoralise and demotivate some rural social workers as stated by participants. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the DSD should consider creating senior posts for social workers who have enough working experience.

5.2.4.1.3 Subtheme 1.3: Practice unrelated to study (Unpreparedness to work in the rural areas)

Participants were of the view that what they learned from school was not enough to prepare them to work in rural areas. Some said that what they learned at tertiary did not apply to rural settings with a belief that school based their education and training on a western approach, side-lining the needs and challenges of rural people. They experienced that they found it difficult to adjust to working in the rural areas with its challenges because they felt they were not prepared enough for being rural social workers. This left participants feeling that their needs were ignored because little was known about rural people and their needs. The researcher realised that little was known about the experiences of rural social workers especially in managing work-related challenges.

The lack of knowledge and training regarding the rural areas had left participants of this study feeling that what they learned in their higher institutions was not practical when it came to implementing the work in the rural areas because of the different setting, belief systems and cultural values. However, due to rural social worker's resilience, many rural social workers learned more about their community which tended to help them know what worked in the community and what did not. Being resilient meant learning from mistakes and studying what the community needed enabled them to successfully adjust to working in the rural areas. This led to the researcher concluding that universities should introduce rural social work modules to prepare students about rural work and its challenges. DSD should take it as their responsibility as well to organise workshops for rural social workers with the aim of teaching them how to manage the work-related challenges

5.2.4.2 THEME 2: SOCIAL WORK CHALLENGES FACED IN RURAL AREAS

The participants had differing experiences of working in rural areas, but they seemed to agree that working in the rural areas is challenging and they shared the challenges which seemed to be common to amongst all of them. The challenges that existed within the rural setting did not only affect new social workers who were trying to adjust but also affected social workers who were born and raised in the rural areas. This shows that rural social work has its own unique challenges that do not only affect service delivery but also affects officially working in rural areas. This includes rural social workers, as mentioned by participants of this study, who experience many challenges working in the rural areas where they find themselves having to deal with scarce resources, improper infrastructure and community members failing to understand the role of social workers.

5.2.4.2.1 Subtheme 2.1: Lack of internal resources

Participants felt that they had too much work because they were not specialising in anything which in turn caused the community members to rely heavily on them. This made them feel that they were overworked because even though the presented problem was not a problem that concerned social workers, they still reported the problem to the social workers which then led to social workers seeing too many clients whose problems were supposed to be reported to other departments. Furthermore, participants complained that the population had been growing in their areas, however at the number of social workers responsible for the area had not changed, which created a high case load which made social workers feel that they were not coping. Therefore, this study calls for the DSD to hire more social workers because it was noted by participants that they ended up not doing justice to cases and focusing on the quantitative instead of the qualitative. A shortage of social workers may lead to other social workers burning out due to the pressure of a high workload (Kufeldt et al. 2021:124; Sithole 2017:303).

5.2.4.2.2 Subtheme 2.2: Lack of external resources

Participants noted that they were not only struggling with internal resources, but they found themselves having to deal with a lack of external resources. This included the lack of referral services such as psychologists, psychiatrists, and treatment centres as noted by participants of this study. This caused long travelling distances for rural social workers who were accompanying their clients to get the required services. This goes to show that the lack of external resources does not only affect a social worker's clients, but it also affects service delivery because they spend more time and energy providing services to one client whilst at the same time other clients are still in the queue to be assisted. This may leave clients unattended as the social worker may be too busy attending other cases.

5.2.4.2.3 Subtheme 2.3: Community understanding of social work

Amongst other challenges that social workers find themselves having to deal with, they must deal with community members who do not understand their role as social workers and others who assume that rural social workers should do their work and at the same time dictate how they should live their personal lives. It was also reported by participants that their roles were not only misunderstood by community members, but it came as a surprise that other stakeholders also did not understand the rural social worker's role because they tended to refer clients whose problems were unrelated to social workers and the DSD. The other issue that was raised by participants was a lack of privacy because their clients tended to also be their neighbours and since the rural setting is usually small and community members happen to know every one's personal information, it subjects rural social workers to their clients knowing a lot of their personal information.

The researcher concluded that rural social workers have an extra duty in ensuring that they are recognised, and their role is known in the community unlike other professions that are obvious within the community. Moreover, a social worker's job tends to have an impact on their personal lives because they are exposed in their community and they may feel that the community members have an expectation of how they should live their lives which may cause social workers to isolate themselves to avoid being judged by their community or clients on how they live their lives.

5.2.4.2.4 Subtheme 2.4: Community infrastructure

The community infrastructure was noted to be a problem for rural social workers delivering services to their clients, especially roads that were not properly arranged and maintained. Participants complained that they spend a lot of time travelling to conduct home visits to clients because they either get lost because they cannot use GPS to find a house because there is no network coverage in the area, or because they must stop the car and walk because of the unsafe, poorly maintained roads that can

damage their vehicles. The researcher concluded, based on the clients' responses and the literature review, that a lack of infrastructure and poorly maintained infrastructure has a negative impact on rural social worker's in conducting their work. As this gave social workers extra duties to travel long distances and at times being stuck with their intervention since there is less infrastructure within their community.

5.2.4.3   THEME 3: COPING MECHANISMS OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN RURAL AREAS

This theme answered the question of how participants manage with the work-related challenges that they experience. Two subthemes derived from this theme were personal, and internal factors.

5.2.4.3.1   Subtheme 3.1: Personal factors

Participants, in response to the question regarding how they coped with their work-related challenges, shared that they use their own resources instead of relying on the DSD to provide them with anything. They explained that for the sake of the clients and to ensure that they have a positive impact it sometimes called for them to use their own resources, such as laptops, internet, stationery, and cars. This seemed as though it was not a matter of choice, but participants felt that it was something that they must do to meet deadlines and at the same time deliver the service to clients.

Setting boundaries was mentioned by the participants to be helpful in managing their work-related challenges. They stated that reminding themselves of their limits and that they cannot do everything at once helped them to carefully plan the tasks that needed to be done on a daily and weekly basis. This also meant that they were not allowing clients to report cases when they were not on duty, but rather they referred them to the office to be assisted by social workers who were on duty. The researcher concluded that setting boundaries is essential as it may help them from becoming emotional drained or having burnout. The researcher is of the opinion that setting boundaries also helps protect rural social workers from clients interfering in their personal lives and reminds them to take one task at a time instead of doing everything at once.

Participants mentioned that having a loved one, whether it is a life-time partner, husband or family member, who is there for you, providing emotional support and always listening when they talk about the stressors and frustrations that they go through at work, was helpful in rural social workers being able to cope with the pressure, stress, and trauma they go through. Participants tended to value the support they received from their loved ones because they believed that if it were not for the support they received from them, they would not be able to cope with their work-related challenges. The researcher concluded that having emotional support is essential for one's wellbeing and tends to make a positive impact in dealing with work-related challenges because whenever participants felt stressed, confused, and demotivated, they would have someone at home to talk to. Therefore, having someone who understands

the line of work you are doing, and the pressure and demands that come with the work seemed to be a blessing as it has proven to have helped the participants of this study. The coping mechanisms of rural social workers did not end with their personal factors, but they also made use of internal factors to cope.

5.2.4.3.2　Subtheme 3.2: Internal factors

The internal factors that were mentioned by participants were that having good relationships with supervision, and colleagues made a lot of difference in helping participants cope. They believed that the two factors helped them a lot in gaining resilience. It was stated by participants that whenever they had a problem, they found that it was helpful to talk to their supervisor who understood the frustrations that they were going through because they had been a social worker themselves doing the exact job faced with similar challenges and they encouraged them whenever they felt stuck or overwhelmed with work. However, before matters escalated to the supervisor participants made use of peer supervision from their colleagues. Participants stated that they found having good relationships with their colleagues helpful in helping them to cope and gain resiliency because they helped one another resolve cases, accompanied one another when driving long distances and provided one another with emotional support.

The researcher concluded, based on the two factors provided by the participants, that it is important to make use of all the support that rural social workers can get from their loved ones, however this does not leave out supervision from peers and supervisors. More importantly, social workers should be taking care of themselves first and ensuring that they are coping before taking care of the needs of others. Most importantly social workers should note that as much as they want to make and see a difference in their communities, as well as in their clients, that should not mean that they can do everything on their own and that they can do everything at once. This implies that they should set boundaries for their clients so that clients understand not to interfere in their personal or spare time. Furthermore, rural social workers should ensure that they team up with other stakeholders and form strong bonds with their supervisors and colleagues because they spend more time at work with those people.

5.2.4.4　THEME 4: RESILIENCE

The theme of this question was derived from the question, "Please explain your understanding of resiliency and what it means to be resilient". Two subthemes emerged from the theme, participants explained their understanding of resilience and how they applied resiliency when dealing with their work-related challenges. The responses of participants were as follows

5.2.4.4.1   Subtheme 4.1: Understanding of resilience

Participants were asked to explain their understanding of resiliency and many of the participants started by defining resiliency and then explained their understanding of the word resiliency. Most definitions revolved around having the ability to bounce back when faced with challenges, trauma, or adversity. From the definitions of the participants and their explanations clearly show that being resilient is about focusing on the positives while there are tests and tribulations. In their definition it was clearly indicated that to be resilient means that you must have been through a difficult phase that is meant to break, destroy, or cause disruption in one's wellbeing or productiveness, but still having the ability to rise above the challenges, be productive and still enjoy doing what you love the most. Participants made use of words such as to push, withstand, do your best and persist in the midst of challenges.

The definitions of the participants helped the researcher to conclude that resiliency is an ability to endure, survive and continue doing your best or living your best life regardless of challenges, misfortunes, and trauma that one faces in life. The researcher is of the view that the participants of this study who were rural social workers appointed at the DSD district offices within the boundaries of Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka municipalities are resilient. The researcher believes that they are resilient because they reported to have faced so many challenges including a lack of resources to implement their work, putting their lives at risk by being threatened by violent clients and having to deal with improper infrastructure. Furthermore, participants found themselves being used as a 'dump site' for unresolved issues, community members interfering in their personal lives, and being stuck with clients due to lack of referral places. However, even though the rural social workers were going through the challenges as stated by the participants, they still found satisfaction with their work, and they still enjoyed working in the rural areas.

5.2.4.4.2   Subtheme 4.2: Application of resilience – perseverance

There are a number of applications that were stated to be used by participants to be resilient. Participants spoke of reminding themselves that the work that they were doing was not for them, but for the benefit of the community. This kept participants trying to do their best because they were of the view that if they stopped caring or doing their level best then their community would be disadvantaged. Participants also spoke of never giving up, they shared that whenever they did not understand something they did not just accept defeat, but they work hard to learn from others or learn from their mistakes. Therefore, this gave them the energy to keep being persistent even though it was not easy to implement the work in the rural areas due to the challenges that they were faced with on daily basis.

Participants spoke of how liaising and linking clients with what they need, helped them a lot in being resilient because this helped them solve cases and at the same time they would not be stuck with clients or unresolved cases. Therefore, this meant that having good relationships with other stakeholders was necessary and important for the wellbeing of rural social workers along with their clients. The participants said they had accepted that they were seen as superheroes to clients because they were the only government office that was nearest to them and that they did not have any other option to get help hence they looked up to them. This made the participants feel as though their role was significant in the community, hence they kept pushing even in the midst of challenges. Being seen as a superhero may add the pressure of working extra hard to avoid disappointing those who look up to you. However, more than any of the methods that are applied to become resilient, participants spoke of reminding themselves why they wanted to become a social worker in the first place. It was explained by participants that whenever they remembered their reasons, it reminded them of their love for this profession and that they wanted to be help the most vulnerable and be change agents. All this seems to have given the participants the strength to draw their resiliency.

5.2.4.5 THEME 5: SUGGESTIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

5.2.4.5.1 Subtheme 5.1: Personal

The recommendations are made based on the suggestions of the participants of what they think is helpful in being a resilient rural social worker. Suggestions for rural social workers and social workers who are considering working in the rural areas were made in terms of the personal things that can be done by social workers to have resiliency in managing the work-related challenges. Participants suggested that rural social workers should enhance their education, familiarise themselves with their community and motivate themselves.

Education

It was suggested that rural social workers should further their studies and not just stop with the honours degree they once received at university but continue reading and equipping themselves with knowledge that relates to their professions or to develop themselves to be able to improve the service standard and at the same time contribute to the body of knowledge. It is believed that when rural social workers focus on equipping themselves it makes a lot of difference because they will not concentrate on the negative but rather equip themselves with knowledge that will help them find solutions, as they would have gained knowledge, skills and a better perspective. Furthermore, when rural social workers equip themselves with knowledge, they will be able to be change agents, understand their client's problems and have better intervention for their clients' presented problems. Moreover, it is important that rural social workers

equip themselves with knowledge because the community looks up to them for information as they happen to be the first stop for clients who seek assistance.

This leads to the conclusion of the researcher that rural social workers will be in a better position of gaining resiliency and dealing with their work-related challenges when equipping themselves with more knowledge and skills. The researcher also supports the notion that rural social workers should equip themselves with knowledge not only related to their profession but with other departments as well, so that they can empower their clients with knowledge and skills as it is their role as social workers to enhance and promote the wellbeing of their clients. The researcher also recommends that the DSD should have workshops or training for rural social workers that is aimed at helping them cope with work-related challenges and most importantly they should aim at building the resiliency of rural social workers.

Familiarise yourself with the community

Participants were of the view that it is significant that rural social workers familiarise themselves with the community that they serve. They stated that rural social workers should be aware of the people they work with, the dynamics that exist within the community, values, and belief systems. Participants believed that when rural social workers know their community and the people that they work with they will cope better because they will know the people they are working with and that will help rural social workers have better interventions that will be relevant to the needs of the community or their clients. The researcher concluded that rural social workers should give themselves a chance to study the community even if it means asking the community about their needs instead of thinking or making decisions for them.

The researcher realised that being born and raised in a community does not automatically mean it will be easier to cope when working within the same community as was confirmed by participants that grew up in the rural areas, but they still found it challenging to be rural social workers working in their communities. Therefore, the researcher recommends that rural social workers do a needs analysis, know who holds power in the community and familiarise themselves with other departments to be able to refer their clients. Social workers should know the clients within the community and their vulnerability, and at the same time be trained and skilled in being sensitive to their vulnerability (Miller, 2012:67). This calls for social workers making it a point to know their clients are coping within their community, household income, debts and management. Furthermore, to understand the community social workers must know their community's strengths, weaknesses, functions, needs and resources (Miller, 2012:67).

Motivation

Most participants spoke of the importance of motivating themselves whenever they felt they were overwhelmed by their work. Participants did not only share self-motivation as important in helping one to cope but they suggested that other rural social workers remind themselves of the passion they had when they started working as social workers and, most importantly, remind themselves why they wanted to be social workers in the first place. They believed that remembering why they wanted to become social workers helped because it reminded them that they wanted to make a difference to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people. Furthermore, they believed that social work is not a just a profession, but it was a calling, and it is not everyone who can do it because it needs people who believe they are called to help people, courageous and eager to make a positive change in people's lives.

This gave the researcher the impression that rural social workers who are likely to have resiliency are those who are passionate about their work and believe that they are called to assist and make a difference to the most disadvantaged people. This calls for passionate social workers to empower those who are not passionate by sharing with them what helps to stay passionate regardless of their work-related challenges. Based on the findings about the challenges that rural social workers have in delivering services to their clients, the researcher recommends and concludes that rural social workers should be proud of the work they do and remember that they are making a positive difference in people's lives. Most importantly people who want to become social workers especially rural social workers must have a passion to work with people, to make a positive change to the most vulnerable individuals and take the profession of social work as a calling to accomplish their work out of the goodness of their hearts.

5.2.4.5.2   Subtheme 5.2: Organisational

The recommendations and conclusions were made based on the findings in chapter 4. The conclusions were made for the DSD to help rural social workers to have resiliency experience in managing their work-related challenges. Recommendations and conclusions that were directly aimed at the DSD to ensure that their employees' network with other departments or stakeholders, allow specialisation on programmes and make their rural social workers feel appreciated and recognised through an increase of remuneration, incentives and allowances.

Networking

The researcher concluded that being a rural social worker is a demanding duty that may cause frustration and negative thoughts. Therefore, it is necessary to network and have a good relationship with other stakeholders as it was proven in this study that networking and having good relationships with other stakeholders is important because it helps to make the referral system easy, to provide effective services

to clients, to have information to share with clients and, most importantly, networking helps social workers to have resiliency in managing work-related challenges.

Specialisation

Participants complained a lot about having a heavy workload because of having too many cases which in turn causes frustration and an inability to produce quality work. The researcher therefore concluded that doing generic social work is the result of rural social workers having too many cases and lacking a focus on other cases Therefore, the researcher concluded based on the findings and recommendations of the participants that rural social workers should consider specialising in programmes offered by the DSD as this will help them have a programme for their work and it will limit the confusion of moving from one intervention to a completely different one.

Remuneration

The researcher came to the conclusion based on the findings of chapter 4, theme 5, that the DSD should consider having rural allowances, increases in salaries and incentives for rural social workers as they have expressed their dissatisfaction with their current earnings considering the amount of work they have, and the type of jobs they do which traumatises and puts their lives at risk. As much as rural social workers may have a passion and feel as though they have calling helping people, they also have a need to feel that they are appreciated and recognised for their demanding job (Daley 2021:24).

5.2.4.6 Conclusion of the chapter

In concluding the chapter, the findings of the research were presented and summarised based on the information obtained from the 12 participants that participated in this research study. All five themes, namely; positive and negative experiences, challenges of working in rural areas, coping mechanisms of rural social workers, participant's understanding of resilience and how they apply resiliency in their work as rural social workers, and lastly, participants made suggestions to other social workers who are working in rural areas or considering working in rural areas to be resilient whilst working in rural areas, were summarised and concluded.

5.2.4.7 Conclusions about the limitations of the study

- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the study could not be carried out as planned. The researcher had to opt for telephonic and virtual interview meetings because the at time she started the interviews South Africa was in lockdown and the researcher had to protect herself and the participants from the spread of Covid-19.

- The study was done with a few participants therefore the findings cannot be generalised for all rural social workers.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that follow below are based on the findings of this study and the recommendations are pertaining to rural social work practice, social work education and continued personal development.

5.3.1 Recommendations pertaining to rural social work practice

- Participants recommended that rural social workers should familiarise themselves with the community by knowing their community's strengths, weaknesses, functions, needs and resources within the community. This can be done by doing community profiling, community meetings and community dialogues, establishing and further developing networks with resources in the community/ other departments, business owners, clinics, etc.

- Participants recommended that rural social workers should network with other stakeholders to be able to improve service delivery and make the referral system easier, provide effective services to clients, have information to share with clients and, most importantly, learn how other stakeholders manage their work-related challenges.

- In terms of shortage of social workers leading to an excessive workload the researcher recommends employing other social service workers, such as community development workers, child and youth care workers, social development workers and volunteers to ease the workload of rural social workers.

- The researcher recommends and concludes that those rural social workers who lack the zeal for being rural social workers should learn from those who are still passionate about being rural social workers and how they manage their work-related challenges.

- Specialising in programmes offered by the DSD and being responsible for one programme at a time. This will help rural social workers to learn more about the programmes they offer and it will help reduce their workload.

- Considering the lack of knowledge by the community members in understanding the role of social workers, it is recommended that rural social workers should educate the community about their roles in the community through awareness campaigns and community dialogue.

- The researcher recommends that rural social workers should deal with the trauma they come across at work through counselling, recreational activities provided by the employer and rotation of work.

5.3.2 Recommendations pertaining to social work education and continued personal development

- Participants recommended that other rural social workers should continue furthering their studies for personal growth and development.

- Participants recommended that rural social workers should consider specialising in programmes offered by the DSD as it will help them have a programme for their work and it will limit the confusion of moving from one intervention to a completely different one. This can be done by learning more about programmes that they are passionate about so that they master them to avoid losing focus.

- Participants recommended to the DSD that they should organise seminars and workshops for rural social workers to be educated about the issues existing in the rural areas and ways in which these challenges can be resolved or managed.

- Participants recommended that social work training in universities include rural social work in their training curriculum so that when social workers are employed in rural areas they are knowledgeable and do not experience issues of adaption.

- Participants recommended to universities that they should ensure that student social workers doing their practical social work training are placed in rural areas to ensure student social workers understand the belief systems and cultural values of rural communities.

5.3.3 Further and future research

The following are the recommendations based on the research findings and the conclusions are made based on the contributions of participants identified in chapter 4 and drawn by the researcher. The recommendations pertaining to this study are made for rural social workers, DSD, further and future research.

5.3.3.1 Further research

Based on the research findings of this study, it is recommended that the following be undertaken in future continued research studies.

- The researcher recommends that further research should be undertaken and possibly involve the other three districts of Mpumalanga Province, namely, Ehlanzeni, Gert Sibande and Nkangala district. This will help rural social workers in gaining knowledge about the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges. As noted in chapter one that there is less literature about the resiliency of rural social workers as many researchers focused on the challenges of rural social workers. This was supported by Shier and Graham (2013:03) that many researcher's notices deficits in rural areas, such as scarcity of resources, poverty, and inadequate health care, however coping abilities of these professionals of these professionals go unnoticed.

- The researcher recommends that further research be undertaken by other researchers interested in the resiliency of rural social workers using a quantitative approach to gain more information about the resiliency experience in managing their work-related challenges. The quantitative approach would allow the use of standardised and statistical procedures to collect and analyse numerical data and to draw conclusions about the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their work-related challenges. This was noted in chapter one that work stress affects wide range of professionals such as social workers, however there is limited information about the coping abilities and the strength of rural areas that enable rural social workers to cope with the challenges (Scales et al. 2013:92).

- The researcher recommends that further research should be conducted in other provinces to examine how other rural social workers manage their work-related challenges. The researcher realised that more researchers had developed an interest in researching about resiliency however their studies focused more on transitioning of vulnerable students into university and children faced hardship and severe stress but tended to have positive development (Refer to chapter one).

5.3.3.2   Future research

The following recommendations are made for future research that can be conducted to cover other gaps that were discovered whilst this research study was conducted.

- The experiences, challenges and coping strategies of rural social workers working in Mpumalanga Province. No research has been done in Mpumalanga about the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of rural social workers. The researcher realised this when searching for literature to support her study that there was no research conducted regarding experiences of social workers with regards to their challenges or coping strategies.

- The factors contributing to the resiliency of rural social workers. In the researcher's experience of working in the rural areas vulnerable individuals who often experiencing trauma, social workers

themselves also face challenges many challenges of working in the rural areas. However, not much is known about it because social workers working in the rural areas were not given a platform to talk about the work challenges they experienced and their resiliency of working in the rural areas. This was supported by (Ambrosino et al. 2012:258; Glick, McHale & King, 2020:209; Pierson, 2016:159; Reamer, 2013:130) in chapter one that rural social workers also face trauma associated with the stress of working in the rural areas hence they after few months of working they become demotivated. However, it is interesting how other social workers manage to cope even though face with vast challenges (Ambrosino et al. 2012:258). As Ellis et al. 2017:262 believed that researcher tended to focus more on what is wrong with individuals who faced high-adversity conditions than what is write about them.

- The positive and negative factors contributing to the rural social workers' duties. The safety of rural social workers in providing services to their clients. It was noted in chapter four that safety of social workers appears to be a challenge, hence Alpaslan and Schenck (2012:383), recommended that the safety of social workers be on the agenda for future research. This was supported by Lamothe et al. (2018:308) and Gould et al. (2017:02), that social workers tend to find themselves at risk and becoming victims of physical, emotional, psychological, and verbal harm. Furthermore, social workers were noted to be frontline of dealing with frustrated people due to poverty, unemployment and violence within the community (Gould et al. 2017:02).

Recommendations were made for social work practice, training and education. The recommendations were also made for further and future research.

5.4   SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This was the last chapter of the research report which summarised all the chapters in terms of conclusions and recommendations, chapter one was introduced to the reader through a general introduction and background of the study, indicating the goal and objectives of the study. Chapter two highlighted research and literature about the resiliency of rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. The application of the research process and how it unfolded was presented in-depth as chapter three. This was followed by chapter four entailing the research findings per identified themes with the incorporation of a literature control. The conclusions and recommendations chapter concludes this research report about the resiliency of rural social workers in managing work-related challenges.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Adams, W.C. 2015. *Conducting semi-structured interviews*, USA: Jossey-Bass.

Adamson, C., L. Beddoe, and A. Davys. 2014. *Building Resilient Practitioners: Definitions and Practitioner Understandings*. British Journal of Social Work 44 (3): 522–541.

Allen, M. 2017. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Alpaslan, N. & Schenck, R. 2012. Challenges related to working conditions experienced by social workers in rural areas. *Social Work/ Maatskaplike Werk,* 48(4).

Alvesson, M. & Sandberg, J. 2013. *Constructing Research Questions: Doing Interesting Research*. London: Sage.

Ambrosino, R., Heffernan, J. & Shuttlesworth, G. 2012. *Social work and social welfare: An introduction*. UK: Brooks/Cole.

Anderson, R. (2019). Intuitive inquiry: Inviting transformation and breakthrough insights in qualitative research.*Qualitative Psychology, 6*(3), 312–319. https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000144

Babbie, E. 2013. *The Basics of Social Research*, 13th edition. USA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Babbie, E. 2014. *The Basics of Social research*, 6th edition. USA: Wadsworth.

Babbie, E. 2017. *The Basics of Social research*, 7th edition. USA: Wadsworth.

Babbie, E. 2020. The Practice of Social Research, 15th edition. USA. Wadsworth.

Bakalinsky, R. 1982. Generic Practice in Graduate Social Work Curricula: *A study of educators' experiences and attitudes*, 18(3), 46-54.

Baker, R. 1975. Towards Generic Social Work practice-A Review and some Innovations: *The British Journal of Social Work*, 5(2), 193-215.

Barbour, R. 2014. *Introducing qualitative research: A student's guide*, 2nd edition. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Bonanno, G.A. & Diminich, E.D. 2013. Annual Research Review: Positive adjustment to adversity – trajectories of minimal–impact resilience and emergent resilience. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 54 (4): 378–401.

Boswel, C. & Cannon, S. (eds). 2017. *Introduction to Nursing Research: Incorporating Evidence-Based Practice*. USA: Jones and Bartlett Learning.

Bjorn, A., Laurent, A., Mowsianiak, H. & Olsen, S.I. 2018. *Goal definition*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-56475-3-7 .

Briney, K. 2015. *Data management for researchers: Organize, maintain and share your data for research success.* UK: Pelagic Publishing.

Brink, H., Van der Walt, C. & Van Rensburg, G. 2018. *Fundamentals of research methodology for health care professionals*, 4th edition. Cape Town: Juta.

Brown, A.R., Walters, J., Jones, A. & Akinsola, O. 2017. Rural Social Work: Recruitment, Job Satisfaction, Burnout, and Turnover. *Contemporary Rural Social Work,* 9(1):1-23.

Burns, N. & Grove, S.K. 2021.*The practice of nursing research: Appraisal, Synthesis, and Generation of Evidence*,9th edition. USA: Elsevier.

Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary. 2013. *Cambridge Advanced Learners dictionary and thesaurus.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carey, M. 2017. *Qualitative research skills for social work: Theory and Practice.* United Kingdom: Routledge Publishers.

Chesnay, M.D. 2015. *Nursing Research Using Phenomenology: Qualitative Designs and Methods in Nursing.* USA: Springer.

Collins English Dictionary. 2018. [online]. Retrieved from: https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/challenge (Accessed 31/12/2019).

Collins, D., Jordan, C. & Coleman, H. 2013. *An introduction to family social work*, 4th edition. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning.

Collins, S. 2007. Social workers, resilience, positive emotions and optimism practice. *Social Work in Action,* 19(4):255-269.

Collins, S. 2017. Social Workers and Resilience Revisited. *Practice Social Work in Action*, 29:2, 85-105.

Comer, M.J. & Stephens, T.E. 2016. *An HR Guide to workplace fraud and criminal behaviour: Recognition, prevention and management.* USA: Routledge.

Corcoran, K.J. & Roberts, A.R. (Eds). 2015. *Social worker's desk reference*, 3rd edition. USA: Oxford University Press.

Corey, G. 2016. *The theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy*, 10th edition. Belmont, CA: Brooks Cole Thompson.

Creswell, J.W. 2014. *Research design. Qualitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. 2016. *30 Essential skills for the qualitative researcher.* London: SAGE.

Creswell, J.W. 2017. Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches, 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. 2018. *Research design: Qualitative quantitative & mixed methods approach*, 5th edition. Los Angeles: Sage.

Curtis, B. & Curtis, C. 2019. *Social research: A practical introduction*. London: Sage.

Dahlin, L., Cederblad, M., Antonovsky, A. & Hagnell, O. 1990. Childhood vulnerability and adult invincibility. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 82(3):228-232.

Daley, M.R. 2021. *Rural Social Work in the 21st Century: Serving Individuals, Families, and Communities in the countryside*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Daniel, J. 2012. *Preparing to make sampling choices in sampling essentials: Practical guidelines for making sampling choices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

De las Olas Palma- García, M. & Hombrados-Mendieta .2017. Resilience and personality in social work and social workers. *International Social Work*, 60(1), 19-31. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872814537856

De Noronha Vaz, T., Nijkamp, P. & Rastoin, J. (Eds). 2016. *Traditional Food Production and Rural Sustainable Development: A European Challenge*. USA: Routlege.

DeJonckheere, M. & Vaughn, L.M. 2019. Semistructured interviewing in primary care research: A balance of relationship and rigour. *Family Medicine and Community Health* 2019, 7.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. 2017. *The SAGE book of qualitative research*, 5th edition. London: SAGE.

Dhavaleshwar, C.U. 2016. The role of social worker in community development. *International Research Journal of Sciences*, 5 (10), 61-63.

Dickinson, C., Trillo, A.H & Crossland, M. 2022. *Low Vision - E-Book: Principles and Management*. India: Elsevier.

Dlamini, T.T. & Sewpaul, V. 2015. Rhetoric versus reality in social work practice: Political, neoliberal and managerial influence. *Social work,* 51(4):467-478.

Donnellan, H. & Jack, G. 2014. *Survival Guide for Newly Qualified Social workers: Hitting the Ground Running*. London: Jessica Kingsly Publishers.

Dykes, G. 2016. Coping, Resilience and Posttraumatic growth: Adverse childhood experiences and social students. *The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher,* 28(1):18-35.

Dziegielewski, S.F. & Holliman, D.C. 2013. *The Changing Face of Health Care Social Work: Opportunities and Challenges for Professional Practice*, 4th edition. New York: Springer.

Ellis, B.J., Bianchi, J. & Griskevicius, W.E. 2017. Beyond Risk and Protective Factors: An Adaptation-Based Approach to Resilience: Perspectives on Psychological Science. *Association for psychological science*, 12(4) 561–587.

Erikson**,** E. H. (1994). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company

Fisher, M.A. 2013. *The ethics of conditional confidentiality: A practice model for mental health professionals.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Flick, U. 2017. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*, 1st edition**.** London: Sage.

Flick, U. 2018. *Designing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Flick, U. 2020. *Introducing Research Methodology: Thinking Your Way Through Your Research Project*. London: Sage.

Flynn, C. & McDermott, F. 2016. *Doing Research in Social Work and Social Care: The Journey from Student to Practitioner Researcher*. London: Sage.

Forero, R., Nahidi, S., De Costa, J., Mohsin, M., Fitzgerald, G., Gibson, N., McCarthy, S. & Aboagye-Sarfo, P. 2017. Application of four-dimension criteria to assess rigour of qualitative research in emergency medicine. *BMC health services research*, 18(1), 120. doi:10.1186/s12913-018-2915-2.

Garmezy, N. 1971. Vulnerability research and the issue of primary prevention. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 41(1):101-116.

Gibs, G.G. 2018. Analysis qualitative data, 2nd edition. London: Sage.

Gibson, J.W. & Hodgetts, R.M. 2013. *Readings and Exercises in Organizational Behavior*. USA: Academic Press, INC.

Gitterman, A. & Knight, C. 2016. Promoting Resilience Through Social Work Practice with Groups: Implications for the Practice and Field Curricula. *Journal of Social Work Education*, (52)4: 448–461.

Glick, J.E., McHale, S M. & King, V. Rural Families and Communities in the United States: Facing Challenges and Leveraging Opportunities. USA: Springer.

Golightley, M. & Goemans, R. 2020. *Social work and Mental Health*, 7th edition. UK: Sage.

Gould, C., Mufamadi, D., Hsiao, C. & Amisi, M. 2017. Reducing violence in South Africa: from policing to prevention. ISS Policy Brief 106, October 2017.

Grant, L. & Kinman, G. 2014. *Developing resilience for social work practice*. UK: Red Globe Press.

Gray, D.E. 2014. *Doing Research in the Real World*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Gray, M., Aglias, k. & Mupedziwa, R. 2017. The expansion of developmental social work in Southern and East Africa: Opportunities and challenges for social work field programmes. *International Social Work*, 4 (1):1-14.

Green, R.W. 2012. *The life of Nelson Mandela*. UK: Library of Cataloging–in–Publication.

Greer, J. 2016. *Resilience and personal effectiveness for workers*. UK: Sage.

Grinnell, R.M., Gabor, P.A. & Unrau, Y.A. 2019. *Program Evaluation for Social Workers: Foundations of Evidence-Based Programs*, 8th edition. USA: Oxford University Press.

Grove, S.K., Burns, N. & Gray, J.R. 2013. *The practice of nursing research: Appraisal, synthesis and generation of evidence*, 7th edition. Missouri: Elsevier.

Grove, S.K., Gray, J.R. & Burns, N. 2015. *Understanding nursing research: Building an evidence-based practice*, 6th edition. USA: Elsevier.

Grove, S.K., Gray, J.R. & Burns, N. 2021. *Understanding nursing research: Building an evidence-based practice*, 9th edition. China: Elsevier.

Guba, E.G. 1985. Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 29(2):75-91.

Hammersley, M. & Traianou, A. 2012. *Ethics in Qualitative Research: Controversies and Context*. London: Sage.

Hays, DG., Wood, C., Dahl, H & Kirk-Jenkins, A. 2016. Methodological rigor in journal of counseling & development qualitative research articles: A 15-Year Review. Journal of Counseling & Development, 94:172-183.

Hessle, S. 2014. *Human Rights and Social Equality: Challenges for Social Work-Development Volume 1*. England: ASHGATE.

Holloway, I. & Wheeler, S. 2010. *Qualitative research in nursing and healthcare*, 3rd edition. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

Horwitz, M. 1998. Social worker trauma: Building *resilience* in child protection social workers. Smith College Studies. *Social Work*, 68(3): 363–377.

Hunt, H., Pollock, A., Campbell, P., Estcourt, L. & Brutton, G. 2018. *An introduction to overviews of reviews: Planning a relevant research question and objective for an overview.* London: British medical journal. Vol 7:03.

Humble, N.M., Lewis, M.L., Scott, D.L. & Herzog, J.R. 2013. Challenges in Rural Social Work Practice: When Support Groups Contain Your Neighbours, Church Members, and the PTA. *Social Work With Groups*, 36 (2): 249-258.

Houser, J. 2018. *Nursing research: Research, using and creating evidence*. Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Ingram, R. 2013. Exploring emotions within formal and informal forums: MesSages from social work practitioners. *The British Journal of Social Work* 45(3): 896-913.

Isaias, P. & Nunes, M.B. 2013. *Information Systems Research and Exploring Social Artifacts: Approaches and Methodologies*. USA: Information Science References.

Jha, A.S. 2014. *Social Research Methods*. New York, NY: Mc Grew Hill Education.

Johnson, B. & Christensen, L. 2012. *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches,* 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jones-Smith, E. 2014. *Strengths-Based Therapy: Connecting Theory, Practice and Skills*. London: Sage.

Joseph, D. 2017. Perceived contributing factors impeding job satisfaction of social workers in non-government organisations. RSA: Stellenbosch University.

Kapoulitsas, M. & Corcoran, T. 2015. Compassion fatigue and resilience: A qualitative analysis of social work practice. *Qualitative Social Work*, 14(1): 86-101.

Kara, H. 2020. *Creative research methods: A practical guide*. UK: Bristol University Press.

Kirst-Ashman, K.K. 2017. *Introduction to Social Work & Social Welfare: Critical Thinking Perspectives*, 5th edition. Wisconsin, USA: Brooks/Cole.

Kirst-Ashman, K.K. & Hull, G.H. 2018. *Empowerment Series: Human Behavior in the Macro Social Environment*. USA: Cengage

Koonin, M. 2014. Validity and reliability, in F. Du Plooy-Cilliers, C. Davis & R.M. Bezuidenhout(eds). *Research matters*, Claremont: Juta, pp.252-262.

Kudushin, A. 2013. The social work interview, 5th edition. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Kuykendall, S. 2020. Skewed studies: Exploring the limits and flaws of health and psychology research. USA: ABC-Clio.

Kufeldt, K., Fallon, B. & McKhenzie, B. 2021. *Protecting children: Theoretical Practical Aspect*. Canada: Canadian Scholars.

Kumar, R. 2014. *Research Methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*, 4th edition. London: SAGE.

Kumar, R. 2019. *Research Methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*, 5th edition. London: SAGE.

Kryvinska, N. & Greguš, M. 2020. *Data-Centric Business and Applications: Evolvements in Business Information processing and management (Volume 2)*. Switzerland. Springer.

Kvale, S. 1996. *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, C.A: Sage.

Lamothe, J., Couvrette, A., Lebrun, G., Yale-Souliere, G., Roy, C., Guay, S. & Geoffrion, S. 2018. Violence against child protection workers: A study of workers' experiences, attributions, and coping strategies. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 81: 308-321

Leavy, P. 2019. *The Oxford Handbook of Methods for Public Scholarship*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. 1985 Naturalistic inquiry. Sage Publication, Thousand Oaks.

Luckenbill, W.B. 2012. *Research in Information Studies: A Cultural and Social Approach*. USA: Library of Congress.

Lune, L. & Berg, B.L. 2017. *Qualitative research method for the social sciences*, 9th edition. Malaysia: Pearson Education Limited.

Lynch, M. 2017. *Understanding key education issues: How we got here and where we go from here*. New York: Taylor and Francis.

Madibogo, J. 2016. *We work under horrible conditions, say social workers*. [Online] Retrieved from: http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2016/09/19/We-work-under-horrible-conditions,-say-social-workers [Accessed 19/09/2016].

Malcok, A., & Yalcin, I. (2015). Relationships among resilience, social support, coping and psychological well-being among university students. Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance, 4(43), 9.

Maree, K. & Petersen, J. 2016. Survey and the use of questionnaires, in, K Maree (Ed.). *First steps in research,* 2nd edition. Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp.174-190.

Marland, A. & Esselment, A.L. 2018. Negotiating with Gatekeepers to Get Interviews with Politicians: Qualitative Research Recruitment in a Digital Media Environment. [Online] Retrieved from: https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794118803022 [Accessed 22/01/2023].

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. 2016. *Designing qualitative research*, 6th edition. London: Sage.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370–396. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346

Matheson, C., Robertson, H.D., Elliott, A.M., Iversen, L. & Murchie, P. 2016. Resilience of primary healthcare professionals working in challenging environments: A focus group study. *British Journal of General Practice* 66(648):507-515.

Maxwell, J.A. 2013. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach.* London: Sage.

McClean, R. 2012. *Proceedings of the 11th European Conference on Research Methods* (Eds). UK: Academic Publishing International Limited.

McFadden, P., Campbell, A. & Taylor, B. 2015. Resilience and Burnout in Child Protection Social Work: Individual and Organisational Themes from a Systematic Literature Review. *British Journal of Social Work (2015)* 45, 1546-1563.

McFarlane, D.A. & Lim, F.P.L. 2018. *A study corporate planning and goal setting. Phillipines: Advanced science and technology letters.* Vol 150 (25) http://dx.org/1014257/asti.2018 .

McGrath, C., Palmgren, P.J. & Liljedahl, M. 2019. Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews, *Medical Teacher*, 41:9,1002-1006.

McLaughlin, H. 2012. *Understanding social work research*, 2nd edition. London: Sage.

Miah, S.J. & Yeoh, W. 2019. *Applying Business Intelligence Initiatives in Healthcare and Organizational Settings.* USA: IGI Global.

Mikėnė, S., Gaižauskaitė, I. & Valavičienė, N. 2013. Qualitative interviewing: Field-work realities. *Socialinis Darbas/Social Work*, 12(1):49–62.

Miller, L. 2012. Counselling skills for social work. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Miller, T., Birch, M., Mauthner, M. & Jessop, J. (Eds). 2012. *Ethics in Qualitative Research*, 2nd edition. London: Sage.

Miryala, R.K. (Eds). 2015. *Trends, Challenges & Innovations in Management - Volume III*. India: Zenon Academic Publishing.

Morris, A. 2018. *Developing the interview guide: In a practical introduction to in-depth interviewing*. City road: Sage.

Mouraviev, N. & Avramenko, A. 2020. *Entrepreneurship for Deprived Communities: Developing Opportunities and enterprise culture*. UK: Emerald.

Mukherjee, S.P. 2019. *A guide to research methodology: An overview of research problems, task and methods*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

Mukherjee, S.P. 2020. *A Guide to Research Methodology: An Overview of Research Problems, Tasks and methods*. New York: CPC Press.

Neuman, W.L. 2014. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 8th edition. Boston: Person.

Ngulube, P. 2020. *Handbook of Research on Mixed Methods Research in Information Science*. RSA: IGI Global Publisher of Timely Knowledge.

National Association of Social Workers, 2013, *Social Work Safety: NASW Resources,* viewed 10 August 2022, from http://www. Social Work Safety NASW Resources (socialworkers.org).pdf

National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 2021, *Code of Ethics: of the National Association of Social Workers*, viewed 13 September 2022, from https://www.socialworkers.org/about/ethics/code-of-ethics/code-of-ethics-english.

Nieuwenhuis, J. 2016a. Introducing Qualitative Research, in K Maree (Ed.). *First Research Steps in Research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp.49-70.

Nieuwenhuis, J. 2016b. Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques, in, K Maree (Ed.). *First Research Steps in Research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp.71-102.

Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E. & Moules, N.J. 2017. Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* Volume 16:1–13.

Noyoo, N. 2021. *Social Welfare and Social Work in Southern Africa*. South Africa: Sun Press.

O'Leary, Z. 2017. *The Essential Guide to Doing Your Research Project,* 3rd edition. London: Sage.

Oakshott, L. 2014. *Quantitative methods*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Padgett, D.K. 2017. *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research*. London: Sage.

Pather, S. & Rey-Moreno, C. 2019. *Advancing rural connectivity in South Africa: A case for community-owned networks policy brief*. South Africa: Technology Innovation.

Parahoo, K. 2014. Nursing research: Principles, process and issues. 3rd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmilla

Park, L., Lee, M., Choi, G. & Zepernick, J. 2017. Challenges and coping strategies of East Asian graduate student in the United States. *International Social Work,* 60(3):733-749.

Pierson, J. 2016. *Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion: Promoting Social Justice in Social Work*. UK: Routledge

Pyne, M. 2020. *The Concise Guide to Using Social Work Theory in Practice: An Essential Guide*. UK: Policy Press.

Piché, T., Brownlee, K. & Halverson, G. 2015. The Development of Dual and Multiple Relationships for Social Workers in Rural Communities. *Contemporary Rural Social Work*, 7(2): 57-70

Plattfaut, R. 2014. *Process-Oriented Dynamic Capabilities: Framework Development, Empirical Applications and Methodological Support*. New York: Springer.

Porche, J.D. 2021. *Health Policy: Application for Nurses and Other Healthcare Professionals*. USA. Jones and Bartlett learning.

Pryor, G. 2012. *Managing Research Data*, 2nd edition. UK: Facet Publishing.

Pulla, V. 2017. Strengths-Based Approach in Social Work: A distinct ethical advantage. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change,* 3 (2):97-114.

Rapp-McCall, L., Corcoran, K., Roberts, A.R. 2022. *Social Workers' Desk Reference*, 4th edition. Oxford University Press.

Reamer, F.G. 2013. *Social work values and ethics*, 4th edition. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Recker, J. 2013. *Scientific Research in Information Systems: A Beginner's Guide*. New York, NY: Springer.

Rees, C. 2016. *Rapid Research Methods for Nurses, Midwives and Health Professionals*.UK: Wiley Blackwell.

Rentala, S. 2019. *Basics in Nursing Research and Biostatistics*. UK: Jaypee.

Revilla, J.C., Martin, P. & de Carstro, C. 2018.The reconstruction of resilience as a social and collective phenomenon: Poverty and coping capacity during the economic crisis. *European societies.* 20 (1):89–110

Resnick, B., Gwyther, L.P. & Roberto, K.A. (Eds). 2018. *Resilience in Aging: Concepts, Research, and Outcomes*, 2nd edition. USA: Springer.

Riebschleger, J., Noris, D., Pierce, B., Pond, D.L. & Cumming, C. 2015. Preparing Social work student for rural child welfare practice: Emerging curriculum competencies. *Journal of social work education*, (51): 209-224

Riebschleger, J. & Pierce, B.J. (Eds). 2018. *Rural Child Welfare Practice: Stories from the Field*. UK: Oxford

Roller, R.M. & Lavrakas, P.R. 2015. *Applied qualitative research design: A total quality framework*. USA: Library of Congress.

Rossman, G.B. & Rallis, S.F. 2012. *Learning in the Field: An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 3rd edition, Sage, Los Angeles.

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. 2017. *Research methods for social work*, 9th edition. USA: Cengage Learning.

Ruel, E., Wagner, W.E. & Gillespie, B.J. 2016. *The Practice of Survey Research: Theory and Application*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rutter, M. 2012. Resilience as a dynamic concept. *Development and Pathology,* 24(2):335-344.

Saleebey, D. 1997. *Strengths perspectives in social work practice*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Saleebey, D. (2013). Introduction: Power in the people. In D. Saleebey (Ed.), *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Higher Ed.

Santos, Q.A. *Examining a New Paradigm of Heritage with Philosophy, Economy, and Education*. USA: IGI Global.

Scales, T.S., Streeter, C.L. & Cooper, H.S. (Eds). 2013. *Rural social work: Building and sustaining community asset*, 2nd edition. Canada: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Shaw, I. & Holland, S. 2014. *Doing Qualitative Research in Social Work*. London: Sage.

Schneider, Z., Whitehead, D.L., Lo Biondo-Wood, G.L. & Haber, J. 2012. *Nursing and Midwifery Research: Methods and Appraisal for Evidence Based Practice*, 4th edition. London: Mosby Elsevier.

Schneiker, A. 2016. *Humanitarian NGOs, (In) Security and Identity: Epistemic Communities and Security Governance*. London: Routledge.

Schmidt, G.G. 2020. *Social Work Practice Remote Communities*. USA: Linus Learning.

Shier, M.L. & Graham, J.R. 2013. Subjective wellbeing, social work, and the environment: The impact of the socio-political context of practice on social worker happiness. *Journal of Social Work,* 15(1), 3–23.

Shokane, A.L., Makhubele, J.C. & Blitz, L.V. (Eds). 2018. *Issues Around Aligning Theory, Research and Practice in Social Work Education: Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining in Social Sciences Series Volume 1*. South Africa: AOSIS.

Shulman, L. 2012. *The skills of helping individuals, families, groups, and communities*, 7th edition. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.

Sibinga, C.T.S. 2018. *Ensuring Research Integrity and the Ethical Management of Data*. USA: Library of Congress.

Silverman, D. 2013. *Doing qualitative research*, 4th edition. London: Sage.

Smith, B. & Sparks, A.C. (Eds). 2016. *Routledge Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*. London: Routledge.

Sithole, S.L. 2017. Revitalizing Social Work Practice: The Community Development Conundrum. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 53(3): 301-314.

Spray, C. & Jowett, B. 2012. Social work practice with children and families. London: Sage.

Terrel, S.R. 2016. *Writing a proposal for your dissertation: Guidelines and examples*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Thompson, S. 2015. *Social work Companion*. UK: Macmillan Education.

Merriam, S.B. & Tisdell, E. 2016. *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation*. 4th edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Tomal, D.R. & Schwartz, J. 2020. *Conducting research: A practical approach to solving problems and making improvements*. Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield.

Trochim, W.M., Donnelly, J.D. & Arora, K. 2012. *Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Truebridge, S. 2014. *Resilience Begins with Beliefs: Building on Student Strengths for Success in School*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Truter, E., Theron, L. & Fouché, A. 2014. Indicators of Resilience in Resilient South African Designated Social Workers: Professional Perspectives. *The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher*, 26 (3): 305-329.

Truter, E., Theron, L. & Fouché, A. 2015. Reflective supervision: Guideline for promoting resilience amongst designated social workers. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 51 (2):221-243.

Truter, E., Theron, L. & Fouché, A. 2017. The Resilience of Child Protection Social Workers: Are They at Risk and If So, How Do They Adjust? A Systematic Meta-Synthesis. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 47(3): 846–863.

Ungar, M. 2012. *The social ecology of resilience: A handbook of theory and practice*. London: Springer.

Usher, K. & Jackson, D. 2017. *Phenomenology in Qualitative Methodology: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.

Van Breda, A.D. 2018. A critical review of resilience theory and its relevance for social work. *Social Work / Maatskaplike Werk*, 54(1):1-18.

Vogt, W.P., Gardner, D.C. & Haeffele, L.M. 2012. *When to use what research design*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Wagenaar, H. 2015. Administrative decision making: A practical clarification. *Administration & Society*, 47(9), 1087–1093.

Waller, V., Farquharson, K. & Dempsey, D. 2016. *Qualitative Social Research: Contemporary Methods for The Digital Age*. London: Sage.

Welman, J.C., Kruger, S.J. & Mitchell, B.C. 2012. *Research methodology*, 3rd edition. Cape Town, South Africa: Oxford University Press.

Wentz, E.A. 2014. *How to Design, Write and Present a Successful Dissertation Proposal*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Whitehead, D., Ferguson, C., Lobiondo-Wood, G. & Haber, J. 2020. *Nursing and Midwifery Research: Methods and Appraisal for Evidence Based practice*, 6th edition. Australia: Elsevier.

Williams, C. 2016. *Social work and the city: Urban themes in the 21st –century*. Australia: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wister, A.V. & Cosco, T.D. 2020. Resilience and Aging: Emerging Science and Future Possibilities (Risk, Systems and Decisions) 1st ed. 2020 Edition. New York City: Springer.

Yarhouse, M.A. & Tan, E.S.N. 2014. *Sexuality and sex Therapy: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal.* USA: Inter Varsity Press.

Zacarian, B., Alvarez-Ortiz, L. & Haynes, J. 2017. *Teaching to Strengths: Supporting Students Living with Trauma, Violence, and Chronic Stress.* USA: ASCD.

Zastrow, C.H. & Kirst-Ashman, K.K. 2016. *Understanding human behaviour and the social environment*, 9th edition. USA: Cengage Learning.

ADDENDUM A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SWREC)

Date: 11 May 2020

Dear Ms LP Botha

DECISION: Ethics approval from 11 May 2020 to 11 May 2021	**SWREC Reference #: 2020-SWREC-67123414** **Name: Ms LP Botha** **Student #: 67123414** **Staff #: N/A**

Researcher(s):   Name: Ms LP Botha
Contact details: 67123414@mylife.unisa.ac.za; 072 788 4788

Supervisor(s):   Name: Prof HM Williams
Contact details: willihm@unisa.ac.za, (012) 429 4269

Title of research: Resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges

Qualification: Master of Social Work (MSW)

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Social Work Research Ethics Committee (SWREC) for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval has been granted effective from **11 May 2020.**

The following are standards requirements attached to all approval of all studies:

1. Approval will be for a period of **twelve months** from of the date of issue of the certificate. At the end of this period, if the study has been completed, abandoned, discontinued or not completed for any reason you are required to submit a report on the project. If you complete the work earlier that you had planned, you must submit a report as soon as the work is completed. Reporting template can be requested from the SWREC administrator on radebn1@unisa.ac.za
2. However, at the **end of twelve months' period** if the study is still current, you should instead submit an application for renewal of the approval.
3. Please remember that you must notify the committee in writing regarding any amendments to the study.
4. You must notify the committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or any unforeseen event that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the study.
5. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the SWREC standard operating procedures, terms of references, National Health Research Council (NHREC) and university guidelines.
6. During data collection, ensure that you adhere to the UNISA COVIC-19 regulations.

Yours sincerely

....
Dr KJ Malesa: Chairperson of SWREC
Email: maleskj@unisa.ac.za
Tel No.: (012) 429 4780

ADDENDUM B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

social development
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Building 3, NO. 7 Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mbombela, 1200
Mpumalanga Province, Private Bag X 11213, Mbombela, 1200
Tel: +27 (13) 766 3428, Fax: +27 (13) 766 3456/57

Litiko Letekudrutfukisa   UmNyango WezokuThuthukiswa   Departement van Maatskaplike
Tenhlalakahle   KwezokuHlalakahle   Ontwikkeling

Enq: Ms. Elize Botha
Tel: 013 766 3053
Ref No.: 12/5/R

MS L.P. Botha
67123414@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Cell: 072 788 4788

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH – LINDIWE PORTIA BOTHA (UNISA STUDENT NO: 67123414)

Dear Ms. Botha,

Your communique dated 22 April 2021, has reference.

The Department gladly supports your research on "Resilience amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges." In principle the department has no objection against you interviewing colleagues to conduct your research, however:

- As dictated by the ethical principles of research, you have to obtain individual consent from each participant.
- Anonymity and confidentiality should be strictly maintained, particularly since you will be dealing with colleagues within the department.
- Participants should be given the opportunity to withdraw or not to respond to a question at any stage of your investigation.

The Department wishes you all the best with your endeavours and look forward to the outcomes of your study.

Kind regards,

MR S.M. MTSHWENI
HEAD: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
DATE: 07·05·2021

ADDENDUM C: INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Research title:

Resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges

Researcher: LP Botha

(67123414)

Ethics clearance reference number:

Research permission reference number (if applicable):

Date: 23/10/2019

Title: Resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges

Dear Prospective Participant

I, Lindiwe Portia Botha I am a social worker working at Verena office, I am doing research with Dr Williams at the Department of Social Work towards a Master's degree in Social Work at the University of South Africa. I am requesting to conduct a research study with social workers working at Thembisile-Hani and Dr JS Moroka. My research topic is "Resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges". The research study aims to find out the resilient factors that enable social workers working in rural areas to effectively perform their work regardless of the difficult circumstances in the rural areas. I want to develop an in-depth understanding of the work-related challenges experienced by social workers and how they manage these challenges. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of the study is to develop an in-depth understanding of the Resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

I choose you to be a participant because i feel you could have valuable information that could benefit the study based on your experience of working in the rural area as a social worker. I gained access of doing the study and identifying you as a prospective participant through the Head of Department (HOD) Mr MV Mahlalela. I will need proximally 10 participants and you were one of the few participants chosen for this study.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves *semi-structured interviews, the questions entails closed and open ended questions; audio recording will be used to record the interview. The kind of question will be asked will be in relation to your resilience of working in the rural areas.* The time needed to complete interview question is approximation of 60-90 minutes.

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

Participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

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

The goal of the research is to find out the resilient factors that enable the social workers in the rural areas to effectively perform their work regardless of the difficult circumstances in the rural areas. The benefit of the study is that it will help in understanding the resilient factors that enables the social workers to cope and will help in implementing the recommendation to the Department of Social Development.

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

The negative discomfort that might occur might arise if during the interview if there are unresolved issues that may affect you. However should there be any issues that causes distress, debriefing will be conducted by the Employee Assistance Programme Practitioners.

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

Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give *[this measure refers to anonymity]*. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings *[this measure refers to confidentiality]*.

The only person who will have access to the data will be transcriber and to insure that confidentiality is maintained, they will sign confidentiality agreement form. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report. *A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.* Please keep in mind that it is sometimes impossible to make an absolute guarantee of confidentiality or anonymity, e.g. when focus groups are used as a data collection method.

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

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval. Hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software programme.

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

Please note that there will be no incentive or rewards for participating in the study. Please note that there will be no payment expected from you as a participant.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

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

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Lindiwe Portia Botha 0727884788. The findings are accessible for 5 years. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact 0727884788, 67123414@mylife.unisa.ac.za, 013 963 7164, fax number 013 963 7182, including email. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof HM Williams 012 429 4269, willihm@unisa.ac.za. Contact the research ethics chairperson of the Department of Social Work, Unisa's Research ethics committee, Dr K. Malesa at maleskj@unisa.ac.za or 012 429 6054 if you have any ethical concerns.

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

_____

 Lindiwe Botha

ADDENDUM D: INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

Research title:

Resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges

Researcher: LP Botha

(67123414)

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

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

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

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

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the digital recording of the interview

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

Participant Name & Surname………………………………………. (please print)

Participant Signature…………………………………………………...Date…………………

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

Researcher's signature………………………………………………..Date…………………

ADDENDUM E: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT - INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research title:

Resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges

Researcher: LP Botha

(67123414)

I would like to welcome you and thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. Your time is much appreciated. Before we start, would you like some water to drink?

I, Lindiwe Portia Botha I am a social worker working at Verena office, I am doing research with Prof HM Williams at the Department of Social Work towards a Master's degree in Social Work at the University of South Africa. I am conducting a study about social working in rural areas titled: Resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges. In this study, I am interested in understanding the experiences of social workers working in the rural areas and what enables them to cope working in the rural areas. What roles are played by their family, friends and community in helping social workers to cope in the working in the rural areas.

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- To explore and describe the work-related challenges rural social workers experience and how they manage these challenges.
- To draw conclusion and make recommendation about the challenges rural social workers experience and how they manage these challenges.

The interview will take 60-90 minutes. Participation in this study is voluntarily and you have the right to withdraw from it without any punishment. Your name will be kept confidential and the data will be destroyed should you withdraw from the study. Please note that, there are no financial gains or rewards for participating in this study. The results of the study will be presented to the Department of Social Development compromising your confidentiality.

With me, I have a digital recorder to record the interview. The recording will be used only for the purpose of the study and it will be kept safe under lock and key.

Tell me whenever you are ready so that we can start with the interview.

Biographical questions

-        In which municipality are you employed

- How many years of experience do you have as a practicing social worker overall?

- How many years of experience do you have as a social worker in your current post?

- Kindly describe your workload?

Research interview questions

1. How have you experienced practising social work in a rural area?
2. What are the work-related challenges that you experience as a social worker working in a rural area?
3. How do you manage the work-related challenges that you experience? (Prompt: How do you deal with the work-related challenges that you experience?)
4. Please explain your understanding of resiliency (Prompt: What does it mean to be resilient)?
5. Can you share with me how do you apply resiliency in your work as a social worker working in a rural area?
6. What can you suggest/ recommend so that other social workers become resilient whilst working in rural areas (Prompt: Or improve their resiliency whilst working in rural areas?

CLOSING

We have come to the end of the interview. Thank you so much for taking part, I appreciate the time you took for being with me. The findings of the study will be presented at the Department of Social Development and the date of the presentation will be discussed with you telephonically. Thank you once again, I am looking forward to seeing you in the future.

Thank you for your time and patience in doing this interview.

ADDENDUM F: DEBRIEFER(S) ACCEPTANCE LETTER(S) & ABRIDGED CV(S)

MPUMALANGA MENTAL HEALTH SOCIETY
Affiliated to the South African Federation for Mental Health
NPO: 024-827   B-BBEE LEVEL 1

No Health Without Mental Health

Phone	:	(081) 731 1208	**PROVINCIAL HEAD OFFICE**
Phone	:	(081) 451 6788	NELSON MANDELA DRIVE LANE 3
Enquiries	:	Ms. T. Masilela	BESTERECTA 103 C, SILKAATSKOP
E-Mail	:	thandekammhs@gmail.com	SECUNDA, 2430

To whom it may concern

Agreement to provide debriefing services

Mpumalanga Mental Health Society has received Ms Lindiwe Botha's request to provide debriefing services to her participants at the end of her research study. The Mpumalanga Mental Health Society has agreed to provide debriefing if and when the study participants are negatively affected as a result of this study.

Regards

Thandeka Pertunia Masilela

Mpumalanga Mental Health Society

Social work manager

ADDENDUM G: TURNITIN RECEIPT & REPORT

turnitin

Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author: Lindiwe BOTHA
Assignment title: Revision 2
Submission title: RESILIENCY AMONGST RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS IN MANAGI...
File name: RS_IN_MANAGING_THEIR_EXPERIENCES_OF_WORK-RELATED_...
File size: 269.5K
Page count: 146
Word count: 54,710
Character count: 297,275
Submission date: 08-Oct-2022 12:21PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID: 1919930246

RESILIENCY AMONGST RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS IN MANAGING THEIR EXPERIENCES OF WORK-RELATED CHALLENGES

ORIGINALITY REPORT

14% SIMILARITY INDEX	**12%** INTERNET SOURCES	**3%** PUBLICATIONS	**4%** STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	4%
2	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	3%
3	Submitted to University of South Africa Student Paper	1%
4	digitalcommons.murraystate.edu Internet Source	<1%
5	socialwork.journals.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
6	wiredspace.wits.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
7	Eucharia Chinwe Igbafe. "Exploring the Emotional Intelligence Needs of University Lecturers in Managing Work-Related Challenges", Review of European Studies, 2020 Publication	<1%

ADDENDUM H: LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Kim N Smit Editorial Services

Declaration of Professional Editing

21 October 2022

This letter serves to confirm that Lindiwe Portia Botha submitted a thesis to myself for editing. The thesis is entitled, 'RESILIENCY AMONGST RURAL SOCIAL WORKERS IN MANAGING THEIR EXPERIENCES OF WORK-RELATED CHALLENGES'.

The following aspects were edited:

- Spelling
- Grammar
- Consistency of layout
- Sentence structure
- Logical sequencing
- References (Reference checking involves proofreading and perhaps some editing with regards to the simple formatting of the references into the referencing style required i.e. changing the order of the elements - author, date, title, series, place, publisher, journal, volume, issue, pagination etc.)

My involvement was restricted to language use and spelling, completeness and consistency, referencing style, and formatting of headings, captions and tables of contents. I did no structural re-writing of the content and did not influence the academic content in any way.

Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Kim Smit

Tel: +27 (0)78 493 6554   Email: kimnsmit@gmail.com
Member of the Freelance panel for the University of South Africa
Member of the Freelance panel for the University of Pretoria
Full Member of the Professional Editor's Guild

ADDENDUM I: RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL

Research title:

Resiliency amongst rural social workers in managing their experiences of work-related challenges

Researcher: LP Botha

(67123414)

<mark>**RISK ASSESSMENT**</mark>

Complete the Research Ethics Risk Assessment by answering each question below. If you answer **"YES"** to any of the items, the outcome of the risk assessment is considered to vary from a low to high risk level. The UNISA research ethics review system is based on the UNISA Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Research Ethics Risk Assessment. If you are an external applicant, a copy of this document can be requested from urerc@unisa.ac.za; internal applicants can click on this link to obtain the document. If you are unsure about the meaning of any of these concepts, please consult your supervisor or project leader.

1	Does your research include the direct involvement of any of the following groups of participants *(Refer to Section 4 in the SOP)*	YES	NO
Place an 'x' in box [if yes, provide details in the space allocated for comments]			
a) Children or young people under the age of 18 Include the parental consent letter and explain how assent will be obtained in section 6.1 of the application form.			**X**
b) Persons living with disabilities *(physical, mental and/or sensory)*[2]			**X**
c) Persons that might be considered vulnerable, thus finding it difficult to make independent and/or informed decisions for socio, economic, cultural, political and/or medical reasons *(such as the elderly, the dying, unconscious patients, prisoners, those in dependant relationships, women considered to be vulnerable due to pregnancy, victimisation, etc.)*			**X**
d) Communities that might be considered vulnerable, thus finding it difficult to make independent and informed decisions for socio, economic, cultural, political and/or medical reasons			**X**
e) UNISA employees, students or alumni Indicate that you will apply for permission at the UNISA Research Permission Subcommittee (RPCS) in section 3.1 of the application form to involve any of these participant groups in the proposed research.			**X**
f) Persons whose native language differs from the language used for the research Attach the translated data collection instrument(s), interview guide(s), participant information sheet and consent form in the participants' first language, as well as a letter from the language practitioner certifying the credibility of the translated material. The services of an interpreter may need to be secured for field work activities.			**X**
g) There is a likelihood that a person or definable group will be identified during the research process and it is likely to be of concern.			**X**

=-\22q1 Describe whether and how proxy or gatekeeper consent will be obtained in section 6.1 relevant to items 2.1. a – e

h) Other[3]. Please describe.		**X**

Comments: N/a

2	**Does your research involve any of the following types of activity that could potentially place the participants at risk of harm?**	**YES**	**NO**
	Place an 'x' in the box provided [if yes, provide details in the space allocated for comments]		
	a) Collection, use or disclosure of personal, identifiable information <u>without</u> the consent of the individual or institution that is in possession of the required information (with the exception of aggregated data or data from official databases in the public domain)		**X**
	b) Collection, use or disclosure of personal, identifiable information directly from participants <u>with</u> consent		**X**
	c) Personal, identifiable information to be collected about individuals from available records (e.g. employee records, student records, medical records, etc.) and/or archives		**X**
	b) Participants being exposed to questions which may be experienced as stressful or upsetting, or to procedures which may have unpleasant or harmful side effects		**X**
	e) Participants being required to commit an act which might diminish self-respect or cause them to experience shame, embarrassment, or regret		**X**
	f) Any form of deception of participants, concealment or covert observation		**X**
	d) Examining potentially sensitive or contentious issues that could cause harm to the participants		**X**
	g) Research which may be prejudicial to participants		**X**
	f) Research which may intrude on the rights of third parties or people not directly involved		**X**
	f) Audio-visual recordings of participants which may be of a sensitive or compromising nature (with or without consent)		**X**
	g) Disclosure of the findings of the research could place participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, professional or personal relationships		**X**
	h) Any form of physically invasive diagnostic, therapeutic or medical procedure such as blood collection, an exercise regime, body measurements or physical examination		**X**
	k)*Psychological inventories / scales / tests		**X**
	q) Other. Please describe		**X**
	Comments:		

*Please add details on copyright issues related to standardised psychometric tests and registration at the HPSCA of test administrator if test administration is in South Africa or of an equivalent board if administration is non South African.

---

[3] Form 1 does not apply to plant, molecular or cell research, animal and environmentally related research.

3	Does your research involve any activity that could potentially place the researcher(s) at risk of harm?	YES	NO
a) There is a possible risk of physical threat, abuse or psychological trauma as a result of actual or threatened violence or the nature of what is disclosed during the interaction			X
b) There is a possible risk of being in a compromising situation, in which there might be accusations of improper behaviour			X
c) There is an increased exposure to risks in everyday life and social interactions, such as working with hazardous materials or sensitive information			X
Comments:			

4	Does any of the following apply to your research project?	YES	NO
Place an 'x' in the box provided [if yes, provide details in the space allocated for comments]			
a) Participants will be offered inducements or incentives to encourage their involvement in the research			X
b) Participants will incur financial obligations as a result of their participation in the research			X
c) The researcher(s) can anticipate financial gains from involvement in the research (i.e. contract research)			X
d) Any other potential conflict of interests, real or perceived, that could be seen as compromising the researcher(s) professional judgement in carrying out or reporting on the research			X
e) Research will make use of Unisa laboratories			X
f) Research will be funded by UNISA or by an external funding body that could compromise the integrity of the research project			X
Comments: N/a			

5	Guided by the information above, classify your research project based on the anticipated degree of risk. *[The researcher completes this section. The ERC critically evaluates this benefit-risk analysis to protect participants' rights]* *Place an 'x' in the box provided*

Category 1		**Category 2**	X	**Category 3**		**Category 4**	
Negligible		**Low risk**		**Medium risk**		**High risk**	
No to indirect human participant involvement. If you choose this option, stop completing this form and contact		Direct human participant involvement. The only foreseeable risk of harm is the potential for minor discomfort or inconvenience, thus research that would not pose a risk above the everyday norm.		Direct human participant involvement. Research that poses a risk above the everyday norm, including physical, psychological and social risks. Steps can be taken to minimise		Direct human participant involvement. A real or foreseeable risk of harm including physical, psychological and social risk which may lead to a serious adverse event if not managed responsibly.	

			the likelihood of the event occurring.		

(a) Briefly justify your choice/classification

The research project will not pose any risk that might harm the participant physically and emotionally. The risks of participating in the research are minor and they might result from issues during the interview that have not been dealt with or misunderstanding. Therefore the research will not pose a risk above everyday norm.

(b) In medium and high risk research, <u>indicate the potential benefits</u> of the study for the research participants and/or other entities.

(c) In medium and high risk research, <u>indicate how the potential risks of harm will be mitigated</u> by explaining the steps that will be taken to minimise the likelihood of the event occurring (e.g. referral for counselling, debriefing, etc.).