EXPLORING RESILIENCE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements
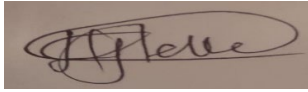for the degree of

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DECLARATION

I, Lucy Rhabela Mangolele (student no: 58544747), declare that "EXPLORING RESILIENCE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG is my own unaided work. It has not been submitted previously for any degree or examination at any other institution for any purposes. I also declare without prejudice that all the sources that I utilized or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of an exhaustive list.

_____   <u>2024/01/09</u>

LR MANGOLELE   Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my one and only precious mother Linah Mangolele. Because of your genuine love, advice, and support, I have grown into a better person; May the Lord bless you with abundant life. Thank you very much, I will forever appreciate you.

I dedicate this work to my beautiful children Xihluke, Nhlamulo and Unene, whose presence kept me going. Thank you for your patience throughout my academic journey. *Dyondzo i tlhari ni xitlhangu xo lwa ni vusiwana, mi yi tekela nhlokweni, mi ta va ni vumundzuku lebyinene* (Education is the key to success).

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ABSTRACT

Social Work is a profession that is fulfilling yet emotionally demanding. As such, the ongoing commitment to self-care by exploring resilience skills and strategies for social workers are essential to maintain a healthy professional quality of life. Limited research EXPLORING RESILIENCE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY WITHINT HE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG has been undertaken so far.

Using a qualitative research approach, this study explored the resilience skills and strategies of social workers employed at the Department of Social Development, working in the City of Johannesburg. A phenomenological research design supported by exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research designs were applied. For data collection, semi-structured interviews using an interview guide with open-ended questions were conducted with a sample of participating social workers. The sample was constituted by means of the purposive sampling technique. Ethical considerations maintained during the study included informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, information management and beneficence. Data were analysed using the eight steps of Tesch (in Creswell & Poth, 2018) and data verification was done according to the model of Guba and Lincoln (in Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191).

Based on the research findings it is evident that resilience skills and strategies are essential to social worker in order to cope with both their work life and personal life. Social workers face various challenges in the line of their work ranging from lack of resources, high caseloads, lack of support by managers, client-related challenges, etc. The significance of social workers understanding the word resilience is imperative, so that they can be able to identify their resilience skills and strategies that help them to cope with challenges. The research findings included the suggestions proffered by the research participants on how their employer can enhance their resilience skills and strategies. In addition, recommendations are provided which are directed towards social work practice, department, social workers, and future researcher.

This study will assist social workers to understand the skills and strategies that underpin resilience on them. It will also assist the Department of Social Development and other public sectors to develop support programmes to retain social workers for the profession.

Key words

Exploring, Burnout, Resilience, Self-care, Skills and strategies, Social worker, South Africa Stress.

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AASW	Australian Association of Social Workers
ADCS	Assistance Division Commander for Support
BASW	British Association of Social Workers
DSD	Department of Social Development
EAP	Employee Assistance Programme
EAPA-SA	Employee Assistance Professional Association of South Africa
HSE	Health Safety and Environment
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
NASW	National Association of Social Workers
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NPO	Non-Profit Organization
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACSSP	South African Council for Social Service Profession
UK	United Kingdom
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United State of America

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In describing the exploration of the resilience skills and strategies of social workers, this research report is divided into chapters presenting an introduction, literature review and theoretical framework, application of the qualitative research method, presentation and analysis of the research findings, and the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

This chapter comprises a general orientation to the study in the form of the research plan for this study, the execution of which is described in detail in Chapter 3. It provides a comprehensive description of the actions that guided the research process in collecting information for the investigation of resilience skills and tactics employed by social workers at the Department of Social Development, working in the geographical area of the City of Johannesburg. The chapter begins with an introduction before describing the problem statement, rationale for the study and the purpose of the study. This is followed by sections presenting an overview of the research methodology, before describing the research method, data analysis and ensuring of rigour. The ethical consideration taken into consideration are explained before defining the key concepts and listing the structure of the research report. In conclusion a summary of the chapter is presented.

This introduction relates the background of the study and the state of the knowledge on the topic,

Background of the study

Resilience is a prominent topic in contemporary academic literature on a global scale (Grant & Kinman, 2012). This quality is particularly vital in demanding professions that require unwavering determination (Greer, 2016:3). Resilience entails the capacity to effectively mitigate challenges and withstand significant setbacks, not only recovering from adversity but also finding meaning and growth through such experiences (Hurley, 2020; Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panther-Brick & Yehuda, 2018). Social work is described as a pleasant profession, yet it is an emotionally

challenging career (Grant & Kinman, 2014:3). There are high emotional demands placed on the members of the social work profession (Crowder & Sear, 2017; Travis, Lizano & Mor Barak, 2016). Long hours, high caseloads, and the emotional provision essential to work and give support to all the clients often have an impact on social workers (Hardy, 2017:2). The UK Labour Force Survey (HSE, 2013) reported that a high incidence of job-related pressure exists among health and social workers. Nevertheless, social workers are expected to adhere to the principles and moral standards and rules of their profession, fulfilling the clients' necessities accordingly, while observing legislative obligations and attaining exceptionally enforced targets (DSD, 2013).

Undoubtedly, social work is a fulfilling career, but it also presents a lot of emotional difficulties to practitioners (Grant & Kinman, 2014:3). Practitioners in the field of social work have significant emotional challenges (Crowder & Sear, 2017; Travis et al., 2016). Social Workers may experience burnout from heir demanding workloads, lengthy workdays and providing the emotional support needed to help clients (Hardy, 2017:2). In addition to meeting the many needs of their clients, social workers are expected to preserve the ethical standards of their profession, follow the law, and accomplish challenging goals (DSD, 2013).

Studies consistently demonstrate that the main and psychologically demanding cause of work-related stress are job-related difficulties (Grant & Kinman, 2014:6-7). Social workers need to be emotionally resilient, able to handle stress, and able to overcome setbacks in order to stay in their jobs for a long time without burning out (Hardy, 2017:2). It is known that social workers experience high levels of stress and burnout (Grant & Kinman, 2012; Moyane, 2016). Whitney (2021:2) describes social work as a theoretical discipline that supports principles like individual empowerment, societal change, creativity, and community solidarity, while also being a practice-oriented profession. Even with the emotional toll that their profession takes, social workers frequently suppress their feelings in order to avoid coming across as unable to do their duties (Van Heughten, 2011; Grant, Kinman & Alexander, 2014; Rajan-Rankin, 2014).

Social workers must become resilient in order to help them carry out their duties in an effective and efficient manner (Grant & Kinman, 2020:7). Furthermore, in order for people to succeed in their roles, it is imperative that issues that undermines their resilience are addressed (Rose & Palattiyil, 2020:39). Resilience is defined as the ability to adjust positively to unfavourable relationships in one's environment regardless of the situation (Truter, Theron & Fouché, 2014); the capacity to respond to life's challenges in a particular and adaptive way (Grant & Kinman, 2016); the ability to return to daily life while managing warning signs of disruption (Southwick & Charney, 2018); and the capacity to endure and be accepting in the face of challenges or unexpected trials (Yilmaz Borekci & Gercek, 2018). Smith & Hollinger-Smith (2014), define resilience as "a person's aptitude to positively care for themselves as well as bounce back from trauma."

Resilience, as defined by various scholars, is widely acknowledged as an adaptable emotional state that varies based on an individual's environment and the number and significance of challenges the individual faces (Collins, 2016:4). It is not a fixed trait but rather a skill that can be developed (Abur, 2020), and it offers numerous health benefits (Kent, Davis & Reich, 2013). Resilience is often conceptualized as a specific quality, a practice, or even an outcome (Collins, 2016; Rutter, 2012; Van Breda, 2018).

Taking a logical perspective, Neenan (2018) characterizes resilience as an outcome resulting from a combination of environmental factors that have a greater impact on human development than individual behaviours alone. It is emphasized that an individual's capacity to thrive and the resources available, are influenced by the nature of the challenges the individual faces (Pemberton, 2015).

In order to reduce the stigma attached to expressing one's emotions and to foster a culture of resilience, social workers should have forums where they can freely discuss their feelings (Grant et al., 2014:885). In order to support resilience and lessen the stigma attached to responding exposure, confidence, self-awareness, independence, hopefulness, humour, positivity, passion, and

critical thinking are identified as characteristics and services to support resilience (Grant & Kinman, 2013). However, it is important to note that resilience has been criticized, as it is sometimes seen as a concept that places blame on people who may find it difficult to cope with challenges (Rose, 2021:2).

Most of the research on social work resilience comes from nations in the minority (Truter, et al., 2014). Researchers from numerous countries conducted studies to determine the high degree of trauma and tiredness among social workers. Due to pressure from work related conditions, there have been reports in recent years of a significant percentage of workers falling to show up for duty (Rose & Palattiyill, 2020:23). It is imperative to address the variables that lead to stress and weariness in social workers in order to support them in their careers (Calitz, Roux & Strydom, 2014). However, other research remarks highlight that it is important to acknowledge clients' flexibility in order to support their progress, rather than examining how resilience improves social workers welfare and performance (Grant & Kinman, 2012:606).

These researchers cite a 2018 analysis by the British Association of Social Workers that found an increasing rate of trauma among social workers, which they attribute to increased workloads and pressure from their jobs (BASW, 2018). A 2019 Unison poll of one thousand social workers found that just twenty percent of them stated that they planned to leave their workloads, and an astounding fifty-six percent of them stated they planned to leave their current jobs in favour of less demanding ones. Several studies investigating the topic of resilience among social workers in first-world countries have been carried out by different scholars (Grant & Kinman, 2020). Social workers and other healthcare professionals are noted to benefit greatly from resilience, which helps them deal with stress and overcome setbacks.

Stanley, Buvaneswari and Arumugan (2018), for example, highlighted the need of resilience among student social workers. Furthermore, McFadden, Campbell, and Taylor (2014) assessed research findings that considered organizational and individual aspects linked to burnout and resilience in child protection social workers. A variety of social and personal resources supports

the resilience and coping mechanisms used by child protection social workers, according to Hurley, Martin, Hallberg (2013) and Kears and McArdle (2012). The list, while not all-inclusive, illustrates the range of demanding positions that social workers are perceived to do and the significance of resilience techniques and abilities to help them carry out their duties effectively.

Research on resilience (sometimes known as 'resilient' or 'resiliency') was also carried out in South Africa, where it produced 12 publications and led to the repeated appearance of several researchers. Among these researchers are Truter et al., (2014), who investigated social professionals for child protection's resilience, and Van Breda (2013, 2018) who made a substantial contribution to the knowledge base of the applicability of resilience theory in social work. Resilience was examined from an educational perspective (respondents were teachers) in the research of Theron and Theron (2014); Wabule (2020); Theron and Theron (2014), and from a health perspective (the respondents were nurses) in Aiken, Sermeus, Van den Heede, Sloene, Busse et al., 2012). Moreover, studies on social workers employed by the South African Police Service (SAPS) (Mosson, 2019) and the Department of Defence (Harmse, O'Neil & Strasheim, 2022; Neil & Kruger, 2022) have been conducted. According to Truter et al. (2014, 2018), there has been a minor but growing focus in studies on the resilience of social workers in South Africa.

In fact, it is important to pay attention to the resilience techniques and abilities that social professionals demonstrate (Abur, 2020:24). According to Abur (2020), this kind of investigation can provide individuals with encouragement and optimism, allowing them to succeed in their career and make wise decisions in their positions. It is clear from the Abur's researcher findings and the body of literature that social workers encounter emotional difficulties in their line of work, but they overcome these obstacles by developing resilience. However, it seems that literature has not given much attention to particular abilities and tactics that support their resilience. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to observe the resilience skills and coping mechanism used by social workers in order to support both social workers and their employers.

The findings of this study could provide significant insights for organizations that employ social workers. The knowledge derived from these findings will be put in use in the creation of support initiatives designed to help social workers stay in the field. Furthermore, this research will help social workers to identify and address the issues that undermine their resilience, which will eventually assist them succeed in doing their work.

State of the knowledge on the topic

Social workers assist people to achieve their fundamental needs and enhance their well-being, especially in marginalized, vulnerable, and oppressed populations. Because of the dynamics of organizational structures and the complex societal concern they deal with, social workers are vulnerable to some degree of pressure. Therefore, the focus is on strengthening their resilience so they can handle this emotionally taxing line of work.

However, it is evident that there is a lack of thorough information in the South African literature that particularly explores the abilities and tactics that support social workers' resilience. The majority of the research currently available concentrates on building resilience in a variety of populations, such as social work students, social workers in training, social workers working in child protection, nurses, teachers, police officers, and defence personnel (Truter, Fouché & Theron, 2017) here is a significant study vacuum identified by the researcher, about the unique resilience techniques and tactics used by seasoned social workers in South Africa. By illuminating the distinct abilities and tactics that support the resilience of seasoned social workers in South African settings, the current research seeks to close this gap (Taylor, 2016; Mosson, 2019; Van Breda, 2018).

Given the emotionally taxing nature of their employment, social workers have an authoritative responsibility for their personal health (Grant & Kinman, 2012:606). Social workers can strengthen their capacity to overcome obstacles by developing a toolkit of techniques and approaches targeted at reducing the stressors that come with their work and enhancing their

emotional resilience (Grant & Kinman, 2020:4; Hardy, 2017). It is impossible to overestimate the importance of resilience techniques and skills for social workers (Abur, 2020). Acknowledging the paucity of existing literature in this field and motivated by a sincere desire to clarify the resilience techniques and methods used by social workers, the researcher decided to conduct this study. The results of this research project have the potential to significantly improve the knowledge base of social workers' general well-being and effectiveness on the job by focussing on the particular skills and strategies that foster resilience.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement is a concise explanation that indicates the specific event that has been examined and serves to focus the study's attention (Fouché, Strydom, & Roestenburg, 2021:81). The knowledge gap and/ or unrecognized matters are repeated (Kumar, 2019:329). A problem formulation identifies the issues or problem that calls for the researcher's investigation (Creswell, 2014:108). Summarised, a problem formulation, according to the researcher, is the process of drawing attention to a certain topic of research that has not been thoroughly investigated before.

Collins (2016) points out that there is rising concern about increased job pressure and tiredness within the health profession, notably among social workers. The Social work profession encounters several difficulties, both domestically and internationally. These difficulties include a lack of resources, heavy workloads, unpleasant working conditions, and inadequate management support. Furthermore, social workers frequently witness extreme human suffering which can be harmful to their wellbeing. Social workers work in circumstances that are upsetting, demanding, and extremely stressful, which frequently result in weariness, as noted by Crowder and Sear (2017:26).

Since emotionally taxing occupations deal with complex and puzzling situations, resilience is particularly important (Grant, Kinman & Baker, 2015). Studies on the resilience of social workers appear to be expanding globally (Truter et al., 2014). According to research, emotional resilience

is crucial for social workers to successfully handle the demands of their jobs. On the other hand, little attention is paid to the idea of methods for developing resilience (Grant & Kinman, 2012:616). There is a dearth of knowledge regarding the techniques social workers employ to enhance their resilience and evade work-related stress (Rose & Palattiyil, 2020). In fact, in order to recognize resilience in themselves, their colleagues, and their organizations, social workers in South Africa need to possess a thorough understanding of the concept of resilience and its related skills and strategies (Collins, 2016).

After working as a social worker for over a decade, the researcher has seen that certain social workers seem to be able to handle greater problems than others. Social workers deal with a wide range of problems, including high rates of poverty, crime, unemployment, abuse in different forms, and inadequate access to necessary services. These conditions create an environment that is full of potential roadblocks for seasoned social workers. In addition, social workers encounter obstacles that may hinder their ability to do their jobs effectively. However, social workers demonstrate resilience by continuing to dedicate themselves to providing their communities with high quality services despite the multitude of obstacles. Thus, the study's problem statement is based on the idea that despite the challenges and numerous duties social workers face in their line of work, they manage to persevere. Studies concentrating on the skills and strategies that serve as the cornerstone of resilience among South African social workers are lacking in the body of current literature. Hence, the problem statement for this research was formulated as follows:

Research and information on the skills and strategies serving as the cornerstone for South African social workers to practise their profession with resilience, are lacking in the body of social work literature. Therefore, this study explores the resilience skills and strategies of social workers specifically within the Department of Social Development, Johannesburg.

The researcher's curiosity was sparked by this discovery, which led to the decision to conduct a study looking into the resilience techniques and abilities used by social workers. In conducting the research, the researcher endeavoured to spot reoccurring patterns in the collected data and identify new trends relevant to the research, with deeper comprehensive and more insight. It is trusted that

the outcome will also result in more efficient employer support networks, which would ultimately prolong the career and contribution of South African social workers.

Following the problem statement above, an explanation of the study's rationale is included in order to comprehend the significance, contribution, and reason for undertaking the study (Fouché & Geyer, 2021:81).

1.3   RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

According to Dudovskiy (2016), the research rationale is a compelling justification that clarifies the researcher's personal factors and reason for conducting the study. It explains the necessity for the researcher to carry out this particular investigation as well as the possible influence the researcher may have on the body of current scholarly literature (Maree, 2016:30; Creswell & Poth, 2018:131).

The research rationale is essentially the researcher's answers to and justification of the fundamental need for the study, summarizing the fundamental motivation behind its execution. According to Dudovskiy (2016:1), the following crucial elements need to be specifically covered in the research justification:

- **Motivation and Inspiration**: This encapsulates the forces and individual inspirations that propelled the researcher to begin this research project. This entails identifying special gaps, difficulties, or questions that have sparked the researcher's interest and motivated them to investigate this area of study.
- **Significance and Impact**: The study's relevance and importance in relation to large academic and practical contexts are highlighted in the research justification. It illustrates how the study might solve important problems, complete gaps in the body of information, or add to the corpus of existing knowledge. This helps to demonstrate the potential significance and worth of the research.

- **Alignment of Research Questions or Objectives**: Frequently, the research rationale matches the research questions and objectives to the gaps or problems found in the literature. This illustrates how the study is set up to answer particular research questions or accomplish present goals meant to fulfil the recognized need.
- **Identification of Research Gap**: The rationale should early on state the gap or weakness the research is trying to fill in the body of existing literature. This highlights the specific field to which the researcher hopes to contribute significantly.
- **Contextualization**: By placing the research into the larger context of research, it provides context for the findings. This could entail making reference to pertinent theories, earlier research, or basic ideas related to the topic of the study.
- **Practical Implications**: Depending on the type of research, the justification may also take into account any application or practical ramification of the study's findings. This can support the research's validity in terms of its applicability to real-world situations.

Social workers regularly deal with the challenging issues that come with their line of work, which may have negative consequences. Based on first-hand observations and twelve years of work experience in the field, the researcher strongly acknowledges the exceptional resiliency displayed by peers in doing their work. It is however, also clearly noticed that some of these committed social workers have given in to the crippling pressures of their jobs, resulting in illnesses like stress and even depression.

The researcher's interest has been piqued by having experienced navigating the social work profession and being intimately familiar with the range of difficult situations that social workers face daily. Therefore, the researcher specifically explored the complex network of resilience abilities and tactics that different social workers use to shield themselves from the negative effects of their line of work. The following major queries came up: What distinguishes social workers who exhibit elevated resilience from their colleagues? Why do they appear to be less affected by the demands of their work?

The need of discovering this underlying resilience process gave rise and drove this research project. Employers, organizations, and individual practitioners would be enabled to learn a great deal from the results of examining and analysing the techniques and abilities that enable certain social workers to grow and maintain their resilience. Hence, this study aimed to provide further insight into the resilience strategies and proficiencies that social workers use. It is envisaged that the creation of support programmes intended to keep social workers in the field could be informed by these findings and would also contribute to preventing problems like burnout and job discontent amongst social workers that could otherwise result in workforce loss.

As was indicated above, much research has been done to highlight the importance of resilience in the social work sector. A diverse range of social workers has been involved in studies on resilience, including child protection social workers, nurses, teachers, social workers employed at of South African Police Services (SAPS), and the South African National *Defence Force* (SANDF) (Truter et al., 2014, 2018; Masson, 2019; Collins, 2016; Van Breda, 2013). However, research on the particular resilience skills and strategies South African social workers use to deal with the demands inherent in their line of work, is still conspicuously lacking. Therefore, it is imperative to learn more about the coping processes and resilience methods that the committed practitioners use (Abur, 2020:25).

By filling in this important vacuum in the literature, this study project hopes to further the national conversation about social workers' resilience tactics and abilities. Additionally, it aims to provide an analytical viewpoint by recognizing the importance of resilience techniques and skills from the standpoint of social workers themselves. This viewpoint is especially important when taking social workers' actual experiences into account. In the end, the study would hopefully offer the Department of Social Development useful advice, information, and assistance in developing policies and retention initiatives for expert social work practitioners. The experts are essential to providing assistance to the community's most vulnerable individuals as part of the department's overall objective. As part of department's overall service delivery framework, these social workers are essential in providing services to individuals of the community who are vulnerable (DSD,

2013:6). Consequently, it is crucial that everyone working with vulnerable populations learns and develops resilience skills and tactics (Abur, 2020). It is possible to enable social workers to succeed in their crucial duty by carefully addressing variables that undermines resilience (Rose & Palattiyil, 2020:39).

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

By elucidating the enigmatic elements that strengthen the resilience of social workers, this research aims to further the field of social work. By doing this, it hopes to create an atmosphere at work where social workers may flourish and successfully deal with the difficulties that come with their important yet hard job. With this intention, this section focuses on the purpose of the research comprising of the research question, research goal, and research objectives of the study.

Research question

The research question is the overall guiding question for the entire study (Flick, 2018:146). For Punch (2016:51) "[the] 'research question' is the question the researcher tries to answer." In writing about the "research question" Doody and Bailey (2016:19) write that "it narrows down the research purpose and goals and lays down a foundation from where research will be conducted." Formulating the research question becomes the first methodological step the researcher must take in planning a research project (Creswell, 2014:50). In other words, the research question is the question in a research study that the researcher sets out to answer.

To explore the resilience skills and strategies of social workers, the researcher posed the subsequent research question:

What are the resilience skills and strategies of social workers within the Department of Social Development, Johannesburg?

To find answers to the research question, the research was guided by the research goal and research objectives.

Research goal

The research goal, as described by Sudheesh, Duggappa and Nethra (2016:632) and Creswell (2014:123), serves as a clear statement of the researcher's intentions and articulates the researcher's desired outcomes. It functions as the essential "road map" guiding the entire study, as emphasized by Creswell (2013:134). To be effective, a research goal must be particularly formulated, specifying the research methodology, focal points, participant involvement, and the research setting as advocated by Maree (2016:31). In essence, the research goal captures what the researcher aims to accomplish, as highlighted by Maxwell (2013:23). Consequently, the proposed research goal for this study is stated as follows:

To develop an in-depth understanding of the resilience skills and strategies of social workers within the Department of Social Development, Johannesburg.

To attain the formulated goal, the researcher worked towards achieving the research objectives.

Research objectives

The research objectives serve as instruments to accomplish the purpose of the research (Sudheesh et al., 2016:632). According to Fouché and De Vos (2016), research objectives are the sequential actions performed within a specific time frame to accomplish the research goal. Lewis and Nicholls (2014:49) state that the concept objectives should be measurable via a data collection approach and should be explicit but not overly restrictive. According to Doody and Bailey (2016:262), the notion of "research objectives" gives the researcher a sense of what to expect from the study. The researcher views the research objectives as the guide with the action steps to be taken to ensure that the research goal is achieved within a given time limit.

13

To achieve the goal of this research, the follows research objectives were outlined:

- *To explore the resilience skills and strategies of social workers within the Department of Social Development, Johannesburg.*
- *To describe the resilience skills and strategies of social workers within the Department of Social Development, Johannesburg.*
- *To draw conclusions and make recommendations regarding resilience skills and strategies of social workers within the Department of Social Development, Johannesburg.*

The next section outlines the research methodology of the study.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The various methods, techniques, and procedures used to carry out a study design or research plan are together referred to as the "research methodology" (Babbie & Mouton, 2016:647). The ontological and epistemological position (such as the research paradigm or worldview), the study population, sampling techniques, strategy, data collection and analysis methods, and procedures for guaranteeing data quality, are just a few of the methodological choices covered in this section (Fouché, Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021). The selected acts of the researcher were assessed together with the rationale behind them (Davis, 2017). As advised by Maree (2016:34), once the chosen mode of inquiry has been defined, it is imperative to explain the rationale behind the choice of specific research method(s) and give an outline of the entire research plan along with supporting strategies, as is done in this chapter.

In expounding the methodology applied in this research, the research approach and the research design followed are presented.

Research approach

The current research intended to investigate the resilience skills and strategies utilized by social workers. To achieve this, a qualitative research approach was applied, allowing the researcher to gather and evaluate the opinions and experiences of the participants. The focus of qualitative research lies in the study of human behaviour and attitudes as they happen in their natural environments (Sithole, 2013:394). Creswell and Poth (2018:7) assert that qualitative research is centred on the study of individuals within their natural settings, with the aim of deriving significance from their experiences and understanding the interpretations they give to them. The text offers answers to inquiries relating to several types of occurrences, while also presenting and analysing the viewpoints of the individuals involved (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019:88-89). The qualitative research approach deals with investigating the underlying beliefs, values, and reasons that provide an explanation for the occurrence of certain behaviours (Casselberry & Nolen, 2018). When doing research on a sensitive issue, a social phenomenon with limited prior information, or a topic with considerable emotional depth, it has been suggested by Padgett (2017:16-17) that the qualitative research approach is the most suitable study method.

The qualitative research approach includes the following features, as outlined by Kumar (2019:16-18) and Creswell and Poth (2018:43-44):

- The qualitative approach is characterized by its flexibility, which enables researchers to adapt and modify the study process as needed. Adjustments may arise during the research process or data-gathering phase when a specific description of the study plan of action is absent. Therefore, during the process of doing research, it is possible to modify the study design accordingly. The researcher employed appropriate methods to gather data and conduct an investigation on the resilience skills and techniques employed by social workers.

- One of the primary benefits of qualitative research is its ability to be done within a naturalistic context, where the phenomenon under investigation naturally unfolds. In this study, the participants were met and interviewed in the environment where they work.

15

- Qualitative research involves the direct involvement of the researcher in the data collecting through the utilization of semi-structured interviews. These interviews are facilitated by an interview guide, which acts as the primary tool for gathering data. In this study, the researcher as the primary investigator gathered the data personally using the utilization of open-ended questions in the interview guide as a guiding framework.

- In qualitative research data are collected from several people rather than depending just on a single source. In this study, the researcher arranged to conduct interviews with social workers employed at the Department of Social Development to explore their resilience skills and strategies.

- Data analysis in qualitative research is an inductive process, and it includes patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up. This information is documented and compiled by systematically organizing the data into themes, sub-themes, and categories. The inductive approach was utilized during the process of data analysis in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the resilience skills and strategies employed by social workers. Understanding the significance of participants' interpretations in relation to a phenomenon and its alignment with existing literature, is of utmost importance for the qualitative researcher. The research included a range of perspectives and components.

The researcher attempted to enhance the complexity of the situation by presenting several perspectives and defining the various factors at play. Hence, the researcher deemed the qualitative research technique suitable for this study, since it seeks to clarify the significance of the social phenomenon researched by probing into individuals' interpretations of their social environment from their own viewpoints (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019:88). The chosen study approach was selected to investigate the resilience skills and strategies employed by social workers. Moreover, the selection of this research approach was considered appropriate due to its basis in the interpretive perspective, which allows participants to provide insights into their own subjective experiences (Kumar, 2019:16). Additionally, this approach is well-suited for exploring areas of inquiry that have received less attention in previous studies such as the topic being researched (Padgett, 2017:17).

Research design

According to Bloomfield and Fisher (2019:28), a research design plays a crucial role in providing a structured framework for many aspects of a study, such as formulating research questions, selecting appropriate data collecting techniques, establishing the research population, sample, and describing the necessary steps for the data analysis. Research designs are of significant value in directing researchers to carefully examine ideas and concepts, facilitating the development of a comprehensive research question (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The researcher intended to employ the phenomenological research design and successfully executed it throughout the research project, as it aligned effectively with the exploratory character of the study and the objective of thoroughly investigating the lived experiences of the participants. This design was reinforced as intended by the exploratory, descriptive, and contextual design to achieve the objectives of the study and attain the research goal in answering the research question.

1.5.2.1 The phenomenological design

The study used a phenomenological research design, which involved an in-depth investigation and organized reflection on the actual subjective experiences of social workers (Usher & Jackson, 2017:02). The research design used for this study was phenomenological, which included theoretical attention to the interpretation and development of meaning. The primary objective was to get a comprehensive understanding of the conscious experiences of persons in their everyday work environments (Qutoshi, 2018:1). The researcher's objective in employing the phenomenological technique was to conduct an in-depth examination of the resilience skills and strategies utilized by social workers. This design facilitated a comprehensive study of their lived experiences with specific reference to the application of their resilience skills and strategies within the demanding setting of their profession.

The exploratory research design

This design is especially useful in situations when there is a lack of pre-existing information or theory. Its main objective is to generate initial conclusions and hypotheses, with the aim of uncovering the underlying nature of a phenomenon, gaining new insights, and evaluating phenomena from an entirely new standpoint. Researchers use it as a starting point of reference for further comprehensive investigations (Makri, 2021; Marshall & Rossman, 2016:78). The small amount of literature available on resilience skills and strategies among social workers, prompted the researcher to choose an exploratory study design. This research study employed this research design to thoroughly explore the resilience abilities and techniques utilized by social workers. This research design seemed appropriate for the current study since as it aimed at exploring information and obtaining a better understanding of the topic.

The descriptive research design

The primary objective of descriptive research is to offer an accurate picture of an individual, event, or circumstances, whereas explanatory research is aimed at showing the linkages and interconnections among various aspects (Yegidis, Weinbach & Myers, 2018:105). The basic concept of theory in descriptive research extends beyond simply the compilation of traits, qualities, or concepts. Applying this research design offers a comprehensive explanation of the interrelationships among these aspects, as well as the linkages, connections, and chronological dimensions that govern the appearance of phenomena and events (Makri, 2021).

The researcher's decision to use a descriptive research design in the investigation of social workers' resilience skills and strategies, was supported by the above definition. By means of the study, the researcher aimed to conduct a thorough examination of and describe the resilience skills and strategies employed by social workers in their duties as professionals. The design used was aligned with the aim of presenting an accurate picture of the phenomenon being researched. Therefore, the

decision to choose a descriptive method was considered appropriate for the purpose of facilitating a thorough and accurate description of the resilience skills and strategies utilized by social workers.

1.5.2.4 The contextual research design

By using this research design the researcher was able to identify and understand how contextual factors affect participants' experience, perception, and behaviour (Holtzblatt & Beyer, 2017). The contextual study design focuses on gathering data inside the participants' natural environment, with careful consideration of the specific contexts involved (Machado & Pacheco, 2020:59). This study aimed to comprehend the physical, social, and economic circumstances that influence the resilience abilities and strategies of social workers by obtaining information from social workers in the context of their natural environment. The primary emphasis of this research design is that in order to comprehend the lives and behaviour of the participants, the researcher must be physically immersed in the participants' environment (Holtzblatt & Beyer, 2017). In developing a contextual research design, the focus is on the researcher. Thus, in order to explore social workers' resilience skills and strategies, the researcher chose a contextual research design.
The following section provides an overview of the research methods employed.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODS

The concept 'research method' is described by Maree (2016) "as the tools a researcher uses in collecting data." Research methods are influenced by the research question, the theoretical framework, and the goals of the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:74). Research methods denote precise methods that are used in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation in a research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:16). It describes how a researcher plans to approach the research problem, including the description of research subjects, data collection, compiling a sample, sampling procedures, and data analysis of study (Graustein, 2014:276). Their function is to provide the collection of relevant information with minimal expenditure of effort, time, and money

(Goundar, 2019) Therefore, the researcher regards the research methods as the instruments used to conduct the research study.

The sub-sections that follow describing the research methods, contain details about the study population, sampling, preparation for data collection, role of the researcher and interviewing skills, methods of data collection, and pilot testing.

Study Population

According to Brink, Van der Walt, and Van Rensburg (2018), the study or research population is the entire group or items in which the researcher is interested, which satisfy the study's selection criteria. Momoh and Scott (2021) define "population" as the total number of people, organizations, and things that share the research's focus and share certain common features. People who are experiencing or have experienced the phenomenon under investigation and who can communicate valuable data on the planned research study should make up a population (Creswell, 2014:119). The study population is viewed by the researcher as a focus group from which the study sample is selected.

Field and intake social workers employed by the Department of Social Development at its City of Johannesburg offices, comprised the study population of this research study. The primary duties of the Department of Social Development (DSD) in Johannesburg are to oversee government efforts to create partnerships that enable marginalized individuals, groups, and communities to become capable and engaged contributors to the advancement of their community and to offer social protection services (Babbie, 2016:16). The DSD was selected due to its outstanding service delivery to the community in that demanding field, in addition to its ease of accessibility to the researcher. Hence, the researcher set out to investigate DSD the resilience tactics and abilities of social workers employed by the DSD in Johannesburg, the largest city in South Africa.

The researcher opted to limit the study's scope to Gauteng Department of Social Development, at Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. This choice stems from a number of pragmatic factors. To begin with, the DSD is a sizable company, suggesting that it employs a sizable number of social workers who may provide insightful analysis for research projects. Furthermore, the researcher is employed at the same department, which makes pertinent data and resources easier to obtain. However, precautions were taken to maintain a neutrality and unbiases perspective. To avoid any possible conflict of interest, social workers who worked in the same office as the researcher were not allowed to participant in the study. Furthermore, the researcher practice neutrality by entering the field as a learner willing to learn from participants' experience respecting their beliefs, and experience. Finally, because of the previously mentioned factors, it is determined that carrying out the research study inside the DSD is economical and efficient. Because the research population is so large and dispersed, it was not feasible to include every member of the population. As a result, a sample of social workers from the research population was chosen to participate in the research (Alvi, 2016:10).

Sampling

According to Campbell, Taylor, and McGlade (2017), sampling is the process of gathering data from a subset of the population that has been chosen in a way that is representative of the full population. Researchers can also choose which units to study by using sampling (Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2018). Sampling, in the eyes of the researcher, is the process of identifying and selecting key players from the research population who can contribute important information about the topic under study.

Purposive sampling, another name for non-probability sampling, was used by the researcher in this investigation. According to Grinnell and Unrau (2014:146), purposeful sampling, a kind of non-probability sampling, entails the intentional selection of particular units or participants for a study, based on the researcher's judgment of which ones will best represent the intended features or qualities of the population being investigated. According to Campbell et al. (2017:44), it is vital to

this sampling method's goals to delve into the perspectives of a certain set of people. In purposive sampling the researcher relies on information saturation (when the information obtained becomes repetitive) to terminate the number of participants interviewed, meaning that sample size is rarely specified beforehand (Gravetter & Forzano, 2016:138).

The researcher resolved to deliberately choose social workers as participants, who were conscious of their resilience techniques and abilities implemented in their work with clients. The researcher was able to obtain important knowledge and details about the topic at hand from the primary information sources thanks to applying this sampling technique.

The criteria for inclusion in the sample of participants in the research study required social workers-

- of any gender and any population group;
- registered as social workers with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP);
- employed at the Department of Social Development's offices in Johannesburg City;
- with two years or more of working experience as a social worker;
- able to express themselves in English;
- who understood what the terms 'resilience skills' and 'resilience strategies' are; and
- willing to participate voluntarily in the research and willing to sign an informed consent.

The exclusion criteria eliminated social workers from being part of the sample, who -

- were not employed at the Department of Social Development's offices in Johannesburg City.
- could not express themselves in English;
- did not understand what resilience skills and strategies are; or
- were not willing to participate in this study and refused to sign the informed consent.

As previously stated, the researcher used purposive sampling to select social workers who fitted the above requirements for the sample. In accordance with the methodologies of qualitative research, the researcher prioritized acquiring in-depth information from participants during data collection, without pre-setting the sample size. As per Nieuwenhuis (2020:92), in qualitative studies, the determination of sample size is guided by the concept of data saturation. This approach entails conducting interviews with successive participants until the responses start to repeat and

Permission for this study was granted by the UNISA Ethics Committee on 25 April 2022, under reference number 58544747_CREC_CHS_2022, which authorized the commencement of data collection (Addendum H). Following this approval, the researcher submitted a formal written request to the Research Administrator of the Department of Social Development in Johannesburg, seeking authorization to conduct the study with DSD personnel. After receiving approval, the researcher used the supervisors of the various offices (DSD sub-offices) as gatekeepers to inform the social workers in their sections about the research study. As pointed out by Flick (2018:157), gatekeepers are vital in resolving issues related to trust, culture, and language by following directives and forming the necessary agreements with them to create procedures involving the participants in the research.

After that, the researcher had one-on-one meetings with social workers meeting the inclusion criteria. to discuss the research project, its objectives, their rights, any implied consequences, and the advantages of taking part in the study, in order to identify prospective participants. The identified potential participants were allowed time to consider whether or not they would like to take part in the study. During a follow-up conversation, the researcher reminded those who consented to take part that it was entirely optional and asked for their signature on a consent form (Addendum D). For the actual interviews, follow-up meetings were scheduled at a time and location that worked for them.

Preparation for data collection

After fully informing the possible participants about the research study and obtaining their consent to participate, they were prepared for their data collection interviews at a location that was secure, favourable, and convenient for them. The participants were provided with detailed information regarding the time, location, and duration of their interviews. In addition, the participants were given a copy of the interview guide comprising of a set of data collection questions to be asked and deliberated about throughout the interview. The researcher's function during the interview was explained. Participants were also asked permission for the researcher to digitally record the interviews, and their signed agreement for this was obtained. Adhering to research ethics, the researcher notified the participants about the individuals who would have access to the data, namely the researcher, independent coder, and research study directors. Furthermore, the researcher reiterated the need of adhering to ethical issues in the study. Interviews were arranged based on the participants' availability and ease of access.

Role of the researcher and interviewing skills

To ensure successful unstructured interviews in collecting in-depth and detailed data, it is of utmost importance to establish rapport with participants by strengthening the interviewer and participant's relationship and trust (Flick, 2018:217; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). To ensure successful interviews and obtaining in-depth and detailed data, the researcher ensured that good relationships and trust were established with the participants. To ensure the effectivity of the process, the researcher used the following interviewing skills: establishing rapport, attentive and active listening, probing, follow-up questioning, clarifying, and summarising. The ability to establish good relationships with participants is a very important skill required to interview participants. In the interviews, the researcher listened attentively and paid close attention to what participants were saying, enabling the researcher to probe further and follow up on participants' responses. The researcher employed clear and comprehensible language, encouraging participants to likewise use clear and understandable language, thereby facilitating a clear and effective discussion.

Method of data collection

When a researcher engages in activities meant to obtain information that would address the research questions, data collecting takes place (Creswell, 2013:147). Using semi-structured face-to-face interviews and an interview guide with open-ended questions, the researcher collected the data required for examining social workers' resilience tactics and skills. Semi-structured interviews, in accordance with Adler and Clark (2015:256), enable the researcher to gain an understanding of the participants' perspectives on circumstances, feelings, experiences, and lives. In order to effectively interact with participants, the researcher must be in tune with them. As such, it requires the researcher to have great interviewing abilities as well as a high degree of focused listening (Geyer, 2021:357). The researcher included questions about investigating the relevant part of the study in a reasonable way and arranged them in an ordered manner to obtain clear answers to the questions, when creating the interview guide. Digital recordings of the interviews were made with the participants' consent.

The researcher formulated, the following biographical questions to ask interviewees when beginning the conversation, in order to obtain the necessary information to compile the participants' profile:

TABLE 1.1 BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONS

Questions
How will you prefer to be called during the interview?
How old are you?
At which university, did you obtain your qualification?
How long have you been working as a social worker?
What is your position at work?

After that, the researcher formulated the following questions related to the subject under study:

TABLE 1.2 OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FROM THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Questions
What are your main responsibilities as a social worker at the DSD?
How would you describe your experience with regard to your job as a social worker?
What is your understanding of the concept "resilience"?
What are the challenges you often encounter in your job?
How do these challenges affect your job performance?
What resilience skills and strategies do you use to deal with these challenges that you experience?
Tell me more about the effectiveness of the resilience skills and strategies you currently use.
What do you suggest can be done by your employer to assist you to enhance your resilience skills and strategies?

Pilot testing

Before using a research instrument in a study, pilot testing is done to test and validate the research instrument on a smaller scale (Barker, 2014:326; Rubin & Babbie, 2016:296). Pilot testing aids in the process modification and making amendments to the research instrument for a seamless primary investigation and prevents problematic issues related to the interviewing, from being discovered during or after the study is completed (Mitchell & Jolley, 2013:203-204). To evaluate the instrument and data collection method in a pilot test, the researcher arranged two social workers who satisfied the inclusion requirements for the sample. In order to prevent contamination, the results of the interviews with these volunteers were not included in the actual study. Pilot testing was conducted to see whether the data collection instrument was appropriate, whether the questions were challenging enough for the participants to understand, and whether enough time had been allotted for the duration of the interviews. In summary, the pilot testing allowed the researcher to evaluate the composition of the research instrument and the researcher's questioning

techniques in order to gather rich material intended to address the study topic and helped the researcher to make the necessary adjustments to the data collection tool.

The next section deals with the data analysis and the interpretation of the data.

1.7   DATA ANALYSIS

The process of giving direction, form, and value to the volume of information gathered is known as data analysis (Roestenburg et al., 2021:391). Data classification, a primary thorough review of the database, coding and organizing themes, data representation, and data interpretation are all part of this process (Creswell & Poth, 2018:181).

Tesch's well-known procedure and steps for data analysis were selected to be followed by the researcher in analysing the data obtained (Creswell, 2014:196; Creswell & Poth, 2018:183-184) as follows:

- The first phase in the research process was to organize and get ready for data analysis by verbatim transcription of the audio interview and organizing the notes appropriately.
- After that, the researcher would select one transcript interview to have a general understanding of its content.
- After gaining a comprehension of the essential data present in the records, the researcher proceeded reviewing each additional transcript in order to compile a list of themes. The themes were grouped together in labelled clusters after being sorted according to their similarities and differences.
- Codes assisted in the process of organizing any existing categories and codes by being assigned to the various clusters.
- To prevent duplication, the categories were abbreviated, and the codes arranged alphabetically.
- By combining similar categories and outlining their relationships, the number of categories were decreased.

- All of the data related to each theme were gathered in one location so that an initial analysis could be done.
- Lastly, the researcher determined if the current data was still required.

The researcher collaborated with an independent coder and the study supervisor for the data analysis phase. The researcher applied the above mentioned Tesch's steps in data analysis independently and subsequently compared these insights with those identified by the independent coder. Additionally, there a series of discussions were held with the supervisor and coder to ensure a comprehensive and verified collaborative analysis.

The methods for ensuring data rigor and verification are described in the section that follows.

1.8   ENSURING RIGOUR

To be rigorous in research, is to have faith in the findings of a research investigation. In ensuring rigour, the main goal is to demonstrate the study methodologies' recurrent dependability. It also provides an accurate depiction of the population under investigation. In qualitative terms, rigor is described as "a way to establish trust or confidence in the findings of a research study" (Queens University of Charlotte, 2023). With reference to the components of qualitative research in relation to qualitative rigor, Burns, Grove, and Gray (2013) stated that rigour consists of confirmability, dependability, credibility, and transferability. To ensure rigor in this research, the model of Guba and Lincoln (see Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191; Hadi & Closs, 2016) was used as follows:

Credibility /Authenticity

Credibility or authenticity has been discussed, with reference to the veracity and honesty of study findings (Hadi & Closs, 2016). The researcher spent time at the research sites to establish trust and building relationships with the participants in order to develop credibility (Creswell, 2013:250). To ensure that results were supported by numerous data sources, triangulation was used.

Triangulation is defined as the use of more than one source to achieve a comprehensive picture of a fixed point of references (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:186). Emerging themes from the data were validated through the use of direct quotations. To guarantee a diversity of viewpoints, interviews were conducted with all social workers who have knowledge of resilience and operationalised it in their daily work.

Transferability /Applicability

The term "transferability" or "applicability" describes how research study findings can be applied to similar situations and produce comparable outcomes (Flick, 2018). Transferability in qualitative research is to help the reader draw links between study components and their personal experiences rather than generalize (Roestenburg et al., 2021:393; Nieuwenhuis, 2016:124). The study's methodology and background were thoroughly described to ensure transferability. In addition, it guaranteed that participants in purposive sampling were carefully chosen to guarantee that they were representative of the population regarding the phenomenon under study and that data was meticulously recorded to provide detailed accounts of the interviews (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:122). Restrictions were kept to a minimum, and data was gathered until data saturation was reached (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:122).

Dependability /Consistency

According to Bless et al. (2013), researchers must be dependable by adhering to a specific and well-defined plan, and every stage of the research process must be finished completely. Implementing the research design, collecting data meticulously, and critically evaluating the research study are all examples of reliability (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:124). Consistency or dependability entails verifying results with participants. Both the researcher and an independent coder individually coded the data to ensure consistent results. Detailed documentation of research procedures was maintained, creating an audit trail for tracking all research steps, from design to

data collection and decision-making (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:121; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014:312).

Confirmability /Neutrality

Confirmability is the quality in which the data gathered must corroborate the study's conclusions and cannot be influenced by the researcher's own agenda (Creswell, 2018:259-261; Nieuwenhuis, 2016: 125). The study's conclusions and interpretations must unambiguously demonstrate that the data support them (Moser & Korstjens, 2018: 121). The research was conducted with the researcher's impartiality and fairness, which are the cornerstones of confirmability or neutrality (Miles et al., 2014; Nieuwenhuis, 2016:125:125).

To guarantee confirmability, the research additionally incorporated the subsequent tactics (Creswell & Poth, 2018, 2018-259):

- Member checking was a useful method for triangulation, as it allowed participants to review the final results and provided input.
- Ending an audit trial so that the investigation's path can be followed.
- Using other people's peer debriefing regarding the study.

The study employed as mentioned before, triangulation through the use of member checking, which is getting participant feedback to ascertain whether or not they concur with the research conclusions and to reduce biasness. In-depth details regarding the research methodology, data collection, interviewing procedures, and participant transcriptions was all employed in the research report. The researcher applied bracketing to avoid biasness. Bracketing is defined as a method used by researchers to mitigate the potential deleterious effect of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase rigor of the research study (Sorsa, Kiikkala & Astedt- Kurki, 2015). In insuring bracketing, data were coded for anonymity and fair interpretation of data, identification information such as age, gender, working experience and working areas was coded to reduce bias when interpreting the results. Because the researcher is working in the same department doing the same job, the researcher made use of her interviewing skills to ensure that

the differences in experience does not become an obstacle in gaining credible data. The researcher allowed participants to speak from their experiences within their workplace, background and beliefs and did not make judgements or negatively questioned their responses. The researcher also checked her interpretation against that of the independent coder, to ensure that she was unbiased.

Steps for verifying the data have been addressed and put into practice to increase the reliability of the results. The following section outlines the incorporation of the ethical considerations into the research process.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Good moral principles that guide a person's behaviour are referred to as ethics (Parveen & Showkat, 2017:1; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:90). Research ethics is concerned with how interventions made by researchers may affect the subjects of their studies as well as the protocols used to keep the subjects safe (Flick, 2018:153). The idea of ethics in research refers to what is appropriate and permissible and denotes an attempt on the part of the researcher to adhere to moral research practices (Brink, van der Walt, & van Rensburg, 2018:55). According to Parveen and Showkat (2017), this means that the researcher is responsible for the participants' well-being, safety, and has respect for their rights.

Protecting research participants' interests and keeping them safe from harm is central to research ethics. In order to reduce the possibility of harm, preserve justice, improve participant privacy, and show respect for participants, the researcher adhered to the following ethical principles:

1.9.1 Informed consent

Participants must be made aware of the benefits and dangers of taking part in the study in order to give their informed permission to participate in the research (Flick, 2018:140). Arifin (2018:30) states that volunteers should receive comprehensive information from the researcher regarding the

aim, procedures, timeline, and potential applications of the study. In order to verify the significance of consent, it should be signed by witnesses (Padgett, 2017:81). The researcher must utilize clear language in order to obtain their appropriate informed permission (Flick, 2018:140). In order to give their consent, participants must be appropriately emotionally mature and aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time (Grinnell & Unrau, 2014:94).

In order to comply with the ethical principle of informed consent, the researcher ensured that all participants are well-informed about all aspects of the study. Before conducting interviews with participants, the research methodology, associated risks, benefits, and drawbacks were described to prospective participants. in this instance, participants consented both orally and in writing (Addendum C). Consent forms were signed by potential participants after being informed about the research study (Appendix D).

Anonymity and confidentiality

The researcher's standards for maintaining the right to privacy are anonymity and secrecy (Roestenburg et al., 2021:124). Confidentiality refers to the researcher preventing unauthorized individuals from accessing private information, whereas participant anonymity implies that only the researcher should be able to identify the participants (Fleming, 2018:211, Roestenburg, et al., 2021:124). According to Fleming (2018), confidentiality in turn, is the preservation of participant privacy and the inaccessibility of data by unauthorized parties. By not tying data to participants' names, the participants' anonymity and confidentiality were maintained (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole 2013:33).

The researcher took precautions to preserve participant privacy in order to shield them from potential harm that could result from the linkage of their identities with the obtained data. The participants' identities were made anonymous by removing their personal information that could identify them and using pseudonyms for them instead. All data that might divulge the private information collected from participants in the research project was handled with extreme

discretion. Only those persons with permission, such as the independent coder, the study supervisor, and the researcher, had access to this data. The researcher made sure that the information that the participants gave was kept private.

Voluntary participation

According to Rubin and Babbie (2017), genuine and purposeful decision-making by participants and realising its consequences, are necessary for voluntary engagement. According to Roestenburg et al. (2021:116–117), participants must be properly informed about the study's objective, their voluntary involvement, possible risk, and the advantages of their participation in the research.

Participants were informed by the researcher from the outset about the nature of the research, its goal, and the consequences of their participation. It was made very evident to participants that their involvement is completely optional and that they were under no need to participate if they so choose. Precautions were taken to maintain a neutral and unbiased perspective because the researcher works in the same department where the study was performed, and some possible volunteers knew the researcher. Furthermore, to avoid any possible conflicts of interest or coercion, social workers who worked in the same office as the researcher were not allowed to participate in the study.

Management of information

The researcher will make sure that confidentiality and the ethical principles of anonymity will be upheld in order to reduce the risk of access to the data collected and the research records (Grinnell & Unrau, 2014:136-137). Therefore, research records must be safely locked away in a secure location since the researcher bears responsibility for protecting participants' sensitive, hidden, and private information from unauthorized access (Padgett, 2017:84).

The researcher advised the participants to clarify the divulging of any information they were reluctant to share or felt is private to guarantee appropriate information management. In managing the information received, the researcher took precautions to safeguard all documents and audio recordings to guard against unwanted access. These recordings were only accessible to the researcher, the study supervisor, and the independent coder. Records were safely locked away, and alphabetical letters were employed for reporting data. To maintain security, password security procedures were used to secure data that was kept safe electronically.

Beneficence

According to Grinnell and Unrau (2014), beneficence is the responsibility to minimize potential harm while maximizing long-term aid that can be achieved. Barrow, Brannan and Khandhar (2020) define beneficence as acting in a way that promotes the care and well-being of others. The two guiding principles of these researchers' beneficence are the participants' right to self-determination from suffering and damage and their right to be shielded from exploitation. Participants must be made aware of the potential effects in advance, and the researcher bears the duty to safeguard them beyond a reasonable doubt by striving to repair or minimize any harm that may occur (Roestenburg et al., 2021:115).

The researcher made sure that participants were never asked to do anything that could diminish their sense of self-worth or cause them to feel ashamed in any kind. The wording of the questions were carefully chosen to minimize any discomfort or suffering. Following the interview, the researcher inquired about the participants' emotions to ascertain whether they were emotionally invested in the study to the point where the designated social worker, who can help with the debriefing sessions, must be contacted in order to support participants. Every participant was also made aware of the risk involved in taking part in the study by the researcher. The researcher made prior arrangements for individuals to be referred for professional counselling and debriefing, if necessary, in case the participants' well-being was jeopardized in any manner. By taking part in the study, the volunteers were not going get any rewards. This study had no financial benefit

associated with it. The dissemination of research findings was done so as to avoid disclosing or negatively impacting participants in any way (Creswell & Poth, 2018:56).

Debriefing for participant

Debriefing is defined as a meeting when participants have a chance to process their experiences from the study (Babbie, 2013: 7). The researcher should make prior arrangements for participant debriefing and referral for professional counselling before handling debriefing, if necessary (Padget, 2017:85).

Debriefing is an essential component of the study's research ethics when it comes to ethical considerations including human engagement (Gravetter & Forzano, 2016:591). The researcher made the appropriate preparations so that a qualified professional with pertinent experience was available to provide counselling to research participants if that were deemed necessary. Addendum F documents the formal request, while Addendum G documents the confirmation obtained. In order to protect the subjects, the researcher followed up with the interviewees to see whether they were uncomfortable or involved in the study on an emotional level. This allowed the researcher to get in touch with the debriefer, who were to help with the debriefing sessions. However, none of the participant required the debriefing services.

1.10   CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The prominent key concepts used in this study are defined and clarified with their connotation in the context of this study indicated.

Exploring/ Exploration

Exploration in social science is explained as a systematic and purposeful wide-ranging, prearranged process, which focuses on intensifying the discovery of generalizations that may lead

to explaining and being considerate of social or emotional life (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). It means to study, analyse, examine, or investigate something. In the context of this research, it meant to investigate, get a better understanding, and become acquainted with the resilience skills and strategies of social workers. Exploring is the process of discovering new things, without knowing exactly what to expect.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability of a self-motivated person to adjust positively to instabilities that threaten the person's role, capability, or progress (Masten, 2014:4; Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, &Yehuda 2014). Resilience is the positive adaption to the natural, and known, experiments of working with clients (Rose & Palattiyil, 2020:39; Southwick & Charney, 2018). Resilience makes people aware of situations, their emotional reactions, and behaviour of those around them. By remaining aware of situations, a person maintains control of the situation and think of and devise a way to solve the problem. Resilience in the setting of this research meant the quality and capability that helps social workers to adjust completely to expressive challenging situations, deal with it, cope with emotional difficulties, foster effective coping strategies, advance welfare, and develop professionally (MacDonald, Jackson, Wilkes & Vickers, 2012; Taormina, 2015:36).

Skills and strategies

The term 'skill' denotes the aptitude to efficiently and enthusiastically use one's information to accomplish or enact goals. It is defined as a power that is acquired to do something competently, it is an aptitude or ability that has been fostered (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014). The concept 'strategy' means a purposeful activity, where one plans or develops a series of steps for obtaining a specific aim. Skills are needed to implement a strategy (Wiggins, 2021). This research explored what specific strategies and skills resilient social workers used in conducting their work.

Social Worker

A social worker is a professional person who assists individuals and families improve their quality of life by ensuring access to basic needs (Dhavaleshwar, 2016:61). In terms of South African legislation articulated in the Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978, as amended (South Africa (RSA). 2019: Sec 1), 'social worker' denotes a person registered as a social worker under section 17 of this Act. In that section of the Act, a social worker is described as "any person who holds the prescribed qualifications and satisfies the prescribed conditions, and who satisfies the council that he is a fit and proper person to be allowed to practise the profession of social work" (South Africa (RSA). 2019: Sec 17(1)). Any person registered as a social worker, may use the title social worker. In this research report, 'social worker' refers to a social worker employed by the Department of Social Development in the Johannesburg city region. As professionals, social workers have acquired the essential knowledge base and skills to practise their profession, and they adhere to the principles and ethics of their profession (NASW 2014:1).

Department of Social Development, Johannesburg

Department of Social Development, Johannesburg is a governmental department under the bureau of Social Development, whose core directive is the delivery of social services, child protection social assistance, and the upliftment of vulnerable population (DSD, 2013a). The DSD, Johannesburg   is a large organisation with more than 10 sub-offices and +- 600 social workers.

1.11   STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research report/ dissertation comprises four chapters with the focus of each of the chapters shown in the below diagram: Figure 1.1 displays the structure of this report.

Chapter 1: General orientation to the study.
- This chapter provides the general introduction and background to the study, study problem, and the rationale of the study, purpose of the study, research goal, question, objectives the research methodology, clarification of key concepts and ethical consideration

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework.
- This chapter reviews the literature regarding resilience skills and strategies of social workers and also discusses the theoretical perspective of the study.

Chapter 3: Application of qualitative research methods.
- This chapter stipulate a detailed research methodology which includes the application of the qualitative approach, research design, methods of data collection, analysis, and verification of data.

Chapter 4: Presentation and discussion of the of the findings.
- This chapter focusses on the first part of the research findings, and literature control to verify the findings.

Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendation.
- In this chapter a summary of the research report, overall conclusions based on major findings and recommendations are provided.

FIGURE 1.1 STRUCTURE OF REPORT

1.12   CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher provided an overview of the research topic, its background, and the plan for conducting the study. Introduced in this chapter is the research topic, demonstrating the researcher's understanding of the topic, research problem, and the underlying rationale for undertaking the research. Additionally, briefly described are the methodology, research methods, data analysis, verification methods, and key concepts along with an outline of the chapter structure.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A thorough literature analysis on the resilience techniques and skills used by social workers is presented in the second chapter of this study. According to Khan and Khan (2017) and Cooper (2018), a literature review is a "written summary" that arranges the literature according to subjects and highlights its advantages and disadvantages. It is also described as a "systematic, explicit, and reproducible method" for analysing the body of current literature on the subject. In describing literature review, Fink (2019) accentuated it as a "comprehensive study and interpretation" of literature on a specific topic. All three definitions emphasize the importance of literature review in establishing the current knowledge base and identifying gaps in the existing knowledge on the subject. Additionally, they highlight the need to critically evaluate and synthesize the literature to provide context and background for the research question.

This chapter aims to present the present conceptualisation of resilience, the significance of social workers to have resilience, challenges faced by social workers and the resilience skills and strategies they employ to deal with challenges. The chapter also analyses, scrutinizes, and reviews the work done by other researchers relating to resilience skills and strategies of social workers. Lastly, the theoretical framework relevant to this research is discussed.

This literature review and theoretical framework for the study delineate the factors impacting social work professionals, conceptualize resilience within social work practice, explain how resilience develops in social workers, explore their coping skills and strategies, and outline the theoretical framework adopted to investigate the resilience skills of social workers.

2.2 FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIAL WORKERS

The social work profession experiences numerous challenges within contemporary South African social work practice. Crowder and Sear (2017:26) affirm that social workers are exposed to trauma, stress and have a lot of pressure which leads to burnout within their working environment. There are suggestions that the issue of work challenges is a concern among South African social workers and social workers in other countries, however, the degree and intensity of challenges faced are not the same. The focus on human beings, their complex problems, and relationships, and emotionally charged situations, can be highly challenging. There are various other factors that put social workers in a stressful situation. These challenges are above all high caseloads, traumatic cases, lack of resources, and lack of support from supervisors and management (Engelbrecht, 2014:101). In this discussion the focus is on stress, burnout, and fatigue; high- or low-level workloads; inadequate and unsupportive supervision; poor relationships with co-workers; lack of resources; role ambiguity; and extra-organizational challenges among social workers.

2.2.1 Stress, burnout, and fatigue

Due to its inherent difficulties, members of the social work profession regularly experience significant stress, which can result in burnout, exhaustion, and tension (Crowder & Sear, 2017:26). Social workers frequently struggle with the upsetting realities of their clients, which can have a negative impact and lead to burnout, stress, and depression amongst social workers. Therefore, enhancing resilience is important because it plays a critical role in helping social workers manage the pressure of their work (Crowder & Sear, 2017:26).

Social workers are more prone to stress than people in other professions (HSE, 2013; McFadden, 2015). This can have a major negative effect on how well social workers function at work (Hussein, 2018). Social workers frequently operate under extreme pressure, and their line of work is notorious for having a negative impact on their physical well-being and safety (Graham, Shier & Nicholas, 2016). Stress can cause social workers to psychologically withdraw from their

profession, a condition known as burnout, which can result in significant exhaustion (Mere, 2012). Burnout is a critical worry for social workers. Nevertheless, this can be lessened by learning efficient coping mechanisms, finding a work-life balance, and managing stress (Mashego, 2018:13). In social work, work-related stresses are a greater cause of stress and burnout than personal issues, according to Rohling (2016:19).

2.2.2 High- or low-level workloads

Social work is a stressful profession that involves a lot of paperwork, unmanageable caseloads, challenging clients, a lack of resources, a staffing shortage, and inadequate and insufficient supervision. High caseloads, heavy workloads, and a lack of resources have been found to increase social workers' stress levels and have an impact on their productivity at work. One of the most obvious and tangible sources of stress at work is the workload (Kabunga, 2014). Overload and underload are two types of workloads that may cause stress at work (Kord, Damani & Parvaresh, 2015). Employee burnout and demotivation can result from having to do too much work in a short amount of time or having little to accomplish at work.

2.2.3 Inadequate and unsupportive supervision

Research indicates that effective supervision contributes significantly to job satisfaction and mitigates the negative consequences of work pressure, whereas ineffective supervision leads to increased work pressure. Social work supervision is an interactive process that occurs within a positive and non-discriminatory relationship, drawing on a range of theories, models, and viewpoints. This role requires a supervisor who possesses the necessary training, knowledge, and experience to oversee and supervise social workers, social auxiliary workers, student social workers, and social auxiliary learners. This is achieved through the execution of administrative, supportive, and educational responsibilities, aimed at facilitating the delivery of proficient and impactful social work services (Supervision Framework for Social Work Profession in South Africa, 2012). It will be easier for social workers to handle work pressure if they have access to

social support systems and other networks. Additionally, a number of studies show that positive, encouraging connections between co-workers and managers boost the wellbeing of both the workforce and the company (Botha, 2022). Burton, Jenny, and Scheuer (2012) state that an employee's likelihood of experiencing work-related stress decreases with the strength and health of their relationships with co-workers; nevertheless, it is pointed out that a weak relationship and a lack of support increase stress and illness (Calitz et al., 2014:162).

2.2.4 Poor relationships with co-workers

It is thought that positive working connections benefit the organization and the individual employee. According to Burton et al. (2012), the social relationships that arise at work between co-workers can lead to stress and poor health. This researcher goes on to say that a lack of trust, a lack of support, and a lack of interest in interacting with involved co-workers are characteristics of unhealthy relationships (Burton et al., 2012). Calitz et al. (2014:162) state that positive working relationships foster emotional support, professional development, the teaching of political and cultural knowledge, teamwork, advancement, and a wide range of personal benefits. Role ambiguity, according to Maluleke (2019:11) is evident when co-workers divert one another, which hinders communication and lowers workplace satisfaction. Stress at work is less likely when co-workers have healthy, good relationships (Burton et al., 2012). Thus, having a friendly workplace and positive working relationships is essential for reducing the negative effects of stress at work.

2.2.5 Lack of resources

The scarcity of resources has been noted by South African social workers as another cause of stress (Skosana, 2020), Reports of resource shortages in social work organizations are common in South Africa (Kheswa, 2019). Among the crucial resources that are absent in social work settings are items such as sufficient office space, stationery, computers, office furniture, and cars. Social workers become frustrated by the lack of these resources, which leads to stress and discontent at work (Skosana, 2020:115). The availability of sufficient resources at work, promotes engagement

and job satisfaction. Truter and Fouché (2019:460) assert that social workers face obstacles as a result of a lack of resources, which heightens workplace discontent. Furthermore, according to Ntsoane (2017), social workers experience irritation and discontent as a result of resource scarcity, which also contributes to burnout and stress.

2.2.5 Role ambiguity

Role conflict and ambiguity occur when a worker lacks the necessary knowledge to carry out a task in an efficient manner. It is essential to ensure that workers have a comprehensive understanding of their responsibilities and are aware of whether they are fulfilling their obligations (Joubert, 2012; Calitz et al., 2014). The ultimate sentiments of ambiguity regarding employment expectations are vulnerability and helplessness. The supervisor has an obligation to provide the worker with regular feedback about the demands of the job (Yoon & Kim, 2013). According to Kim and Kao (2012) role conflict and ambiguity in the workplace lead to employee unhappiness, low self-esteem, helplessness, depression, elevated blood pressure, stress, and lack of enthusiasm about the work. It is essential to clearly define roles for staff. In social work, changes in roles, policies, and processes within organizations are considered challenges.

2.2.6 Extra-organizational challenges among social workers

Social workers face challenges that extend beyond their specific work environments and include both personal and external influences. This includes things like not having friends and family support, personal copying techniques, and not being able to manage job and family obligations. Social workers believe that social support is essential to their ability to handle difficult cases. A person facing difficulties benefits emotionally from the presence and support of friends and family (Yoon & Kim, 2013). The presence of trustworthy individuals is viewed as powerful social support when someone is faced with a difficult circumstance (Joubert, 2012).

Social support is seen as a fundamental element for social workers to deal with challenging situations. The support and existence of friends and family members have a positive emotional

effect on an individual who encounters challenges (Yoon & Kim, 2013). When an individual encounters a challenging situation, the presence of reliable people is seen as strong social support (Joubert, 2012). Conflict between work and family is seen as one of the difficulties faced by social workers. Some people can't handle the demands simultaneously imposed on them by their families and their jobs; they can't cope (Joubert, 2012). A family is seen as essential part of individual's support and as such the inconsistencies between family and work difficulties may lead to stress (Maluleke, 2019:12). An individual's family position plays an important part in the development and management of challenges. Given that social work is a demanding profession that frequently results in high levels of stress for its practitioners, it is necessary to investigate how resilience is conceptualized in this field.

2.3 CONCEPTUALISING RESILIENCE

The concept of resilience holds substantial importance in various professions, such as social work (McFadden, Mallet & Leiter, 2018). Resilience is a crucial tool that can assist workers in overcoming obstacles at work, as evidenced by growing research (Truter et al., 2017). These obstacles could inter alia stem from problems in the family and relationships, serious health issues, issues at work, and financial hardships. Both the health and productivity of social workers may suffer as a result (Hussein, 2018). Resilience is therefore essential for social workers. Resilience is linked to environments where chronic pressure is intrinsic and gloomy situations are experienced over an extended length of time (Cyrulnik, 2015:296).

According to Masten (2014:187) and Southwick et al. (2014), resilience is the ability to adjust well in the face of hardship, tragedy, or other significant sources of pressure. It is also the physical flexibility that enables individuals to recover from obstacles, trials, and pressure in order to continue and manage their work and subjective lives. Theron (2016:636) and Punova (2020) defined resilience as a concept involving a dynamic developmental process that enables social workers to adapt and pursue necessary interests, despite significant challenges they faced in maintaining their profession. Resilience is frequently pushed by the balance of a person's entire

cognitive state, which includes their cultural beliefs, emotions, spirituality, and physical state, according to Gair, Miles, Savage and Zuchowski (2015:32). Resilience can be defined as the ability to endure devastating events while continuing to face the outside world. Resilience, thus, is desirable since it emphasizes strengths rather than weaknesses (Abur, 2020:28).

In 1973, resilience was initially introduced as a theoretical concept in psychology and medical research (Hurley, 2020). It was also widely applied in social, behavioural, and natural scientific fields (McGeary, 2011; Van Breda, 2018). People now turn to resilience as a solution to long-term challenges that impact their social, economic, and environmental environments (Phillip, 2019). Since it aims to increase one's ability to strive beyond obstacles, it is seen as a very good characteristic. Because it emphasizes intensity above restrictions, resilience is useful (Abur, 2020:28). Most people think that it includes positive adjustment to deal with adversity (Southwick & Charney, 2018). According to Rose (2021:3), resilience is increasingly understood as a dynamic concept that includes both defensive and defenceless aspects.

According to Grant and Kinman (2013), resilience is commonly seen as a personal quality that helps people overcome adversity and maintain their happiness in both their personal and professional lives. Both the environment and the individual can achieve sustained resilience (Ungar, 2012). It suggests a respectful and reciprocal relationship between individuals and their surroundings. Resilience is crucial in the social work profession to provide high-quality service delivery to clients (Cox & Thompson, 2020). Van Breda (2017:227) claims that resilience is viewed as a strenuous process made up of susceptible and defensive abilities in various threat contexts and developmental stages. According to Punova (2022:210), one should consider that working in the social work field entails emotional strain and that social workers may experience unique challenges as a result of the upsetting circumstances that their clients face. According to Hardy (2017), resilience is essentially the ability to bounce back from setbacks and persevere through difficult times in both personal and professional life. Furthermore, Phillip (2019) affirms that in social work resilience is allied with sustaining susceptible clients to deal with hardship.

As a talent that can be learned and developed over time, resilience is thought to offer people a number of benefits, including bettering their general well-being through things like lower rates of depression, higher levels of self-assurance, and improved self-control (Kent et al., 2013). Furthermore, it is confirmed by Collins (2016) and Van Breda (2018) that resilience is a process, consequence, or human attribute. Resilience is the ability to manage an issue instead of going after its source. According to Grant and Kinman's (2013) research on the concept of conceptualizing resilience, there is a great deal of diversity in how resilience is portrayed, and it involves a range of talents and capacities. Furthermore, while devising strategies to boost resilience, Grant and Kinman (2020:)17) contend that knowledge of the competencies that fortify resilience and the methods to be applied to enhance it is essential for those working in the helping profession.

To expand on the idea of resilience, it is argued that some people seem to handle difficult situations better than others, and that is because those who are doing well have high levels of resilience, which enable them to deal with hardship (Taormina, 2015). When faced with difficulties, resilient people do not give up; instead, they confront the difficulties by bringing in positivity to balance the unpleasant emotions (Hardy, 2017:2). Resilience is an inherent quality in people who can reject the detrimental effects of their job stress in a highly demanding setting (Kapoulitsas & Corcoran, 2015:88). From the above exposition, it is clear that, when faced with novel and ongoing conditions, reflectiveness and an optimistic outlook are personal attributes linked to stress confrontation. These attributes help one to be creative, flexible, actively participate in stressors, and possess a variety of effective problem-solving techniques.

In order to be resilient, people must interact with their surroundings, which include their home and workplace safety. Resilience and sustainability are achievable for both the individuals and their surroundings, claims Ungar (2012). Notwithstanding the demands of the workplace, resilience is positively influenced by the individuals and their surroundings (Ungar, 2013). Grant and Kinman (2012:606) contend that resilience serves as a safeguard against environmental stressors that arise from outside factors. Furthermore, resilience radiates optimism, which is beneficial to welfare and mental health, according to Abur (2020:29).

With reference to the ability to avoid harmful behavioural and physiological alterations in response to persistent stress, Gu, and Day (2013) mention several studies on resilience that identified the traits common to social and behavioural science as being -

- a method of utilizing resources to maintain well-being;
- the ability to bounce back from misfortune and restart positive functioning;
- a person's resilience to shock or disturbance measured by how well the person can adjust to acute stress, trauma, or more chronic forms of adversity;
- the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress; and
- the ability to adapt successfully in disturbing circumstances that threaten one's capacity to function, to develop, or one's viability.

Resilience is actually anticipated to manifest on a range of modified volumes in many domains of life (Southwick & Charney, 2018). Neenan (2018) defines resilience as the capacity to use both internal and external resources to demonstrate ingenuity in response to a variety of developmental experiences and backgrounds. Rather than an individual's excellence, it is perceived as an active link between personal qualities and beneficial external variables. Because of this, people in the social work profession need to be resilient, according to Grant and Kinman (2014:17), since it succours them to assist their clients more effectively, no matter what emotional upheaval they may be going through.

2.4 RESILIENCE AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Burnout amongst social workers can be a consequence of working in an atmosphere that is difficult, demanding, and subjecting them to high pressure for (Crowder & Sear, 2017:26). Consequently, to combat burnout, it is critical to establish proactive coping mechanisms and techniques (Grant & Kinman, 2020:4). In the caring industry, resilience has gained some attention (Truter, Fouché & Theron, 2016) It is crucial to take a step back and consider why social workers need to be resilient. The word "resilience" frequently slips out of mouths without anyone knowing

exactly what it means or how to attain it (Grant & Kinman, 2020:4). Undoubtedly, possessing this trait can effectively safeguard and improve one's health and overall well-being. The majority of research has focused on investigating resilience in the context of trauma management (Truter & Fouché, 2019). However, new studies have emphasized its ability to shield individuals from the adverse effects of work-related stress and enable them to thrive in a professional environment (Stanley et al., 2018). Resilience is widely acknowledged as being crucial for professionals in the helping field who encounter extremely difficult and intricate situations (Rose & Palattiyil, 2020:24).

The concept of 'resilience theory' is occasionally colloquially referred to as a passing trend or a popular movement that everyone embraces (Van Breda, 2018:1). However, according to Garrett (2016:1909), resilience is considered a significant and central topic in the scholarly literature of social work. Individuals with higher emotional literacy tend to exhibit greater levels of enthusiasm, optimism, confidence, trust, and cooperation. A social worker with limited emotional literacy skills may struggle to cultivate "appropriate" empathy, potentially exacerbating conflicts by responding in a similar manner when confronted with hostility and lack of cooperation. Such social workers may unknowingly allow their emotions to influence their decision-making process and resort to negative health behaviour like overeating or consuming alcohol as a means to alleviate negative mood states. Understanding the different levels of emotional literacy is crucial for improving professional practice and promoting the well-being of service users and oneself.

Resilience is self-motivated relationship between a person's qualities and environmental support elements. According to Grant and Kinman (2020:5) social workers who can preserve positive relationships in their personal and work lives, are regarded as being more resilient. However, it does not mean that social workers who are able to balance their personal and work life do not encounter challenges, it simply means that they are able to positively thrive when faced with challenges. Though some social workers may neglect their own emotional needs, when it comes to identifying and promoting resilience in their clients, it will eventually culminate in heightening their stress and even cause burnout. It is agreed that when social workers face challenges, their employers must give the necessary support. Tradewinds Recruitment Social Care (2018) wrote

that "creating an emotionally resilient team has been a matter of utmost importance to social work teams and has played a prominent role in many workforce reforms.

It is believed that resilience has become a slogan in social work, however, it is important for social workers to know what resilience means, to which extent do they need it, if resilience can protect their well-being and improve their professional and most significantly how they can enhance it (Grant & Kinman, 2020:4). These researchers argued that resilience is noble information to social workers as it is an attribute and a skill that can be improved and advanced (Grant & Kinman, 2020:4). In addition, Hurley (2020) maintained that for social workers to improve their individual welfare and improve their professional custom, developing resilience is key.

Working as a social worker is a very demanding profession that requires social workers to develop a toolkit of abilities and techniques that will help them remain resilient and provide quality services. Social workers have the right to request regular, reflective supervision, which promotes emotional resilience and professional development. However, they also have a responsibility to share their challenges by being well-prepared and receptive to criticism and discussion (Truter & Fouché, 2019: 457; Zimunya & Alpaslan, 2022).

Research has found that resilient people have the following qualities (Grant & Kinman, 2020:5)

- Self-efficacy and self-esteem.
- Enthusiasm, optimism, and hope.
- A positive self-concept and a strong sense of identity.
- A high degree of autonomy.
- Self-awareness and emotional literacy.
- Self-compassion and ability to prioritize self-care.
- Decisive judgement
- Strong social skills and the social confidence to develop effective relationship with people.
- The capacity to identify and on one's unique pattern of internal and external resources.
- The capability to learn from experience.
- A sense of humour.

The scarcity of literature on resilience among South African social workers, poses risks to the well-being of these professionals and presents challenges to them (Truter et al., 2014:307). Should South African social workers be versed thoroughly in practical research, it will be quite powerful for them to vanquish challenges. More information is required in relation to the study phenomenon which needs detailed research to ensure that there is strong emphasis on what needs to be done to succour social workers to be resilience and able to thrive in their career.

In a study carried out by Abur (2020:29), it is suggested that social work education and practice can be advantageous for marginalized community groups, vulnerable individuals, as well as for combating prejudice and harsh regulations. This researcher also underscored the significance of social workers, student social workers, and other professionals in human services maintaining their resilience skills for both personal and professional growth (Abur, 2020:29). Furthermore, Abur (2020:29) highlighted that resilience is a valuable aspect of social work training, as it equips students with strategies to effectively navigate challenging situations.

From the above information, it is deduced that in the social work profession, showing resilience is fundamental to ensure that efficient and effective services to the service users is provided. In dealing with stressful situations, social workers frequently implement their knowledge, capabilities, and education to infuse their resilience. For social workers to deal with the challenges they encounter in their day-to-day life, they need to advance and develop their resilience skills and strategies. However, in performing their professional duties, social workers are dealing with difficult situations. Therefore, it is certainly not always easy for them to be resilient.

The workplace and its surrounding environment significantly contribute to the stress experienced by professionals, making resilience crucial for social workers. It is, therefore, essential for social workers and their work environment to collaborate in order to maintain and nurture resilience.

2.5 DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCE IN SOCIAL WORKERS

Social work is a challenging profession which leads to extreme burnout, exhaustion, and stress amongst social workers. Building and maintaining resilience is a constant journey and is

sometimes challenging. Resilience develops in the face of difficulties (Grant & Kinman, 2014:5). In social work and in the other helping professions, supporting and protecting ones' well-being is important. It is believed that the development of resilience in social work can help social workers thrive in their jobs (Abur, 2020:24).

As a practising the profession of social work, social workers have the task to improve people's well-being and assist them in meeting their basic needs, particularly amid marginalised vulnerable and oppressed populations (Wacek, 2017:4). Hence, it is crucial for social workers to develop resilience. Abur (2020:24) asserts that anyone working with vulnerable community members needs resilience skills. As added by Kapoulitsas and Corcoran, (2015:88) resilience is an attribute that is essential in individuals who are unable to elude the adverse effects of work-related pressure in naturally trying environments.

Within the Department of Social Development, social workers encounter several obstacles in their daily work, including demanding clients, excessive workloads, inadequate resources, unfavourable working circumstances, and insufficient support from employers (Truter & Fouché, 2019). Hence, it is crucial to ascertain the aptitudes and tactics that social workers utilize to bolster their resilience. Social workers are crucial in achieving the government's primary social priorities, including reducing poverty, promoting youth development, preventing social crime, and fostering social cohesion. According to Abur, (2020:25) when dealing with challenging issues in the society, social workers must comprehend the prominence of resilience.

Resilience development is a complex and personal process that blends internal strength and external resources. Social workers, in particular, must recognize the fundamental role of resilience in delivering high-quality services to service users. By investing in resources to enhance their resilience, they can protect themselves from being adversely affected by the challenges faced by service users. Developing resilience equips social workers with a toolbox of strategies to navigate these challenges and safeguard their well-being (Hurley 2020; Riopel 2019; Grant & Kinman 2020:8-17; Hardy 2017:3).

Furthermore, according to Grant and Kinman (2020:4), resilience development helps social workers effectively adapt to the demanding nature of their profession and supports their professional growth. The researchers emphasize that resilience not only shields social workers from the negative impacts of occupational stress but also enables them to thrive in their careers and deliver excellent outcomes for their clients.

Research shows that in order to develop ways to improve resilience in social workers, it is crucial to first understand the skills that support it and strategies that can be used to reinforce it (Abur, 2020:26). In helping social workers to develop their resilience, various competences are identified such as emotional intelligence, reflective thinking skills, empathy, social competence, and social support (Grant & Kinman, 2012:605).

The competences of reflective thinking, empathy, social confidence, and social support entail the following:

2.5.1 Reflective thinking

Reflective thinking emphasizes the attainment, preservation, and improvement of professional development as the main skill for social workers. Grant and Kinman (2020:9) maintain that the personal reflections of social workers, nurture professional improvement and improve the service and assistance they provide. According to Sheppard and Charles (2014), for social workers to be able to reflect and consider their own competences, reflective thinking is an essential skill. Studies show that analytical reflection indorses active adjustment (Burr, Blyth, Sutcliffe & King, 2016:2). If social workers develop the skill of reflective thinking, they will be able to discover the effectiveness of logical and illogical views, feelings, fears, beliefs, and the way it has an impact on their job (Grant & Kinman, 2020:9). Self-reflection, empathetic reflection, and reflective communication are seen as interlinked elements of reflective thinking (Grant & Kinman, 2012:610). Grant and Kinman (2020:10) are of the opinion that the more reflective abilities social workers have, the happier they are. These researchers also affirm that reflection is a self-protective instrument in social workers as it assists them to be more resilient (Grant & Kinman, 2020:10). In the helping professions, well established reflective abilities strengthen emotional literacy and

precise understanding and easing helping personal relationships to safeguard workplace pressure (Ruch, 2007, Grant & Kinman, 2013). In a nutshell, reflective thinking improvement has the ability to develop resilience and nurture the abilities that support it.

2.5.2 Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand and be aware of another person's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours' by accepting their perspective (Grant & Kinman, 2014). Moudatsou, Stavropoulou, Philalithis and Koukouli (2020:2) define empathy as the ability to determine and comprehend the mental state and emotional state of another person by imagining what that person might be experiencing. It is also seen to be an act of responding to the needs, feelings, and circumstances of other people. The capacity to recognize and share the feelings, ideas, and experiences of others is known as empathy (Grant & Kinman, 2020:10). One of the most important skills in the service-provider relationship is empathy, which has been highlighted as the core attribute of social workers (Jani, Blane & Mercer, 2012). Having Empathy and being empathetic is a crucial quality in both helping relationships and the social work profession (Grant & Kinman, 2020:10).

Empathy plays a compelling role in both the personal and professional lives of social workers. It empowers them to comprehend the needs of their clients and equips them with the tools to provide effective assistance. Within the social work profession, the practice of empathy enables social workers to establish meaningful connections with their clients (McGregor & Dolan, 2021). The ethical principles of the international Federation of Social Workers (2012), underscore the importance of social workers responding with kindness, care, and understanding in diverse client interactions. This aligns with the assertion of Stanley and Bhuvaneswari (2016) that having and using empathetic skills, are essential for social workers, particularly when working with vulnerable populations facing varied challenges.

According to Grant and Kinman (2014), social workers who possess these empathetic abilities are able to help their clients to become more resilient in addition to recognizing and expressing

sympathy for their viewpoints. Furthermore, empathy has wider ramifications and supports professional emotional health as well as personal success, according to Grant and Kinman (2014). This supports the idea put forward by McGregor and Dolan (2021) that compassionate social workers can improve their clients' emotional health by seeing the world in a different way. Thus, empathy is crucial for fostering resilience as well as producing fruitful results while working with clients.

To promote mental well-being and peace, empathy is also seen as an essential element, and it is associated with emotional intelligence (Stanley & Bhuvaneswari, 2016). To understand other people's feelings and walk in their shoes, empathy is required. For social workers to make sincere efforts to admit what clients think, suitable empathy is crucial. Empathy assists employees to effectively handle their emotional responses and those of others and identify the effect of their problem-solving and executive abilities (Howe, Smajdor & Stockl, 2012:346).

Having empathy not only guards against empathetic anxiety but also improves the mental well-being of social workers. Resilience is crucial for managing social workers' personal and professional lives effectively. Empathetic individuals often exhibit mental adaptability, positivity, social self-sufficiency, cooperation, and strong problem-solving and management skills. Additionally, empathy is essential for promoting emotional well-being and correlates with emotional intelligence. Empathetic social workers play a pivotal role in driving social and economic change and enhancing general well-being (Grant& Kinman, 2012:611; 2013; Stanley & Bhuvaneswari, 2016; Moudatsou et al., 2020).

2.5.3 Social confidence

In the helping professions like social work, social confidence, assertiveness, good communication and conflict resolution skills are the required capabilities to support the practitioners' resilience (Howe, Smajdor & Stockl, 2012:346). For social workers, developing resilience and supporting effective resilience with their clients, social confidence is a key element (Grant & Kinman, 2020:11). Adding to that, these researchers assert that social confidence also helps social workers to foster solid and helpful social networks with co-workers, friends, and family, as it is another

element of emotional resilience (Howe et al., 2012:346). Social confidence is an essential skill which assists social workers to withstand challenges appropriately and improve their resilience. Furthermore, social confidence plays a crucial role in in social settings as it enhances quality of working relationship and help build effective support networks (Grant & Kinman, 2020:11).

Furthermore, Hurley (2020) asserts that to address emotions that are possibly traumatic, one should have individual competence. In building and preserving resilience in individuals, self-esteem and confidence is another major strong optimistic element. For social workers to build and cultivate resilience they must set achievable goals. As much as effective communication with clients is requires for social workers to established social skills, it also required to foster active social support systems with peers, family, and friends (Grant & Kinman, 2012:611). In social work practice, having social confidence is a significant attribute required by social workers.

2.5.4 Social support

Social support has been associated with the provision of various psychosocial health benefits. Social support is categorized by two types of support, namely instrumental, emotional and companionship support and support by the sources of support which are family members, friends, and significant others (Lin, Hirschfeld & Margraf, 2018). Social support denotes an optimistic psychosocial relation with others and has common reliance and interests (Grant & Kinman, 2020:11). Social support is one of the qualities that nurture resilience and emotional proficiency, and it is fundamental to segregate personal and work matters. According to Holt-Lunstad, Smith, Baker, Harris, and Stephenson (2015:227) the more a person has social support, the more physically and psychologically and less stressed the person is. Thus, relationships that social workers have with their family and friends and fruitful relationships with colleagues, help them thrive in the emotional effect of their work (Grant & Kinman, 2014:9). In a helping profession like social work, to foster resilience, social support is thus an essential facility.

The whole community, including members of nuclear families, extended family members, friends, and resourceful organizations within the community all render social support to social workers. Receiving social support directly reduces pressure (Punova, 2022:216). The resilience of a social worker flourishes when the social worker maintains positive relationships with others (Whitney, 2021:4). Grant and Kinman (2012:612) conclude that for helping profession like social work it is fundamental to establish possible resources of support to practitioners from their individual and professional systems.

Social support at work involves effective communication from supervisors and colleagues and the provision of care, trust, and respect by colleagues (Sigursteinsdottir & Karlsdottir, 2022:2). When social workers receive sufficient social support at the workplace, it helps to build-up their well-being, enhance their resilience skills, and increase their job performance ((Holt-Lunstad, Smith, Baker, Harris & Stephenson, 2015). Social support is associated with both work commitment and life satisfaction. It has been found that the more support employees receive, the greater their commitment to their work (Yildirim & Celik, 2020:1). Moreover, previous research has shown that increased social support is linked to higher resilience when facing challenges (Yildirim, 2019). Consequently, it is believed that social support not only enhances work commitment but also contributes to life satisfaction and emotional well-being, mediated by resilience (Radey & Wilke, 2021).

2.6 COPING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Coping is explained as a way a person manages external and internal demands that burden or surpass the person's resources (Grant & Kinman, 2014) Various coping skills and strategies are utilised by social workers, as these skills lead to happy employees, job fulfilment, and make them thrive in their jobs despite their challenges. The coping skills and strategies present in two forms, namely internal (personal) and external (organizational) resources (Seiffege-Krenke, 2013). Internal resources are personality traits like firmness. The social support that one can get from home and at work is called external, environmental, or organizational resources. To build

resilience and thrive in their jobs, it is important for social workers to develop coping skills and strategies. If an individual does not have problem-solving skills, it is hard to develop resilience. Hurley (2020) argued that for an individual to address the emotions which are possibly overwhelming the individual must have resilience skills.

The two forms of coping skills and strategies utilised by social workers, that is personal strategies and **organizational strategies, respectively entail the following:**

2.6.1   Personal Strategies

Among the tools social workers utilize to increase their resilience, is the expertise of problem-solving. This method offers solutions for fixing problems and helps people keep note of any difficulties they may have encountered. Speaking with loved ones, especially those you trust, about your problems is another way to solve them, according to Cherry (2020). As was already mentioned, social workers use resilience skills like reflection to help clients identify the shifting aspects of both reasonable and unreasonable beliefs, feelings, suspicions, expectations, attitudes, and customs related to their line of work (Grant & Kinman, 2020:9).

Furthermore, on a personal level, mindfulness also is a proposition that could intercede in assisting social workers to be resilient. This implies that having a happy mind, will result in one enjoying the work (Grant & Kinman, 2012). Regardless of the pressure, stress, and challenges that one has, social workers need to foster a kind attitude towards themselves. Newman (2016) adds that a kind attitude assists social workers to live a positive life and prepare them to face challenges with a positive attitude.

Mindfulness is also a helpful tool in coping with stress and anxiety and can also improve emotional literacy and self-awareness (Grant & Kinman, 2020:18). Mindfulness includes meditation, breathing procedures and focusing on the existing time, without a decree of assisting others to change their thinking, feeling and actions (Kinman, Grant & Kelly, 2019). In addition, Whitney (2021:4) asserts that practicing mindfulness can improve qualities of attention, physiological control and non-reactivity that are restorative in general, and that are dangerous for awareness and emotional adjustment needed for effective in the moment of resilience. Another coping strategy is

emotional distancing as it assists a person to detect restrictions with their and work conditions to eschew emotional fatigue (Rose, 2021).

Positive thinking is also seen as a personal level resilience skill and a coping strategy (Rohling, 2016:18). The creation and increasing of self-awareness are also coping skills in social workers as it restores meaning and hope and connect with others. Planning, setting goals, and time management are other ways in which some social workers use to manage stress. Spirituality and humour are additional skills employed by social workers to cope with pressure and maintain their resilience. To reduce pressure and foster resilience, spiritual activities such as meditation, being in nature, prayer and religious bustles are helpful. An additional personal skill social workers can use is the aptitude to ascertain the kind of support needed and where it can be obtained (Grant & Kinman, 2020:12). Moreover, establishing explicit limits is a crucial approach that social workers employ to manage job difficulties. Establishing and maintaining clear boundaries is crucial for social workers, as it involves differentiating between their professional duties and personal obligations in both their work and family domains. Another fundamental personal quality that underpins the resilience in social work is self-knowledge (Grant & Kinman, 2020). In building resilience, improving safety, and coping with the stress of their work, social workers need to develop an understanding of what works and what does not work for them during demanding times. The researchers assert that if one can use these ways physically, psychologically, and behaviourally, and also use the internal and external resources, this will help them to improve their coping methods (Grant & Kinman, 2020).

2.6.2   Organizational strategies

Organizational support both inside and outside the workplace, is another strategy for assisting social workers in managing stress (Naples, 2014). Employers do not seem to care about the well-being of their staff members or what they go through. Numerous studies have shown that social workers' resilience can be increased with the help of peers, the community, and appropriate supervision (Sekgobela, 2021; Botha, 2022). Additionally, Kraaijeveld, Schaatsma, Boot & Shaw

et al. (2013) noted that employees' confidence is bolstered by supervisors' or colleagues' admissions and acknowledgement of work well-done. Employees that receive support from their employer, manager, and co-workers experience less stress at work. Whitney (2021) asserts that interpersonal connections help people become more resilient. Additionally, this study claims that being around by compassionate people helps an individual perceive their personal qualities and abilities (Whitney, 2021).

According to Hardy (2017:3), supervision should be established and conducted in a developmental and supportive manner rather than just in an administrative and management manner, in order to help social workers develop deep thinking. On an organizational level, social workers can use staff meetings, acknowledging their contributions, and being listened to as forms of social support to help them talk about and resolve issues that are important to them. Miguel, Camerer, Casey, Cohen, Esterling, et al., (2014) claim that doing so can lower stress levels, encourage employee autonomy, and let workers talk about their issues. Employees may use their accomplishments as a source of inspiration and coping mechanisms (Miguel et al., 2014).

Social workers also employ reflective supervision as a coping strategy, which may strengthen their resilience (Paris, 2012; Truter & Fouché, 2015). Kearns and McArdle (2012:390) assert that a smaller workload and compassionate management are necessary to foster social workers' resilience. Finally, peer coaching is regarded as a critical component in helping social workers develop their thinking mode, cope with pressure, and create resilience (Grant & Kinman, 2020).

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Fouché and Geyer (2021:81), the theoretical framework is a section of the study that outlines the theories or conceptual framework serving as its foundation. In addition to helping to focus the research, the theoretical framework adds theory to the research plan (Maree, 2016:32; Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2011:36). Research findings are explained, and theory is conceptualized by means of the theoretical framework. A series of claims that relate to and clarify the connections between an individual's behaviour and the variables that influence it are also

included in the social science theoretical framework (Green, 2014:34). Gran and Osanloo (2014:15) defined the theoretical framework as an analytical tool with several perspectives that assist theory in a research investigation. In the attempt to explore resilience skills and strategies of social workers, the researcher applied the theoretical framework of the ecological system approach.

According to the ecological system paradigm as developed by Bronfenbrenner, an individual can only be comprehended in relation to his or her surroundings (Ahmed, Amal & Kilawin, 2017:48; Guy-Evans, 2020). Because it offers a clear conceptual framework for observing and analysing human behaviour and its social structures, ecological system theory is the practice perspective in social work that is most commonly used (Weyers, 2011:20). It holds that a person's environment has an effect on how the person develops (Menova, 2015).

In applying this idea to social work practice, Teater (2014) states that one must maintain the understanding that people are interconnected with their social, cultural, and physical environments. The developed and natural domains, as well as man-made and devised structures and constructions, are all included in the physical environment. Social surroundings encompass interactions with friends, family, co-workers, and other members of the community, as well as involvement with society. Cultural characteristics, which include language, customs, values, and beliefs that influence an individual's expectations, perspective, and attitude must be taken into consideration.

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological system approach, the human environment is structured in five different levels: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem (Guy-Evans, 2020). The five levels of the ecological system approach as depicted in Figure 2.1, respectively entail the following-

- **The Microsystem** includes the individual interactions with family members, peers, neighbours, or caregivers. It emphasizes the impact one microsystem has on the others (Holosko Dulmus & Sower, 2019). In microsystems, relationships are bi-directional,

connoting that individuals can be swayed by the environment they are living in and in turn are capable to influence other people (Guy-Evans, 2020). This means that how people react in their environment, determines how others will react towards them. The interaction between social workers and their direct family members can influence their resilience skills and strategies and how they cope with work demands (Holosko, Dulmus & Sower, 2019:7-8). One microsystem indirectly influences another (Guy-Evans, 2020). The researcher wished to explore what role these microsystems played on the resilience skills and strategies of social workers. The interaction between social workers and their direct micro systems informed the study regarding their perception on their resilience skills and strategies in this regard. This means that the closer the social workers are with their families the better they are able to develop resilience skills and strategies.

- **The Mesosystem** comprises the interrelations among two or more individual microsystems (Menova, 2015). Social workers are involved with other systems in their environment and neighbourhood which could include schools, the community, and other stakeholders such as other government sectors and NGO's. These interactions might influence the resilience of social workers positively or negatively. Social workers are involved daily with their neighbourhoods and all these systems have their own interactional suggestions which inform and create the social workers' perception on their resilience skills and strategies.

- **The Exosystem** incorporates connections between the formal and informal social settings where the individual does not have a dynamic or direct role and the individual's immediate context such as local communities, social network, workplace, and community service providers play an important role. Ideally, a healthy context should provide the individual with resources and opportunities to promote well-being (Hong, Kim & Yoshihama & Byoun, 2010:59). Social workers are faced with work challenges that create pressure and might affect their occupational and emotional health.

- **The Macrosystem** involves the cultural influences, the socio-economic, ethnicity, geographical location, and religious aspect affecting the person (Menova, 2015). Social workers within the South African context might experience resilience in a different way than for instance social workers from India.

- **The Chronosystem** involves environmental and life changes in the individual's lifespan. This can also include the socio-historical situations and events that influence an individual (Neal & Neal, 2013:729; Guy-Evans, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic for instance had a devasting effect on the economy of South Africa and affected service delivery to social work client systems on different levels. This also has an impact on the resilience or stressors they might experience, hence the researcher wished to explore which skills and strategies strengthen their resilience.

CHRONOSYSTEM

Environmental changes that occur over the life course

MACROSYSTEM

Overarching values and beliefs

EXOSYSTEM

Economic, Political, Education, and Government

MESOSYSTEM

Family, school, peers, religious affiliation, workplace, and neighbours.

MICROSYSTEM

Age, Gender, Health, education
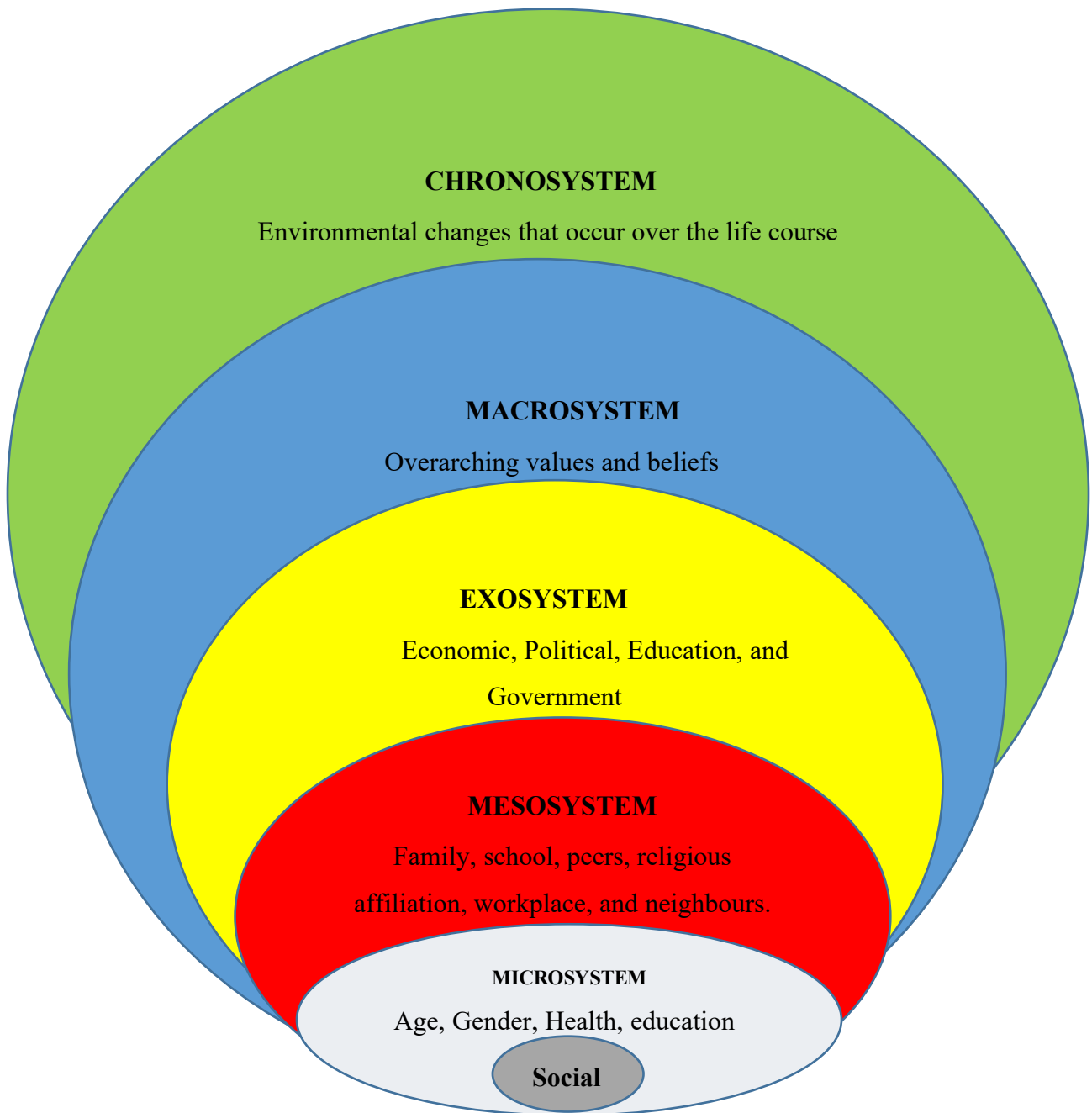
Social

FIGURE 2.1 DEMONSTRATION OF ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM THEORY IN SOCIAL WORKERS

The utilisation of the ecological system framework offered the researcher the opportunity to take all systems and their connections into account when conducting this research study. Basically, this theoretical framework has to do with a person's relations and connection to the environment (Teater, 2014). Part of the biological language that are compelled in the ecological assessment to social work, incorporates adjustment, stress, and person-environment fit (Van Rensburg, Theron & Rothman, 2021). In terms of this perspective a person struggles to move over a life course while keeping a good person-environment fit, which will improve their growth and development positively. This model enables the researcher to identify a comprehensive list of elements that contribute to resilience skills and strategies of social workers (Teater, 2014:5). The first elements include individual environment and other personal traits such as age, gender education, income, and physical conditions. The researcher needed to understand how these factors impacted on the resilience skills and strategies of social workers. The second factor is the relationships which includes the social worker's closest social group such as friends, partners, family members all of whom influence their personal behaviour and their competence. The third element is the surroundings in which social workers have social relationships with, such as neighbourhoods, schools, and workplaces, on how they affect their resilience skills and strategies. The next element is the wide societal factors that affect the social workers. These include cultural, economic, educational, social customs and social polies. Finally, are the environmental changes that occur in life courses.

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented an overview of resilience skills and strategies of social workers. The chapter highlighted the literature on conceptualising the concept "resilience," with specific reference to resilience in social workers, how social workers can develop resilience and the benefit of it, factors that challenge social workers and the coping strategies used by social workers. Described are the factors affecting social workers, conceptualising resilience, resilience and social work practice, the

development of resilience in social workers, the coping skills and strategies of social workers, and the theoretical framework used in this research of the resilience skills of social workers.

In the upcoming methodology chapter, the researcher deals with the application of the research plan compiled in Chapter 1, to collect, investigate and analyse the data collected and develop the key aspects and research outcomes of this study.

CHAPTER 3: APPLICATION OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the application of the research plan compiled in Chapter 1 is described. Outlined is a comprehensive overview of the operationalisation of the research methodology, research methods, data collection, data analysis, data verification and ethical considerations. The aim with it is to guide the investigation into factors affecting social workers and their resilience in rendering their services. A detailed and rich description of how the planned research was applied is expounded.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology implies the methods, techniques and procedures that are employed in the process of implementing the research design or research plan (Babbie & Mouton, 2016:647). According to Sefotho, (2021:11) research methodology is deemed to be the knowledge of learning how research is conducted, and which techniques are to be used from beginning to end. The techniques include criteria for ontology and epistemology, which provide guidance to the researcher for the finalization of the study. However, there are various stages in the research process that must be followed in order to perform successful research (Davis, 2014:17). It is noted that after selecting the mode of inquiry, the researcher should quickly outline the entire research strategy and tactics and explain why a particular method or methods were selected (Maree, 2016:34). The methodology thus includes the methods that seek to comprehend the behaviour and life mode as experienced by the individuals involved (Creswell, 2013:45). It also explains the reason for selecting the method utilized (Van der Westhuizen, 2010:16).

The research methodology applied is discussed in terms of the research approach and the research design employed in the research.

Research approach

The research approach is defined as a strategy that includes steps and methods of data collection, analysis, and data interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:3). For Creswell, (2014:3), research approach denotes research strategies and processes that extend over the steps from extensive speculations to thorough methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Research methods in the social sciences often fall into one of three categories: qualitative or in-depth research, quantitative or statistical research and mixed methods research. The starting point for many quantitative research methods is the formation of a hypothesis, which is tested to see if the participants agree or disagree with it (Lune & Berg, 2017:12). As far as qualitative research is concerned, the end goal of qualitative research is to get an "inside" perspective on, description of, and explanation of social processes (Flick, 2018:04).

In line with the information provided in Chapter 1 (refer to 1.5.1), the researcher selected to conduct qualitative research in order to acquire an evolving comprehension of the participants' lived experiences of the matter researched as expressed through their verbal accounts of their thoughts, actions, beliefs, emotions, and perspectives about it. A qualitative research strategy has been chosen for this research, as it is appropriate for the study's objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018:7). Also, since the researcher is curious about how social workers experience and build their resilience, employing a qualitative approach to the research is relevant (Kapoor, Mahamuni, Bhowmick & Qureshi, 2022:37). The researcher was able to get an "inside" look at the phenomenon studied thanks to this method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:182). The researcher was more concerned with the calibre of the data collected than the number of social workers providing the data.

Qualitative research places an emphasis on seeing people in their natural habitats to deduce meaning and evaluate the significance that individuals ascribe to such settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018:7). It is inherently explicative and always on the lookout for clarification of questions like "what" and "how" (Kapoor et al. 2022:37). Neuman (2014:8) and Creswell (2013:49) argue that there are no universally accepted guidelines to follow in carrying out a qualitative study.

Notwithstanding, qualitative research is an adaptive study method as the researchers learn more and more in the field (Neuman, 2014:8). The capacity to be flexible and adaptable is seen as a crucial quality of qualitative research because it helps researchers to respond to the complexity and subtleties of the social reality they are examining.

In addition, qualitative research attempts to comprehend the fundamental significance of what individuals feel (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:40) and is frequently undertaken to examine a topic of great sensitivity (Padgett, 2017:16). This allows for a tighter focus on the topic under study (Padgett, 2017:16). As supported by Yin (2018:7), this research approach was used to examine the resilience practices and capacities of social workers because it provides the researcher with an introspective viewpoint on human behaviour in the workplace and in daily life.

The researcher was able to actively engage participants in order to gain a complete understanding of their life experiences since qualitative research recognizes the absence of a singular, unchanging reality (Moule & Goodman, 2014:173). The researcher consulted DSD social workers in their regular work environments, adhering to the characteristics of a qualitative approach that offers a secure and friendly environment for the candid sharing of personal tales (Kumar, 2019:16–18; Creswell & Poth, 2018:43–44). These characteristics of qualitative research enabled the researcher to delve deeply into the participants' statements and unearth true insights about their coping strategies in the face of hardship. Other unique characteristics of qualitative research that were significant to this inquiry, are the following:

- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** The inherent flexibility of qualitative research, as highlighted by Creswell and Creswell (2018:182), allows for methodological adaptations in response to emerging insights. This adaptability was particularly beneficial in this study, especially during the early phases of data collection, which coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, the researcher occasionally faced rejections from participants due to the strict pandemic-related protocols. Additionally, there were instances where participants needed to alter the scheduled time and location of their involvement in the study, owing to challenges posed by the pandemic.

- **Natural Setting Observation:** This approach involves studying individuals in their natural environments, facilitating a deeper understanding of their feelings, thoughts, beliefs, assumptions, and values (Neuman, 2014:454). In this study, interviews conducted at participants' workplaces created a comfortable environment for sharing their experiences.

- **Researcher as the Primary Data Collection Tool:** When gathering data, qualitative researchers act as the primary instrument, conducting tasks like observations and interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:181). In this research, the researcher played a key role in collecting the data for this study, by conducting semi-structured interviews with participants using an interview guide with open-ended questions.

- **Data Collection from Multiple Sources:** Qualitative research emphasizes the collection of data from various sources to establish validity and advance a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2016:6). In this study, data were gathered by conducting interviews with participating social workers, observing their interactions, behaviours and work environments providing a holistic picture of the phenomenon under investigation.

- **Focus on Participant Meanings:** Qualitative research centres on exploring the meanings and interpretations participants attribute to a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:182). In this research, the researcher was attentive to how participants decoded and described their resilience skills and strategies.

- **Inductive Data Analysis:** Data analysis is an inductive process in qualitative research, involving the identification of patterns, categories, and themes that emerge from the data itself (Creswell, 2016:8). During the analysis of the data obtained from interviews with and observations of 13 social workers, various themes naturally emerged, the analysis of which contributed to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon researched.

- **Exploratory and Descriptive Nature:** Qualitative research is exploratory and descriptive in nature, focusing on understanding and describing the meanings people attach to specific conditions (Creswell, 2014:246). By building trust and rapport with participants, the researcher encouraged rich descriptions of their experiences, thereby facilitating an exploration and description of the resilience skills and strategies of social workers.

- **Holistic Approach:** Qualitative research seeks to comprehend participants' interpretations within the broader context of existing literature (Flick, 2014:27). In this study, the researcher reported on various angles and elements involved, providing a comprehensive, in-depth picture of the participants' resilience skills and strategies. The study emphasized the interconnectedness of these elements, rather than isolating individual components.

By applying these characteristics of qualitative research, the researcher successfully gained valuable insights into the resilience skills and strategies of social workers while ensuring the clarity and coherence of the research without repeating ideas.

The qualitative approach also is consistent with the theoretical framework used in this research, namely the ecological system approach, as described in Chapter 2 comprising of the literature review. The qualitative research method is frequently combined with the ecological system theory, which emphasizes the complex and dynamic interrelationships between individuals and their surroundings (Onwuegbuzie, Collins & Frels, 2013:7). Individuals' subjective experiences and perspectives within their social and environmental contexts can be investigated through qualitative research. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to gather information on the experience and challenges of the participants about the phenomenon being researched.

The ecological system theory suggests that research participants' experiences are shaped by multiple levels of influence, including their individual traits, their immediate environment (such as their family and working environment), and broader societal factors (such as immigration policies and cultural norms) (Menova, 2015; Teater, 2014). As highlighted by Holosko et al. (2019:7-8) the interaction between social workers and their direct family can influence their resilience skills and strategies and how they cope with work demands. Using qualitative data, the researcher investigated how these various levels of influence overlapped and shaped the social workers' experiences and challenges. In qualitative research, the chosen approach and research design work hand in hand to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the studied phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013).

Research design

The research design refers to a group of small, formulated methods from which a researcher can make a selection to suit the specific research goals and objectives (Roestenburg et al., 2021:157). It is a procedure that establishes the decision from extensive conjecture to a thorough method of data collection, measurement, and analysis (Devi, 2017). During the course of the data collection process when using a qualitative research design, the researcher is fully involved in the collection of the data by being attentive to new developments (Neuman, 2014:165). According to Babbie (2013:112) a qualitative research design is naturally flexible and changes throughout the process.

As stated in Chapter 1, the researcher planned to employ a phenomenological research design, supplemented by exploratory, descriptive, and contextual designs, in order to accomplish the study's aims. The designs were successfully adopted and implemented according to the original plan and are deemed relevant in this study, entailing the following:

Phenomenological research design

Applying a phenomenological design enables a researcher to gain clarity about the underlying nature of a phenomenon and particular work experiences (Gill 2020:11). Phenomenology is the deliberate effort to comprehend the various forms of understanding amongst individuals that arise from a specific viewpoint, encompassing their perception, cognition, recollection, imagination, affect, aspirations, and bodily consciousness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:13). The researcher used phenomenology, a qualitative research design, to investigate and describe how social workers understand the skills and tactics that support their resilience. This design ascertains how people interpret their world through real-life lived experience, hence it also called an interpretive design (Creswell, 2014:14; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017:168). The goal of using a phenomenological design was to obtain and provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon researched, from the perspective of those who have experienced it.

The researcher adheres to the phenomenological study design by conducting comprehensive interviews with 13 social workers to acquire insight into their lived experience and highlighting the significance of their resilience abilities and strategies in relation to their emotions, thoughts, and encounters. According to Creswell and Poth (2018:66-67), the suggested range of sample size for phenomenological investigations is between three and fifteen people. The sample size of thirteen participants fell within this range and provided diverse data on their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. As prescribed, in conducting the research, the researcher put her preconceived notions and a prior assumption aside and concentrated primarily on the immediate experience of the participants (Bliss, 2016:17).

The phenomenological research design assisted the researcher to understand the participants lived experiences about the phenomenon under investigation and facilitated the creation and obtaining of a thorough and contextualized 'insider' perspective about it, as is normally associated with the phenomenological research design (Bliss, 2016:16). The utilization of a phenomenological design provided the researcher with additional insights that complemented and aligned with the existing knowledge about the topic. These insights could be verified through the diverse viewpoints of the participants. To compose the research report, the researcher maintained thorough documentation of the participants' accounts of these occurrences and relied on their verbatim expressions about it. The researcher utilized the collected comments and themes from the interviews to produce a structural representation. The participants' descriptions were influenced by many contextual variables, which were illustrated through the usage of specific phrases and themes. The recommendations generated from the findings in Chapter 5 offer an overview of the potential connections and relationships with other phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018:78-80).

Explorative research design

The exploratory design is used when not much information is known about a topic to be explored, and when a process of building knowledge on the topic, problem, or the research question

identified, is required (Babbie, 2016:90). It assists in knowledge discovery, gaining insight, and testing the propositions the researcher may have (Kumar, 2019:15). An explorative research design was used to guide the process of exploring and discovering the experiences of the participants. As limited knowledge was available on the research topic and specifically locally specific information, it was beneficial to integrate the exploratory research design.

As planned, the exploration of the participants' experience contributed towards the knowledge and understanding regarding the objectives of this research which focus on exploring the resilience skills and strategies of social workers at the Department of Social Development, in Johannesburg. The goal was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the situation, topic, or phenomenon researched (Bless et al. 2013:60) by supplementing the limited availability of knowledge about the subject matter in this specific case. The use of this design also assisted the researcher with the choices related to sampling and data collection method.

Descriptive research design

In addition to the exploratory aims, the researcher also had a descriptive objective, which was to describe resilience skills and strategies of social workers employed at the Department of Social Development in Johannesburg.

In using the descriptive research design the researcher regards experiences as intentional, and therefore believes that reality should be consciously observed, described, and understood (Babbie, 2016:90). The focus is to understand the experience of participants rather than the interpretation of events (De Vos, Strydom & Fouché & Delport, 2014:293).

The primary objective with a descriptive research design is to provide a description of the demographic segment, without digging into the underlying causes or reasons for a certain phenomenon (Babbie, 2013:98). Participants and the researcher engage in this activity at various stages of the research process (Yegidis, Weinbach & Myers, 2018:105).

The researcher determined that using the descriptive research design was suitable for the investigation, as stated in Chapter 1. Applying a descriptive research design assisted the researcher to obtain an accurate understanding of each participant's perception and experience regarding the phenomenon under. The researcher effectively described and presented the findings in a methodical manner, categorizing the data and identifying key themes. The data were additionally explicated through theories and models (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014: 202, Flick, 2014:24).

Contextual research design

As the research design takes into account the complete context of the individual who is involved with the event researched, it was crucial to incorporate a contextual design in this research. The contextual research design is instrumental in determining appropriate strategies to enhance life quality (Holtzblatt & Beyer, 2017). A contextual design helps to provide a description, explanation and understanding of events that occur within a certain setting. It also aims to explain why these events are observed exclusively among particular individuals and not others (Machado & Pacheco, 2020:59). In addition, Merriam and Tisdell (2014:235) argued that in order to obtain genuine responses on sensitive subjects, researchers should employ a contextual study design. This study aimed to comprehend the physical, social, and economic circumstances that influenced the resilience abilities and techniques of social workers. The researcher gained a comprehensive understanding of the experiences faced by the participants by employing a design that highlighted the impact of different ecological systems related to the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2014:47).

Referring back to the ecological system model. In terms of the ecological system model, the theoretical framework used for this research, it is believed that the person can be only understood in the context of his or her environment (Ahmed, Amal & Kilawin, 2017:48). As a result, the primary idea behind the design of this study was that, to comprehend the ways in which the participants lived their lives and conducted themselves, the researcher needed to be immersed in the environment and different systems in which the participants worked and lived. The researcher

further took the context of the social work participants and circumstances at work and at home into account when formulating the interview guide, questions and utilizing the theoretical framework in interpreting data. Consequently, data were interpreted in the unique contextual perspective of each perception as the pattern unfolded, describing a particular occurrence, scenery, or occasion (Flick, 2014:26). By so doing, it reduces the anxiety of participants to identify an experience, but rather permits participants to describe an experience through observed behaviour.

The following section describes the research population and sampling methods utilized.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods denote precise methods that are used in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation in a research study (Allen, 2017:1). It describes how a researcher will plan to approach the research problem, including the description of research subjects, data collection, sampling procedures, and data analysis of a study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:51). The concept 'research method' is described by Maree, (2016) "as the tools a researcher uses in collecting data." Research methods are influenced by the research question, the theoretical framework, and the goals of the study (Roestenburg et al., 2021). Their function is to establish various steps to be taken by a researcher in studying a research project (Creswell, 2014). They also enable the collection of relevant information with minimal expenditure of effort, time, and money (Bryman, Bell & Hirschsohn:2014). Therefore, the researcher regarded the research methods as an instrument through which the research study was conducted. The subsequent elements of the research method explored are the study population, sampling, preparation for data collection, method of data collection, pilot-testing, role of the researcher and interviewing skills, method of data analysis, and ensuring trustworthiness.

Study Population

Babbie (2016:116) and Brink et al. (2018:115) describe "population" as the entire mass of observations that the researcher desires to analyse. Therefore, their definitions are comparable in

this regard. However, the definitions of Babbie (2017:202) and Momoh and Scott (2021) build on this notion by including individuals, institutions, and objects that share common features that are of interest to the researcher. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018:16), the population should be made up of people who are currently experiencing or have previously experienced the phenomenon that is being examined and who are able to offer meaningful data for the research project. This shows how important it is to identify a research population that is relevant to the study issue and is able to provide useful insights into the subject being investigated. All of these definitions, while there are some slight distinctions between them, agree on the essential premise that the research population refers to the group observation or individuals that a researcher desires to study as part of a research project.

As originally planned the population for this study included all field and intake social workers employed at the Department of Social Development in Johannesburg. Demarcating the population to the said geographical area was motivated not only by its easy accessibility to the researcher, but also by the exceptional service they provide to the community through the practise of their challenging profession. The researcher sought to explore the resilience skills and strategies of social workers. The boundaries of the research population were restricted to the intake social workers employed at the Department of Social Development in Johannesburg comprising a sufficient number of social workers who would provide valuable information to the research study. As the researcher also works there works, and it would be cost-effective it was resolved to conduct the study there.

Sampling

The selection of a sample in research is an economical approach influenced by a range of circumstances, such as resource limits, including constraints on time and funding preventing the research population as a whole to be subjected to a research project. Sampling allows researchers to conduct studies swiftly and cost-effectively, making research possible in situations when examining a whole population is not feasible or would be financially problematic. The carrying out of well-designed sampling methods is important in order to maintain statistical validity and

improve the generalizability of research findings. Additionally, these approaches play a vital role in addressing ethical issues and overcoming logistical problems (Elfil & Negida, 2017).

The act of choosing a subset of individuals from a larger group, known as the target population, is referred to as the "sampling method" in academic literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:16). Sampling meets the objective of collecting data and making conclusions about the entire population or dataset by examining the attributes and discoveries derived from the chosen sample (Botha, 2022:30).

There are two principal types of sampling techniques that can be employed in research (McCombes, 2019).

- Probability sampling entails a random selection, allowing for robust statistical inferences regarding the enter group. Probability sampling is a sampling method in which a researcher selects a small number of criteria and selects members of the population according to these criteria, at random. All members of the population meeting the criteria, have an equal opportunity to partake in the sample (Elfil & Negida, 2017:3).
- Non-probability sampling allows the researcher to obtain data more easily by selecting units non-randomly based on accessibility or other factors. In non-probability sampling, the researcher selects research participants at random. This method of sampling is not fixed or predetermined by a selection procedure. This makes it difficult for all elements of a population to have equal chances of being included in a sample (Pandey & Pandey, 2015:53).

In the book titled "Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches", Creswell & Creswell (2018: 184-187) discusses various forms of non-probability sampling strategies, including the following:

- Convenience sampling, which is the selection of study participants who are readily accessible and available to participate in the research.
- Purposive sampling, where participants are selected based on specific criteria, such as their expertise or experience in relation to the topic of the study.

- Snowball sampling, where participants are asked to identify others who may be eligible to participate in the study.
- Quota sampling that involves selecting participants based on specific criteria or quotas, such as age, gender, or ethnicity to assure diversity in the sample.

Because the researcher wanted to select certain participants intentionally so that they can provide rich and detailed information that is useful for understanding the phenomenon being studied, the purposive sampling method was relevant for this research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:186).

These non-probability sampling techniques connected to qualitative research are illustrated in Figure 3.1 as follows (McCombes, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:184-187):
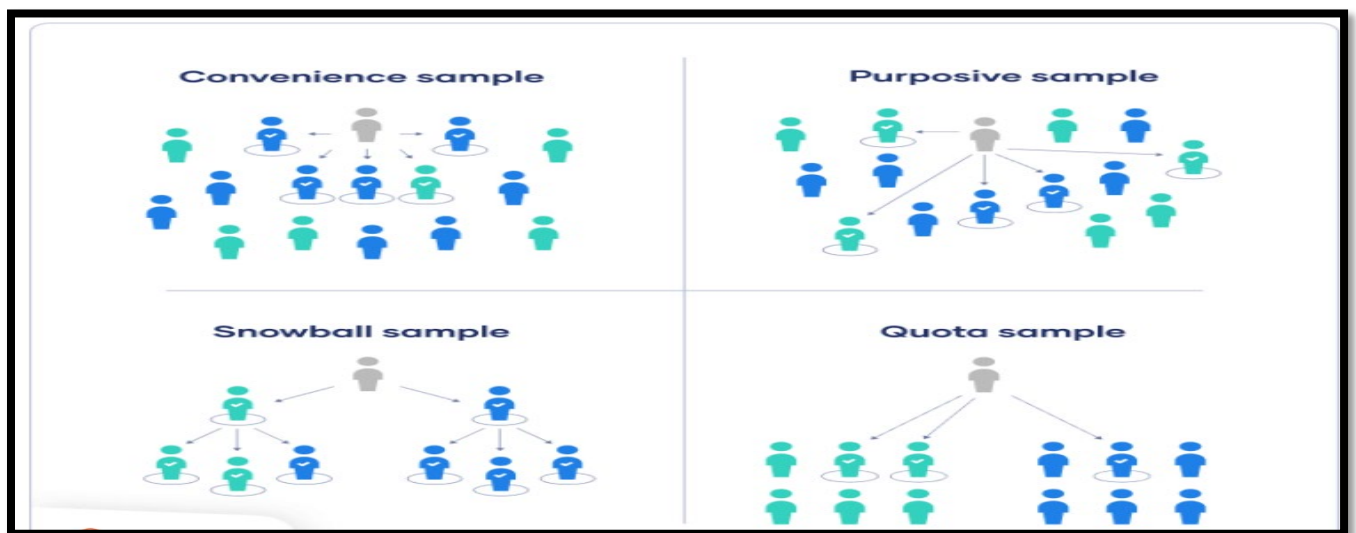
FIGURE 3.1 QUALITATIVE SAMPLING METHODS (MCCOMBES, 2019; CRESWELL & CRESWELL, 2018:184-187)

Purposive sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, was used in this research. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to select participants who meet certain characteristics (Pascoe, 2014:42; Umar, 2018) and involves selecting a unit of study based on the researcher's opinion of which unit will best represent the overall quality of the population being investigated (Grinnell & Unrau, 2014:146). Campbell, Taylor, and McGlade (2017:44) state that this sampling method is

relevant to explore a specific group of people's perceptions relevant to the objectives of the specific study. In purposive sampling the sample size is not predetermined as the researcher depends on the saturation of information (Gravetter & Forzano, 2016:138). Purposive sampling is further cost effective and not time consuming (Rubin & Babbie, 2017:355). In this instance the research participants were selected based on their legitimacy and their impact towards the study purpose.

As planned, the researcher selected participants who met the following criteria:

- Participants were social workers of any gender and any population group.
- Participants who were registered as social workers with the SACSSP.
- They had to be employed at the Department of Social Development's offices in Johannesburg City.
- They had to have at least two years or more working experience as social workers. (This criterion was included due to the fact that experienced participants could report more effective, reliable, and authentic information regarding their resilience skills and strategies).
- The participants had to be able to express themselves in English.
- Participants had to understand what resilience skills and strategies are.
- All participants selected had to be willing to participate voluntarily and willing to sign an informed consent for participating.

The following persons were excluded as participants from the research.
- Social workers who were not employed at the Department of Social Development, in Johannesburg City.
- Social workers who could not express themselves in English.
- Social workers who did not understand what resilience skills and strategies are.
- Social workers who were not willing to participate in this study and refused to sign the informed consent.

The researcher employed purposive sampling to choose social workers who possessed specific features and experiences relevant to the study's focus on resilience as participants (Braun & Clarke 2014:3). The study thus used a non-probability sampling technique, namely purposive sampling, to compile a sample of the research population consisting of participants, who met the explicitly stated inclusion criteria. These individuals had adequate first-hand knowledge about the subject matter of the study. The utilization of this approach ensured that the selected sample accurately reflected the characteristics of the intended population, hence enhancing the validity and relevance of the study's findings. Thus, the utilization of purposive sampling, together with the establishment of clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, allowed the selection of a sample that effectively addressed the research objectives, while also considering limitations in terms of time and resources.

No adjustments were made to the original inclusion and exclusion criteria. Participants complying with the above criteria were identified and included in both the pilot study and the research. These individuals had adequate first-hand knowledge with the subject matter of the study.

As described above, deliberate sampling techniques are frequently used by qualitative researchers to choose participants for their research (Creswell, 2013:301; Umar, 2018). This allows them to choose participants who are most likely to provide rich and varied data related to the study question. The author highlights that the goal of qualitative research is to obtain and offer a deep understanding of a particular occurrence rather than extrapolating the findings about a broader population (Umar, 2018). Choosing the appropriate participants for a sample in qualitative research requires careful assessment of the research questions and design. Furthermore, it highlights the need for the use of intentional sampling techniques to choose people who can provide high-quality data.

In qualitative research, the sample size is not fixed. Instead, the principle of data saturation is employed to determine when a sample has a sufficient number of participants for data collection (Laher & Botha, 2012:17). This indicates that the researcher concentrates on gathering comprehensive and thorough information until a stage is reached where further data do not

contribute to the emerging conclusions (Miles et al., 2014:31, Nieuwenhuis, 2020:92). Based on data saturation, the sample size can expand or reduce (Neuman, 2014:147). In this research the sample size was not predetermined, and interviews were held until the information obtained from participants became repetitive and no added information was obtained (Creswell & Poth, 2018:158). In other words, the researcher conducted interviews with additional participants up to a point during the interviews when the researcher realised that no new information was being gathered from the participants. This indicated that data saturation had been achieved. The researcher then discontinued the interviews. Hence, the principle of data saturation, the conceptual yardstick used for determining qualitative sample size, which occurred in this case when interviews were conducted with 13 participants, was applied, and determined the sample's size in this research.

To double check the issue of having obtained data saturation, after concluding the interviews and having had the digital records of the interviews transcribed, the researcher looked through the interview transcripts to check whether any new repeating themes or subjects emerged, in order to confirm that data saturation had been reached (Guest, Namey & Chen, 2015). To determine whether the findings included anything unique or innovative that had not been discovered before, the researcher utilized the tool of a peer review. The transcriber and the supervisor both provided assistance with this process. In addition, the researcher used triangulation to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon researched and integrate the data obtained, as a method to validate the achieved level of data saturation. This involved the collection of data from various sources, involving interviews and observations, and afterward conducting a comparative analysis to determine the consistency of findings across three different investigative approaches. This finding suggests that there is an excess of accessible data, and that data saturation has definitely been achieved (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1411).

Hence, from the entire population of social workers employed at Gauteng DSD, Johannesburg City, interviews were conducted with a sample of 13 participants which was sufficient for the principle of data saturation to be reached and the conducting of additional interviews to be

terminated. Table 3.1 provides an overview of how the participants were recruited. In the context of the research reflection, it is noteworthy to mention that the selected sampling approach was effectively implemented.

Preparation for data collection

Preparation for the data collection process entails gaining access to the research setting where the researcher wants to conduct the study. Once this has taken place, the researcher starts recruiting participants and getting the participants ready for the data collection.

Gaining access to the research setting

Phenomenological qualitative investigations involve the deliberate selection of participants and settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:185). Research setting means the place where data are collected. This is the physical, and social context within which research is conducted. The first phase in the research process was the researcher formally initiating contact with the Research Administrator of the Department of Social Development in Johannesburg, through written communication (see Addendum B). The purpose of this correspondence was to seek authorization for conducting the study. After gaining the necessary authorization, the researcher successfully employed the supervisors at several DSD sub-offices as gatekeepers. The supervisors played a key part in distributing information about the research project to the social workers in their different sections. The implementation of this method was executed effortlessly, making a significant contribution to the effective execution of the research project.

An early stage of collecting data is gaining access to the field where the researcher wants to conduct the study (Flick, 2018:161). For the researcher to obtain permission to undertake the research and acquire possible participants' permission to take part in the research, the researcher was firstly compelled to submit a proposition to the academic authorities under which auspices the research is to take place, that guarantees the safety of the participants, to be studied and considered

by the responsible human subjects' appraisal boards (Creswell, 2013:152). For data collection and undertaking the research, the researcher must secondly obtain permission from the necessary authorities in the research setting and request to access prospective participants to participate in the study (Roestenburg et al., 2021:333; Creswell & Poth, 2018:156). For this purpose, an official procedure of admission entails consideration of the organization's working order and rubrics concerning professional protocol and tactical arrangement for mobilization of data collection at the organization where the research is to take place (Roestenburg et al., 2021:333). To acquire access to potential participants, the researcher was typically required to create and submit a research proposal that underwent assessment by human subject review boards, one from the organization where the research was to take place and another from the university concerned. The purpose of these reviews is to ensure that the participants would be safeguarded from any potential harm.

On the academic side, as a master's student the researcher submitted a comprehensive study proposal to the university. It was reviewed and approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Once the ethical clearance from the College of Human Science Research Ethic Committee at the university to conduct the study had been obtained, the researcher contacted the administrator of the Department of Social Development, Johannesburg in writing to formally obtain the permission to conduct a study (Addendum D). When permission was granted to the researcher by the Department of Social Development, the researcher contacted the gatekeepers (supervisors) who supervise the social workers personally to explain the study and request them to act as the gatekeepers in the process. Gatekeepers can assist with the issue of trust, culture, language, and necessary arrangements regarding protocols to be followed (Flick, 2018:157). The process followed by the researcher to gain entry to the DSD is summarised in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1 PROCESS FOLLOWED TO GAIN ENTRY TO DSD

OFFICE	Accessing gatekeeper	Response from gate keepers
Department of Social Development, Johannesburg City	The researcher wrote a letter and send it through an email to the Senior Administrative Officer requesting permission to conduct the research study with social workers at the Department's offices.	• The researcher was initially instructed to fill out the DSD application form in order to conduct the study and include necessary documentation. • The authorization to carry out the research was granted in written form after a period of three weeks. • The researcher was authorized to select appropriate participants from any DSD offices in the Johannesburg Region and to deliver the letter of permission to the relevant authorities. • As a result, the researcher individually met with each gatekeeper (DSD Supervisors) at the JHB head office, Midrand, Senaone, Pimville, and Chiawelo office, and provided them with the letter of approval. The supervisors furnished the researcher with the names of the prospective participants and their contact information.

Participant recruitment and preparation

Prior to data collection, it is necessary to recruit and adequately prepare potential participants. To accomplish this, the researcher must obtain permission to engage with the possible participants and cultivate a positive and productive rapport with them (Creswell, 2013:147). Preparation of participants means stages included prior interviewing the participants. It also involves enlightening

the participants on how data will be collected, and the kind of information required (Doody & Noonan, 2013:31).

After gaining the necessary permission and access to conduct the research, the gatekeepers referred the researcher to potential participants by means of providing their contact numbers and email addresses. In recruiting and preparing the participants for the interviews, the following steps were followed:

- The researcher contacted all prospective participants by email, requesting them to partake in the study, also elucidating the research topic, purpose, the rights to voluntary participation and the reasons why the researcher sees them as significant to the study and the responsibility of the researcher in protecting the participants from any risk. When prospective participants' response was positive and they showed interest to participate, the researcher arranged for a face-to-face contact. Contact information for the study supervisor and Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Human Science at UNISA, was provided for more study details.

- The researcher conducted individual sessions with the prospective participants, during which formal introductions were made and prospective participants were given the chance to ask questions. The researcher highlighted issues that arose, such as the length of the interviews and the potential advantages and disadvantages. The researcher established rapport with them in these face-to-face semi-structured interviews to recruit, inform and prepare them and to make the necessary arrangements for the data collection interviews. Every participant understood the purpose and expectations of the study. They all gave their consent to be interviewed and were made aware of their unrestricted right to withdraw from participating in the research at any time.

- Following some of those presents' expression of eagerness to participate in the study, informed consent forms (Addendum D) were duly filled and signed by both the subjects and the researcher. This facilitated the researcher in establishing an open and trustworthy rapport with the subjects. However, certain individuals declined to take part in the study

because they had limited time available owing to other obligations, while others believed they lacked the necessary information to contribute effectively. Around six potential participants declined to take part in the activity due to time constraints and other work obligations.

- The researcher eventually successfully recruited and enlisted thirteen individuals who fulfilled the inclusion criteria and had shown their enthusiasm to partake in the research endeavour. Every individual willing to be involved in the study, provided their signature on the informed consent document.

- The researcher notified the participants that data would be gathered from them through semi-structured interviews. Participants were presented with an interview guide consisting of a set of biographical and data collection questions that would be addressed during the interview (Addendum E). The researcher also addressed ethical principles that would be upheld during the procedure, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring anonymity and secrecy, promoting voluntary involvement, managing information appropriately, and prioritizing beneficence.

- The participants were informed that with their consent, the interviews would be digitally recorded for the purpose of documentation. They were assured that their identities would be safeguarded and that access to the recorded information would be restricted to authorized individuals.

- The final step, signing consent paperwork, represented a voluntary agreement. The researcher's thoughtfulness of interview appointment scheduling showed her commitment to participants.

Appointments were scheduled and confirmed with the participants to determine the time and location for conducting the semi-structured data collecting interviews. The researcher advised the participants to choose a location and schedule for the interviews mutually convenient for both parties.

Reflecting on the recruitment and preparation method used, the researcher regards it as having been performed successfully. Direct and phone interactions were started with social workers to tell them about the research study's goals, their rights, and the possible benefits of participation. This method promoted trust, openness, and informed decision-making. Providing enough time for participants to decide whether they would participate in the research, showed respect for their autonomy. In contacts with participants that followed, the researcher reaffirmed their willing participation, reaffirming voluntary consent.

An overview of how the participants were recruited and the settings where the participants were first interviewed is presented in Table 3.2.

TABLE 3.2 RECRUITMENT AND INTERVIEWING OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants' Pseudonyms	Preparation of recruited participants for data collection during face-to-face or telephonic contacts prior to the research interviews		Places of interview	Did they agree to participate and sign informed consent?	Duration of interviews
	Face-to-face	Telephone			
Abigail	X		In the social worker's office at Midrand office	Yes	1 hour
Boitumelo	X		In the social worker's office at Senaonae	Yes	1 hour and 20 minutes
Cindi	X		In the social worker's office at Pimville	Yes	1 hour
Deliwe	X	X	In the social workers' office at Midrand	Yes	1hour
Ether	X		In the social workers' office at the regional office.	Yes	1hour and 40 minutes
Frank		X	In the social workers' office at Chiawelo	Yes	1 hour and 30 minutes

Galeboe		X	In the social worker's office at Pimville	Yes	1 hour
Harper	X		In the social workers' office at Senaone office	Yes	1 hour and 20 minutes
Isaac	X		At the social worker's office at Chiawelo	Yes	1 hour
Joy		X	In the social worker's office at Senaone	Yes	1 hour 35 minutes
King		X	At the office boardroom at the regional office	Yes	1 hour and 15 minutes
Lebo	X		At the Office boardroom at the regional office	Yes	1 hour and 35 minutes
Martha	X		In the social worker's office at Chiawelo	Yes	1 hour and 40 minutes

In conclusion, the researcher's careful participant recruiting, and preparation helped the research to succeed and demonstrated the researcher's ethical and participant-centric values.

Adding to this, the choice of suitable data collecting methods was inherently connected to the process of determining the research site and selecting the study sample.

Collecting the data

Collecting data is regarded as a logical approach of gathering information relevant to the research purpose (Burns, Grove& Gray, 2013:44). Data collection is described as the process when a researcher partakes in activities that are intended at gathering information that will respond to the research questions (Creswell, 2013:147). Data collection methods involve the application of specific methods and activities enabling researchers to collect data scientifically to respond to the research question (Creswell & Poth, 2018:148; Bless et al., 2013:184). In qualitative research studies, making observations, conducting interviews, studying documents, secondary data, and

audio and visual materials are the modern data collection methods (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:335). In gathering information for this research, the researcher decided to use semi-structured interviews guided by an interview guide with open-ended questions as the method of collecting data in this study.

Interviewing is a data collection method that aims to comprehend the world from the perspective of the interviewees (Creswell & Poth, 2018:164). Semi-structured interviews are unplanned organized interviews in which a list of pre-arranged questions is provided for discussion, but there is room for more in-depth queries. According to Adler and Clark (2015:256) conducting semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to understand the participants' lives, experiences, feelings, perceptions, or situations from their point of view. It requires the researcher to flow with the thoughts and narratives of participants, hence, the researcher must have excellent interviewing and attentive listening skills (Geyer, 2021:357). Conducting these interviews are used to gather qualitative data and are usually extensive which allows the researcher to explore topics with little existing literature or describing the lived experience of participants in detail (Nieuwenhuis, 2020:109). Semi-structured interviews are not rigid and allow more questions to be asked to obtain profound data (Canals, 2017:398). Interviewing the social workers concerning their resilience skills and strategies enabled the researcher to understand their stories offering unique insights regarding the subject under study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:14).

Conducting semi-structured interviews supported by an interview guide was the most suitable method of data collection in exploring the resilience skills and strategies of social workers. In defining "interview guide" Rubin and Babbie (2017:465) describe it as a guide that defines the issues or themes that the researcher intends to address. A comprehensive interview guide consists of a series of open-ended questions and potential probes that address the pertinent components associated with the phenomenon under investigation (Padgett, 2017:118). The interview guide serves the objective of aiding the researcher in organizing the questions and promoting adaptability and authenticity in the interview process (Padgett, 2017:118). An interview guide is designed to

portray the researcher as an "inept debater" and serves as a tool to maintain the structure of the interview process (Geyer, 2021).

The interviews were directed by the use of this interview guide, which also provided the researcher with the ability to modify the order in which the questions were asked and to ask follow-up questions (Bryman et al., 2014). In order to maintain coherence across the interviews, each one was carried out by the same interviewer, the researcher.

The study's characteristics, as highlighted by Burgess and further expounded by Mason (2018:110), were instrumental in ensuring the efficacy and appropriateness of the interviews conducted. The methodology of the study involved direct verbal exchanges between the researcher and participants, emphasizing the interactional nature of the process. This approach aligns with Mason's emphasis on the interviews being purposeful conversations, where both parties actively engage in a meaningful exchange of ideas, providing depth and context to the research topic.

Furthermore, the interviewer's maintenance of a casual tone, as advocated by Burgess and Mason, facilitated an environment conducive to open and honest communication, without detracting from the study's objectives. This approach echoes Mason's recommendation for building rapport and showing empathy, making participants feel comfortable and respected, thereby enriching the quality of the data collected. In adherence to ethical research norms, the study placed a strong emphasis on the researcher's reflexivity. This aligns with Mason's focus on ethical sensitivity and the importance of maintaining neutrality throughout the interview process. Such reflexivity ensures that the researcher's biases or preconceptions do not influence the data, thus preserving the integrity of the study.

Additionally, Mason's approach to qualitative research stresses the importance of flexibility and adaptability in the interview process. This was reflected in the study's methodology, where the researcher remained open to modifying the interview structure based on emerging insights,

ensuring that the conversations remained relevant and effective in uncovering nuanced perspectives.

During the data collection interviews, the researcher first made an effort to establish a comfortable atmosphere by inquiring about the participants' well-being. This was done before proceeding to ask the questions outlined in the interview guide, which aimed to gather biographical information and explore the topic at hand (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:14). The researcher utilized the prepared questions to gather biographic information from the individuals. Subsequently, the researcher moved to the subject being examined and posed the formulated inquiries designed to explore this particular topic.

According to Braun and Clarke (2014:590), collecting biographic information from participants is an essential aspect of qualitative research. This is because it can help the researcher understand how the characteristics and context of each participant may influence the experiences and perspectives of participants. According to Guest et al. (2013:30), collecting biographical information is an essential aspect of qualitative research because it provides context for a deeper understanding of experiences and perspectives of participants. In the course of their research, if they collect demographic information such as age, gender, and level of education, as well as personal history information such as family history and cultural influences, researchers can gain insight into how participants' individual characteristics may influence their responses. This enables researchers to recognize bias sources and gain a deeper understanding of the social and cultural context in which participants are positioned. Chapter 4 provides a thorough profile of the research findings.

When beginning the conversation, biographical information of the participant was obtained by the researcher asking the following questions listed in the interview guide:

- How will you prefer to be called during the interview?

- How old are you?

- What is your highest educational qualification?

- At which university did you obtain your qualification?

- How long have you been working as a social worker?

- What is your specific service delivery area?

Once the biographical information from the participants was obtained, the following flexible open ended topical questions were asked to obtain detailed information from the participants for the study:

- What are your main responsibilities as a social worker at the DSD?

- How would you describe your experience with regard to your job as a social worker?

- What is your understanding of the concept "resilience"?

- What are the challenges often encountered in your job?

- How do these challenges affect your job performance?

- What resilience skills and strategies do you use to deal with these challenges that you experience?

- Tell me more about the effectiveness of the resilience skills and strategies you currently use?

- What do you suggest can be done by your employer to assist you to enhance your resilience skills and strategies?

Throughout the interviews, participants were encouraged to answer questions in a manner which clearly reflected their experience. The researcher, mindful of avoiding a question-answer format, adopted a technique wherein she would ask a question, attentively listen to the subject's response, and thereafter inquire more to probe further into the information provided by the participant. Nevertheless, the inquiries were unrestrictive. The researcher additionally encouraged participants

to provide further elaboration on specific parts of their responses in order to obtain as much detail as possible (Thomas, 2017:207).

Besides using probing and prompting during the interviews, the researcher asked follow-up questions, where she used planned and unplanned follow-up questions to allow the participants to elaborate further or clarify their answers. The researcher utilized active listening, by listening to verbal communication and observing the non-verbal communication of the participants (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019:6). Clarification as an interviewing skill was used where the researcher asked participants to clarify the order in which an event emerged. Furthermore, the skill of summarizing was employed where the researcher recapped what the participants had said and reflected it back to them, repeating their own words as much as possible (Reid & Mash, 2014:4). During the interviews, the researcher used the agreed language medium (English), which was familiar to all participants. However, they were allowed to use their language if they wanted to.

With the consent of all the participants, the researcher audio recorded the interviews. (DeJonkheer & Vaughn, 2019:4). This was to enable the researcher to focus more on the participants and their responses during the interviews, than on note taking. Note taking was limited to taking down information about the participants' background and their non-verbal behaviour.

Pilot testing

Pilot testing is defined as an approach to verify research instruments, adjust the research procedure, guarantee participant understanding of inquiries, and improve the researcher's interviewing skills. Pilot testing is seen as an essential stage performed in order to avoid issues during the main studies and enables a seamless investigation process. The above descriptions and the importance of pilot testing in adjusting and changing the research process timely to prevent finding problematic issues after the study has been finished are highlighted by Mitchell and Jolley (2013:203–204).

Pilot testing is crucial, according to Doody & Doody (2015:1074) to ensure that each participant interprets the research topic in the same way. This is essential to the validity and reliability of the study. Pilot testing, according to Doody and Doody (2015:1–7), gives researchers the opportunity

to hone the abilities they'll need before starting the real study. This emphasizes how important pilot testing is to improve the overall calibre of study and the skills of the researcher.

It is clear that pilot testing is an essential stage in the research process because it enables the identification and modification of potential issues prior to the main study. It aids in the development of the researcher's abilities and ensures that all participants comprehend the questions in the same way, which is essential for the study's validity and reliability. Overall, pilot testing improves the research quality. Pilot testing thus, allows the researcher to focus on precise areas that have been indistinct beforehand or testing particular questions (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:387). In addition, Monette, Sullivan, Dejong and Hilton (2014:92-93) assert that pilot testing assists in estimating the usefulness of the anticipated study, such as time and costs that may be required, along with prohibiting the hindrances that might arise during the actual qualitative interviews.

In conducting the pilot testing in this study, the researcher interviewed two social workers who share comparable attributes of the participants encompassed in the study. The researcher elucidated to the two participants the purpose and process of pilot testing. Participants were asked to offer genuine responses regarding their interviews. Pilot testing checks and ensures that the data collection instrument equivalents the sampled profile and will serve the necessary purpose of effectively collecting the required data (Rubin & Babbie, 2016:296). Hence, the pilot testing was able to assist the researcher to determine whether the instrument was adequate for the purpose of data collection that responded the study objectives.

Upon obtaining consent from the two social workers requested to participate in pilot testing the interview guide, the pilot interviews were conducted and recorded in audio format and subsequently transcribed and evaluated to ascertain whether the questions elicited the desired responses. These participants were explicitly notified that they would not be included in the main study sample, that their information would just be used for pilot testing purposes, would not be included in the data to be collected for the study and would not be taken into consideration in the

study findings. After the pilot interviews were over, the two participants were requested to contemplate on their experience and provide detailed input on the questions asked. The researcher sought to ascertain from them whether the queries were unambiguously formulated and readily comprehensible. The participants' feedback indicated that they preferred the questions to stay unchanged in their original formulation.

The recorded pilot interviews were transcribed and sent to the study supervisor for comment and analysis. This allowed her to review the collected pilot data and evaluate the interviewing style and skills of the researcher. The supervisor's report indicated that the pilot testing was effectively concluded. This resulted in the approval of the interview guide and the subsequent commencement of the major study. This crucial component of the study effort ensured that the research instrument was comprehensible to participants. The questions formulated were appropriate for the topic, clear, and efficient in obtaining the necessary information. Hence no modifications or additions to the interview guide were necessary.

Moreover, when doing the pilot study, the researcher strictly adhered to the Covid-19 regulations in place at the time. At this stage of the research effort, the researcher guaranteed strict adherence to social distancing guidelines in order to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic. The compliance was undertaken with the aim of ensuring the safety of the participants.

In general, the researcher concluded that the questions comprising the interview guide were well structured, soundly presented and also produced relevant information required for the study.

Role of the researcher and interviewing skills

The strategy for gathering data called for conducting semi-structured interviews aided by an interview guide. To ensure successful semi-structured interviews in collecting in-depth and detailed data, it is of utmost importance to create rapport and establish a harmonious relationship with the interviewees (Flick, 2018:217; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The researcher did so with the participants in order to guarantee fruitful interviews with them and to obtain comprehensive and detailed data. The scholar placed significant emphasis on establishing trust

with participants as a foundation for the research and utilized the necessary tactics to ensure a constructive rapport with the subjects. In addition, the researcher placed a high value on being truthful, forthright, and kind. She also made sure to honour confidentiality agreements and gave participants clear information about the goals and aims of the study in order to foster participant confidence (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015:88-89).

Throughout the study, the researcher paid close attention to what the participants had to say, clearing up any miscommunications and showing an interest in their viewpoints in their responses. The researcher demonstrated empathy by making an effort to understand the participants' perspective, acknowledging their emotions, and offering supportive and non-judgmental comments (Hoolachan, 2019).

In conducting the interviews, the researcher avoided using technical jargon or any other terminology that would be difficult for participants to grasp, in favour of concise, courteous, and clear communication. Furthermore, during the research procedure, the researcher showed respect for cultural diversity and awareness of the ethnic origins of her subjects (Lonczak, 2021).

The researcher also used the following interviewing techniques in conducting the interviews, to ensure that the procedure went smoothly: establishing rapport, maintaining active and attentive listening, asking probing and follow-up questions, clarifying ideas, using suitable language, and summarizing the discussions. Before conducting an interview with participant, building a strong rapport with the person is crucial. To facilitate a clear discussion, the researcher additionally employed intelligible language and permitted participants to utilize their own understandable language (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019:6; Nieuwenhuis, 2016:94; Reid & Mash, 2014:4).

The researcher's utilization of the research interviewing abilities referred to above, are itemised and described in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3 RESEARCH INTERVIEWING SKILLS

SKILL	APPLICATION
Rapport	To establishing rapport with the participants, the researcher created a conducive environment for participants to feel comfortable in to talk, by showing full interest in and connecting to them when asking questions. The researcher also made participants feel comfortable by arranging a quiet and safe space where interviews were conducted.
Active Listening	In order to get a complete, clear, and specific depiction of the content of the participants' story lines, the researcher must have good listening and observation skills that focus on their story, including the non-verbal signs (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019:6). The researcher listened and paid careful attention to what participants were saying, probed and made follow-ups on what participants were articulating, assisted by pertinent eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions.
Follow-up questioning	For the researcher to allow participants to elaborate further and clarify answers to the questions, the researcher may use planned or un-planned follow-up questions (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019:6). The researcher, made sure that whenever she was not clear about the participants' answers, she prompted them to get more clear details.
Clarifying	If participants make a precise annotation about which they are unsure, the researcher may ask them to elaborate or provide clarification (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:94). In order for the participants to experience the researcher as being respectful, the researcher respectfully reiterated what the participants had said about their responses as a reflection of what they had discussed.
Probing	Probing is sometimes used to produce sufficient detail and it can be done by giving waiting time for participants after asking the question, to think and add to their response or the interviewer can repeat or summarize the participant's words for encouragement (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:94). The researcher probed,

	when necessary, to encourage the participants to offer additional information for interpretation of unclear answers.
Summarizing	Summarizing what is said during the interviews brings together a series of inputs and reflecting them back to the participants, using their own words as far as possible (Reid & Mash, 2014:4). The researcher summarized the discussions constantly throughout the interviews.
Language	Although the majority of the local languages are known to the researcher, all of the interviews were conducted in English because the participants felt most at ease speaking it. The researcher found it easier to collect the data as a result.
Bracketing	The researcher greeted the participants appropriately and asked them socially acceptable questions prior entering the interviewing schedule. The researcher also transcribed the verbatim responses of the participants and added field notes to the transcripts. The transcripts ensured that the "voices of the participants" led to the findings, and that the researcher's own interpretations did not influence the results.

It is evident from using these interviewing skills and techniques in the discussions with the participants, that applying the techniques were crucial to developing rapport with study participants. A well-prepared interview guide and semi-structured interviews allowed for a process of flexible yet ordered data collection. The researcher established a stronger connection with participants by listening to them and by posing open-ended enquiries to them. Seeing people feeling at ease whilst sharing their thoughts, experiences, and opinions during the interviews, pleased the researcher. This deliberate rapport-building enhanced the quality of the data and contributed to the success of the study. The social workers' resilience strategies were revealed thanks to the deliberate application of planned interview techniques, which fostered an environment of openness and trust.

The next section discusses how data were interpreted. It also provides detail of the eight steps as proposed by Tesch (cited in Creswell, 2014:196, Creswell & Poth, 2018:183-184).

Method of data analysis

The data analysis process is the practice of working with data to give directive, shape, and value to the amount of collected data (Schurink, Schurink & Fouché, 2021:391). This process involves data classification, conducting a primary complete reading of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing data, and forming an interpretation of them (Creswell & Poth, 2018:181). According to Flick (2018:420), describing and explaining of the phenomenon researched are some of the aims of data analysis. In analysing phenomenological data, the researcher is required to consider statements that are significant and generalize its meanings (Creswell, 2014:196). It compels the researcher to detect participants' reiterating and likeness of information. In this research, participants' experiences are connected, and themes are developed about the resilience skills and strategies of social workers.

In this study, the data analysis was a collaborative effort involving the researcher, an independent coder, and the research supervisor. The researcher initially applied Tesch's steps in data analysis independently and then compared the identified themes with those determined by the independent coder. The coder verified the information recorded, structured it, and ensured that the researcher did not omit any information This was followed by several discussions among the researcher, the supervisor, and the coder, ensuring a thorough verification and collaboration of the findings. This triangulation approach enhanced the validity and reliability of the data analysis process. The independent coder also signed a declaration of confidentiality.

The inclusion of an independent coder in qualitative research has numerous notable benefits. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), one benefit of this approach is that it increases the study's credibility and objectivity. An independent coder, unaffected by the prejudices of the main researcher, offers a new and unbiased viewpoint, hence enhancing the credibility of the study. Bazeley and Jackson (2013) observe that involving an additional coder in the coding process enhances reliability and consistency by identifying and correcting any errors in data interpretation.

In addition, as emphasised by Saldaña (2015), an autonomous coder can enhance the analysis by assisting in the refinement and expansion of topics and categories, resulting in a more comprehensive and intricate examination. This step is essential since it guarantees a thorough comprehension of the material. Furthermore, Patton (2015:464) underscores the significance of an autonomous coder in the validation of themes and interpretations. Triangulation, which refers to the process of cross-checking, is crucial for verifying the precision of the findings.

Maxwell (2013) emphasises that employing an independent coder can substantially mitigate researcher bias. Adopting an impartial methodology for data analysis is crucial in upholding the research's credibility. Engaging an autonomous programmer not only increases the precision but also improves the reliability of the research results, as emphasised by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Ultimately, an independent coder promotes self-reflection, as proposed by Finlay (2002). The process of critical self-reflection allows the researcher to constantly examine and evaluate their assumptions and interpretations, which enhances the analytical process. The researcher analysed the data collected from various participants by executing the qualitative data analysis steps as projected by Tesch (Creswell, 2014:196; Creswell & Poth, 2018:183-184) as follows:

The researcher delicately read all the transcripts, jotting down some ideas that came to mind in order to get the whole picture and meaning of the information.

The researcher selected one interesting interview and go through. The intention was to identify underlying meaning by making notes, bringing more meaning to the collected data. Once more, any thoughts that come to mind was written done in a margin of the interview transcript.

After carefully perusing the transcripts, the researcher arranged related topics in groups by arranging them in columns, alongside with unique and leftover topics. This led to developing themes that could also be grouped according to major, unique, and excess data.

The researcher abbreviated the topic as codes and wrote the codes next to the appropriate section of the data. The researcher did a follow-up to check if new codes transpire.

The researcher found the most descriptive words for the topics and converted them into relevant categories. The aim was to reduce the total number categories by grouping related topics together.

In this stage a final decision was made by the researcher of abbreviating each category and arranging codes in an alphabetical order.

Data materials belonging to each category were grouped together in one place and a preliminary analysis was performed.

And lastly, the researcher recorded existing data using a book in order to verify data and make sense out of it. Consequently, the recording guaranteed that the data are properly categorized.

FIGURE 3.2 FLOW-CHART: EXECUTION OF DATA ANALYSING PROCESS (TESCH IN CRESWELL; 2014:196; CRESWELL & POTH, 2018:183-184)

Subsequently the researcher had a consensus discussion with the research supervisor on the themes, sub-themes, and categories to be presented as the research findings. In reaching consensus, the themes, sub-themes, and categories were finalized. The results of the study are presented in Chapter 4.

Ensuring trustworthiness

As explained in Chapter 1, the word "data verification" refers to the authenticity of the study and the extent to which research findings accurately reflect the topic being examined (Yates & Leggett, 2016:227). Data verification aims to establish the accuracy of a study by assessing the researcher's level of diligence, attention to detail, and thoroughness in the study's design, implementation, and reporting of research findings. Babbie (2016:405) asserts that a qualitative research project's worth is contingent upon its credibility and dependability.

According to Cypress (2017), trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the calibre, veracity, and honesty of the results. The researcher is responsible for demonstrating that the research study was carried out in a credible, dependable, and precise manner (Cypress, 2017:254). The researcher must make sure the research study is carried out in a trustworthy, dependable, and comprehensive manner in order to ensure rigour (Cypress, 2017:254). For a study to be regarded as rigorous, the researcher and the critical reader of it must have faith in the findings of the research investigation. Establishing recurrent reliability in the study procedures is its main goal. It must also provide an accurate depiction of the population under investigation. Lietz and Zayas (2010) and Thomas and Magilvy (2011) list credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as such a study's characteristics.

This study's trustworthiness is established by employing Lincoln and Guba's model (described in Lietz and Zayas (2010) and Thomas and Magilvy (2011)) which encompasses the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. By addressing these four principles by means of the strategies portrayed in Table 3.4, the credibility of this study is guaranteed.

TABLE 3.4 STRATEGIES AND PRINCIPLES ENSURING RIGOUR AND TRUSTWORTHINESS (LIETZ & ZAYAS, 2010; THOMAS & MAGILVY, 2011)

PRINCIPLES EMPLOYED	STRATEGIES
Credibility/ Authenticity Credibility is internal validity that aims to validate the originality trust and truth of the research findings (Schurink, Schurink & Fouché, 2021:394-395). To ensure credibility, the researcher must have prolonged engagement in the research site to be enabled to establish a good working relationship with the participants (Creswell, 2013:250). According to Lincoln, Lynham & Guba (2018:140) in ensuring credibility, the researcher must aim to collect rich, thick data, instead of apparent, low-quality data that pose little potential for analysis.	• In ensuring credibility in this study, the researcher used well-established research methods, with a theoretical framework supporting the research question and research design. • Triangulation was used where more data resources were used to reach the same conclusions and increase credibility. • Directive quotation was used to validate the themes developing from the data. Some participants were requested to reassess transcriptions of the interviews to guarantee the true reflection of their interviews (Reid & Mash, 2014:4).
Transferability/ Applicability Transferability refers to the significance of the research findings when transferred and generalized to other settings of similar environments and still deliver similar results (De Vos et al, 2014:393). Ensuring transferability will be achieved through descriptions of the context and process of the study and ensuring the careful selection of participants in purposive	• In applying transferability in this study, the researcher provided information about the following limitations: number of participants, methods of data collection, the length of the sessions, and the time frame set for the completion of data collection. • The researcher reduced any limitations and acquired as much data as possible during the interviews until data saturation was reached.

sampling to ensure they are representative of the population in terms of the phenomenon studied and data will be documented in detail to ensure thick descriptions of the interviews (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:122).	
Dependability /Consistency Dependability involves interpretation, recommendation, and evaluation of findings of the study by the participants to support the data they have shared (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:121). It articulates whether the processes and the research methods are consistent throughout. Hence, another researcher should be able to obtain the same results with the use of the researcher's perceptions and information (Miles et al., 2014:312).	• In this study, the researcher asked the independent coder to check the consistency of recorded data and the results of the data, to manage reaching comparable results. • All research procedures were written down to leave an audit trail to trace the research steps and ensure accurate application of the research design, recording the data collection, and keeping a record of all decisions made during the study (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:393). • The coder's services were used to verify the information recorded to make sure the researcher did not omit any information.
Confirmability /Neutrality Confirmability is based on the researcher's relative neutrality and reasonable fairness from prejudice (Miles et al., 2014). Confirmability implies that other researchers can confirm the method used by the researcher for the study findings and can use the same method to conclude similar findings (De Vos et al., 2014:394).	• To meet the confirmability of the findings, the researcher utilized reflexivity to be able to intentionally and sensitively guard against interference in the analysis and interpretations of the data from the participants. • The researcher remained neutral and used probing to gather more information on participants' unique responses.

	- After each interview, the researcher reflected on her performance and the information gathered. - An audio recorder was used to ensure confirmability to go through the recordings in case the researcher omitted any information and for the research supervisor to verify that what was written was a true reflection of what was shared by participants. - This process was enhanced during transcriptions of the interview which assisted the researcher to gain new insight into the area of study. - The researcher consulted various theoretical perspectives and previous research to support the findings and curb the effect of research bias. - The researcher also exercises self-awareness and reflectivity by being aware of her own standing as a social worker who is working on the same department, and also being aware of her personal opinions about belief and perception. In ensuring that she was unbiased, the researcher checked her interpretations against that of the independent coder. Reflectivity was used as a strategy to account for and limit personal biases.

In the next section the ethical consideration that were applied in the study are outlined.

3.4   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics guides researchers in performing their research to avoid harming participants by following proper protocols and respecting human rights (Davis, 2017:62). According to Bless et al. (2013:28-29), Monette,Sullivan, Dejong and Hilton (2014:50) it involves what is impacting on human behavioural interactions, a principled responsibility that a professional person is obliged to meet in addition to a code of conduct, the directing manner, and the standard behaviour of a certain occupation. Protecting the interest and safety of the participant and those that are affected by the study results, is described as being of great significance (Roestenburg et al., 2021:118). Thus, a researcher is obliged to ensure that the study meets the criteria for ethical research throughout all stages of the research process (Brink et al., 2018:55). The Department of Social Work's Departmental Research and Ethics Committee at UNISA granted ethical clearance for this project (Addendum B). For the researcher to minimize the risk, uphold justice, and enhance the privacy and respect of participants, the ethical principles described and clarified in Table 3.5, were applied as planned and outlined in Chapter 1.

TABLE 3.5 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Principle	
Ethical Consideration	**Implementation**
Informed consent	According to Neuman (2014:7), informed consent is an agreement from the participant to voluntarily participate in the study, after they have been properly well-informed about the background and purpose of the study. In order for prospective participants to provide informed consent, it is important for the researcher to provide participants with enough detail on the study, enabling them to make a rational decision regarding their participation (Babbie, 2017:65). As per the researcher's initial proposal, the participants received a comprehensive explanation of the goal, objectives, and scope of the study during their personal

	interviews. All ethical considerations, such as the potential advantages, hazards, preservation of anonymity, and secrecy of the study, were thoroughly elucidated. The researcher provided the participants with the consent letter from the University's Department of Social Work Ethics Committee as evidence that she had been authorized to carry out the study at DSD. Prior to obtaining the participants' signatures on the required document (Addendum D), the researcher explained the process of informed consent in accordance with the predetermined design. The researcher emphasized that participation was optional and that potential participants had the freedom to choose whether or not to take part in the research and could withdraw from the research process at any point. Participants were given the chance to ask questions in order to obtain a better understanding of any study-related issues, and clear and necessary responses were supplied to them. Interview appointments were arranged once the researcher ensured that participants comprehended the study's nature, procedures, and potential risks and benefits.
Anonymity and Confidentiality	Inadequate measures to ensure anonymity and confidentiality employed by a researcher can result in both unforeseen and anticipated negative consequences for participants, while also undermining the overall scrutiny and evaluation of the study findings (Kang & Hwang, 2023:1). Participants 'anonymity means no one besides the researcher should be able to identify the participants, while confidentiality means an agreement of people to protect confidential information from being accessed by unauthorized people (Fleming, 2018:211, Roestenburg et al., 2021:124). Anonymity and confidentiality are regarded as critical principles upon which all other principles rest, because they play an important ethical role during the informed consent stage, as they might be some of the determinants for prospective participants' decision on whether to participate in the research or not. Infringing anonymity and confidentiality could result in participants' sensitive information being allied to their identities. In accordance with the study's design and objectives, the researcher took measures to guarantee that any information gathered cannot be attributed to any individual participant. Participants' identities

	were anonymized by replacing their names with pseudonyms, and all recorded data were thoroughly protected to prevent any association with individual participants' names and identities. Participants' identifying information was not revealed. In order to preserve anonymity, the researcher securely stored all acquired information in a lockable cabinet within the workplace, ensuring that it remained inaccessible to unauthorized individuals. After the prescribed period of five years of secure storage, the preserved data will be annihilated.
Voluntary participation	Voluntary participation entails deliberate and genuine decision-making of participants and their implications (Rubin & Babbie, 2017:85). Participants should be fully informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, the risk, and the benefits should be communicated (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018:210, Roestenburg et al., 2021:116-117). As intended the researcher ensured participants that they have a right to share or withhold information that they think is sensitive to them. They were also informed that they have a right to withdraw from participating in the study at any time if they no longer wanted to continue participating in the study. The planned information sheet and consent forms were used, and they were robust, clear, and well written as advised by Fleming and Zegwaard (2018:211).
Management of information	The safeguarding of research data is an important component of research ethics, particularly in the present era characterized by an increase of hacking and data breaches. This issue has attracted increasing attention globally, leading to the implementation of expanded regulations (Bos, 2020:262). The researcher ensured that the data collecting took place with appropriateness and adherence to ethical standards. The researcher assured all participants that all interview notes, digital recordings, and transcripts would be kept totally confidential, and that their identities would not be disclosed. The researcher securely stored all physical copies of the interview recordings, notes, and transcripts in a locked and protected location within the office. The obtained data kept in the researcher's computer is safeguarded by a password to prevent unauthorized access. The researcher has

	retained and will continue to safeguard the recordings and transcripts of the interviews for the specified duration of five years, as required by the University's research stipulations, after which they will be deleted and discarded (UNISA, 2016:17).
Beneficence	The study design needed to take into account the potential harm resulting from the research to participants, researchers, the broader community, and the institution (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018:211). The principle of beneficence emphasizes an ethical duty to give priority to the interests and needs of others, with the goal of promoting their well-being and maximizing positive outcomes while limiting potential damage in many contexts, including healthcare, research, and decision-making (Singh & Ivory, 2015). As planned the researcher ensured that participants were protected from harm by giving them the opportunity to decide to what extent they were willing to share their experiences. The researcher also informed participants that there was no remuneration for participating in the study. The researcher was honest with participants by informing them that the study was conducted for academic purposes and that there were no financial or other benefits to participants. After each interview, the researcher checked with the participants if they were not negatively affected by the researcher's questions in order to arrange for counselling for them. No participants indicated any harm or the need for counselling or debriefing.
Debriefing	Debriefing is an ethical practice in research, where research participants are assisted after the research process with any question or problem arising from the research (Allen, 2017:357). The debriefing process provides a beneficial response in participants who suffered the effects of the research study (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015:159). In this study, as initially planned, the researcher arranged for a social worker to help with debriefing sessions with participants following the interviews, if thought necessary. Following the completion of the interviews, the researcher gave participants the chance to assess the degree of their emotional engagement in the study, having arranged to provide assistance and to make referrals as necessary

	for debriefing sessions with the designated social worker. It was found that none of the participants required the use of debriefing services. The researcher, furthermore, showed a willingness to clarify any misunderstandings that may have arisen during the interviews with the participants. This was achieved by providing the participants with the option to ask questions and seek clarity whenever they deemed it necessary. The researcher successfully addressed and provided clarification for all such inquiries.

3.5   CHAPTER SUMMARY

A qualitative study methodology was used to obtain an in-depth knowledge of the resilience skills and techniques used by social workers. A full explanation is given of execution of the research plan by describing the application of the study's research methodology, research methods, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

As far as the research methodology is concerned, it became clear that the use of the qualitative research approach and the research design used, namely a phenomenological, explorative, descriptive and a contextual research design, were befitting for this study.

The inherent qualities of the research methods in the form of the study population, sampling, preparation for data collection, method of data collection, pilot-testing, role of the researcher and interviewing skills, method of data analysis, and ensuring trustworthiness successfully highlighted the resilience and strategies adopted by social workers.

In ensuring the study's trustworthiness and verifying the data, by means of the four principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, the credibility of this study was ensured.

The ethical considerations underlying to the research included obtaining the participants' informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, voluntary participation, management of information, beneficence, and the availability of a debriefing facility for participants.

The subsequent chapter entails a comprehensive examination and analysis of the data obtained and the study's results.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous three chapters explored the resilience skills and strategies of social workers, and the theoretical framework applicable. These chapters formed a platform of knowledge from which to understand the importance and role of resilience skills and strategies for social workers. The research followed a qualitative approach to explore the views of the social workers regarding their resilience skills and strategies they use to thrive in their job.

This chapter presents the empirical results of the analysis within the broad categories of the research aim, research question and discussion thereof. Data were obtained by means of conducting semi-structured interviews containing open-ended questions with the participants. Data were then analysed to explore and understand the resilience skills of social workers employed by the Department of Social Development in Johannesburg. The gathered data are discussed in accordance with the literature review in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 in the form of a literature control, to further explain and understand the findings of the empirical study and to extract meaning from it. The research findings were verified against the literature review and were explored in terms of validity and applicability to the social workers' views regarding their resilience skills and strategies.

Frontline social workers at the Department of Social Development were interviewed by means of the chosen data collection method. The findings are presented in the form of the themes, sub-themes, and categories that were identified from the collected data. Each participant has been assigned an identifying pseudonym to ensure the privacy and anonymity of participants. These pseudonyms are used when referring to participants and what they said.

The next section will discuss the demographic profile of the participants in this study.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Thirteen participants, who met the criteria for inclusion in the sample participated in this study. The demographic data discussed in this section provides a description of the context within which the findings were procured.

The participants of the research are social workers employed by the Department of Social Development at its Johannesburg offices. Thirteen social workers were interviewed. Included in the sample were social workers who had at least 2-15 years of working experience, who understood English and the meaning of the concept resilience skill and strategies. The demographic profile of the 13 participating socials is presented in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1.

TABLE 4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Participants	Gender (male /female)	Ethnic group	Institution where they obtained their BSW degrees	Position at work
Abigail	Female	Setswana	University of Pretoria	Social worker
Boitumelo	Female	Xitsonga	University of Venda	Social worker
Cindi	Female	Xitsonga	University of South Africa	Social Worker
Deliwe	Female	Xitsonga	University of Johannesburg	Social work supervisor
Esther	Female	Tshivenda	University of Venda	Social work supervisor
Frank	Male	Isizulu	University of Johannesburg	Social worker
Galeboe	Female	Isizulu	University of South Africa	Social worker
Herper	Male	Sepedi	University of Limpopo	Social worker

Isaac	Male	Tshivenda	University of Johannesburg	Social worker
Joy	Female	Setswana	University of Venda	Social worker
King	Male	Tshivenda	University of Limpopo	Social Worker
Lebo	Female	Isizulu	University of Pretoria	Social Worker
Martha	Female	Isizulu	University of South Africa	Social Worker
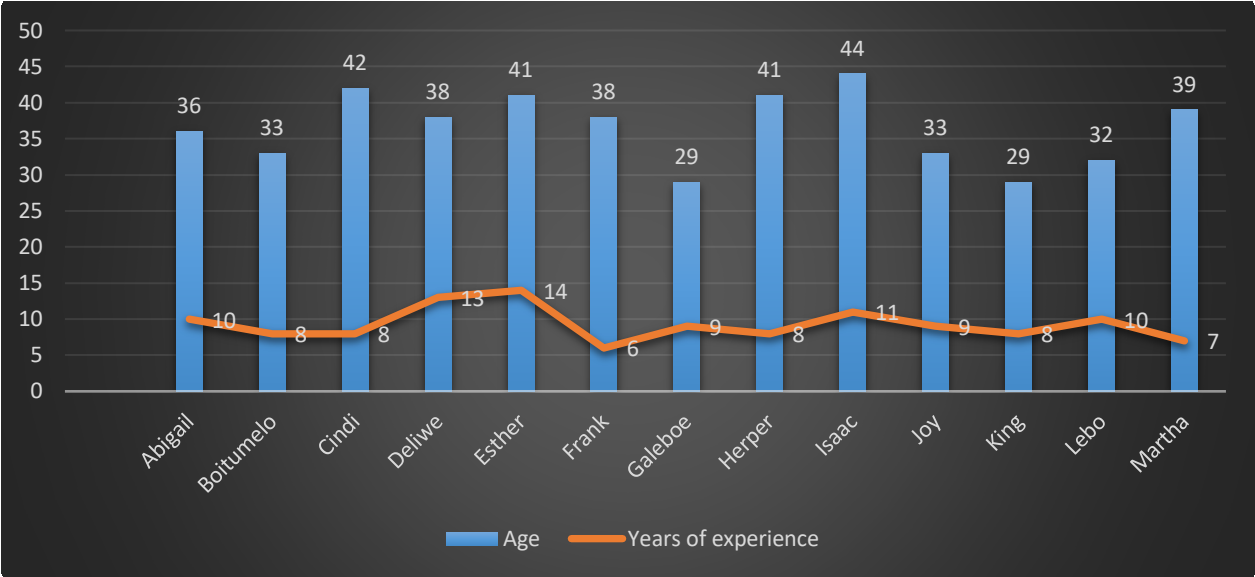
FIGURE 4.1 AGE AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

As indicated in Figure 4.1, the participants' ages ranged from 29 years to 44 years. The importance of the age range in this study lies in its reflection of participants' level of maturity, which may have influenced their professional and personal experiences while responding to the research inquiries. Research (Pretorius & Herbst, 2022:12) has also demonstrated that certain characteristics of social workers, such as age, gender, and experience, can be associated with for example an increased risk of client violence. Specifically, younger, and less experienced social workers, particularly females, may be vulnerable to client aggression.
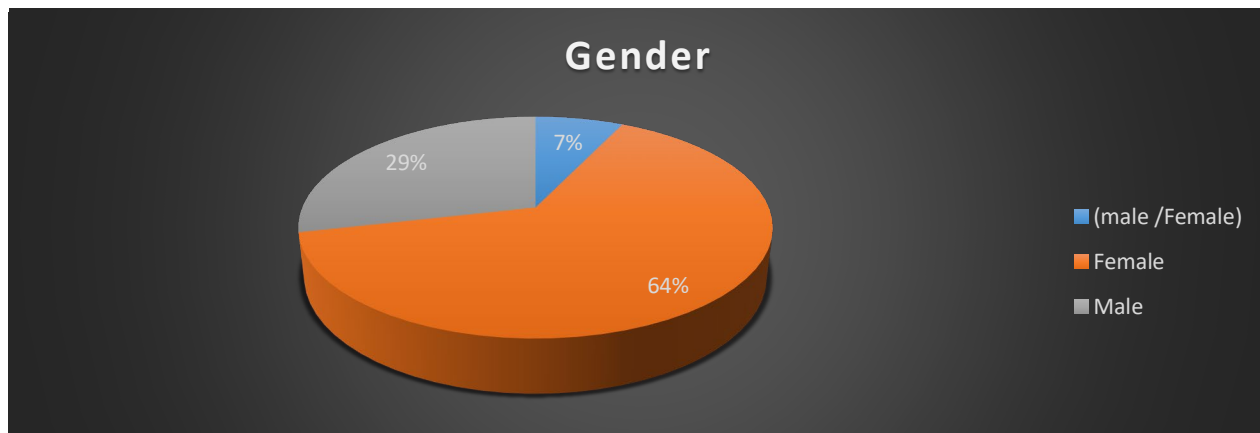
FIGURE 4.2 GENDER DISTRIBUTION

From the 13 participants, nine were female and only four were males (Figure 4.2). The dominance of females in the social work profession is a trend observed both in South Africa and internationally as highlighted by Khunou, Pillay and Nethononda (2012:120). "The caring professions" such as social work, teaching, and nursing, are regarded as female-orientated profession (AASW, 2019). According to Table 4.1, the participants were from the ethnic groups Setswana, Sepedi, Xitsonga, Isizulu and Tshivenda and 11 participants held positions of social workers while the other two were social work supervisors. It is clear from Figure 4.1 that the participants' years of experience ranged from 6 to 14 years.

4.3 PRESENTATION OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

In this section, various themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged from the data analysis are presented and confirmed and contrasted with the literature. The formulation of themes was guided by the interview guide devised by the researcher for the purpose of data collection. Figure 4.3 below, lists the themes, sub-themes and categories identified by the researcher from the data collected.

Theme 1: Social workers' explanation of their main functions and responsibilities

- **Sub-theme 1: Participants' function and responsibilities as intake social workers**
- **Sub-theme 2: The responsibility of field social workers**
- **Sub-theme 3: The responsibility of social work supervisors**

Theme 2: Social workers' accounts of their experience of their jobs.

- **Sub-theme 1: A positive or mostly good experience**
- **Sub-theme 2: Negative experiences or challenges**

Theme 3: Social workers' understanding of the concept "resilience"

Theme 4: Social Workers' main challenges experienced in their jobs at the department

- **Sub-theme1: Limited resources**
- **Sub-theme 2: Lack of office space**
- **Sub-theme 3: Excessive or high caseloads**
- **Sub-theme 4: Lack of support from supervisors and managers**
- **Sub-theme 5: Not being consulted and frequent policy changes**
- **Sub-theme 6: Client- related challenges**

Theme 5: Social workers' accounts of how the challenges they experience affect them work-wise and personally

- **Sub-theme 1: Work effects**
  - **Category 1: Confidentiality is breached**
  - **Category 2: Clients wait long, work is delayed, and employees are blamed**
  - **Category 3: Job performance is negatively affected**
  - **Category 4: Participants become withdrawn and relationship with colleagues are affected.**
- **Sub-theme 2: Personal Effects**
  - **Category 1: Feels stressed and demotivated**
  - **Category 2: Being moody or unhappy**
  - **Category 3: Taking the job home's effect on household relationships**
  - **Financial costs or threats to personal safety.**

Theme 6: Resilience skills and strategies used to deal with challenges

1. **Sub-theme 1: Self-care**
2. **Sub-theme 2: Supervisor and colleagues' support**
3. **Sub-theme 3: Family and friends' support**
4. **Sub-theme 4: Separating work life and pleasure or home**
5. **Sub-theme 5: Intrinsic rewards and uplifting experiences**
6. **Sub-theme 6: Taking time off and going out with friends or family on holiday**
7. **Sub-theme 7: Relying on personal faith**
8. **Sub-theme 8: Exercising, sleeping or reading**
9. **Sub-theme 9: Consulting a therapist**
10. **Sub-theme 10: Adopting practical strategies and a proactive mind**

Theme 7: Explanations of the effectiveness of the skills and strategies used to deal with challenges

Theme 8: Social workers' suggestions on what can be done to enhance their resilience.

- **Sub-theme 1: Management support and consultation**
- **Sub-theme 2: Addressing high caseloads and employing more social workers**
- **Sub-theme 3: Provide needed resources**
- **Sub-theme 4: Bring back the performance bonus and increase the salaries for social workers**
- **Sub-theme 5: Publicize the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and make it accessible**

FIGURE 4.3 THEMES, SUB-THEMES, AND CATEGORIES

115

In the next sections, the findings on themes, sub-themes and categories listed in Figure 4.3 above are discussed, supported by excerpts from the transcribed interviews and subjected to literature control.

Theme 1: Social workers' explanation of their main functions and responsibilities

This theme emerged from the responses provided by the social workers to the researcher's request for them to explain their main functions and responsibilities at the Department of Social Development. The participants described their main functions and responsibilities in terms of their position in the Department. Three sub-themes came forward, namely: the participants' function and responsibilities as intake social workers, the responsibilities of field social workers and the responsibilities of social work supervisors. The participants narrated their responsibilities or duties as social workers according to their roles and this theme was further analysed and gave rise to three sub-themes.

Prior to giving the participants' job descriptions, it is necessary to provide a clear overview of the nature and methods of social work. Social work is a profession and academic field that focuses on promoting social change, social cohesiveness, and the empowerment of individuals. It aims to bring about positive growth and emancipation for people (IFSW, 2016:1). The values of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for variety are fundamental in the field of social work. Social work involves the active involvement of individuals and systems in order to tackle difficulties in lives and improve the overall welfare of individuals and communities. This is supported by the application of social work theories, social science, humanities, and ethical knowledge (IFSW, 2016:1).

The case work, group work and community work methods are the instruments used by social workers for restoring and maintaining service users, social functioning, and well-being (DSD, 2013b). As gathered from the participants' understanding it seems that they are all engaged in statutory services and guided by the DSD's Act, and it includes court related and court-ordered services (SASSCP, 2012; ADCS, 2013).

116

Sub-theme 1: Participants' function and responsibilities as intake social workers

Six participants mentioned that an intake social worker is a front-line social worker. When a family in need of assistance, due to suspected child abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or dependency is referred for assistance, the intake social worker reacts appropriately. It was disclosed by seven of the interviewees that they worked as intake social workers. They provided the following explanations of their roles and responsibilities:

"*I am an intake social worker. My responsibility in this section is to do assessment of clients who come to our office for the first time. I also respond and attend to crisis cases that are brought to our office, attend court for access cases, mediation, and opening inquiries for different cases*" (Abigail 3-6).

 "*As an intake worker, my responsibility includes assessing first-time clients who are coming to our office for the very first time. I do problem assessment and assist with opening the file then refer if necessary. I attend to access cases, family disputes and any other statutory services. I write all kinds of statutory reports and present them in court. My responsibilities also include the removal and placement of children at risk at different institutions. Again, ... I run different programmes as per our annual performance plan, such as services to elderly people, services to families, services to people living with disability, HIV/Aids and care and protection to children. I am also responsible for providing food parcels and school uniforms to vulnerable groups.*" (King 4-13).

The storyline is congruent with the literature review. Intake social workers are forefront social workers who attend to the client first before they are referred to the social worker that will eventually assist them. They conduct initial assessments and evaluations of individuals or families seeking help from the organization. The intake worker accepts the client as a person who is in a very stressful situation (Ijaz, 2021).

Social workers in South Africa face a huge responsibility including the eradication of poverty, empowering individual groups, developing the communities, and linking the communities with available resources (Patel, 2015). The intake workers are the eye of the department as they meet

people for the first time and determine the needs that are required for them. These social workers are seen as useful assets in the DSD as they play a crucial role in the community. According to Choate and Engstrom (2014:371) the intake workers are viewed as generic social workers because their work include rendering to services to families, care and protection of children, social support, services to elderly, services to people with disabilities, substance abuse clients. The results indicate that intake workers play a crucial role within the department as they ascertain the needs of clients, thereby holding the responsibility of ensuring that clients receive necessary and suitable assistance.

Sub-theme 2: The responsibility of field social workers

The second sub-theme deals with the responses of four social workers who explained that they are field workers. Field social workers are also referred to as child protection social workers or designated social workers. They deal mostly with children who are in need of care and protection, and they protect the children by means of statutory intervention (Truter et al., 2016).

Statutory intervention is a specific area within the profession of social work that focuses on enhancing the social functioning of people, families, and communities through the implementation of administrative procedures mandated by law. It includes various interventions in various categories of cases, such as court-ordered prevention, crisis-related interventions, cases reported to the court, and cases resulting in a child being placed in alternative care or adoption (Patel, 2019:20; ADCS, 2013).

Field social workers offer specialized services aimed at safeguarding children from harm. These services include providing early prevention services, investigating allegations of child abuse, removing children at risk, placing them in alternative care such as foster care or safe environments, and facilitating family reunification (Stanley, Buvaneswari & Arumugan, 2018:104). Participants expressed themselves as follows in this regard:

".... my responsibility as a social worker, I am a field social worker doing all statutory intervention and performing all methods of social work. However, as field workers in the Department, we focus mostly on foster care where we place children in need of care and protection in alternative care.

These are children who are orphans, neglected children, abused children and those whose parents are not in the position to care for them due to certain circumstances, like they are mentally challenged or in jail" (Frank 3-9*).*

Similarly, Cindi said:

"My responsibility as a field worker is to do statutory services. I provide social care and protection to vulnerable groups, like children, elderly people, youth, people with disability and the community at large. However, in my section, we specialize in foster care... for example, children who are orphaned, neglected, abandoned and those whose parents are sentenced or those who are mentally challenged. I also perform all methods of social work which are case, group and community work. We run educational and support groups and do awareness campaigns and programs" (Cindi 1-8).

Field social workers are also seen as child welfare social workers (Griffiths & Royse, 2017:73). It is evident that social workers in the department of social development render social work services to families and children. The DSD (2013b:36), emphasizes the importance of a family as beneficiary for social welfare services, with children and youths being regarded as vulnerable groups in the family. In confirming the commitment of social workers in the field of child and family care, Engstrom (2016:13), alluded that in ensuring the care and protection of children around the world, social workers are the major specialist. Consequently, this confirms the existing pressure that statutory social workers encounter in the line of their jobs. The field social workers are regarded as essential workers as their role includes rendering services to vulnerable individuals. These narratives are thus consistent with findings and concepts as defined in literature.

Sub-theme 3: The responsibility of social work supervisors

The third group of participating social workers explained that they are social work supervisors. As per the Supervision Framework (2012), a social worker who possesses the necessary experience and qualifications to supervise social workers, student social workers, and social auxiliary workers, is considered a social work supervisor. Supervisors monitor and manage the work of their supervisees through a supervisory process that involves duties such as performing evaluations,

establishing agreements, implementing performance management strategies, and evaluating supervisees in compliance with organizational policies and procedures. Supervisors have the duty to monitor and ensure the ethical and proficient conduct of their supervisees (SACSSP, 2012:18). This role was narrated as follows:

"*My responsibility is to supervise social workers, social auxiliary workers, student social worker and interns in my section. In fact, I oversee everyone in my section. I also do the quality assurance of the work they do, make sure thy follow the right policies in the Department.*" (Deliwe 5-8).

"*I am a social work supervisor, and my responsibility is to supervise everyone in my unit, canalize reports and perform all statutory work including performing all methods of social work like case work, group work and community work*" (Esther 3-6).

These narratives complement the literature review. A social work supervisor must have the necessary experience and qualifications and is delegated with authority to supervise other social work practitioners. According to the DSD (2013a:36) and SACSSP (2012:18), a social work supervisor is responsible in supervising fellow social workers, student social workers, social auxiliary workers and student auxiliary workers, by performing all functions of social work to promote efficiency and professionalism in the social work service rendered. Social work supervisors are seen as important employees as they provide support to the social workers and ensure that work is properly done in the working environment, hence resilience is essential in them.

Theme 2: Social workers' accounts of their experience of their jobs

This theme, related to the participants' experience of their jobs. Their responses were varied and were given under two sub-themes of how they regarded it, namely: a positive or mostly good experience and negative experiences or challenges.

Sub-theme 1: A positive or mostly good experience

The participants' responses reflect that their positive experience is associated with the sense of meaning and determination in their work. Their ability to provide practical assistance to the

community is considered a kind deed. Nine participants in this research study demonstrated their positive experiences of working as social workers. Despite occasional challenges, their experiences have generally been good or positive. They also conveyed their appreciation for being able to support and safeguard the community, particularly the weaker segments. The story that follows corroborates this:

"...helping people is what I enjoy soo much and watching them show appreciation of the work. It does give me pleasure. I can say…. My experience of working in this job is good although there are challenges, but when you do something, you enjoy, you end up overlooking the negatives. So, in short, I can say my experience is good because social work is not only a profession to me but a calling… I have passion in this job and I'm enjoying bringing change to the community. Social work profession motivates and challenges me to think out of the box" (Martha 10-19).

"Being a social worker is a very good experience. You get to meet different people and assist them. I have passion in this job, and I enjoy helping people, so my experience is good as I am doing something that I like" (Joy 8-11).

"...my experience is good so far. I like this job, so it was easy to adjust. I chose this career knowing what to expect so to me the experience is good. I love working with people and throughout my years of practicing, I have learned a lot in this career that keeps me going even today" (Galeboe 11-14).

Some social workers said that their experience was mostly good, but at the same time, they acknowledged that the experience was not all positive. They expressed themselves as follows:

"You know you cannot always be content with everything in this job like ours. As I am saying, there are positive and negative experiences. If you are able to work an assist the community, it is a blessing because you get to make a change in people's life. As for me, helping people is my passion, and it gives me peace and courage if I see people getting happy with what I do. Then I consider that as a positive experience. With regard to negative experiences, yes, they are there but I am able to survive because I love my job and it taught me to always look at the positive side of things, so I have now become strong professionally" (Esther 8-17).

"...regarding my experience, I can say it's good because I like my job and enjoy helping people. Though there are some negatives in our job. So far, I can say I have good experience and enjoy my job" (Abigail 9-11).

It seemed that the majority of participants reported positive experiences in practising their profession. They reported that although there are challenges in their job, they overlook them and focus on the positive, hence they reported that their experience is mostly good. Providing good service to their clients and their clients' satisfaction, brings social workers joy and motivates them to excel in their roles (Joseph, 2017:161). In support of that, Moyane (2016:69) argues that social workers become more satisfied while helping clients, which in turn strengthens their dedication to and confidence in changing people's lives. Social workers play a vital role in protecting and improving people's lives. When clients give positive feedback to good services provided by social workers, it strengthens social workers' usefulness feeling and it gives them motivation and hope to continue doing their work (Ostadhashemi, Arshi, Khalvati, Enghlima & Khankeh, 2019:10; Joseph (2017:164). Career achievement is believed to enhance work confidence. Miguel et al., (2014) and Joseph (2017:162) maintain that another surviving strategy among employees is job achievement, as it also assists in motivating them to do their work to the best of their ability.

Sub-theme 2: Negative experiences or challenges

In this sub-theme, the researcher explores the negative experiences of social workers in their jobs. All 13 participants indicated that they experienced several challenges in the work environment which led to negative experiences and attitudes towards their work and clients. Studies reveals that there is an upsurge of menace in social workers' work-related stress when executing their responsibilities due to their high caseloads, job dissatisfaction, working environments and exposure to traumatic situation (Kagan & Itzick, 2019; Kheswa, 2019; NASW, 2013; Winstanley & Hales, 2015). Nevertheless, these studies are infrequent due to the predominant focus of researchers on negative occupational impacts. Specifically, they examine organizational, social, and personal factors that contribute to work stress and burnout, such as psychological job demands, inadequate social support, role conflict, depression, and relationship issues (Collins, 2008;

Collings & Murray, 1996; Sanchez-Moreno, de La Fuente Roldan, Gallardo-Peralta & de Roda, 2015). Furthermore, many social workers lose interest in their work. In general, social workers who are dealing with children and families encounter more of negative experiences.

One main contributor to this is vicarious or indirect trauma, which arises from working closely with clients who have endured traumatic experiences, that significantly affects the job satisfaction, personal life, and mental well-being of social workers negatively (Berrios & Zarate, 2020: iii).

The findings of this study show that social workers experience lots of negative experience when rendering services to their clients, which include, emotional, physical, and psychological abuse. Their work involves ensuring that the safety and welfare of their clients are always protected, however, their safety is also compromised during service delivery. Social workers sometimes suffer physical attacks from clients while conducting home-visits or removing children from their unsafe homes. Tzaffrir, Enosh, and Gur (2013: 1123) support the tendency that the violence that social workers suffer at the hands of their clients, creates negative work experience, and affects their jobs. As per the Children's act no 38, of 2005, as amended (DSD, 2013a) the focus of social workers is to prioritize the best interest of the children, hence at times they must remove children from their homes due to certain circumstances. In the process, they sometimes get attacked by parents or family members who oppose their decisions. Lynch (2017:1) and Pretorius & Herbst (2022) affirm that social workers typically engage when clients are in a state of extreme distress and facing significant difficulties, which often leads to feelings of frustration, anger, and aggression.

The sentiment expressed in the literature quoted above resonate with the participants' negative experience.

"My experience is a lot, you get to learn more things, but it is challenging. Social work is a profession for the tough-hearted… I have acquired a lot of skills that helps me in personal and work life… sometimes you tend to meet difficult clients who at times threatened your job and even your life. Again, as we deal with children who went through difficult situations, as a person you tend to be affected by the situation of your clients but as a professional, we have to be strong..." (Cindi 10-20).

"I don't want to lie; it is difficult to do this job as a man. I think it needs women as they have soft hearts, but for a man it turns you into something that you are not… don't get me wrong, male people are … how can I put it… strong. But let's leave that, but on a serious note, for me from the six years that I have been working here, it's been hell. Maybe it's because social work was not my dream. I just did it because I got a scholarship, but I had a terrible experience. Even now, I am trying to study further so that I can leave this place... but I see other people enjoying it, but not for me. You know the things that we witness here is not good, you can end up losing it. But I think women, they have that thing man, so they are good in what they do, I mean most of them" (Frank 15-25).

Social workers frequently find themselves providing social work services to involuntary service users and operating in environments that are characterized by unpredictability and growing safety concerns. This exposes them to a heightened risk of verbal and physical assaults (Zimunya & Alpaslan, 2022). Enosh et al. (2013:123) confirms that social workers and the welfare organizations can be impaired and terrified by clients' hostile behaviour that they display, controlled by forceful personality traits, and frustrations. Social workers are also negatively affected by the violence they witness amid their clients. Social workers interact with clients face-to-face; thus, they are negatively affected by witnessing the clients' challenges. This is confirmed by the following storyline:

"Eish, the negative experience that I normally experience is dealing with difficult clients. In the cases of mediation where parents are having disputes regarding parenting or those are having marital disputes, some clients fail to understand the decision we make regarding their case, so they threaten us. It creates a problem because our lives turn to be at risk because we do home visits alone sometimes in their areas, and sometimes we live in the same areas with them, so it is easy to target us" (Harper 17-22).

The views on negative experiences shared by the participants correspond with the findings of various scholars (Campbell & Holtzhausen, 2020; McFadden, 2020; Chung & Choo, 2019; Truter & Fouché, 2019, Crowder & Sear, 2017) who confirm that the constant exposure of social workers to negative experience results in effecting increased stress levels, trauma, burnout, and compassion exhaustion. The occurrence of service-users' violence and aggression significantly impact the

functioning of social workers, resulting in feelings of vulnerability, helplessness, embarrassment, and defensiveness, and contributes to a diminished sense of self-worth (Zimunya & Alpaslan, 2022). Subsequently, some studies show that as a result, some social workers have intensions of leaving their jobs (McFadden, 2020; Kheswa, 2019).

Theme 2 demonstrates that social work can be highly rewarding, as social workers derive satisfaction from the positive impact they have on their clients' lives. The fulfilment deepens their love for their profession and reinforces the sense of determination they find in their work. However, it is important to acknowledge that the social work profession also exposes social workers to negative experiences and risks that can compromise their personal safety. In response to these challenges, social workers employ various coping strategies and demonstrate resilience to navigate such incidents and situations. Understanding the range of experiences encountered by social workers and the resilience skills and strategies they employ becomes crucial in comprehending the dynamics of their profession and supporting their well-being. Even though there are many negative factors related to the social work profession, most of the participants for DSD's Johannesburg offices mentioned the negative impact of witnessing or negative impact of clients' reactions.

The responses provided by the participants in this section exhibit a significant level of agreement with Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems approach as described by Guy-Evans (2020), which serves as the foundational theory for this research. Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasizes the need to understand the several levels of influence that impact an individual's growth and experiences (Guy-Evans, 2020). Within this framework, the experiences of social workers are influenced by various ecological systems, including the individual and microsystem level (their personal commitment and dedication to social work), the mesosystem level (interactions with clients and supervisors), and the exosystem level (organizational and societal influences) (Guy-Evans, 2020). The social workers' favourable engagements and need to assist others align with the individual and microsystem components, whereas the challenges and hazards they face, such as threats and violence, are impacted by the exosystem and macrosystem elements present in their professional environment. The narratives also highlight the social workers' adeptness in handling the challenges

of their profession, demonstrating their capacity to adjust and implement effective methods, which are essential elements of Bronfenbrenner's framework.

Theme 3: Social workers' understanding of the concept "resilience"

After having listened to the social workers' account on their experience of their jobs, the researcher asked the participating social workers to explain what they understand about the concept 'resilience'.

These responses can be attached onto the construct, "bounce back" (in Webster & Rivers, 2018). The concept "resilience" in the context of this research refers to social workers' ability to recover from challenging situations. Resilience is what gives social workers the strength to cope with trauma, adversities, and hardships of their work. The study revealed that most participants understood the concept of resilience as a way to recover from challenging situations. They mentioned that it is the ability of a person to recover from difficult situations and managing to adapt from it. A few story lines from the interview transcripts bear witness to this:

 "… my understanding of resilience is the ability of a person to recover or recuperate from difficult or challenges and be able to adapt from the situation. I think it's that." (Abigail 14-16).

"I think the term resilience means the ability of a person to recover from difficulties and be able to adjust well in situations… a resilience person is able to bounce back quickly. In fact, to be resilient is to be able to be strong and withstand or toughen up in difficult or challenging situations" (Cindi 23-26).

Participant Cindi also said that**: "***resilience is the capacity of a person to pull through when you are facing difficult times. When we say a person is resilient, it means a person pull through or survive in challenging times, adapt and able to move on."*

Participants Isaac and Esther added:

"My understanding about the concept resilience is that is when a person is able to survive in a challenging environment, adapt to it or get used to it" (Isaac 17-18).

Resilience has to do with someone who is not afraid of challenges, you're able to face them and learn to live amidst them and be able to survive and still remain strong. In fact, is the ability to recover, adapt or adjust from challenging situations" (Esther 20-23).

These storylines align with the descriptions of 'resilience' by Truter et al., (2016); Van Breda (2018); and Abur (2020). The researchers argue that resilience is the potential to exhibit resourcefulness by using internal and external resources in response to different contextual and developmental changes. It is evident that the aspect of bounce-back-and-adjust is critical in the social work profession as it helps social worker to thrive in their jobs. Thus, the understanding that these participants have about this phenomenon is in line with their experience of applying resilience skills. The participants' understanding further highlights that for social workers to develop and enhance their resilience skills and strategies, continuous support is required in order for them to render effective service delivery to the clients.

While participants defended their understanding of the concept of "resilience," a number of academics contend that social work is a demanding and difficult career, just like any other helping profession, and that in order to succeed in the field for a long time, social workers must be emotionally resilient (Southwick et al., 2014; Hardy, 2017:5; Truter et al., 2014; Rajan-Rankin, 2014).

The participants' understanding of resilience, as specified in their answers, can once again be closely linked to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Guy-Evans, 2020). The participants' accounts of resilience, namely their capacity to "rebound" and "recuperate from difficult circumstances," might be seen as an expression of their individual traits and qualities, which correspond to the microsystem level in Bronfenbrenner's model (Guy-Evans, 2020). Furthermore, their capacity to adjust and endure challenges corresponds to the mesosystem and exosystem elements, such as contacts with clients, colleagues, and the work environment, which impact their resilience (Guy-Evans, 2020).

The study's results highlight the need of providing social workers with support and tools to develop and enhance their resilience abilities. This aligns with the macrosystem level of Bronfenbrenner's theory, which incorporates the wider socioeconomic and cultural variables that impact an

individual's growth and experiences (Menova, 2015). Within this framework, the acknowledgment of the difficulties and the need of adaptability in the field of social work, is an important component.

Theme 4: Social Workers' main challenges experienced in their jobs at the department

After having recounted their understanding of the concept resilience, the researcher asked the participants to describe the main challenges they experience in their jobs at the Department of Social Development. The social workers described numerous challenges that they experience, and these are given under six sub-themes, namely limited resources, lack of office space, excessive high caseloads, lack of support from supervisors and managers, not being consulted and frequent policy changes, and client-related challenges. Each sub-theme is discussed with the relevant story line and literature control.

The focus of this theme is on the professional experiments conducted by social workers. The researcher tried to comprehend the difficulties faced daily by social workers. The researcher discovered that the participants face numerous obstacles that affect their ability to perform efficiently and provide quality service. Participants listed insufficient departmental, institutional, budgetary, organizational, human resource, and employer support as obstacles. The difficulties include, but are not limited to, a dearth of office space, a heavy caseload, a lack of resources, and a lack of support. Among the difficulties social workers face at work are a heavy caseload, a lack of resources, unfavourable working conditions, cramped offices, a staffing shortage, inadequate supervision, and a lack of care (Engelbrecht, 2014:101).

Sub-theme1: Limited resources

Every participating social worker described the lack of resources as one of the main challenges with which they have to contend. These resources referred mainly to cars, stationery, computers,

and telephones. Office space is also a resource, but this is dealt with as a separate challenge due to its specific impact on the principle of confidentiality. Social workers face a significant challenge due to the shortage of resources, which hampers their ability to perform their job effectively. This scarcity of resources limits their capacity to utilize their skills and talents fully. However, when resources are available, it leads to success for the organization. The study has found that there is a lack of cars, office space and all essential tools required to provide suitable and essential intervention. Martha and Galeboe were saddened as follows by the lack of resources:

"... the resources are limited, and it is frustrating to us. For example, cars are a big challenge because we have to share, and we are many. As for me, my job requires me to have a car everyday as I am doing intake. Crisis cases can come at any time, so without a car it is impossible to attend to it. Computers are slow and some are not working, so I have to ask from those that are not busy, so it is a challenge because my work requires it as I have to type reports and referrals every time" (Martha 27-33).

Participant Martha was supported by Galeboe when a making suggestion concerning lack of resources:

"...the cars are limited, we have to share two cars while we are 15, so you see that's a bit challenging because sometimes you will have to do visits by walking and/or use your own car, so it is a challenge. The photocopying machine sometimes the toner is finished and when you order it will take time to be issued, so you have to travel to other office to make a copy. Internet is a stress because sometimes it's on and off. So, to send a document you need to travel, and the cars are limited so you understand the frustration" (Galeboe 26-33).

The findings of the study reveal that unavailability or limited resource as one of the challenges encountered in the workplace that may cause failure of social workers to render developmental and holistic social work services. The study findings correlate with the study by Ntsoane (2017) who revealed that job satisfaction and frustrations in social workers at the workplace, are mostly the result of a lack of resources. This is also supported by a study conducted by Mere (2012) who argues that the lack of resources creates frustrations for social workers which result in stress and job dissatisfaction. Lack of resources can negatively impact on service delivery and cause obstruction for the employees in their service delivery. Limited resources could negatively

influence the community where social workers are prevalent (Moyane, 2016). Job dissatisfaction and disengagement are outcomes of unavailability of resources, lack of supervision and lack of workers' acknowledgement (Calitz et al., 2014:160). A lack of resources is one challenges amongst others that create challenges for social workers and demotivates them to perform their jobs accurately.

Sub-theme 2: Lack of office space

Although office space is also a resource, all the participants specifically cited the lack of adequate office space that prevents them to treat their clients with the required confidentiality, as a serious challenge. Consequently, it is afforded a separate sub-theme about which the participants said the following:

"Our work involves working with people's problems which we are required to handle them with confidentiality but is impossible because we are sharing an open plan all of us and only use these five offices as consultation rooms and it is difficult because we are many" (King 32-35).

"... at the moment we are operating on an open plan, so you cannot interview a client in front of your colleagues because the offices are limited and always occupied. So, the confidentiality of clients is at stake. So, to follow the right principles, you will have to let the client wait until you get a chance to use the office and it creates long ques and clients complain of waiting long. On the other hand, it creates backlog because sometimes you will have to alternate days to use offices" (Galeboe 34-40).

"With regard to office space, the office space is limited. Like in this office, we use an open plan being twelve and sharing three offices which serve as consultation rooms, it becomes a challenge" (Boitumelo 26-28).

The majority of participants seem to view the shortage of office space as a serious obstacle, which makes it harder for them to provide quality services. According to the survey, participants share workplaces, which compromises clients' privacy. Another effect is that clients frequently have to wait in long lines for services because social workers must rotate using the limited office space, which causes delays in providing services. This point of view is consistent with research by Day,

Hartling, and Mackie (2015), which demonstrated how the availability of resources directly affects employees' performance by making it easier for them to complete tasks and goals at work. The environment and location where social work services are provided hold significant relevance for both staff members and the individuals receiving those services. These factors play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of the services received and one's own self-perception. Additionally, the environment and location have a direct impact on communication dynamics and the relationships established between practitioners and the children and families they work with (Stanley, Larkins, Austerberry, Farrely & Manthorpe et al., 2014:86). The absence of a designated workspace for social workers following challenging home visits contribute to feelings of "emotional disorientation". This lack of a physical "secure base" undermines their ability to effectively carry out their work and limited opportunities for meaningful interactions with colleagues (Stevenson, 2016).

In conclusion, the lack of office space emerges as a significant challenge for social workers, hindering their ability to provide effective services. This issue leads to breaches of client privacy and delays in services delivery. The availability of resources, including adequate office space, directly impacts workers' performance and their achievement of work goals and tasks. Furthermore, the environment and location of social work services are crucial in shaping perceptions, self-perception, communication dynamics, and relationships with clients. The absence of a dedicated workspace following challenging home visits contributes to emotional disorientation, negatively affecting social workers' work effectiveness and opportunities for meaningful colleagues' interactions. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing office space constrains to enhance social work practice.

Sub-theme 3: Excessive or high caseloads

One of the main challenges described by all thirteen social workers was the high caseloads they have, which makes it difficult for them to perform their jobs. In South Africa, it has been found that social workers in their working environments face many challenges. Lack of available

resources to render effective services to the community is one of the challenges. Due to that lack of resources, the tendency of not being able to deal with high volume of cases is created. Having excessive caseloads affects social workers and has a severe negative effect on the delivery of quality services. There is a tendency of social worker caseloads increasing and becoming unmanageable over time. Subsequently, work becomes too much and turn out to be a challenge to social workers. Cindi concurred as follows with this:

"*The main challenge in this Department is excessive caseloads. In this Department, the work is too much but they do not want to hire enough social workers. As a result, you find that one social worker ends up having a huge caseload*" (Cindi 33-35).

In addition, King and Lebo narrated the following:

"*Another thing is high caseload… in this Department there is lot of work, the caseloads are excessive and make it hard for us to perform our job*" **(**King 38-40).

"*The issue of high caseload. The work is too much and as I have said, the resources are limited as compared to the workload, so it creates a challenge to us as workers*" (Lebo 23-26).

The findings highlight that social workers encounter a significant workload that poses a major challenge to their job performance. This aligns with the findings of Mashego (2018:30), who noted that excessive workload leads to exhaustion and diminishes individuals' energy level. These findings also align with studies conducted by Khan and Khan (2018) and Truter and Fouché (2019), which revealed that out of a sample of 150 employees, 60% experienced stress as a result of the high workload they encountered in their jobs. The study further identified that a shortage of staff contributes to the high caseload within the Department. As a result, participants expressed their belief that hiring additional staff would alleviate the workload.

Sub-theme 4: Lack of support from supervisors and managers

Another challenge experienced by the social workers is a lack of support from their managers. A lack of supervision has been found to be a challenge that social workers are facing, and which negatively affects the delivery of quality services. Supervision is a vital part of any organization that intends to maximize its success potential. Social workers view supervision as a means of

discussing particular issues they face and creating a "language" to validate their emotions (Truter et al., 2018; Schiller, 2017). Four study participants indicated that one major problem facing social workers is a lack of support from their managers and supervisors. In this study four participants revealed that insufficient support from their supervisors and managers is a significant challenge for social workers. The findings show that there is lack of support from the management. For example, King reported the following:

"Lack of support by our managers is also a challenge. They sit in their offices and dictate to us. They don't visit or come to see what we are facing in our offices, but when we make a mistake, we are charged" (King 35-38).

Similarly, Deliwe and Frank concurred with the views of King.

"We have issues with limited resources, office space and lack of support from our leaders. They don't usually come to the offices to see what we are going through; all they are interested in is stats. They also just dictate in whatever way they want things to be done, how you do it and with which resources, they don't care. So, it is a challenge because everything your subordinates expect you to advocate for the, and if you don't get answers to what they want you seem like you are failing to lead" (Deliwe 34-40).

"...the management treat us like we are nothing, no support, no visits, no consultations, but make a mistake, you will be charged" (Frank 40-41).

Presently, the support function of supervision is disregarded in South Africa to a great extent, which directly affects the service delivery of social workers (Chibaya, 2018). Supervision is an important part in the workplace, hence there should be a balance between work done and supervision. According to several scholars, supervision has a direct impact on employees' mental and physical health, and it also has control over the work environment, job duties and deadlines (Leiter, Gascon & Martinez-Jarreta, 2010; Truter et al., 2018). The findings of this study show that inadequate supervision is a serious challenge as it increases job stress in social workers. This is supported by the study conducted by Khan and Khan (2017) which postulates that low morale and work strain are the results of unsupportive supervision. The absence of support by managers impacts negatively on the social workers to perform their job effectively. Hence, the support the social workers receive from their supervisors and managers is very important in social workers as

it has an impact on social workers' psychological and physical health, including their job performance.

Sub-theme 5: Not being consulted and frequent policy changes

Another challenge described by social workers is that they are not consulted about policy changes which frequently occur. They are merely informed by emails or at meetings. Deliwe and Abigail narrated the following about it:

"The changes in the Department, you will just learn about them from the emails or meetings. They don't consult or at least inform us on time, and the subordinates turn to blame you because you are the one to deliver the message to them" (Deliwe 40-43).

"… the issue of consultation by the Department. They don't really recognize us that we are existing, as long they get the work done, its fine with them. They just change policies and rules the way they want without consulting us. I mean we are the ones rendering services to clients, and we know what's best for our clients, and if they can consult with us whenever they want to change anything in the Department, it would be better so that we also have inputs and be part of the decision making in whatever concern our job" (Abigal 92-98).

The study revealed that participants expressed concerns about a lack of consultation from their managers regarding departmental matters and the implementation of policies without their input. When workers are not provided with opportunities to voice their thoughts or express their opinions concerning their work, it poses a significant challenge. Social workers, being the ones responsible for delivering services to clients, have a vital role to play in making input regarding any changes that affect their jobs. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Morse, Slayers, Rollins, Monroe-Devita and Pfahler (2012), who suggested that employees may experience challenges like burnout when they lack a sense of control and discretion in the workplace. The frequent changes in legislations and policies in the department is supported by Truter and Fouché (2019), who revealed that it negatively impacts social workers' job performance. The perception of social workers being excluded from decision-making processes is viewed as a challenge and can consequently lead to decreased work productivity. The issue of autocratic leadership at DSD seems

to be a serious concern to social workers as they do not feel respected and excluded in decision making in things that concern their jobs.

Sub-theme 6: Client- related challenges

A total number of four participating social workers mentioned client-related challenges as an important challenge they experience. This is reflected in their storylines. Although the research did not focus on client-related challenges, it must be acknowledged that client-related challenges are real and add to social workers' stress and frustration. The aggression of clients towards social workers creates a challenge for social workers (Lamothe, Couvrette, Lebrun, Yoale-Soulierie, Roy et al., 2018). To support this, Deliwe and Harper reported the following:

"...the challenges that we normally encounter are having to deal with difficult clients... some threaten us if we can't help them. Sometimes you have to witness the abuse happening to a client, so it's a challenge. Having to make decisions for clients and remove their children due to certain circumstances" (Deliwe 27-31).

"...our job comes with lots of challenges like dealing with dangerous and untruthful clients. Witnessing abuse happening on our watch. Dealing with destitute people and children who have been neglected by their parents. It is a big challenge and needs someone strong" (Harper 28-31).

From these two storylines, it can be deducted that social workers face significant levels of stress and frustration. They encounter client related challenges such as having to deal with difficult and sometimes threatening clients, witnessing abuse, making decisions to remove children from harmful situations, and working with destitute individuals and neglected children. These experiences require individuals who possess strength and resilience to navigate through these difficult circumstances. It is evident that social workers are exposed to emotionally demanding situations that can take a toll on their well-being and highlight the need for adequate support and self-care within the profession.

Social workers often encounter involuntary clients and unwilling families and are required to intervene in dangerous situations such as domestic violence or substance misuse. Consequently, their physical safety is threatened while they strive to protect children (Kim & Hopkins, 2017:102).

Adding to that, Wacek (2017) reported that there is high rate of clients' aggression towards social workers which include physical, verbal, and emotional violence. Clients' aggressions are found to be a big challenge for social workers as they sometimes render services in volatile and dangerous situations which in turn compromise their well-being, personal safety, and job-satisfaction. This study established that stress amongst social workers is caused by the negative behaviour of service receivers which is confirmed by the findings of Raudeliunaite and Volff (2020:9).

The difficulties experienced by social workers in their positions at the Department of Social Development, as noted in Theme 4, are examined using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Guy-Evans, 2020). This paradigm facilitates the comprehension of the complex relationship between different ecological systems and their impact on persons within those systems.

At the microsystem level, social workers have difficulties due to heavy workloads and minimal guidance from supervisors and managers, which directly impact their day-to-day experiences. These challenges can lead to stress, burnout, and frustration, influencing their health and job satisfaction. The microsystem viewpoint focuses on the immediate work environment and interpersonal ties inside the department.

At the mesosystem level, the absence of consultation and frequent policy changes suggest a disconnection between social workers and the wider organizational structures in the department. This lack of connection might limit good communication and cooperation, thereby reducing the social workers' capacity to deliver high-quality services. The mesosystem perspective stresses the relationship among many parts within the department and their influence on the experiences of social workers.

The exosystem level is characterized by the lack of resources, such as office space, which can be perceived as an external element that influences the performance of social workers. The limited resources restrict social workers' ability to effectively use their abilities and deliver appropriate interventions. This level focuses on the wider societal and organizational variables that have an impact on social workers.

The research addresses the issues linked to clients, such as managing challenging and even threatening customers. These challenges underscore the dynamic interactions between social workers and their clients, which are important components of the microsystem. The problems can have an emotional and physical impact on social workers, highlighting the significance of understanding the microsystem in the perspective of client problems.

Ultimately, the difficulties encountered by social workers at the Department of Social Development may be examined and comprehended through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Guy-Evans, 2020). This viewpoint aids in clarifying the manner in which different ecological systems, ranging from the microsystem to the exosystem, interconnect and impact the experiences and welfare of social workers in their professional capacities.

Theme 5: Social workers' accounts of how the challenges they experience affect them work-wise and personally

After having explored the challenges that the participating social workers experience at the Department, the researcher asked the social workers to recount how the challenges they experienced affected them in their work and personally. Their responses are given under two sub-themes, namely how their work is affected and how they are affected personally.

This theme explores the consequences yielded by challenges encountered by social workers on their job and everyday life. Challenges are widespread in the social work profession because of the exposure and emotional demands of the job. These challenges have a far extended effect on both the social workers and the clients they serve. Challenges can lead employees to quit their jobs believing that they are incompetent. Some employees remain in their job with very little progress at work, if any. The effects are divided into two sub-themes, which are work related effects and personal effects (Moyane, 2016).

Sub-theme 1: Work effects

From the storylines, it is clear that the challenges the social workers experience affect their work, and their responses are divided into the following four categories that emerged (Figure 4.4):
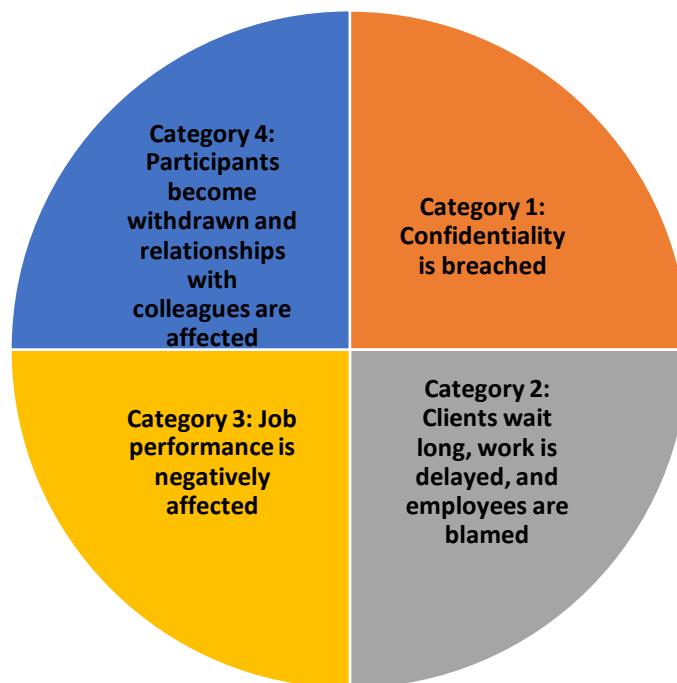

FIGURE 4.4 WORK EFFECT CATEGORIES

The participants responded similarly regarding the effects of the challenges they encounter in the work. Participants admitted that due to challenges, their moral commitment to client and work is degraded daily.

Category 1: Confidentiality is breached

Two participating social workers stressed that the lack of office space as well as non-operating photocopying machines led to clients 'right to confidentiality" being breached. Boitumelo and Abigail narrated the following:

"With regard to open plan policy, it affects us because even the clients end up not feeling free to share their information when there are other people around us. Again, as we are working in an open plan, clients' confidentiality is compromised (Boitumelo 35-38*). Boitumelo added: "some clients end up not trusting you because you are exposing their information"* (Boitumelo 47-48).
"If the offices are all occupied, one has to interview a client in front of other colleagues, which in turn violate the principle of clients' confidentiality" (Abigail 25-27).

Insufficient office space is one of the challenges that social workers face in the course of their work. The study's findings revealed that social workers share offices due to a shortage of consultation rooms; they converse with clients in front of colleagues, from sheer necessity violating the clients' right to privacy and confidentiality; and that resources such as photocopying machines are scarce or insufficiently functional. As a result, social workers must travel to other offices or public spaces in order to make copies, fax documents, or scan client paperwork.

Consequently, social workers are required to travel to other offices or public places to make copies, fax documents, or scan clients' paperwork. Social workers face a dilemma in this scenario because they are required by the code of ethics to handle client information with the highest professionalism (DSD, 2013a; Bos, 2020). Furthermore, Janebova (2017:1) implied that social workers are "agents of social control," implying that they are seen as mechanisms that conceal information belonging to privileged groups. Taking clients' information to public spaces or other offices compromises confidentiality, risking the loss of documents or unauthorized access to clients' sensitive information. Thus, this issue presents a negative effect as it increases the likelihood of breaching client confidentiality.

Category 2: Clients wait long, work is delayed, and employees are blamed
The lack of office space and cars results in clients having to wait or the work being delayed, according to the social workers this causes the following:
"...you cannot interview a client in front of your colleagues because the offices are limited and always occupied. So, the confidentiality of clients is at stake. So, to follow the right principles, you will have to let the clients wait until you get a chance to use the office and creates a que and clients

complain of waiting too long. On the other hand, it creates a backlog because sometimes you will have to alternate days to use offices" (Galeboe 34-40).

"The [challenges] *do affect us as they hinder our work progress, and you end up looking like you are incompetent. And it makes it difficult for me do my job…* (Boitumelo 30-31).

According to the findings, a considerable number of social workers face the challenge of having to share a limited number of offices due to inadequate office space. To adhere to the code of conduct and ensure client privacy, social workers often have to make clients wait for extended periods until an office becomes available where they can conduct interviews in a confidential and comfortable setting. Additionally, the study identified a shortage of cars and other resources as another challenge for social workers, as they must take turns using them. Consequently, this situation leads to prolonged waiting times for clients to receive services. Limited resources could negatively influence the community where social workers are prevalent (Kheswa, 2019; Tavormina & Clossey, 2017; Schiller, 2017). The study findings also indicated that social workers face challenges that impact their job performance and timelines. As a result, client's express dissatisfaction with the lack of service delivery and tend to attribute the blame to social workers. Participants had the following to say about this:

".. sometimes when you fail to do your job on time, you tend to be blamed by both the clients and the management and you will be charged for that" (Joy 34-36).

"Sometimes you end up being blamed by clients and management when clients get services late. This is because some clients go and report you to the managers and or our social work council and you will be summoned to go and explain" (Cindi 64-67).

In conclusion, the challenges experienced by social workers, including limited office space and shortage of resources, have a direct impact on their work. Prolonged waiting times and dissatisfaction expressed by clients are clear indicators of these challenges.

Category 3: Job performance is negatively affected

All thirteen social workers also cited that their job performance is negatively affected by all the challenges they experience, as highlighted by the following excerpts from interviews:

"This is because some clients go and report you to the managers and or to our social work council and you will be summoned to go and explain. In order to impress clients, you end up bypassing the system and in turn deliver low quality work which is not right because it catches up with you later" (Cindi 65-69).

"My work is behind; cases are lapsing and all that. So, it gives me stress because I have to send a progress report every week about those lapsed cases, but I do not have resources to perform my job properly. I mean, I get to use a car twice a month and intake workers are prioritized as they always have a crises case so sometimes, we spend a week without a car because they will be attending those urgent cases" (Frank 55-60).

"In a nutshell, the challenges have a huge effect as they hinder my work performance, cause stress, and also make me to deliver less quality work. I would sometimes feel demotivated and feel lazy to do my job and if I do, I will make lots of mistakes" (Martha 43-44).

The study findings show that job performance is negatively affected by the challenges encountered by social workers in their jobs. These findings confirm the outcome of the study conducted by Moyane (2016:72) which indicated that challenges that social workers encounter in their jobs, such as unavailability of resources and high caseloads result in a lack of job satisfaction and occupational stress in social workers. The participants disclosed that the unavailability or limitation of resources negatively impacts their job performance. They expressed the challenge of having to handle a high workload with limited resources, which hampers their ability to fulfil their professional duties effectively.

Literature thus confirms that supervision, interpersonal relations, physical working conditions, low salaries, company policies and administrative practices are the main factors that can lead to job dissatisfaction (Calitz et al., 2014:162). These challenges that social workers encounter in the line of their job, negatively affects their performance (Calitz et al., 2014:162; Kheswa, 2019).

Category 4: Participants become withdrawn and relationships with colleagues are affected

Some of the social workers stated that as a result of the challenges, they at times withdraw and isolate themselves and that their relationship with their colleagues is affected.

"I am not a talkative person, but my actions can tell if I am stressed. I just keep quiet and sometimes cry my pain out. I isolate myself and would not like to talk to anyone. That create a problem because my subordinates will on that time need my assistance, so I won't because they can't access me" (Esther 36-40).

"These challenges have big effects in my life. Because we sometimes fight for resources, our relationship as colleagues is affected. So, it is a stress. Others get sick and hospitalized because of depression here" (Frank 60-63).

"...sometimes when I am stressed, I will be irritated about everything and start to shout at my supervisees, and it affects our relationship" (Deliwe 53-54).

The finding demonstrates that the scarcity of resources impacts the dynamics among social workers as they consistently contend for limited resources. Work problems or work stress have a detrimental effect on the connections and interactions among employees, hence compromising the job efficiency of social workers (Naidoo, 2011). Social workers rely on assistance and cultivate strong relationships with their colleagues in order to effectively carry out their profession. Burton et al. (2012) suggest that social workers can overcome job obstacles by having a supportive working environment and cultivating excellent working relationships (Kim & Kao, 2012). In addition, according to Risser (2022), employees may effectively overcome work obstacles and sustain their confidence by engaging in peer and advisory groups and fostering positive working relationships. The scarcity of resources is a significant barrier for social workers, which in turn impacts the dynamics of their interactions as they continually compete for these resources.

Sub-theme 2: Personal effects

Social workers experience significant stress in their work, as well as in their physical and emotional well-being and personal life, due to the inherent demands of their profession (Punova, 2022:11). The participants said that the difficulties they encountered in their professional roles also have a personal impact on them. These responses are discussed in the form of the four categories illustrated in Figure 4.5.
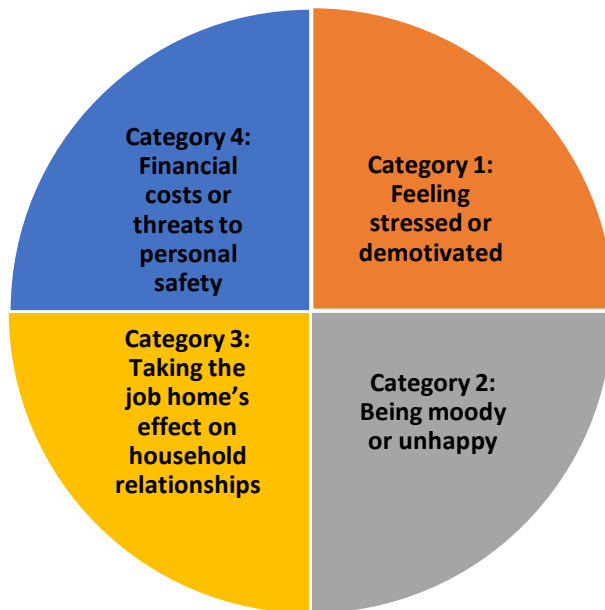
FIGURE 4.5 PERSONAL EFFECT CATEGORIES

Category 1: Feeling stressed or demotivated

Three participating social workers articulated as follows that the challenges they experience in working at the Department of Social Development contributed to them feeling stressed or demotivated:

"I sometimes have problem such as headache, when I'm stressed … these challenges do affect me" (Isaac 41-42).

"In my personal life, it affects me as I will sometimes feel stressed and end up having a terrible headache" (Deliwe 46-47).

"Sometimes you feel demotivated to do your job because there will be no support that you get from managers" (Cindi).

The findings support previous international research conducted by Kheswa (2019), which highlights that the professional responsibilities of social workers are characterized by significant workloads and carry inherent risks for psychological stress and burnout. Exhaustion and

143

psychosomatic health complaints are commonly predicted by job demands, which are typically the most influential factors in determining outcomes (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2014:395). The headaches experienced because of stress align with research dated as far back as in 1998 by Schaufeli and Enzmann who demonstrated that employees who experience chronic fatigue and exhibit cynicism towards their work are more likely to report a higher prevalence of psychological and physical health problems. Following extended periods of high job demands, employees may experience chronic exhaustion and develop psychological detachment from their work (Bakker et al., 2014:392).

The narratives shared by the participants align with category 1, illustrating that they experience stress and demotivation due to the challenges they face in their work. They express a lack of interest in their job, which is consistent with the findings of Moyane (2016:68) who observed that work challenges can lead social workers to become exhausted, causing them to simply go through the motions of their work without prioritizing quality. The study also revealed that social workers identified a lack of support, resources shortage, and an imbalance between high work demands and inadequate salaries as demotivating factors that hinder their ability to perform their job effectively.

Category 2: Being moody or unhappy

Participants also stated that the challenges in their work at the Department of Social Development caused them to feel moody and unhappy. This is reflected in the following story lines:

"Sometimes I will be moody even at home and it affects my relationship with husband and kids" (Deliwe 48-49).

"I am always not happy when I think about coming to this environment. My work is behind, cases are lapsing and that. So, it gives me stress because I have to send a progress report every week about those lapsed cases, but I do not have resources to perform my job" (Frank 54-57).

"And it makes it difficult for me to do my job and become emotionally exhausted and end up having burnout. By this I mean I will sometimes be moody at home due to the work stress that I encountered at work" (Boitumelo 31-33).

These storylines underscore that work challenges such as working conditions, shortage of resources, and high workload cause some social workers to be moody and feeling unhappy at the workplace. Bakker et al. (2014:395) highlighted that patient-related exhaustion predicted mood disturbance. This emotional exhaustion, a fundamental component of burnout, is characterized by depletion of emotional resources within an individual. It is marked by feelings of frustration, hopelessness, sadness, a sense of being emotionally overwhelmed, irritability without cause, increased fatigue, depression, and a sensation of being trapped in work. That patient- or client related exhaustion is not a new phenomenon, is indicated as this definition of emotional exhaustion was outlined by Maslach and Jackson as long ago as in 1981.

Category 3: Taking the job home's effect on household relationships

In relation to this category, participants emphasized that they bring their work responsibilities home in order to deal with workload, leading to a negative impact on their relationships with their households. This is confirmed by Gonzalez-Rico (2022) emphasizing that demands of work can affect not only employees' work efficiency but also their quality of life outside their work environment. Participants stated it as follows:

"I also take my job home to avoid talking to people, and it affects my relationship with my family members" (Esther 40-41).

In my personal life, these challenges affect me because I gets stressed when I have too much work. I become moody even when I am at home, so it also affects my relationship with my family members" (Martha 38-40).

The participants' descriptions of their experiences, such as feeling anxious, unmotivated, and emotionally exhausted because of issues relating to their work, are consistent. They discuss how the stress they experience at work influences their moods and that it even seeps into other aspects of their lives, such as their relationships with members of their families. This deals with the stress that an individual experiences after leaving work, as discussed by Dacey (2019: iii) highlighting common stressors, the challenge of having to juggle work and family obligations, and the potential consequences for it on the relationships with family and friends.

The narratives of the participants provide first-hand examples of how the difficulties they confront in their work situation have a real impact on how they feel about themselves and the connections they have outside the work situation. According to Wang, Chen, and Duan (2017:99) and Dacey (2019:4), when employees work from home, the lines between their personal lives and their professional lives might become blurred, which can result in an increased risk of conflict. These findings together highlight the interconnectedness between social workers' personal lives and their professional lives, as well as possible ramifications that this interconnection may have on employees' well-being and the relationship they maintain.

Category 4: Financial costs or threats to personal safety

According to Ntshongwana and Tanga (2022:45), shortages of mobile facilities is a challenge social workers encounter that affects their service delivery. But it is not only their service delivery that is affected, but according to the narratives of the participants it is also their finances and personal safety that is affected. Abigail, Lebo and Isaac expressed the following sentiments in this regard:

"The seventeen of us, we have to share two cars. As an intake worker, crisis can come in at any time and if the car is unavailable, it delays my job. So, I end up using my own car to attend to the case and they do not compensate us for that…(Abigail). She further added: *"It also affects my personal life because as I have said, I sometimes have to use my car and it exposes me to clients if you are dealing with difficult clients, they can damage my car or even worse"* (Abigail 48-50).

"Sometimes I have to conduct visits with my car which is not safe as it compromises my safety from harm by unsatisfied clients" (Lebo 32-33).

"As for me, I do not have a car, so it is a challenge. I have to walk to do visit and if it is far, I take a taxi, so it affects my finances because I must always spare money for visits" (Isaac 38-40).

Several participants shared their experiences of being exposed to physical risks and potential attacks by clients in various settings, including their offices, during home visits, and while on the road for fieldwork. Home visits pose a threat to the personal safety of social workers, as they are vulnerable to physical and verbal abuse in this setting. Kim and Hopkins (2017:1) confirm that child protection personnel face dangerous working conditions during home visits since they may

be subjected to physical and psychological aggression by clients. The statements are also supported by the NASW (2013:16) and Lynch, (2017) indicating that social workers who make visits to clients in field work may be subjected to a range of safety risks. In a study by Schenck and Alpaslan (in Truter & Fouché, 2019:453), the risks faced by social workers in the course of their work, were listed. These risks included a lack of resources, such as cars and computers, funding for programme implementation, heavy caseloads, staff shortages, clients' low levels of literacy and cooperation, their reliance on social grants, a lack of cooperation among professionals, fear for their personal safety, and a lack of professional support. This aligns with the challenges experienced by the participants in this study that also affect their personal lives namely the lack of resources and the fear for their personal safety. A press statement by the DA in KwaZulu- Natal supported the participants' emergency measures of having to use their own transport when none is available to manage their workload and to assist clients during home visits (Zimunya & Alpaslan, 2022; Kheswa, 2019).

Theme 5 may be understood by applying Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (in Guy-Evans, 2020), in explaining how challenges within the Department of Social Development affect social workers and their clients in several interconnected systems. The microsystem encompasses in-person interactions inside the workplace and situations where confidentiality is breached. In addition, the mesosystem demonstrates how scarce resources affect the interactions between social workers and their clients. The exosystem includes external factors, such as limited vehicle availability and economic limitations, that impact both professional and personal aspects. The influence of the macrosystem is seen in the workplace rules, ethics, and regulations. Although Theme 5 does not explicitly address temporal changes, it does highlight persistent challenges that might be seen as elements of the chronosystem (Cherry, 2020) This research emphasizes the need to consider the broader ecological context while addressing challenges in the field of social work.

Theme 6: Resilience skills and strategies used to deal with challenges

The participants shared their accounts of the difficulties they face and how these difficulties impact both their professional and personal lives. Subsequently, the researcher inquired about the resilience skills and strategies they employ to cope with these challenges. As an introduction to this theme, one of the participants, Abigail, expressed herself as follows: "…*in this Department it is the survival of the fittest. If you are not strong you will burn out*" (Abigail 55-56).

This theme resulted in ten sub-themes namely: practising self-care, supervisor, and colleagues support, separating work and pleasure or home, **intrinsic rewards and uplifting experiences** taking time off and going out with friends or family on holiday, relying on personal faith, exercising, sleeping, or reading, consulting a therapist, and adopting practical strategies and a proactive mind.

Sub-theme 1: Self-care

The participants expressed that incorporating self-care into their routines was a critical approach to address the challenges they encounter within the Department of Social Development. Emphasizing the importance of self-care, they identified it as an effective method for managing work challenges and nurturing their resilience, rather than resorting to quitting their jobs. The study revealed several self-care strategies that social workers can utilize to navigate challenges and enhance their resilience. It was observed that social workers possess inherent qualities that contribute to their resilience, suggesting that these capacities are innate.

Self- compassion or care is crucial in social workers as it enhance the well-being of social workers and is an essential skill that sustain them in their profession. Grant and Kinman (2012:17) confirm that for social workers, self-care embraces all abilities that sustain resilience. Some participants (Abigail, Boitumelo and Frank) disclosed that they bolster their resilience by consciously focusing on positive aspects that uplift their mood whenever they face difficulties. By doing so, they experience an improved state of well-being. Additionally, participants (Boitumelo, Frank, Abigail

and Galeboe) mentioned that when confronted with challenges, they prioritize their tasks based on importance rather than becoming overwhelmed by it. Participants also highlighted the significance of delegating certain responsibilities to their social auxiliary workers as a strategy to manage their workload.

Boitumelo and Abigail have explained their way of self-care as follows:

"I think practicing self-care is the best strategy for me. To tell you the truth, I love myself, and I put myself first in everything. I normally do not mix work issues and the personal issues. When things are not looking good at work, when I go home, I forget about it and focus on myself" **(Boitumelo 41-44).** *She added: "...spoiling myself is another strategy that I use... I work near a mall, whenever I feel overwhelmed, I take a lunch break and go to the mall and buy myself something nice, or just to do window shopping as self-destruction"* **(Boitumelo 46-49).**

"...my life comes first. I love and respect my job, but self-love is my first priority" **(Abigail 57-58).**

Narratives from Galeboe and Frank indicate that some social workers take some time off to relax as a way of self-care.

"When I am out of the office, I forget about work life and cheer myself with what I like and people that I love. Self-care is very important to me because we live once" (Frank 71-73**).**

Galeboe reiterated that:

"The resilience skills and strategies I use to deal with challenges is self-care. Yhaa self-care is the best strategy to me" **(Galeboe 44-45).**

From these storylines, it can be concluded that practising self-care is a significant and effective strategy for the individuals mentioned (Boitumelo, Abigail, Frank and Galeboe). They keep their personal and professional lives apart and put their health first. They increase their capacity to bounce back from setbacks and remain competent by intentionally putting their attention on themselves and indulging in enjoyable and soothing activities when not at work. The act of self-care serves as a form of rejuvenation and allows them to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Overall, these narratives highlight the importance of self-care as a vital component for social workers in promoting their resilience and well-being. The narratives provided by Boitumelo, Abigail, Frank and Galeboe align with the findings of the literature. For instance, according to

Ostadhashemi et al. (2019:8), it is crucial for social workers to develop life skills and utilize techniques for self-control, stress management, and anger management in order to foster self-compassion. The mentioned individuals' emphasis on self-care and prioritizing their well-being, reflects their recognition of the importance of self-compassion in their professional lives.

Additionally, Grant and Kinman (2020:17) highlight that social workers who are kind to themselves experience better mental health and are more adept at navigating work challenges. This corresponds with the narratives provided, as Boitumelo, Abigail and Galeboe demonstrate a strong focus on self-love and the integration of self-care practices to support their resilience. Overall, the storylines shared by these individuals are consistent with the literature, understanding the significance of self-compassion, self-care, and prioritizing one's well-being in promoting mental health and effectively managing work challenges for social workers.

Sub-theme 2: Supervisor and colleagues' support

The following paragraph highlights the significance of social support from supervisors and colleagues in the context of social work, drawing upon personal narratives and aligning them with relevant literature. Eight participants cited drawing support from supervisors and colleagues as a strategy that they use to deal with work challenges, as portrayed by the subsequent storylines:

"I have a very supportive supervisor and very helpful one. Whenever I have a challenge, I know if I can share with her, she will make me feel good. Again, my colleagues are my pillar of strength. We normally share experience on difficult cases, so I know when I am stressed, they are there for me. We are like a family, and we support each other" (Abigail 58-63).

Similarly, Galeboe indicated that:

"Another thing I am a lucky person, I don't get irritated easily because I have a supportive supervisor, she is one in the million and best supervisor. She supports us and makes sure we go out for team building once in a quarter where we enjoy ourselves and forget about the office. As colleagues, we normally have debriefing session on Mondays where we share experiences of cases and give each other guidance" (Galeboe 49-55).

150

".. and another strategy is to talk to my supervisor and colleagues because we normally support each other during challenging times, and we support each other a lot" (Harper 51-63**)**.

The storylines shared by Abigail, Galeboe and Harper highlight the importance of social support from supervisors and colleagues in social workers managing work challenges. These align with the literature, which emphasizes the positive impact of social support on social workers' well-being and ability to cope with pressure (Kheswa, 2019; Joseph, 2017).

According to Punova (2022:216), social support in the form of supportive supervisors and colleagues can reduce work pressure for social workers. The accounts of Abigail and Galeboe specifically mention the supportive nature of their supervisors and the sense of camaraderie they experience with their colleagues. This aligns with the literature's assertion that peer group supervision is essential for social workers, providing an informal network of support (Ingram, 2013:896).

Furthermore, Tumwesigye (2021); Zimunya and Alpaslan (2022), highlight that developing mutual relationships with colleagues fosters peer coaching, self-awareness, and problem-solving skills. The narratives of Abigail, Galeboe, and Harper reflect the importance of sharing experiences, seeking guidance, and supporting each other during challenging times. This supports the literature's notion that peer relationships offer emotional support, promote professional growth, enhance teamwork, and increase one's abilities (Calitz et al., 2014:162). Supervision also emerges as a vital aspect in cultivating intense ideas, as mentioned by Harper. This aligns with the literature's emphasis on the significance of supervision in social work practice (Hardy, 2017:3). Adequate supervision, according to Calitz et al. (2014:161), enhances employees' engagement in their work.

In conclusion, the narratives provided by Abigail, Galeboe, and Harper underscore the value of social support from supervisors and colleagues in social work. The accounts align with the literature, which highlights the effects of social support on social workers' ability to handle pressure, their professional growth, and their overall well-being.

Sub-theme 3: Family and friends' support

The subsequent paragraph examines the crucial role of family and friends in the lives of social workers, as reflected in personal narratives shared by Isaac, Cindi, and Martha. Drawing upon relevant literature, particularly the works of Truter et al., (2014); Maslach and Leiter (2016); Rose and Palattiyil (2020), this analysis aligns the next storylines with scholarly findings related to this theme.

"My family is one of my supporting structures. I have a loving family and we love each other. We always have lunch and often go out and we support each other always" (Isaac).

"At home I share everything with my mother, and she is a good motivator. I know if I can talk to her, I feel relieved… (Cindi 87-88**).**

"… the skills and strategies that I usually use when I face challenges are talking to my friends. My friends understand and support me a lot. We share a lot of things, so it is easy for me to talk to them" (Martha 47-49).

The narratives shared highlight the significance of family and friends as sources of support in the lives of social workers. These reports are consistent with the literature, which emphasizes how important family support is in helping social workers overcome obstacles and stay resilient. According to Truter et al., (2014), family reinforcement is an essential tactic that social workers use to deal with difficulties. The narratives provided by Isaac, Cindi and Martha echo this statement, emphasizing the love, understanding, and motivation they receive from their family members. The support from the social workers' families serves as a valuable resource in relieving stress and providing emotional relief. Grant and Kinman (2020:11), assert further that establishing healthy relationships with family members is crucial for social workers to manage the emotional effects of their work. The narratives align with this perspective, as Isaac, Cindi and Martha all highlight the positive impact of talking to their family members and friends in finding understanding and support. These relationships contribute to their overall well-being and enable them to deliver effective services to their clients.

In conclusion, the findings highlight the significance of healthy relationships with family members as a vital asset for social workers in maintaining their emotional well-being and professional effectiveness.

Sub-theme 4: Separating work life and pleasure or home

Another major resilience strategy that participants use to cope and is to separate work life from pleasure or home as outlined in the following narratives.

"I am that kind of a person who does not mix work and pleasure. Whatever happened at work stays there and what happen at home remains there" (Cindi 72-74).

"I leave what happens at work there and what happens at home at home" (Harper 43-44**)**.

The storylines provided by Cindi and Harper highlight the importance of maintaining clear boundaries between work and professional life. Both individuals express their commitment to keeping their work-related experiences separate from their personal lives. This approach allows them to preserve a sense of balance and prevent the negative impact of work-related stress from affecting their home life. By drawing this distinction, they effectively create a boundary that supports their well-being and helps them navigate the challenges in each respective domain. The results of the study, which are consistent with those found in the literature, emphasize the need of maintaining clear boundaries between work and personal life.

Most participants revealed that when they are having challenges at work, they leave them at work when they go home, and whenever they have family challenges, they leave them at home when they go to work. They do not mix work life with their personal life and vice a versa. This finding correlates with the study finding of Diamond (2022) which confirms that social workers must ascertain the boundary between work and personal life as a way of self-care. To support that, Salloum, Kondrat, Johnco and Olson (2015) suggested that to forget about the day or work stress, home should be used as a recess. The study further reveals that having boundaries of social life and professional life is key to social workers as it assists them to focus on one thing at a time and in turn assist them to cope with whatever challenge exists separately. The continuance in separation

of professional and personal life by social workers has been found to be significant and is a major resilience strategy to cope with both the work and personal challenges.

Sub-theme 5: Intrinsic rewards and uplifting experiences

Social workers with a strong sense of efficacy believe in their own competence, skills, knowledge, and capacity to address the challenges and needs of their clients and bring about meaningful change for them. Thus, social workers with elevated levels of hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy tend to feel less emotionally exhausted and less cynical about their work (Virga, Baciu, Lazar & Lupsa, 2020). Rose and Palattiyil (2020) propose that "people who have high levels of self-awareness and attitudes of enthusiasm, optimism and hope are more resilient, as well as those who are open to new experiences and have a high level of autonomy". According to Calitz et al. (2014:164) job satisfaction in social workers increases their positive work engagement. For example, the importance of job satisfaction was clarified by Boitumelo and Deliwe as follows:

"Eeerrr, being a social worker was by choice and I am very passionate with my job. Whenever I get to meet the client's expectations and they show satisfaction in my service, it gives me pleasure and satisfaction knowing that I have changed someone's life. I enjoy seeing people happy with what I do, and, in that way, it gives me strength and motivation to do more" (Boitumelo).

"...I also use positive thinking... I mean not all cases are unsuccessful, most of them become successful, so I encourage myself by them and in that way, I get strength to move forward. There are clients whom I assisted, and they show appreciation. In that way I motivate myself with such so to say not all is failing, at least I've done this and that. I also avoid the negative and focus on positives" (Cindi).

Social workers believe that giving back to the society is a means of appeasing God. They believe in supernatural forces and that the blessings that clients pray for come to pass. Martha narrated the following in this regard:

"I like to see people happy, and when I render services to my clients, I feel happy and at peace. Some of our clients are elders and they are spiritual people, so when they are pleased with my

service, they normally say 'God bless you my child' I feel that their blessing encourages me and gives me hope that God is giving me strength and hope to continue helping more people" (Martha). The study established that whenever social workers provide good and quality service to their clients, it brings happiness and encourages them to work harder and love their profession. According to Tumwesigye (2021:11) to boost job morale, job satisfaction is vital. The participants indicated the importance of rendering acceptable services to their clients as it also helps them to be resilient and avoid negative things in their job. In order to cope with challenges and be resilient, commitment, engagement and satisfaction is vital in social workers (McFadden, Campbell & Taylor, 2014). Job fulfilment is also seen as a resilience strategy used by social workers as it also gives them contentment and gratification in practising their profession. The research further established that when social workers provide effective and efficient service to their clients, it brings happiness and satisfaction to both social workers and clients, thus, make social workers to be more resilient to the work challenges. Furthermore, the study found that job satisfaction guarantees sustainability and diminish work pressure. Therefore, the social workers' value to their clients, positivity, determination, and job satisfaction are found to be resilient skills and strategies that social workers utilize to experience thrills in their job.

From these storylines, it can be concluded that the intrinsic motivation and personal satisfaction derived from making a positive impact on client's lives serve as a significant source of strength and motivation for social workers. Boitumelo expressed passion for her job and finds fulfilment in meeting client expectations and witnessing their satisfaction, which fuels her drive to continue making a difference. Cindi emphasizes the power of thinking and focuses on successful cases, using them as reminders of her capabilities and achievements. This positive mindset gives her strength to persevere and avoid being weighed down by negativity. Martha finds inspiration and encouragement in the blessings and gratitude expressed by her clients, particularly the spiritual elders, which instil in her a sense of purpose and hope that she is being guided to help more people. Collectively, the narratives highlight the intrinsic rewards and uplifting experiences that fuel social workers' dedication and motivation to continue their vital work.

Sub-theme 6: Taking time off and going out with friends or family on holiday

The participants highlighted that one of the ways they deal with challenges is to take time off and go on holiday with friends or family. For example, Deliwe, Galeboe and Isaac reported the following:

"Strategies like going out with my family on a vacation, talking to my sister and friends, going out shopping and spoil myself, taking myself out for a spa treatment works for me when I am stressed" (Deliwe 61-63).

"I take myself out with friends or family because they are my pillar of strength. When I go out, I will laugh and do all the things that cheer me up, so it helps me to forget about everything else and at the end I would feel relieved and be able to focus again" (Galeboe 46-49).

"My family is one of my support structures. I have a loving family and we love each other. We always have lunch together and often go out and we support each other always." (Deliwe)

In conclusion, the narratives shared by Deliwe and Galeboe emphasize the effectiveness of various strategies in managing stress and finding relief. These strategies include spending quality time with family and friends, engaging in enjoyable activities such as shopping or going on vacation, and indulging in self-care practices like spa treatments. These individuals recognize the importance of seeking support and finding moments of joy and relaxation outside of work. By implementing these strategies, they are able to alleviate stress, regain their focus, and experience a sense of relief. These personal accounts highlight the value of maintaining a healthy work-life balance and prioritizing self-care as essential components of well-being in the social work profession. This is confirmed by Risser (2022) who stated that to enable social workers to stay connected and get support, they must spend time with people they love such as friends and family. Traveling on holidays with friends and family is important for social workers to rejuvenate their emotional well-being (Salloum et al., 2015; Diamond, 2022).

Sub-theme 7: Relying on personal faith

Three participants highlighted that relying on their personal faith by praying and reading the Bible is a strategy that they use to deal with their challenges at work. The study has established that personal faith plays is a significant strategy in assisting social workers to be resilient when facing challenges. For example, Cindy, Esther, and Martha narrated the following storylines:

"*Another skill that I use is prayer. As I am a Christian, whenever I feel overwhelmed, I read my Bible, meditate, and pray and it helps me a lot*" (Cindy 78-80).

"*I am also a spiritual person, so praying and reading a Bible is my skill to cope with challenges*" (Esther 45-47).

"*...praying is my best way to deal with challenges. I grew up knowing that prayer solves everything, and I have adapted and always apply it when I am not in good space or facing difficulties*" (Martha 57-60).

The narratives shared by Cindy, Esther, and Martha emphasize the significant role of prayer in their coping strategies for dealing with challenges. As individuals with a strong spiritual foundation, they find solace and strength in prayer and reading the Bible. This spiritual practice provides them with a source of comfort, guidance, and reassurance during difficult times. Through prayer, mediation, and drawing upon their faith, these individuals have developed a coping mechanism that helps them navigate and overcome challenges. Their stories highlight the importance of spirituality and the profound impact it can have on their resilience and ability to face adversity.

The conclusion drawn from the aforementioned storylines aligns with the existing literature, which emphasize the transformative and renewing aspects of spiritual and mindful practices for social workers in coping with challenges. Allen (2017: 85-86) highlights that practices such as worship, prayer, and reflection provide solace and renewal of spirit for social workers. These practices are seen as transformative tools that help social workers navigate the demands of their profession. Additionally, the study conducted by Truter et al., (2014) supports the notion that personal faith and spirituality play a significant role in fostering resilience among social workers. This reinforces the idea that incorporating spiritual and mindful practices can contribute to the well-being and

resilience of social workers, enabling them to effectively cope with challenges they encounter in their work.

Sub-theme 8: Exercising, sleeping or reading

The following narratives highlight the significance of physical exercise as a valuable strategy for managing stress and promoting the well-being of social workers. Cindi, Boitumelo, and Martha share their experiences of incorporating into their routines as a means to stay calm, unwind, and regain their focus. These personal accounts underscore the positive impact of exercising, sleeping, or reading on their mental and emotional well-being.

" I also like sleeping as it keeps me calm and relaxed. Other skill that I like to do are workouts. Whenever I feel stressed, I would rather jog or do workouts in the house, and I will feel better afterwards" (Cindi 88-91).

"I also like to exercise in order to deal with challenges" (Boitumelo 44-45).

"Another strategy is exercise. Exercise helps me to unwind and able to focus, so whenever I feel down or stressed, I go to a gym or just take a walk alone" (Martha 49-51).

"I also like reading novels, in order to distract my mind" (Deliwe 62-63).

"Reading encouraging books is also my skill" (Joy 51-52).

The shared narratives emphasize the effectiveness of physical exercise as a strategy for dealing with challenges and maintaining the overall well-being of social workers. These individuals express a preference for activities such as jogging, workouts, going to the gym, or taking walks as a means to alleviate stress and improve their mental state. Engaging in regular exercise not only helps them unwind and find relaxation, it also enhances their ability to concentrate and refocus. These stories highlight the importance of incorporating physical exercise into the lives of social workers as a valuable tool for managing stress and promoting their overall resilience and well-being. According to Salloum et al. (2015) to support work performance, including physical and mental strength, getting enough sleep is helpful. Therefore, getting enough rest and physical and emotional exercise are fundamental resilient skills and strategies that support social workers to be resilient in their work.

Sub-theme 9: Consulting a therapist

A few of the participants said that one of their strategies to deal with the challenges at the Department was to visit and talk to a therapist. The study established that consulting the therapist is another resilience skill that social workers use to deal with challenges. Consultation has been found to play a crucial role as a strategy of social workers to cope with challenges and lead to resilience. This is confirmed by Viscu (2013:51), who states that counselling is fundamental in employees as it assist them to develop strategies to manage challenging situation, help them make critical verdict and advance their positions. Furthermore, the study found that despite social workers being professionals and counsellors themselves, consulting a therapist relieves their pressure and helps them to see things differently. To ensure the psychosocial functioning and the quality of services offered by the employer, debriefing and counselling social workers is crucial (Conway, 2016:2). The support that they get from a therapist, or a psychologist plays a fundamental role in the professional life of social workers as it gives them support and assist them to be resilient. For example, King and Deliwe alluded the following narratives in this regard:

"Furthermore, we have a psychologist around our workplace, so whenever I feel down, I go talk to her and in that way, it helps me to be focused" (King 62-64).

"Strategies like… and talking to a therapist" (Deliwe 60-63).

The strategies mentioned by King and Deliwe, which involve seeking support from psychologist or therapist, align with the literature findings regarding the benefits of counselling or therapy for social workers. The narratives highlight the positive impact of talking to a professional in improving job performance, reducing stress, and enhancing focus. This finding is supported by the research by Viscu (2013:51-59) which reveals that counselling can have various positive outcomes such as improving mood, treating mental illness, enhancing communication and relationships, and Employee Assistance Programmes promoting self-esteem and resilience. These findings suggest that looking after their emotional well-being, ultimately supports the competence of social workers in practising their profession. The counselling services provided to employees by the Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) offices within the department are essential in helping social

workers to debrief when facing and dealing with challenges and serve to strengthen their resilient skills and strategies. Overall, the shared stories shared by participants are consistent with the literature, highlighting the significance of EAP as it impacts positively on social workers by advancing assertiveness training, building self-confidence, coping strategies, teamwork, and job satisfaction (Richmond, Pampel, Wood & Nunes, 2017).

Sub-theme 10: Adopting practical strategies and a proactive mind

Another strategy used by several social workers was articulated as prioritizing the work and accepting what they cannot change. This is evident in the following story lines:

"Another thing is that I don't stress with things that I can't change, I do what I can and leave the rest to later because I don't want to beat myself around for some things I can't change" (Frank 74-76).

"The resilience skills and strategies that I use are…time management. I am good in managing my case according to when they are due. So, to make things easier for me, I do my cases three months prior the lapsing dates" (Lebo 38-40).

In conclusion, the narratives shared by Frank and Lebo emphasize the importance of adopting a proactive and realistic approach to managing challenges at work. Frank's perspective reflects a mindset of not stressing over things beyond one's control, choosing instead to focus on what can be changed or influenced. This approach helps in avoiding unnecessary self-impose stress. Lebo highlights the effectiveness of time management as a resilience skill, prioritizing tasks and completing them well in advance to ensure a smoother workflow. These personal accounts underscore the significance of adopting practical strategies and a proactive mindset in effectively navigating challenges and maintaining resilience in the face of work demands. This finding relates to the findings by Risser (2022) which reveal the significance of planning, being proactive, and setting reasonable goals in whatever one intends to do in order to stay attentive.

Theme 6, "Social workers' accounts of the resilience skills and strategies they use to deal with challenges," can be evaluated using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to show how these techniques vary throughout ecological levels (Guy-Evans, 2020).

The microsystem resilience techniques such as self-care, support from colleagues and supervisors, and the faith of social workers are indicative of their professional connections. Their unique responses to circumstances aid in their coping.

In the mesosystem, social workers must communicate with bosses and co-workers. The sub-theme of supervisor and colleague support emphasizes workplace connections. Social workers are more resilient when managers and co-workers support them. This support is similar to Bronfenbrenner's proximal processes, which are direct encounters and connections that affect growth (Mercon-Vargas, Lima, Rosa & Tudge, 2020). Social workers' resilience is affected by external variables like separating work and home life at the exosystem level. The exosystem influences coping techniques by influencing work-life boundaries through workplace regulations and culture.

Theme 6 and its sub-themes demonstrate how social workers' resilience abilities and techniques are moulded by their jobs, interpersonal and external variables, according to Bronfenbrenner's theory. This ecological viewpoint emphasizes how these components interact and affect social workers' problem-solving skills.

Theme 7: Explanations of the effectiveness of the skills and strategies used to deal with challenges

After having described the resilience skills and strategies they use to deal with the challenges they face at the Department of Social Development, the researcher asked the social workers to explain how effective they considered them to be. All social workers said that the skills and strategies they used were effective.

Study participants confirmed that their ability to overcome adversity and deal with work-related obstacles has been aided greatly by the resilience abilities and tactics they use. They have been able to handle challenging circumstances and keep a positive attitude thanks to their abilities and tactics. Resilience skills are especially helpful for social workers, according to Grant and Kinman (2020:7), as they help with stress management and make it easier for them to provide high-quality services. Social workers can use their talents and personal power while avoiding negative thought patterns by utilizing these resilience strategies.

161

The study also found that strategies increase flexible thinking in social workers when they face challenges. Furthermore, practicing self-care such as an exercise, is effective for social workers as it reduces stress and increases their confidence, positivity, and problem-solving skills. Cuddy (2015) supports the notion that body, and mind practices enhance personal power and confidence. The resilience skills and strategies employed by social workers are effective because it assists them in dealing with challenges, reducing stress, and enabling them to provide effective and efficient services to their clients. The following storylines confirm that social workers consider the resilience skills and strategies they use as effective in dealing with challenges, as explained as follows by Boitumelo, Esther and King:

"It works for me hey, whenever I speak to my colleagues, supervisor or meet with friends, I feel relieved. When I share my challenges with them, I know they will encourage me and also give me advice on how to deal with whatever hindrance I may be having. As I am saying, self-love is my best medication, when I take care of myself by going out, exercises, and spoiling myself, it gives me self-satisfaction. In fact, these skills and strategies do work for me, because when I apply them, I know I will feel energetic and able to find a way forward" (Boitumelo 57-64).

"It works for me seriously because I am able to think straight and come up with a solution of whatever might be bothering me. When I am alone, reading a bible uplift my spirit and calm me down. S, they are effective and work for me because after that I will be able to face whatever challenge and I like it because I don't talk to anyone, because if I did, I might have hurt someone or make mistakes. But if I keep quiet, I am able to find myself back in my personal space without having hurt anyone" (Esther 49-55).

"I think they are very effective because they help me cope well with these challenges. Whenever I talk to my colleagues when I am stressed, I feel relieved and help refresh my mind and be able to find a way out of my challenges. As I have said about my family, they are very talkative people, and they have that thing that helps me keep going even when I am stressed. Self-pampering is a self-care to me, so I know when I do it helps me focus well on my job. Seeing a therapist also assists me very much as she has that magical voice, so talking to her helps me to find ways of whatever challenge I face. So, in a nutshell, the resilience skill, and strategies I use when facing

challenges are very effective and applying them helps me excel in my job and increases my job performance" (King 68-78).

Similarly, Harper, Isaac, and Martha, support the views by saying the following:

"I think they do work for me because they help me a lot. Whenever I apply them, I feel relieved and able to focus more on my job. Again, it also assists me to view things from a different perspective. It also gives me emotional stability and also improves my job performance" (Harper 54-57).

"They are very effective, because when I apply them, I feel relieved... my family and colleagues are the pillar of my strength, whenever I talk to them, I feel relieved, I cope well and am able to find a way out from whatever challenge I have. Taking myself out is also working for me because I am able to feel light weighted and able to focus well on my job. It also helps me excel in whatever I do" (Isaac 55-60).

"I think they do work hey and a lot. As I have told you, my friends mean everything to me, whenever I talk to them, I am able to feel better and able to forget about everything that was bothering me… praying is also a best medicine. Growing up I learned that prayer solves everything, and I have adapted to that and use it in my daily life, and it is working for me because whenever I pray, it is able to lift my spirit and I calm down from what was troubling me. Again, taking things easy helps me a lot because I am able to focus well and be able to see things in another perspective and from there, my performance will improve, and I do better in what I do. My previous experience also motivates me to want to do more and better. It gives me strength knowing that I can make a contribution in changing people's lives. So, these skills and strategies are effective and assist me to be more resilient" (Martha 67-79).

The study findings have revealed the effectiveness of resilience skills and strategies employed by social workers, as they instil confidence and equip them with the ability to find solutions to the challenges they encounter. The resilience skills and strategies are considered fundamental and highly beneficial for social workers. The findings also indicate that resilience skills and strategies play a crucial role in enhancing social workers' confidence, strength, and problem-solving abilities.

According to Newman (2016), self-compassion plays a significant role in boosting social workers' confidence and assists them in finding solutions to their problems. The utilization of resilience skills and strategies by social workers proves to be effective in addressing both personal and work-related challenges, contributing to better mental and overall health outcomes, and enabling them to manage stress effectively.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explains social workers' resilience tactics' success (Guy-Evans, 2020). It shows how individual habits, cultural, and social elements help the social workers to cope with problems and offer high-quality services. On the microsystem, social workers focus on self-care, support, and reflection. Colleagues, bosses, friends, and family support and encourage mesosystem users, improving their coping techniques. Therapists and external resources improve social workers' coping methods and problem-solving on the exosystem. On the Macrosystem cultural and personal values like prayer and self-compassion increase social workers' confidence and help them solve difficulties, and on the chronosystem, social workers acquire resilience skills and tactics from their experiences, improving their stress management.

Theme 8: Social workers' suggestions on what can be done to enhance their resilience

The final question posed by the researcher to the participating participants was to ask them what their suggestions were for how the Department can enhance social workers' resilience skills and strategies. The social workers' suggestions varied, and they are conversed under the following five sub-themes depicted in Figure 4.6 below.

Sub-theme 1: Management support and consultation

Sub-theme 2: Addressing high caseloads and employing more social workers

Sub-theme 3: Provide needed resources

Sub-theme 4: Bring back the performance bonus and increase the salaries for social workers

Sub-theme 5: Publicize the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and make it accessible

FIGURE 4.6 SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE RESILIENCE

Before discussing the responses under this theme in depth, it can be noted that one of the participants, Deliwe, said this in her response about what the Department can do:

"It is a lot because the Department is really failing us, so if they can up on the issues that concern workers even the production will be improved, and it will also keep up the image of the Department" (Deliwe 85-87).

The participants put forth numerous recommendations for the department to bolster social workers' resilience skills and strategies to effectively address their work challenges. These suggestions were multifaceted and encompassed a multi-sectoral perspective. Nonetheless, a common thread among all the proposals was the need to repair the department's support system for social workers. This entails focusing on aspects such as enhanced management support, improved recruitment, and retention strategies, ameliorated working conditions, and increased visibility of the department's Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP). The ensuing sub-themes are the articulated opinions on how the department can aid social workers in enhancing their resilience skills and strategies.

Sub-theme 1: Management support and consultation

Previously in theme 4, sub-theme 4.3.4.4, the social workers had cited the lack of support and consultation by the management as a main challenge and now they all responded by suggesting that management should give the necessary support to and consult with the social workers. According to this study, there is a need to enhance management support for social workers and foster positive attitude towards them. Joseph (2017) and Naples (2014) emphasize that organizations have both moral and legal responsibilities to safeguard the well-being of their employees. Additionally, the participants recommended that management should be adequately trained to offer support to their supervisees. As an illustration, the following was reported:

"I think if the Department can give its employee necessary attention it would be helpful. By necessary attention I mean support and make it a point that they visit our offices regularly so that they can witness and be familiar with the kinds of workplace we are working in" (Esther 58-61).

"...the issue of consultation by the Department. They don't really recognize us that we are existing. As long as they the work done, it is fine with them. They just change policies and rules the way they want without consulting us. I mean we are the ones rendering services to clients, and we know what's best for our clients, and if they can consult with us whenever they want to change anything in the Department, it would be better so that we also have inputs and be part of the decision making in whatever concerns our job" (Abigail 92-98).

"... it will be best if the employer can engage employees from the grassroot level on the decision-making. They must also provide employees with necessary support that they need. They must have meetings with employees which do not necessarily concern work-related issues but the well-being of employees. The employers must also emphasize with the employees and understand what they are going through so that the employees must also feel appreciated, and, in that way, it will assist them to perform their job effectively" (Harper 60-66).

The study findings indicate a lack of sufficient support provided to social workers by their employer. The support from colleagues, supervisors, managers, and other professionals within the department is perceived by the social workers as a professional network crucial for bolstering the

resilience of social workers. Thus, the participants emphasize that adequate support from their employer will significantly contribute to the enhanced resilience of social workers.

Moreover, it is regarded as crucial for managers to pay attention to specific resilience skills and strategies employed by their social workers in order to provide targeted support. Truter et al., (2014) concur with the suggestions of social workers, stating that supportive relationships with colleagues, managers, family, and friends help social workers to cope with work challenges and build resilience. This finding is further supported by the study of Truter and Fouché (2019:457), which reveals that employees' coping skills are enhanced through learning from peers and receiving support from management in the form of communication and debriefing.

Sub-theme 2: Addressing high caseloads and employing more social workers

In theme 4, sub-theme 4.3.4.3, the social workers had mentioned high caseloads as a significant challenge and here they all suggested that the management must address the issue of high caseloads and employ more social workers. According to the study, the issue of social workers' scarcity is a significant factor that contribute to high caseloads at the Department of Social Development. The NASW (2013) accentuates that most departments face high caseloads due to shortage of staff. Additionally, the participants revealed social workers are expected to deal with high caseloads which affect their job performance and resilience. Hence, the participating social workers emphasized the significance of addressing high caseloads and employing sufficient numbers of social workers to significantly contribute to the overall resilience of social workers. To support this, the following is alluded:

"The issue of caseloads should be addressed as it causes stress to employees. You cannot, as a social worker, have more than sixty cases, because clients end up suffering, children abused without our knowledge because we see them once per year because there are many. Now if one can have a manageable caseload, it will be easier to render supervision to each of them on a quarterly basis" (Galeboe 64-69).

"The issue of excessive caseloads should be looked at because it is straining" (Abigail 88-89).

"They must hire enough staff so that the work will be easy as a social worker will be allocated with reasonable caseload. There are lots of qualified social workers who are unemployed and whom the Department have subsidized, so if they can hire them even on contract basis, it will eliminate the problem that the Department is having of shortage of staff" (Cindi 108-112).

The participants in the study put forth recommendations suggesting that the employer should address the issue of high caseloads to enhance the resilience of employees. One of the contributing factors to the high caseloads is the shortage of social workers, and the participants assert that employing more social workers would be instrumental in providing the necessary support to enhance their resilience. These recommendations find support in the work of Moyane (2016:58), wherein it is highlighted that factors such as massive workloads, backlogs, and staff shortages significantly impact workload management, daily task handling and overall control. The finding is further supported by Schiller (2017), who reveals that high caseloads are influenced by factors such as the rise in social problems, shortage of staff due to limited funding and changes in laws and policies. These findings align with a survey that was done at a social work indaba held by the Department of Social Development in 2006, which revealed a shortage of social workers at the department, which consequently created a backlog and high caseload (DSD, 2013a)

This study strongly advocates for the department to address the challenges of high caseloads and the taking of steps to employ more social workers, thereby fostering resilience among them. According to social workers' opinions, addressing the issue of high caseloads and increasing the number of social workers in the workforce will ultimately lead to a reduction in the caseload burden, enabling social workers to thrive and excel in their roles.

Sub-theme 3: Provide needed resources

The social workers offered helpful recommendations, arguing that the department should provide them with the tools they need to carry out their duties efficiently. The study's conclusions show that improving working conditions and having access to necessary resources from employers may be important factors in developing social workers' resilience tactics and skills. These viewpoints are supported by the IFSW (2012:4), which states that employers are accountable for protecting

social workers' professional safety and providing clean, safe, and hazard-free workplaces. These kinds of circumstances are vital because they have a big impact on social workers' ability to practice morally and effectively.

The participants also stressed the significance of putting standard procedures in place to support social workers' personal safety within the department. The working environment of social workers should also be favourable in order to maintain the confidentiality principle and guarantee the safety of their clients. Isaac, Deliwe, and King provided the following justifications to demonstrate this idea:

"I think the Department must improve regarding resources. If they can provide enough resources, it can assist us employees to thrive in our job. It will also assist employees to perform their job effectively" (Isaac 63-65).

"They must also ensure that they provide us with necessary resources so we will be able to perform our jobs effectively… The use of office space must be revised because it makes us as service providers to not practice in an ethical manner as expected" (Deliwe 80-85).

"…the Department can at least provide us with required resources which will assist in making our job easier such as computers or laptops which will assist us to do our jobs… enough cars or provide us with sub-cars that will assist employees to attend cases at any time. Must build offices that ensure that social workers maintain the code of conducts of their work, and ensure that the working conditions are improved, ensure that we have operative photocopying machine which have scan, fax, and everything" (King 81-90).

The participants' experiences emphasize the significant impact of working conditions on their resilience skills and strategies. They suggest that if the employer can improve these conditions, it would greatly support the development and application of their resilience skills. The sentiment aligns with the insights provided by Moyane (2016:48), who highlights the importance of resource availability for organizational success. The participants specially identified the need for specific resources such as cars, office space, photocopying machines, and computers, emphasizing that the lack of these resources deprives them of fully utilizing their professional skills and talents. The unanimous consensus among the participants is that the provision of necessary resources would contribute greatly to enhancing their overall performance.

Paris (2012) and Day et al., (2015) support the participants' perspective on the significance of resources for employee well-being and high performance. This corroborates their suggestion that the availability of the necessary working tools and resources are crucial factors that play a vital role in shaping their resilience and performance as social workers.

In summary, Moyane (2016), Paris (2012), Day et al. (2015), and Ntsoane (2017) reinforce the participants' findings regarding the crucial importance of working conditions and resource provision in supporting social workers' resilience skills and strategies, and overall performance.

Sub-theme 4: Bring back the performance bonus and increase the salaries for social workers

A number of social workers included in their suggestions that the Department should bring back the payment of the performance bonus and increase the social workers' salaries. The study established that social workers are not happy with the salaries they receive as compared to the work that they do. Upon enquiry, it was brought to the researchers' attention that DSD used to pay social workers a performance bonus, but this was later stopped as a result of budgetary constraints. The participants feel that they are working hard, yet their incentives do not match the amount of work they do. For example, the participants narrated the following:

"… the Department must learn to acknowledge the good work done by the employees. So, I suggest that they can at least try to re-look on the issue of performance bonus. Employees get encouraged when they get something to show appreciation at the end of the year. The little incentives that they used to give us used to motivate us, so they must bring back the performance bonus: (Lebo 63-69). The findings of the study indicate that a significant portion of social workers expressed dissatisfaction with their salaries. In light of this, they proposed the implementation of performance bonuses and improved salaries, believing that this would serve as a motivating factor to work harder and ultimately boost their resilience. This aligns with the notion that the nature of work, coupled with inadequate salaries, contributes to stress and burnout among employees, as suggested by Slayers, Rollins, and Kelly (2013) and Calitz et al. (2014). To cultivate resilience and provide appropriate support, it is crucial for supervisors and management to acknowledge and recognize

170

the good work done by employees. Kraaijeveld et al. (2013) further corroborates this notion, revealing that employees' confidence are augmented through the employers' acknowledgement of good work done by the employees.

Sub-theme 5: Publicize the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and make it accessible

The final suggestion put forth by social workers pertains to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). They recommended that the existence of EAP should be widely publicized, and its services should be easily accessible. As previously mentioned, social work is rewarding and yet a highly stressful profession. Therefore, the immediate visibility of the EAP is essential. This would enable social workers to seek counselling and support, ultimately leading to an improvement in their resilience skills and strategies.

Although the Department of Social Development offers EAP services at the regional level, they are not prominently visible, and many employees are unaware of their existence. For instance, participants Frank and Esther conveyed the following concerns:

"I *heard our department has an Employee Assistance Programmes around Johannesburg. I have never seen any official from their offices, or even heard any colleague consulting their offices. So, the Department must make us aware of these offices and their officials so that we know where to go when face challenges. Let them avail themselves, and make us aware of the services they render, because the, we are really going through stuff as workers, and we end up being hospitalized or go to the private institutions when we need help while we have our own in the Department."* (Frank 85-93).

"There are Employee assistance programmes in this department, but few people know where the offices are based. At least if they can make these offices visible by making the officials from EAP meet employees once per year to share where their offices are and the kinds of services that they offer to make people familiar with them" (Esther 63-67).

Similarly, King suggested the following:

" .. the Department must prioritize the employee wellness services. At the moment, the Department has EAP, however, not everyone in the Department is aware of their offices. So, I suggest that the Department should restructure and make the EAP to be more effective and responsive in assisting the employees" (King 92-97).

A significant number of participants expressed concerns about the visibility of the department's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The study revealed that social workers often seek consultation with private therapists due to lack of visibility and accessibility of the EAP services within the department. Participants emphasized their lack of awareness regarding the location and services offered by EAP, leading them to opt for private therapy instead. They suggested that the department should conduct orientation sessions for employees to acquaint them with EAP and ensure that officials are knowledgeable about the services provided.

The study underscored the importance of social workers being familiar with the EAP offices' locations and the types of services available, so they know where to seek support when encountering work-related challenges. When employees experience stress, it is crucial for them to consider seeking professional help from the EAP (Moyane, 2016:64). According to Meyer, Jayawardana, Muir, Ho and Sackett (2018:1), EAP services are significant for employees as they help advance their health and emotional well-being. Additionally, Bajorek (2016:7) and EAPA-SA (2010) reinforce the perspective of the visibility and accessibility of the departmental EAP services being needed. as it does not only benefit employees, but both the employer and the employees. Therefore, it is utmost significance for the Employee Assistance Programme to be visible and accessible to employees, enabling them to access counselling and debriefing services to enhance their resilience skills and strategies.

The next section provides a summary of the chapter.

4.4   CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the central focus is on presenting the findings derived from the transcribed interviews with thirteen participants employed at the offices of the Department of Social Development in Johannesburg City. The chapter begins by providing a demographic profile of the

participants and proceeds to explore eight themes, each with its sub-themes with categories where applicable. The main emphasis is on analysing and interpreting the data collected from the participants and subject it to a literature control.

The first theme delves into the participants' main functions and responsibilities as social workers in their jobs. The second theme encompasses the experiences of social workers in their job and roles. Moving forward, the third theme explores how social workers understands the concept of resilience. The fourth theme centres on the main challenges encountered by social workers in their jobs. This led to the fifth theme, which investigates the effects of these challenges on both their work and personal lives. Subsequently, the sixth theme focuses on the resilience skills and strategies employed by social workers to navigate challenges effectively.

The seventh theme assesses the effectiveness of the aforementioned skills and strategies utilized by social workers. The last theme examines the suggestions made by social workers regarding what their employer (DSD) can do to enhance their resilience.

Throughout these themes, relevant literature is incorporated in support of participants' storylines. Evidence is drawn from participants' narratives about their experiences and views relating to the themes and sub-themes extracted from the transcribed data to formulate the research findings. In the literature control, the research findings are confirmed and/or contrasted by appropriate literature.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter firstly summarizes the findings of the study and assesses the degree to which the research goal and objectives have been met. It serves as a shortened amalgamation of the contents of the preceding chapters of this research report. The summary of the study encompasses an overview of the study in terms of the introduction, the literature review, application of the research methodology, and the findings of the research (the latter by briefly revisiting the different themes that emerged).

After presenting the summary the study's boundaries and the limitations inherent to it are specified, before describing the value of the research study in exploring the resilience skills and strategies of social workers and how they manage to excel in their roles. Recommendations are made for the practice of social work, **for the DSD as employer, for social workers, and** for future research. The chapter is concluded with a chapter summary.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of the study was to investigate the resilience skills and strategies utilized by social workers employed within the offices of the Gauteng Province's Department of Social Development in the City of Johannesburg. The study predominantly focused on examining the resilience skills and strategies employed by these social workers to navigate challenges they encounter in their social work practice. It delved into their job experiences, the specific challenges they face, and the repercussions of these challenges on their work. Additionally, the study explored the effectiveness of the resilience skills and strategies they deploy.

The study also aimed to pinpoint where the department may provide assistance to improve these resilience techniques and abilities. It is anticipated that the study's findings would provide useful context for understanding social workers' opinions on resilience. The study's conclusion provide insight into the critical resilience skills and techniques that social workers especially those working for the Department of Social Development in Johannesburg City consider to be imperative.

The study's recommendations ultimately seek to advise how to create a conducive work environment for social workers and promote organizational support in order to fortify their resilience, which in turn enables them to perform their duties with more effectiveness.

There are five chapters in this research report. The study's credibility has been ensured by the logical arrangement of the chapters and the course of the research process. The study adhered to every procedure described for performing a qualitative research study, and the following is a summary of the preceding four chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background of the study

This chapter provides an overview of the study's context in the form of the research plan, including the research problem, questions, goal, and objectives. The research approach and planned process are illustrated. A concise overview of the qualitative research method is provided. The fundamental ethical considerations that governed the conduct of the research, such as obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring their privacy and confidentiality, managing information, and promoting beneficence, are clearly explained. The fundamental principles utilized in the study are elaborated upon. The background of social work practice is outlined, and it signified that social work practice is generally a challenging and yet a gratifying profession (Grant & Kinman, 2020). It is further deliberated that there are high emotional demands placed on the social work profession and social workers, as they work with vulnerable groups. Unfavourable working environments, high caseloads, lack of support by managers, lack of resources, and client-related problems are some of the challenges social workers face in their jobs (Skosana, 2020:119). Therefore, resilience skills and strategies were found to be significant factors which provide

support and hope to social workers to assist and inspire them in practising their profession (Crocker & Wilson, 2023:199) The researcher concludes that to provide a clear description of the research topic, the background described is significant.

The researcher learnt that there are limited data in the South African literature that explore the skills and strategies which reinforce the resilience of social workers. Most research done in this regard, is extensively researched regarding the enhancement of resilience in social worker students and student social workers, nurses, teachers, police officials, and members of the defence force. Subsequently, this gap in the social work literature enthused the researcher's interest in exploring resilience skills and strategies of social workers within at the Department of Social Development, Johannesburg. Thus, the researcher concluded that gaining more information and knowledge about it could help identify patterns and trends which could enhance employers' support to their employees, thereby prolonging the work-life of South African social workers.

The research problem statement was formulated based on the claims that social workers face several challenges and difficult problems in their practising their profession, yet still manage to persevere (Grant & Kinman, 2020). As a result, the researcher was curious to find out what resilience techniques and abilities social workers use to overcome obstacles and how they improved them. In summary, the formulation of the problem was important since it provided the researcher with guidance for conducting the research (Pardede, 2018). The researcher regarded it as crucial to comprehend the resilience techniques and abilities that social workers employ in order to survive in their demanding line of work. This chapter also included the research goal which is summarized in Table 5.1 below:

TABLE 5.1 ACCOMPLISMENT OF THE RESEARCH GOALS

Goal of this research	Conclusive statement on the accomplishment of the research goal
▪ To develop an in-depth understanding of the resilience skills and strategies of social workers.	The execution of the research plan outlined in Chapter1 facilitated the attainment of a thorough comprehension regarding social

	workers' perceptions and experiences concerning resilience skills and strategies. In Chapter 4, this profound comprehension and insight are deliberated upon, and the phenomenon researched is delineated. In this context, the focus was on the challenges encountered by social workers in their professional roles, their utilization of resilience skills and strategies to address these challenges, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of these skills and strategies.

Based on the information provided in Table 5.1, it can be inferred that the study's goal was successfully achieved.

The study's research question, *"What are the resilience skills and strategies of social workers within the Department of Social Development, Johannesburg?"* was also delineated. Thirteen social workers who work for the Department of Social Development's offices in its Johannesburg offices, were interviewed in order to gather information for answering the study question. Hence, the researcher was guided to consider and investigate the topic at hand by having clarity on the research question.

To the attain goal of this research, the researcher put together the achievable objectives summarized in Table 5.2, below.

TABLE 5.2 THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND THEIR CONCLUSION AND ACCOMPLISHMENT

Research objectives	Concluding statement on how each research objective were accomplished
• To explore the resilience skills and strategies of social workers within the	The exploration of the resilience skills and strategies of social workers were accomplished

Department of Social Development's Johannesburg offices.	through the methods of data collection and analysis, as elucidated in Chapter 4.
• To describe the resilience skills and strategies of social workers within the Department of Social Development's Johannesburg offices.	Chapter 4 of this report presents the description of resilience skills and strategies of social workers. The chapter focuses on the findings on the experience of social workers on their resilience skills and strategies.
• To draw conclusions and make recommendations regarding resilience skills and strategies of social workers within the Department of Social Development, Johannesburg.	This chapter (Chapter 5) presents the accomplishment of this objective. In the forgoing sections, the summary, conclusions, and recommendations were specifically based on answering the research questions and describing the attainment of the research goal by achieving the research objectives.

In social research, it is important to put together the research goal and objectives since it gives the researcher a clear purpose and helps them stay focused on the research goal (Lee, Locke & Latham, 1989:299). As a result, the researcher came to the conclusion that the goals of the study were successfully met.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 gives a summary of the pertinent literature used for the investigation and goes into additional detail on what other researchers have found and said regarding social workers' resilience tactics and skills. It presents a detailed description of the theoretical framework for the.

This study established and identified the pertinent literature on the subject being researched. It was possible to review what other earlier studies had assessed in terms of social workers' resilience tactics and abilities. The literature was gathered from a number of trustworthy sources, including books, periodicals, the Internet, and other sources. The goal of the literature review was to obtain

a better understanding of the resilience techniques and abilities that social workers use in their demanding line of work, as well as how it might be improved. Information on the notion of resilience, its relationship with social work practice, and the evolution of residency in social workers were provided by the literature review. The review also described the variables that impact social workers and provided an explanation of their coping mechanisms.

Resilience has been defined as an individual's capacity to adjust to adversity and enable them to flourish (Crocker & Wilson, 2023:198). Because social workers deal with complex cases, resilience is a common habit required in the field of social work. Social workers are said to benefit greatly from the development of resilience since it makes their jobs easier (Crocker & Wilson, 2023:198). The evaluation also looked at the issues that social workers face, like heavy caseloads, a lack of resources, and supervisors' lack of support.

The literature served as a revelation for comprehending the idea of resilience and its importance in of social work. It also helped the researcher reach the predetermined study aim and provide a solution answer about the research topic.

The researcher employed the ecological system theory described this chapter as the theoretical framework of this study that guided the investigation to comprehend the phenomenon. The ecological system theory is predicated on the idea that individuals can be comprehended in relation to their surroundings (Kirschbaum 2017:20-21). The five levels of the human environment, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem constitute the ecological system theory. The framework was used to investigate how individuals related and were connected to their surroundings (Kirschbaum 2017:20-21).

Utilising this paradigm made it possible for the researcher to comprehend how social workers' resilience tactics and talents are influenced by their surroundings. In order to answer the research question and accomplish the research goal, this framework was appropriate for the research study. The framework explored the participant's relations and connection with the environment and provided an understanding on how these factors affected the social workers' resilience skills and strategies. Using this framework enabled the researcher study to answer the research question and achieving the research goal.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed account of the execution of the research process and methodology. The subsequent section provides a concise summary of that information.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The third chapter provided a comprehensive analysis of the application of the research methodology, related to the qualitative research approach and the research design in the form of a phenomenological, explorative, descriptive, and contextual research design. The research process is described by examining the application of the research method in determining the research population, selection the sample strategies, collecting the data by conducting the interviews, analysing the data, validating the data, and maintaining the ethical standards throughout the study. This study was meaningful since it used a qualitative research approach that enabled the researcher to interact with participants in their workplaces and collect extensive data. The study was sensitive in nature, and the researcher was able to learn more about the participants' little-known true-life experiences relating to their resilience, with the use of the qualitative research approach (Charran, Sorrells & Cooc, 2019). By combining open-ended questions from an interview guide with semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to gather sufficient data the from participants with the use of the qualitative methodology.

Using the phenomenological, explorative, descriptive, and contextual research designs to achieve the study's research goal entailed the following:

- **Phenomenological research design**: This study design focuses on how people view the world, how they interpret their experiences, and how they translate information into perception (Zahavi, 2019:903). Because it gave participants in this research, the opportunity to examine and share their own experiences with resilience techniques and abilities, this research design was appropriate.
- **Explorative research design:** When minimal knowledge is available about a phenomenon to be investigated, as in this case, this study design is employed (Thomas, 2016:126). As there was a dearth of information available on social workers' resilience

tactics and skills, an exploratory research design was required to gain fresh knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon, social workers' resilience techniques and skills.

- **Descriptive research design:** A descriptive research design is employed, much like explorative research design, when little or no information is available about a topic under study. The researcher described social workers' resilience abilities and tactics, the efficacy of applying these techniques, and how they would like to be supported by their employers in further developing resilience techniques and skills. Using the descriptive research design enabled the researcher to provide a thorough description of the subject under investigation.

- **Contextual research design:** The researcher needed to understand how the environment influenced the resilience skills and strategies of the social workers. Given that the social workers' lived experiences were examined in their natural environments, using a contextual research design was appropriate. It enabled the researcher to interact with the participants in their workplaces and collect extensive data (Holtzblatt & Beyer, 1997). The ecological system theory framework fitted in well with this design. Exploring the social workers' relations and connection with the environment, enabled the researcher to comprehend how social workers' resilience tactics and talents are influenced by their surroundings.

The research methods applied comprised the following:

- The study's **research population** was geographically, limited to the City of Johannesburg and consisted of the social workers employed by the Department of Social Development, resulting from a cost- and time-effective choice.

- To obtain **the sample**, the researcher used specific inclusion criteria in purposefully selecting the participants. The size of the sample was determined by means of the data saturation principle and the sample consisted of 13 volunteers. This allowed the researcher to collect rich data from the participants, which helped to address the study's research question. The participants submitted suggestions on how to help social workers enhance their resilience skills and tactics in addition to rich information about these areas.

181

- After recruiting and finding the study participants, the interview guide developed was subjected to **pilot testing** to test it. Two social workers meeting the inclusion criteria, participated in the pilot testing. They were interviewed by means of the interview guide and participants found the questions clear and understandable. The researcher transcribed the interviews and presented them to the study supervisor, who was also content that no changes were needed to the interview guide. The pilot testing offered the researcher a strong indication that the interview guide was applicable to the study and that the interview guide would enable the researcher to answer the research questions. The results of these interviews were not incorporated in the data collected for the research.

- **Data collection** took place by conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants, assisted by an interview guide with open ended questions. The following interviewing skills and techniques were used during the interviews, to get the participants to open up and elaborate on what they were sharing, establishing rapport, active and attentive listening, probing, follow-up questioning, clarifying, and language. The researcher's use of semi-structured interviews in conjunction with her interviewing techniques was appropriate and advantageous for the study.

- To **analyse the data,** the researcher respectively utilized the eight steps of Tesch (in Creswell & Poth, 2018:183-184). These eight steps were employed to methodically investigate and organize the data, enabling the researcher to comprehend the significance attributed to the experiences and perceptions of social workers regarding their resilience abilities and tactics. It also facilitated the researcher in streamlining the process of analysing vast quantities of obtained data and enabled the researcher to examine the data in a systematic and coherent manner. During this process, the themes were apparent.

- To ensure the **rigour and trustworthiness** of the study, the model of Lincoln and Guba (in Lietz and Zayas, 2010), encompassing the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability was used. In order to enhance the credibility of the study, an impartial coder was employed to analyse the data. The themes were discussed with the study supervisor and agreement was reached on eight themes, thirty-one sub-themes, and

nine categories. Ultimately, these measures collectively enhanced the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191).

- Conducting research in an **ethical manner** and treating participants with honour, dignity, and respect is a moral obligation for conscientious social researchers (Resnik, 2020). The researcher adhered to the necessary ethical principles by obtaining the participants' informed consent to participate in the research, protecting their identity and confidentiality, assuring voluntary participation, handling information appropriately, and ensuring beneficence. Additionally, arrangements were made to provide debriefing services in the event that participants needed them. The researcher ensured that ethical views were integrated throughout all stages of the research procedure.

The research findings on the topic under study were addressed in Chapter 4 in order to fill the gap in the social work body of literature and research. The research findings are presented in a pattern of themes, sub-themes, and categories.

Chapter 4: Research findings

The findings of the study were derived from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the 13 participants who provided rich information on their resilience skills and strategies. Nine of the participants were females and only four were males. The literature presented in Chapter 4 confirmed that globally, social work is a female dominated profession. All participants have been working at the Department of Social Development's offices in Johannesburg for more than two years. Eight participants had been employed for more than five years, and seven participants have been employed for more than ten years. Regardless of their years of experience, the participants have their own and different resilience skills and strategies in coping with their challenges at work. Eight themes emerged from the findings, namely: the participating social workers' explanation of their main functions and responsibilities at the Department of Social Development, their account of their experiences of their jobs, their understanding of the concept 'resilience', their descriptions of the challenges they experience, how the challenges affect their personal and work life, the skills

and strategies they use to deal with challenges, the effectiveness of these skills and strategies, and suggestions on what their employer can do, to support them. The researcher's general conclusion concerning the identified themes in relation to the goal of the research, is that it is evident that social workers should be equipped with sufficient resilience skills and strategies to deal with their work challenges and that, social workers are aware of their resilience skills and strategies.

The identified themes consist of sub-themes and categories, which are summarized as follows:

Theme 1: Social workers' main function and responsibilities at the Department of Social Development

Based on the information provided by the participants, three distinct roles of social workers were identified: intake workers, field social workers, and social work supervisors. These roles all involve providing services to families and children. Intake workers are described as social workers responsible for problem assessment and at the initial point of clients' contact. Field social workers, focus on aspects such as foster care placement and the placement of vulnerable children at risk in alternative care settings. Social work supervisors oversee the work of both the intake and field social workers. All these roles entail statutory work and involve working with vulnerable individuals and communities, earning these social workers the title of statutory social workers.

These social workers engage in case work, group work, and community work. Resilience skills and strategies are crucial for statutory social workers, given their significant responsibilities in providing social work services in various domains, including child welfare, child protection, and support for the elderly, people with disabilities, and individuals struggling with substance abuse issues.

Theme 2: Social workers accounts on their experiences of the job and responsibilities

Participants' accounts of their job experiences indicate that social workers have diverse perceptions, attitudes, and passions when it comes to their profession. Some participants described having positive or rewarding experiences, highlighting that they learnt valuable skills through their work that helped them overcome challenges. Despite the difficulties they encounter, these social workers remain committed to their tasks.

Conversely, other participants shared negative or challenging experiences they faced in their jobs. This includes witnessing abuse among service users and, in some cases, being subjected to abuse themselves, either from service users or supervisors. These experiences underscore the demanding nature of the social work profession.

In conclusion, participants regarded social work undeniable as a profession filled with challenges, but also as incredibly rewarding. The participants' accounts reflect a range of experiences, both positive and negative. To enhance the effectiveness and well-being of social workers, it is crucial for the employer to provide them with.

Theme 3: Social workers' explanation of their understanding of the concept "resilience"

Based on the responses of the participants to this theme, it is concluded that the participants possess a clear understanding of the concept of 'resilience'. Furthermore, the nature of their profession underscores the importance of social workers having resilience skills and strategies.

The participants' narratives about the concept of 'resilience' revealed a range of perspectives, all of which were associated with facing challenges. Some participants described resilience as the ability to bounce back from challenges, while others saw it as a means of recovering from difficulties. Words like adapt, conquer, and survive were used to express their understanding of resilience.

Considering the participants' accounts, the researcher concludes that they generally comprehend resilience as the capacity of an individual to recover from and adapt to challenging circumstances. Therefore, individuals who can bounce back, recover, withstand, and adapt to difficult situations are considered resilient. It is further concluded that resilience skills and strategies are fundamental for social workers, and the participants' demonstrated understanding of the concept itself indicates that they are well-aware of its significance in their profession.

Theme 4: Social workers, description of the main challenges experienced in their jobs

Based on the participants' accounts of the challenges they face in their jobs; the researcher can conclude that social workers realise that they have a significant responsibility in providing services to clients. However, this responsibility is consistently hindered by the numerous challenges they encounter in their work environment.

To support this conclusion, the participants highlighted a multitude of challenges in their roles, including resources shortages, limited office space, overwhelming caseloads, staff shortages, and inadequate supervision. It is evident that social workers face a myriad of challenges in their line of work, which in turn impede their ability to effectively serve clients.

It is concluded that the working conditions of social workers are unfavourable, as they frequently lack the necessary 'tools' to perform their duties effectively. The issue of excessive caseloads has a profound impact on both the personal and professional lives of employees. Participants' complaints about managers' and supervisors' poor cooperation are concerning.

Theme 5: Social workers' accounts of how the challenges they experience affect their work and personal life

Based on the responses provided by the participants in relation to this theme, it is concluded that the challenges faced by social workers in the Department of Social Development have significant

effects on both their professional and personal lives, regardless of factors such as gender, age, or year of experience. It is important to note that individuals, even within the same profession, may perceive and respond to challenges differently. What may be viewed as highly challenging by some, can serve as motivation for others. Therefore, it is concluded that when choosing a career, one's passion for the field and a person's personality traits play a crucial role.

This conclusion is reinforced by the participants' statements, where some mentioned that their passion for the job allows them to overcome challenges without being significantly affected. Conversely, others admitted entering the profession due to external factors, such as financial support, and as a result, they struggle more with challenges, which in turn affects both their work and personal lives.

Furthermore, the researcher concludes that addressing the effects of these challenges is vital for the well-being and job performance of social workers. The participants detailed the organizational and personal outcomes of these challenges. On an organizational level, these challenges can lead to breaches of clients' confidentiality, work delays, job dissatisfaction, poor performance, client complaints, strained relationships with colleagues, and withdrawal from work-related tasks. On a personal level, social workers may experience stress, demotivation, moodiness, the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life, strained relationships with family members, burnout, depression, and even health problems.

Theme 6: Social workers' accounts on the skills and strategies they use to deal with challenges

This section of research is fundamental as it delves into the resilience skills and strategies employed by social workers when confronted with challenges. It explores the various methods that social workers use to navigate and cope with challenges at work. While the skills and strategies employed may differ from one social worker to another, each has their own approach to thriving in demanding circumstances. The participants have expressed using various methods through which they overcome challenges, highlighting the diversity of resilience-building approaches.

Among the skills and strategies identified in the study, several stand out as crucial for assisting social workers in building resilience. Self-care and time management are found to play a pivotal role in helping social workers become resilient. Additionally, taking breaks and spending time with friends and family members are viewed as essential strategies for managing challenges. The study also accentuates the importance of support from colleagues and supervisor in bolstering social workers' resilience. This highlights the significance of fostering positive relationships among co-workers and ensuring that supervisors provide the necessary support.

Furthermore, family support and spending quality time with loved ones are identified as vital for helping social workers effectively cope with work-related challenges and maintain focus on their job. Consequently, it is concluded that the support of colleagues, supervisors, and family members constitutes major resilience skills and strategies that aid social workers in coping with and recovering from challenges. Moreover, self-compassion, effective time management, and spending time with loved ones are recognized as key strategies that empower social workers to remain resilient despite the challenges they face. Additionally, learning to prioritize tasks, taking necessary breaks, and experiencing job satisfaction are seen as essential skills that contribute to social workers' resilience. Therefore, the researcher concludes that the resilience skills and strategies employed by social workers are constructive and play a pivotal role in enabling them to find meaning in their work, effectively cope with challenges, and maintain resilience.

Theme 7: Social workers' explanations of the effectiveness of the skills and strategies they use

Based on the responses provided by the participants in these aspects, it can be concluded that the resilience skills and strategies employed by social workers are highly effective in aiding them to maintain resilience in the face of challenging situation in their work. These skills and strategies are instrumental in helping social workers address both personal and work-related challenges while also reducing their stress levels, ultimately enabling them to perform their job duties more effectively.

The findings indicate that these resilience skills and strategies empower social workers with a sense of confidence in their role, motivating them to work diligently and facilitating effective problem-solving. They also serve to alleviate stress, foster a sense of peace, and fortify social workers, allowing them to provide effective services to their clients.

As a result, it can be concluded that effectiveness of resilience skills and strategies is contingent on the individual, with different approaches providing useful to different social workers in helping them navigate challenges. It is evident that these skills and strategies are indispensable in the daily lives of social workers, providing them with the strength to excel in their personal and professional realms. They instil confidence and contribute to the retention of social workers within their profession.

Theme 8: Social workers' suggestions for how Department of Social Development can enhance their resilience social workers' resilience skills and strategies

Based on the information shared by the participants, it is evident that social workers have a solid understanding of the concept of resilience, and many of them exhibit resilience in their own lives. They are not only aware of what resilience entails but can also provide real-life examples of their resilience.

Considering the participants' input on this matter, several practical recommendations have emerged. Some participants suggested that management should offer them the necessary support to enhance their resilience. This support could include improving working conditions, making essential resources readily available, and ensuring that the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is visible and accessible to all employees. Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of involving social workers in decision-making processes and policy development, given their first-hand knowledge of clients' needs. They also advocated for reasonable and manageable caseloads to enable social workers to provide effective services to the community.

Considering these recommendations and the participants' response, it can be concluded that the suggestions put forward by the participants are both sensible and feasible. They primarily target

employers, particularly the Department of Social Development (DSD). These suggestions emphasize the need for support from management, active involvement of social workers in decision-making processes, and the accessibility of support service like the EAP.

In conclusion, the researcher affirms the importance of management providing appropriate support to employees to enhance their job satisfaction, well-being, and resilience skills and strategies. Constructive communication channels between employers and employees should be established, and EAP services should be made more visible for easy access by employees. These actions can contribute to a healthier and more resilient workforce in the field of social work.

5.3   LIMITATIONS

The limitations inherent to this study offer critical insight into the extent and applicability of the research findings, thereby enhancing the understanding of the study's boundaries. Limitations in a study are the restrictions that arise due to the chosen research methods and design. These are aspects of the study that are beyond the researcher's control Miles (2019:2). It is imperative to incorporate this section as it serves as a beacon of transparency, shedding light on potential constrains and biases that might have impacted the research outcomes. Consequently, it enacts a significant part in safeguarding the trustworthiness and credibility of the research.

The limitations of this research mainly relate to the boundaries within which the research was conducted and include the following:

- One notable limitation pertains to the **demographic composition** of the research participants. The study primarily consisted of black social workers, with a notable gender imbalance, comprising of nine females and only four males. The demographic skew introduces a limitation as it may not fully represent the diverse range of experiences and perspectives that social workers from diverse backgrounds might bring to the topic.
- Another limitation stems from the **geographic focus** of the research. The study was exclusively conducted within the Johannesburg offices of the Department of Social Development. This geographic restriction was imposed due to resources constrains.

Consequently, the findings may not be readily generalizable to other geographic areas, regions, or non-governmental organizations, potentially limiting the broader applicability of the research.

- Additionally, the qualitative research approach adopted for this study has **limitations related to generalization**. The in-depth exploration of social workers' resilience skills and strategies was contextualized within a specific setting, thereby constraining the ability to extrapolate findings to a wider context. Furthermore, the researcher intentionally sought participants who could provide comprehensive insights into the research topic. While this enhanced the depth understanding, it may limit the ability to generalize findings to a broader population of social workers.

5.4   VALUE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the study makes a substantial contribution to the social work profession. It explains the experiments social workers face and the coping mechanisms they use by offering a thorough examination of their resilience techniques and strategies. The creation of interventions, policies, and support programmes that are specifically designed to meet the needs of social workers can be greatly aided by this understanding. Furthermore, because the geographic and demographic variations found in this research demonstrate the diversity within the profession, the study emphasizes the significance of taking context-specific aspects into account when creating such initiatives. The results also highlight the critical role that support networks play in assisting social workers in overcoming the difficulties they face in their line of work and in their personal lives. This understanding can direct organizational procedures and guidelines meant to support employee retention and well-being.

In summary, despite some limitations, this study provides insightful information about the resilience techniques and abilities of social workers. It establishes the groundwork for upcoming studies and projects aiming to strengthen the resilience of the profession for the benefit of social workers and the disadvantaged groups they assist. In order to ensure the validity and credibility of

research findings, it is imperative to acknowledge these constraints, as Walliman (2016:231) correctly put it. It is also via these limitations that opportunities for development and improvement occur.

5.5   RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study was conducted with the aim of understanding the demanding nature of social work jobs and how social workers manage to excel in their roles. For the Department of Social Development to take into account and recognize the resilience skills and strategies employed by social workers, the suggestions that following, are put forward.

Recommendations for social work practice

The following recommendations are made for social work practice about the value and role of resilience skills and strategies employed by social workers:

- Institutions that offer social work education and training must encompass resilience skills and strategies in their curricula, as some social workers seem not to understand that applying resilience skills and strategies are vital in practising social work for them to prosper in their jobs.
- For professional development, successful supervision, and improved productivity, employers of social workers must give precedence to constant support and training of their social workers.
- Institutions and individuals that are accredited social work continued professional development (CPD) providers, must develop training programmes targeted at developing resilience skills and strategies used by social workers, how to develop them and how to brace them. This can be presented in the form of workshops or forums.

Recommendations for the department

The following recommendations are made to the management of the Department of Social Development to assist its social workers in developing and strengthening their resilience skills and strategies:

- Efforts should be made by the management of the Department of Social Development to address excessive caseloads and improve workload management. This could involve employing more social workers to reduce caseloads, improving administrative processes, and providing appropriate resources to meet the demands of the job.

- Measures should be put to help social workers cope effectively with high caseloads, such as reducing the ratio of cases per social worker through hiring of additional staff to address staff shortages.

- The Department and its management should prioritize providing the essential tools and resources necessary for social workers to deliver effective and efficient services to clients. Additionally, to uphold professional standards, it is crucial for the department to ensure safe, secure, and user-friendly working conditions for both employees and service users.

- The Department of Social Development must develop strategies to mitigate the effects of challenges on social workers. Such strategies are essential not only for retaining social workers in their roles but also for enhancing their resilience and well-being.

- The management of the Department of Social Development must ensure that EAP services are put in place, are operative, resourceful, and brought to the attention of employees. This can contribute expressively to employees in utilizing the services.

- Social workers should be actively involved in the decision-making processes within the department. Their insight and experiences can provide valuable input into policy development and decision-making that directly affects their work.

- The management of the Department of Social Development should encourage their social workers to maintain a healthy work-life balance. This includes ensuring reasonable working hours, promoting time off, and providing flexibility when needed.

Recommendations for social workers

The following recommendations are made to social workers develop and utilise their resilience skills and strategies:

- Social workers should learn to identify the kinds of resilience skills and strategies that they need, to deal with challenges. This can be done through self-introspection, learning from other colleagues or in a form of training.
- They should take initiative and engage in activities that will help them identify the kinds of skills and strategies that underpin their resilience. Social workers must attempt to understand and know themselves first to thrive in their job.
- Social workers should initiate support groups where they meet frequently to discuss issues that concern them and give each other necessary support.

Recommendations for future research

The following recommendations are made for future research about the resilience skills and strategies employed by social workers:

- Based on the responses from the participants, it is clear that there are several factors that influenced the resilience skills and strategies of social workers. However, there is still not much information available on what reinforces the resilience skills and strategies in social workers. This is mainly because this study focused on exploring the kinds of resilience skills and strategies social workers have. Thus, further research on how to develop resilience skills and strategies in social workers and how to support them still needs to be done.
- Furthermore, it would be judicious to investigate this topic at a national level to gain a perspective of the national situation regarding resilience skills and strategies of social workers, including the proposition they have on how to develop them and their sustenance.

5.6   CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this concluding chapter of the dissertation, the research journey commenced with an introductory overview, encompassing a general introduction, problem formulation, and an introduction to research process. A concise recapitulation of the contents covered in the preceding four chapters is provided. Additionally, a summary and conclusion of the research process and methodology are presented, along with a discussion of the study' limitations.

This chapter serves as the culmination of the research report, delivering summaries and conclusions derived from the identified themes, sub-themes, and categories. It is followed by a set of recommendations addressing practice, organizational aspects, considerations for social workers and potential avenues for further research.

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ADDENDA

ADDENDUM A: RESEARCHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Research title: **EXPLORING RESILIENCE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH WITHIN DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG.**

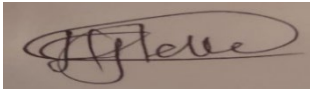Researcher: Lucy Rhabela Mangolele

Hereby, I Lucy Rhabela Mangolele, ID number 790911 0725 087 in my personal capacity as a researcher, acknowledge that I am aware of and familiar with the stipulations and contents of the

Unisa Research Policy
Unisa Ethics Policy
Unisa IP Policy

and that I shall conform to and abide by these policy requirements

Signature: …………………………….

Date: 2022/03/13…………………………

ADDENDUM B: PERMISSION LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

GAUTENG PROVINCE
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: Dr. Sello Mokoena
Tel: XXXXXXX
File no.: 09/06/22

Dear Ms L Mangolele

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

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

Your application on the research on "EXPLORING RESILIENCE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS: A QUALITATIVE RESERCH WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG" at the University of South Africa has been considered and approved for support by the Department as it was found to be beneficial to the Department's vision and mission. The approval is subject to the Department's terms and conditions as endorsed on the 1 3ᶠⁱ November 2019.

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

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

We look forward to a value adding research and a fruitful.

With thanks

Dr Sello Mokoena
Director: Research and Policy Coordination
Date: 0/6/ 2022

ADDENDUM C: REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

Research title: EXPLORING RESILIENCE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH WITHIN THE DEPAFRTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG.
Researcher: Ms. Lucy Rhabela Mangolele

Ethics clearance reference number:
Research permission reference number:
2022/05/13

Title: EXPLORING RESILIENCE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG.

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Lucy Rhabela Mangolele student researcher, and I am doing research with Dr Taetske Calitz senior lecturer in the Department of Social Work towards a master's degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled "EXPLORING RESILIENCE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG."

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?
I am conducting this research to explore the resilience skills and strategies of social workers.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

Since you are well-informed about the topic, I hereby approach you with the request to participate in the study. The study will be conducted at the Department of Social Development. You are chosen as a participant for this study about the resilience skills and strategies of social workers as you are one of the social workers employed in the Department. For you to decide whether to participate in this study research project, I am going to provide you with information that will help you understand the need and aim of this study. Furthermore, you will be informed about the type of questions that might be asked as well as the possible risks and benefits involved in participating in this research project. Your rights as a participant in the study will also be explained. The study originated from social workers who experienced challenges in their profession but who remained resilient. The aim of this study is to explore these resilience skills and strategies for social workers. The information gathered from this study will contribute toward providing support to social workers and enhancing their resilience skills and strategies. It will further assist the Department of Social Development to develop support programs to retain social workers for the profession.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?
The study involves audio-recording semi-structured interviews. Should you agree to participate, you would be requested to participate in a face-to-face interview that will be conducted at a place and time that will be convenient to you. During the interview, the following questions will be directed to you:
When beginning the interview, the participants' biographic information will be obtained by asking the following questions:

- How will you prefer to be called during the interview?
- How old are you?
- At which university, did you obtain your qualification?
- How long have you been working as a social worker?
- What is your position at work?

Once the biographical information from the participants is obtained, the following flexible questions will be asked:

- What are your main responsibilities as a social worker at the DSD?
- How would you describe your experience with regard to your job as a social worker?
- What is your understanding of the concept "resilience"?
- What are the challenges you often encounter in your job?
- How do these challenges affect your job performance?
- What resilience skills and strategies do you use to deal with these challenges that you experience?
- Tell me more about the effectiveness of the resilience skills and strategies you currently use.
- What do you suggest can be done by your employer to assist you to enhance your resilience skills and strategies?

The session will approximately take about 60 to 90 minutes.

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

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Your decision to participate, or not to participate will not affect you in any way now or in the future and you will incur no penalty and/or loss to which you may otherwise be entitled. If you agree to take part, you have the right to change your mind at any time during the study.

As a researcher, I also have a right to exclude you from the participating in the study without regard to your consent if you fail to follow the instructions or if the information you have divulged is emotionally sensitive and upsets you to such an extent that it hinders you from functioning physically and emotionally in a proper manner. Furthermore, if your participation at any time affects your safety in any way, you will be excluded from this study.

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

Please also take note that this is a research project and there is no form of funding involved in this study. However, as a result of participating in this study, you can benefit from more information on the resilience skills and strategies of social workers.

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

This study poses no risk to the participants. Although it involves direct participation, there will be no form of physical activity that will be done. The only foreseeable risk or harm may be minor discomfort. However, it is within your right to alert the researcher any time you feel discomfort about the questions asked or any other action that you feel poses harm or makes you feel discomfort. Should you feel that the information you have shared left you feeling emotionally upset, or disturbed, I am obliged to refer you for counselling and debriefing session (Should you agree) with a scheduled debriefer.

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

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research [this measure refers to confidentiality]

OR 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 audio records and transcripts of the interview will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Identifying information will be deleted or disguised in any subsequent publication and/or presentation of the research findings.

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

With your permission, the interviews will be audio-recorded. The recorded interviews will be transcribed word-for-word. Your responses to the interview, both the audio-recorded and transcribed versions will be kept strictly confidential. The audio records will be coded to disguise any identifying information. The records will be stored in a locked office at the Department of Social Development and only I will have access to them. The transcripts will be made available to my research supervisors, and an independent coder with the sole purpose of assisting and guiding me with this research undertaking. My research supervisor and the independent coder will each sign an undertaking oath to treat the information shared by you in a confidential manner.

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet Department of Social Development for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. The audio records and transcripts of the interview will be destroyed upon the completion of the study. Identifying information will be deleted or disguised in any subsequent publication and/or presentation of the research findings.

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

There is no financial benefit in participating in the study. You will not also be required to pay anything in participating in this study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Social work at UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish. Without the approval of the committee, the study cannot be conducted. Should you have any questions and queries not sufficiently addressed by me as the researcher, you are more than welcome to contact the Chairperson of the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at UNISA. His contact details are as follows:

Professor M.A. Antwi, with telephone number: 012 429 6739 and Email: antwima@unisa.ac.za, or post your question or queries to:

The Chairperson, Human Science, College of Human Science, P.O Box 392, UNISA, 0003.

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

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings or receive any further information, please contact me Lucy Mangolele, the researcher on 082 335 6941, Email: rhabelam79@gmail.com. The findings are accessible for two years. Please do not use home telephone numbers. Departmental and/or mobile phone numbers are acceptable.
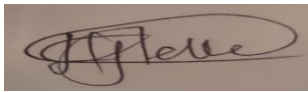
You have the right to ask questions concerning the study at any time. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Calitz, my supervisor on 012 429 8768, email: calittm@unisa.ac.za.

Please contact the research ethics chairperson of the Human Science committee, Professor M.A. Antwi, if you have any ethical concerns. His contact details are as follows: telephone number: 012 429 6739, Email: antwima@unisa.ac.za.

Based on all the information provided to you above, and being aware of your rights, you are asked to give your written consent should you wish to participate in this research study by signing and dating the information and consent form provided herewith and initialing each section to indicate that you understand and agree to the conditions.

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

Thank you

Lucy Rhabela Mangolele (Researcher)

Contact details: (082 335 6941)

(011 527 0814)

(58544747@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

ADDENDUM D: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

Research title: EXPLORING RESILIENCE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG.

Researcher: Ms. Lucy Mangolele

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.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree with the recording of the Semi-structured interview.

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

Participant Name & Surname…………………………………………. (please print)

Participant Signature……………………………………………. Date…………………

Researcher's Name & Surname… Ms. Lucy Mangolele

Researcher's signature...... .... Date...2022/03/13

ADDENDUM E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Biographical questions

- How will you prefer to be called during the interview?

- How old are you?

- At which university, did you obtain your qualification?

- How long have you been working as a social worker?

- What is your position at work?

Topical Questions

- What are your main responsibilities as a social worker at DSD?

- How would you describe your experience with regard to your job as a social worker?

- What is your understanding of the concept "resilience"?

- What are the challenges you often encounter in your job?

- How do these challenges affect your job performance?

- What resilience skills and strategies do you use to deal with challenges that you experience?

- Tell me about the effectiveness of the resilience skills and strategies you currently use?

- What do you suggest can be done by your employer to assist you to enhance your resilience skills and strategies?

ADDENDUM F: DRAFT REQUEST FOR DEBRIEFER

Enquires: Ms. L.R. Mangolele

Contact No: 082 335 6941

Date: 2022.06.15

Dear Mrs. Adua Salim

RE: REQUEST TO DEBRIEF PARTICIPANTS FOR RESEARCH STUDY

My name is Lucy Rhabela Mangolele, a master's student at the University of South Africa. I am doing research with Dr. T.M Calitz, senior lecturer in the Department of Social Work (UNISA). I am requesting you to provide debriefing counselling to my research participants in case the need arises. My research topic is **"EXPLORING RESILIENCE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG."**
Your participation will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Ms. L.R. Mangolele
Researcher

ADDENDUM G: DEFRIEFING ACKNOWLEDGMENT LETTER

Enq: Mrs. Adua Salim

Tel. (C): +
Email**:**

Dear Ms. Mangolele

 Re: Acceptance for Debriefing services

 This letter serves as a confirmation that I Mrs. Thapelo Adua Salim with SACSSP registration no: 10XXXXX have accepted your request regarding the debriefing services to your research participants. I am willing and happy to support your research participants with no cost.

Please ensure that you remind me at least a week before data collection begins so that I prepare myself to receive your participants when the need arises.

Best wishes to your research Journey.

Kind regards

Thapelo Adua Salim

………………………………

Mrs. T.A. Salim   **2022.07.05**

ADDENDUM H: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNISA | university of south africa

COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

25 April 2022

Dear Ms. Lucy Rhabela Mangolele

| NHREC Registration # : |
| Rec-240816-052 |
| CREC Reference # : |
| 58544747_CREC_CHS_20 22 |

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 25 April 2022 to 25 April 2025

Researcher(s): Name: Ms. Lucy Rhabela Mangolele
                Contact details: 58544747 @mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Dr T.M. Calitz
                Contact details: 082 449 8877

Title: EXPLORING RESILIENCE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Degree Purpose: MA

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

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

The proposed research m ay now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher (s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles express ed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

4. An y changes that can affect the study -related risk s for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants privaoy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to   any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant   to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South   African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de -identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in   future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.

7. No fieldwork   activities may continue after the expiry date   (25 April 2025). Submission of a completed research ethics pro gress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference   number   58544747 _CREC_CHS_2022   should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research pa   rticipants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Signature: Khan

Prof. KB Khan
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature: PP AHMudzusi

Prof K. Masemola
Exécutive Dean: CHS
E-mail: masemk@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 2298

ADDENDUM I: 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:	L R MANGOLELE
Assignment title:	Chapter 4 DRAFT
Submission title:	Exploring resilience skills and strategies of social workers
File name:	AutoRecovery_save_of_Dissertation_Mangolele_5_turnitin.docx
File size:	534.02K
Page count:	184
Word count:	58,625
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Submission date:	01-Nov-2023 10:56AM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID:	2214022007

EXPLORING THE RESILIENCE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES OF
SOCIAL WORKERS

by

Lucy Rhabela Mangolele

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Supervisor
Dr T.M Calitz

SEPTEMBER 2023

REPORT

Exploring resilience skills and strategies of social workers

ADDENDUM J: EDITOR'S LETTER

DR J LOMBARD

RESEARCH REPORT CRITICAL READING, LANGUAGE & TECHNICAL EDITING

Cell: 078 116 8018
e-mail: berto@woodcarving.co.za

136 Erich Mayer St
PRETORIA NORTH
0182

EDITOR'S LETTER

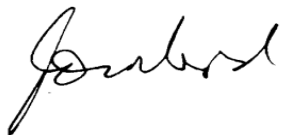EDITING OF MSW DISSERTATION: MANGOLELE, LUCY RHABELA (S/NO 35981849)

This is to certify that I have critically read and edited Ms. Lucy Mangolele' s dissertation for the degree Master of Social Work (MSW) at UNISA, entitled:

Exploring the resilience skills and strategies of social workers

The following aspects of the dissertation were edited:

- Spelling
- Grammar
- Sentence structure
- Logical sequencing
- Consistency of layout
- Consistency of referencing and in-text references
- Consistency and completeness of reference list

The responsibility to do the corrections and implement my comments and suggestions correctly, remains that of the student.

DR J LOMBARD
12 December 2023