

**Strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage
their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector**

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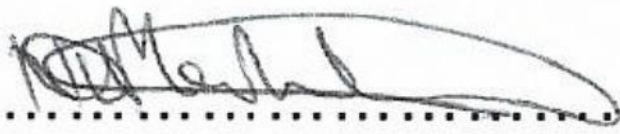
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I declare that this dissertation is my own work and all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

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



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Signature:

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I thank my Lord and saviour for prospering me and giving me hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV). I also thank the following people for assisting me throughout my research journey:

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my daughter (Nonjabulo Mahlangu), my mother (T.J. Mota-Mahlangu), all social workers within the South African NGO sector and THHG (The House of His Glory) church.

ABSTRACT

Social work services in South Africa are rendered by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), amongst various other entities. To ensure effective service delivery to clients, social workers working in the NGO sector are supervised. For supervision to occur, both the supervisor and the supervisee enter a supervision relationship and as such, locating the supervision relationship is crucial. This study thus explored strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector. A qualitative approach following an exploratory, descriptive, and contextual design was employed in the study and data collected by means of semi-structured interviews. The data was analysed using Moustakas' steps for data analysis as outlined by Holloway and Wheeler (2010:286). Guba's and Lincoln's model was employed for data verification. Ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, harm to participants, debriefing, management of information and beneficence were followed in the study.

The study established that participants employed different strategies to manage their supervision relationships. The participants' strategies included holding regular supervision sessions, early interventions, confrontation, communicating, understanding, tolerance, and resorting to disciplinary procedures. Based on the findings, recommendations for the social work profession, policy makers and future research are proffered with the goal of improving social work supervision relationships.

KEY TERMS:

Strategies, social work, social work supervisor, social work supervisee, supervision relationships, non-governmental organisation.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1. Introduction and background to the study

Supervision is practiced within various disciplines and departments in organisations (Engelbrecht, 2010:324). The importance of supervision in the workplace lies in the opportunity it gives to supervisees to reflect on their experiences and to determine what skills they lack and where effort should be directed (Langa & Graham, 2010:178). Supervision is a formal arrangement between the supervisor and supervisee, providing the supervisee an opportunity to discuss their work experiences, achievements, and challenges with someone more experienced than they are (Launer & Hogarth, 2015:573). Grant, Schofield, and Crawford (2012:528) concur that supervision strives to enhance professional competence, support professional development, and cater for accountability to the public.

Supervision is also critical to social work practice (Marc, 2012:172). In social work, supervision facilitates the formation of competent, effective, and accountable practice (Wonnacott, 2012:507). Doel (2010:101) confirms this observation and states that supervision in social work should not be underestimated, stressing the importance of ensuring that the supervisor is familiar with the 'social work landscape' and that the supervisee should then be someone willing to know the social work terrain. Supervision ensures the welfare of clients and that supervisees develop their full potential in their profession (Richard, 2016:6). Bernard and Goodyear (in Pierce, 2016:137) endorse that developing new skills, gaining more knowledge, and understanding about one's profession should be the focus of supervision.

In social work, supervisors utilise the functions of supervision in their undertakings. The functions of social work supervision include administrative, educational, and supportive guidance (Goddard & Hunt, 2011:422). Kadishin (in Engelbrecht, 2010:3) concurs that the functions of supervision include administrative supervision, educational supervision, and supportive supervision and report that these functions are intended to ensure that the organisation reaches its intended goals. Bernard and Goodyear (2014:132) share the same sentiment that assessing the learning needs of the supervisee (educational supervision), providing the supervisee with support (supportive supervision) and evaluating the performance of the supervisee

(administrative supervision) are critical for effective management. Doel (2010:102) and Engelbrecht (2010:3) also confirm that the goal of supervision is reaching effective service delivery, which is administrative supervision, training and educating supervisees to improve their knowledge and skills. This entire set of tasks is designed such that supervisees are motivated to improve their performance and are supported throughout the process.

Supervision takes place in a context where there is a supervisor and a supervisee. The most important constituent of social work supervision is the supervision relationship, which according to Wonnacott (2012:13), is at the heart of this matrix. Social work supervision involves a social work professional in the capacity of a supervisee who is under supervision of a senior professional with more experience and knowledge than the former. Social work supervision is, according to O'Donoghue (2015:8), a professional relationship aimed at improving, developing, supporting, and providing for the welfare of the supervisee and social work practice, by means of interactive and reflective processes that focus on supervisee practice, professional development, and wellbeing.

The supervision relationship is viewed by Beinart (2014:259) as a mutual agreement in a verbal or written contract between the supervisor and supervisee. The contract contains supervision goals and the roles that each one is obliged to execute to actualise the intended mission. Bernard and Goodyear (2014:121) and Milne and Reiser (2017:105) also stress the need for a supervision contract, viewing it as an agreement between the supervisor and supervisee on the goals and tasks to be performed by each one of them in augmenting accountability.

According to Corey, Haynes and Moulton (2010:52) and Holloway (in Cliffe, Beinart & Cooper 2014:78), the components of a supervision relationship include the interpersonal relationship which entails the dimensions of power and involvement, the phase of the relationship and the supervisory contract which consists of a set of expected roles, and tasks. Bording (in Greenberg & Tomescu 2017:46) states that a strong emotional bond ensues in the concerted effort to reach specified goals agreed upon by the supervisor and supervisee. The contract sets out tasks that must be

performed and these comprise the most critical components of the supervision relationship.

In this study, the conviction is that a healthy supervision relationship yields effective supervision outcomes. According to Bernard and Goodyear (2014:13) the effectiveness of supervision is palpable when the supervisee's professional development is ensured, and the client's welfare is protected. According to Corey et al (2010:52) supervision is effective when it is conducted ethically, and constructive feedback is provided in an environment that is supportive and non-judgmental. Wonnacott (2012:507) concurs and states that supervision cannot be effective unless the supervisee is willing and motivated to learn, honest in presenting their work and trusts both the supervisor and the supervision process.

The effectiveness of supervision can also be increased through the deployment of several strategies and Topor, Ahnallen and Dickey (2017:41) contend that such strategies consolidate trust in the supervision relationship and enhance the ultimate supervision. A strategy is defined as a plan, a perspective and a pattern that is employed to direct action into achieving certain goals of the future and to defend or fight an opponent (Gcaza & von Solms, 2017:3). In concert, Berger, Quiros and Benavidez-Hatzis (2017:7), understand that strategies refer to the mechanisms used by supervisor and supervisee to sustain the supervision relationship, thereby increasing effective supervision. Chandler (in Bolisani & Bratianu 2017:236) refers to a strategy as a plan used to determine long term goals and objectives of the organisation, planning of appropriate structures of action and the allocation of resources necessary for reaching these goals.

Some of the strategies outlined by Topor et al (2017:41) include, discussing the power differences, the components of the supervision relationship and the feelings of inadequacy arising from supervisees. According to Berger et al (2017:7), self-exploration, ongoing open dialogue, balancing power, creating relational safety, and sharing contemporary trauma knowledge can also be employed as strategies of managing a supervision relationship.

Managing a supervision relationship is important in social work because it entails handling and nurturing the relationships (Lockwood, 2019:4). According to Watkins, Hook, Ramaeker and Ramos (2016:29), managing the supervision relationship is viewed as a fixing process where the threat is recognised, approached and fixed. Managing the supervision relationship can also begin at contracting phase and when this happens, it has been found by Tebes, Matlin, Migdole, Farkas, Money, Shulman, and Hoge (2011:191,196) that this increases job satisfaction and effective management of stress in both the supervisor and the supervisee.

In South Africa, social workers across different fields are exposed to supervision. However, this study was conducted in the NGO sector located in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The study strives to identify strategies employed by supervisors and supervisees in managing their supervision relationship within the NGO sector. According to Goddard and Hunt (2011:422), many social workers are employed in the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector where they enter supervision relationships either as supervisors to their subordinates or are themselves supervised. The NGO sector is defined by de Beer and Swanepoel (in Matsimbi & Mtapuri 2014:712), as a sector that is not formed nor controlled by the government but by people who come together, identify a need in the community and establish an NGO to fulfil an identified need.

In South Africa, the NGO sector has grown into a massive network since its inception in 1913 following the extreme poverty caused by the white government's legislation barring blacks from owning more than thirteen percent of the land (Mazibuko, 2000:3). According to Statistics South Africa (in Volmink & Van der Elst 2017:8), there were 127 000 registered NGOs in South Africa by the year 2014. Five years later, in 2019, there were 208 294 registered NGOs in the South African social welfare sector (NPO Directorate, 2019). These numbers show an exponential growth of NGOs. A statement by Minister Zulu (2023), the Minister for Social Development, confirms that the number of registered NGOs in South Africa has increased to 270 313 as of 23 February 2023 (Department of Social Development, 2023). It is critical to note here that not all NGOs in the sector engage the services of a social worker.

The responsibility of NGOs is defined by Chenhall, Hall and Smith (2010:737) and Richard (2016:6), as that of empowering the poor and providing support and welfare services to vulnerable groups. In South Africa, particularly in the Gauteng Province, this sector services approximately 620 745 clients every year (Department of Social Development, 2019).

Patel (2012:610) differentiates between formal welfare organisations which are subsidised by the state, Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) funded by religious bodies and Community-Based Organisations, which receive funding from private donors. According to Patel, Schmidt and Hochfeld (2012:215-216), formal NGOs are created to provide government-like services to the public. CBOs are not as large as the formal NGOs (for example, day care centres), and FBOs are largely governed by the rules of the religious organisation to which they belong such as the church. The mission statements of FBOs are synchronised with the faith group that the organisation is registered under (Van der Merwe & Swart, 2010:80). In this study, the project focused on formal welfare organisations.

Most employees in the formal welfare NGOs are social workers (Patel et al., 2012:217). Social workers in these NGOs render different services to diverse groups of the public and such services include guaranteeing the wellbeing of abused, neglected, orphaned and vulnerable children, adoption, foster care services, training services, youth care, social development, family care, caring for the disabled, early childhood development, counselling, and advocacy. In South Africa, social work posts in the formal NGO sector are determined by the funding provided by the Department of Social Development as stipulated in the NPO Organisation Act 71 of 1997 (Department of Social Development 2019). To apply for funding for supervisor and social worker posts, the NGO must be registered in terms of the NPO Act 71 of 1997, have a proven track record of rendering social services and have a clear target (input and output) that is aligned with the annual performance plan of the Department of Social Development, while an additional registration in terms of the applicable legislative requirement is compulsory for specialised services such as adoption (Department of Social Development, 2019). As of 2018, the social work personnel, particularly social work practitioners and social work supervisors in the NGO sector were 630 and 13 000 respectively, according to the South African Council for Social

Service Professions (2019). Drawing from these statistics it can therefore be estimated that there are more than 630 supervision relationships in the NGO sector, which are the specific focus of this study. The number of supervision relationships mentioned here indicate that supervision relationships are essential in the NGO sector. Confirming this status, Bernard and Goodyear (2014:83) mentions that as supervision is important in the NGOs, so is the supervision relationship. The supervision relationship in the NGO sector usually involves a social work practitioner and a supervisor who is also a social work professional (O'Donoghue 2019:102). According to Engelbrecht and Höjer (2010:780), the supervisor in the NGOs is normally a female qualified social worker with five years or more of social work experience who reports directly to the director and enters a supervision relationship with a social work practitioner. The NGOs normally follow the supervision framework developed by the Department of Social Development and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (Department of Social Development & South African Council for Social Service Professions, 2012:3).

Against this backdrop, the researcher strove to examine social work supervision relationships in the NGO sector, focusing on ways in which the contractual obligations should be managed. Following the recommendations of Shaw, Groene and Berger (2019:205), the focus of employing strategies in supervision relationships within the NGO sector must explore methods and processes followed by the NGO in delivering services, with the goal of improving safety and quality service delivery. NGOs can also employ strategies with the aim of implementing novel ways of training for supervisors and supervisees, for the future growth of supervisees and for effective supervision (Trepal, Tello, Haiyasoso, Castellon, Garcia & Martinez-Smith 2019:27). These researchers demonstrate that employing strategies to manage the supervision relationship culminates in effective supervision. The researcher anticipates that the findings of this study complement the novel strategies currently in vogue for social workers and social work supervisors in their quest for developing sound, constructive, meaningful, and professional relationships. This researcher is of the view that sustainable working relationships between the supervisors and supervisee constitute the acme in effective social work service delivery. Unfortunately, though, the supervision relationship is not without challenges, justifying the initiative to undertake this study.

1.2. Problem formulation

The need to uncover the strategies employed by supervisors and supervisees in managing their supervision relationship within the NGO sector in this study lies in the fact that the NGO sector plays a vital role in South African communities. According to Richard (2016:6), NGOs are developed to empower the poor. South African NGOs help in delivering social services to communities (Patel et al, 2012:215) and in the fight against poverty (Matsimbi & Mtapuri 2014:711). Kumaran, Samuel, and Winston (2012:32) further add that the NGO sector helps in ensuring that the living standards of South Africans are improved.

Though the NGO sector plays a vital role in South Africa communities, financial constraints pose huge impediments in the sector. The researcher observed that NGOs are under pressure from government to provide and guarantee effective services, regardless of their financial constraints. This is largely because formal NGOs depend on state funding, and only partially funded by private businesses and funding agencies such as the National Lottery and Motsepe Foundation. They also receive donations from foreign governments. The implication of this is that funders sometimes determine where their money ought to be spent, leaving the NGOs vulnerable.

Volmink and vander Eist (2017:8) confirm that while having to provide services to the vulnerable groups, lack of finances threatens the survival of NGOs since these institutions are largely dependent on government funding. Francie (2010:503) also rationalises that financial challenges stem from the fact that NGOs receive government subsidies that are often inadequate to cover the full range of the costs of the NGO.

The 2008 world economic recession plunged the social welfare sector into a crisis because private donors, businesses and funding entities could no longer fund the sector (Hagos & Smit, 2013:104). This dire situation has had adverse effects in South Africa. According to Chenhall et al (2010:749-750) financial austerity compelled NGOs into reducing employment, a situation that led social workers into performing additional duties as accountants over and beyond the prime responsibility of social work. Matsimbi and Mtapuri (2014:711) concur that the financial challenges alluded to above compromised both the functionality and sustainability of the NGOs because they could

not perform without resources. As a consequence, some NGOs had to close some of their branches or to shut down completely.

These financial challenges also had an impact on employees. According to Francie (2010:503), employees do not get paid satisfactorily and they lack a sense of security in their jobs, leading to stress. Volmink and van der Elst (2017:19) state that NGOs do not employ skilled employees because the salaries offered do not attract experts to join the sector. Consequently, the fraternity of NGOs is unable to provide services benchmarked at expert level. According to South African Non-Government Network (SANGONET), an estimated 30% (amounting to 36 000) of the country's 122 000 registered NGOs had to close due to financial challenges before 2018 (SANGONET 2018), a situation that has detrimental effects on the profession because it exposes social workers to unemployment, making it difficult for them to re-enter the field.

Over and above the stated challenges in the sector, the supervision relationship has its own challenges too. According to Eschleman, Bowling, Michel and Burns (2014:363) these could lead to conflict between the supervisor and the supervisee. Grant et al (2012:528) perceive that the challenges in supervision as ranging from negative feelings such as supervisee feeling ill-treated by the supervisor or vice versa. Another challenge faced in supervision relationships includes supervisee perceiving the supervisor as abusive (Martinko, Harvey, Brees & Mackey 2013:132). According to Carlson, Ferguson, Hunter and Whitten (2012:851-852), supervisee resistance, deviant behaviours, dishonest reporting by supervisees are also common challenges that call for further and sensitive scrutiny in supervision relationships. In some instances, supervisees perceive that they are harmed by the supervisor, or the supervision process itself is another challenge according to Ellis (in Ladany, Mori & Mehr 2013:43) while Eschleman et al (2014:363) state that there is a possibility that supervisees may feel victimised, bullied, and undermined. These feelings and perceptions could end up nurturing negative attitudes in supervisees towards their jobs, lowering job performance, and developing an increased deviant behaviour.

The researcher has observed that the supervision relationship is subject to the challenges faced by the supervisor in managing the organisation and by the pressures experienced by social workers in their rendering of services to clients amidst a host of

other hurdles faced by the organisations in attaining set goals and visions. According to Francie (2010:503), new social workers receive their first round of training and supervision from the NGOs and then leave the NGOs due to low salaries. In essence this means that the NGOs have become fertile training ground used temporarily to earn the critical experience required by the government. This means that the supervision relationships nurtured in the supervisees ended abruptly and new ones should begin without any hope of retaining them long enough. This complicates the journey towards competence and such a situation becomes emotionally exacting on the social work supervisors and often leaves them feeling demoralised.

The challenges catalogued above may lead to disrupted supervision and inadequate supervision because the relationships are not quite sustained. Grant et al (2012:528) adds that supervision is viewed as problematic if it is characterised by confrontational criticism, direct attribution of blame, unclear agendas and instructive rather than interactive, reciprocal learning processes. According to Langa and Graham (2010:178) such supervision may work to demotivate, a factor leading to an increase in supervisee burnout and negative experiences in the supervisees. Such a complex scenario often results in the supervisee resenting work. Grant et al (2012:528) are also convinced that negative experiences and problems that arise in supervision often work hinder the professional development of essential and core competencies.

For the supervision relationship to become meaningful, the challenges mentioned above need to be excised. According to Beinart (2014:257) a strong and well-conducted supervision could lead to meaningful supervision experiences that make it seamless to reach the goal of shaping competent social workers. Chiller and Crisp (2012:237) adds that good supervision also helps in checking what it is that the supervisee needs to be putting more effort in without causing the supervisee to feel inadequate. Such an ideal enables the supervisee to identify spaces and opportunities for improvement. Consequently, according to Yin (in Goddard & Hunt 2011:424), how supervisors and supervisees deal with these challenges depends on the strategies that they chose to employ in managing their supervision relationship.

Against this backdrop, the researcher undertook a literature search to justify this study. The researcher consulted e-books, journal articles and dissertations to determine the

extent of research focused on this topic. From this search, amongst others, the following articles relating to the topic were reviewed: “Building and sustaining the supervisory relationship” by Beinart (2014), “Enhancing postgraduate supervision through a process of conversational inquiry” by Spiller, Giselle and Bruce (2013), “PhD students experiences of thesis supervision in Malaysia: Managing relationships in the midst of institutional change” by Krauss and Ismail (2010), “An examination of people of colour supervision dyads: Racial identity matters as much as race” by Jernigan, Green and Helms (2010), “Managing multiple relationships in supervision: Dealing with the complexity” by Abela and Scerri (2010), “On psychotherapy supervision competencies in an international perspective: A short report” by Watkins (2013) and One supervisor, two students: Experiences and anxieties of PhD journeys by Hove and Nkamta (2017).

Other articles perused included “Providing competency training to clinical supervisors through an interactional supervision approach” by Tebes, Matlin and Migdole (2011), “Supervisor social skills and supervision outcomes” by Bambling and King (2014), “The competent psychoanalytic supervisor: Some thoughts about supervision competences for accountable practice and training” by Watkins (2014), “Defining and understanding clinical supervision: A functional approach” by Milne and Watkins (2014), “Creating courses in constructivist supervision” by Olson, Mistler and Korcuska (2011) and “Managing difficulties in supervision: Supervisors perspective” by Grant , Schofield, and Crawford, S. (2012).

Although the above-mentioned articles relate to supervision relationships, there are only two articles that the researcher accessed that interrogated specifically the concept of managing supervision relationship. Even so, these studies were not conducted in the NGO sector, and they were also not conducted in South Africa. Furthermore, of the articles identified, none referred to strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees in the management of their relationships. It was this paucity in research on the specific niche that compelled this current study. The researcher understood that if the sought strategies could be uncovered in South Africa, the realisation would enhance the Africanisation agenda. Okeke (2010:39-52) argues that the Africanisation implies that Africans should minimise the habit of seeking

answers to unanswered African questions from outside Africa. Against this backdrop, the problem statement for this study was framed as follows:

There is limited information relating to strategies employed by supervisors and supervisees in managing their supervision relationships in the NGO sector of South Africa.

It was anticipated that through this study, social workers and social work supervisors could gain insights into possible strategies they could employ in maintaining effective social work competencies through robust and lasting relationships.

1.3. Rationale for the study

The researcher is a social worker by profession, who has in her quest to gain experience, volunteered in a few organisations. Since the researcher had no social work experience, she has had to work under the supervision of a senior social worker. This is where she experienced some of the challenges in supervision relationships in the NGO sector as amplified in the preceding segments.

The researcher also learnt that the major challenge in the NGO sector in South Africa is that NGOs depend on sponsors and donors for funding who are themselves not able to fully fund all their operational needs. For instance, in the organisation where the researcher completed her practical training as a student social worker, the duties included cleaning since the organisation did not have enough funds for hiring a cleaner. In another NGO where the researcher was a volunteer social auxiliary worker, the duties of social workers included cooking for the orphaned and vulnerable children.

The researcher has also experienced supervision challenges in her previous employment. In her previous job the researcher was assigned the responsibility of supervising employees working under the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). The researcher's relationship with her subordinates was beset by various challenges such as supervisees reporting false information, giving wrong information to clients, absenteeism and not reaching the target, and as such she struggled to maintain any good working relationships with them. This responsibility and the fact that the researcher did not have extensive experience in supervising the work of others

prompted the researcher to read more on supervision to identify in the literature successful strategies employed by social workers and supervisors in managing the supervision relationship. Unfortunately, the researcher could not find any, justifying the need for this study.

1.4. Theoretical framework

A theory is a set of explanations about concepts that are related to each other, and it is useful for understanding a phenomenon under study (Holloway & Wheeler 2010:11). A theory serves the purpose of viewing, defining, informing, and understanding the phenomenon under study (Creswell 2016:117; Neuman, 2014:56; Silverman 2013:223). According to Anfara and Mertz (2015:23), a theoretical framework refers to the lens that help the researcher to better understand the research process utilised in examining the phenomenon under study. Heeding the advice of these researchers, this study adopted the resilience theoretical framework to guide the research journey.

Resilience is defined by le Coze (2019:8) as the ability to rise, recover and return to normal functioning after a knock down. Resilience theory was developed after observing that two people, groups or organisations facing similar challenges do not react to these challenges in similar ways. That is, while one person/organisation may adjust and adapt to the challenges, another may be broken by the same challenges. In a nutshell, resilience theory focuses on the fact that organisations could return to normal functioning after facing a challenge (Wiig & Fahlbruch, 2019:1).

There are three 'moments of resilience' in supervision, and these include the supervisor and supervisee who must realise that there is a challenge (situated moment); create structures for them to recover from the challenge (structural moment) and together implement those structures to reformulate (system moment) according to Macrae (2019:17). Kyriakidis and Dang (2019:44) states that 'knowing what has happened', 'knowing what to look for', 'knowing what to expect' and 'knowing what to do' are fundamental cornerstones of a resilient relationship. Echoing Fletcher and Sarkar (2011:3), the preceding discussion moves the resilience theory from the challenges facing the organisation and/or supervision relationships to the identification of the strengths that the supervision relationship and the organisation engenders, which in turn enable it to overcome.

The ability of a person or organisation to build on these fundamental cornerstones of the resilience theory symbolises that the organisation and individuals can develop and employ strategies for dealing with challenges. In a supervision context Yin (in Goddard & Hunt 2011:424) proposes that organisations should develop strategies (building worker resilience) to manage supervision relationships.

The choice for this theory acknowledges that challenges may arise in supervision relationships, and both the supervisor's and supervisee's have abilities to develop strategies relevant to managing their supervision relationship. Through resilience theory, the researcher has, for the purpose of this study, also sought to identify challenges of supervisors and supervisees (situational moments), determined by the mechanisms that they employ in recovering (structural moments) and reformulate (system moments) their relationship and subsequently clarify how supervisors and supervisees mitigate the challenges (Knowing what to do).

It is therefore anticipated that this study conveys that even though supervisors and supervisees face challenges in their supervision relationships and working in a sector that has its own challenges, they can still be resilient and construct new realities of dealing with their challenges in a positive manner.

1.5. Research question, goal and objectives

The researcher determined and developed the research question after serious consideration of the ultimate goals of this undertaking. This is detailed in the following discussion.

1.5.1. Research questions

A research question refers to that statement which prompts the researcher to look for answers (Kumar, 2011:18). The focus of the research question is on what the researcher seeks to understand (Stake, 2010:71). According to van der Stoep and Johnston (2009:4), it is important that the researcher commences the study with a research question to narrow down the focus of the topic. Against the preceding arguments, the research question for this study was formulated as follows:

What strategies are employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationship within the South African NGO sector?

To answer this research question, the goal of the study was also explicated to guide the investigation process.

1.5.2. Research goal

The goal of a research study refers to the exact intention for conducting a specific study (Creswell, 2014:136). According to Holloway and Wheeler (2010:41), this purpose is crafted in the form of a statement about what it is that the researcher strives to achieve by conducting the study. In qualitative research, a research goal is either to explore, describe or understand people's phenomenon (Neuman, 2014:104). Consequently, the goal of this study was designed to:

Explore strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector.

Through this study the researcher adds new knowledge on the supervision relationship of social work supervisors and their supervisees as other supervisors working in related contexts may adapt, renew, and employ the strategies identified and examined in their own supervision relationships. To attain the said goal, there are step-by-step activities undertaken towards achieving the goal hence the subsequent discussion.

1.5.3. Objectives of the study

Objectives serve as directory to the right kind of information that helps the researcher to answer the question (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2018:512). According to Kumar (2011:11), objectives are stated in words that are action-oriented, crafted to break down the research question into small aims that together help to reach the one ultimate objective of the study. Drawing from the preceding notion of objectives, the following objectives were developed to:

- Frame theoretically the phenomenon of social work supervision and the supervision relationship.

- Explore and describe strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees in managing their supervision relationship within the South African NGO sector.
- Generate recommendations suitable for social work practice, policy makers and future research.

1.6. Ethical considerations

Ethics constitute the set of rules that guide how researchers treat participants, handle data and conduct themselves during a study, with a prime focus on matters of right and wrong (Vanderstoep & Johnston 2009:12). Qualitative research involves people, therefore, the duties of protecting participants rests on the researcher (Creswell, 2009:87). Protecting participants means building trust, eliminating threats, considering the rights of participants, ensuring that there is no harm experienced by participants, and protecting the researcher's own integrity and avoiding misconduct (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010:54, Neuman, 2014:145). The researcher ensured that participants' rights to voluntary engagement, confidentiality and anonymity were protected. The researcher also ensured that participants were protected from harm and that they knew exactly what the study required from them. The following section clarifies how participants were protected.

1.6.1. Informed consent

Informed consent refers to the right of participants to choose whether to participate in the study or not, considering all information about the study having been shared with them (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010:59). No participant should be coerced to participate in a research study against their will (Neuman, 2014:151). The researcher conformed to this ethical requirement by compiling informed consent forms for both social workers and supervisors, which are attached as Addendum C and D. The forms explained all information regarding the study ranging from the goal and benefits of the study, the criteria for inclusion, the method used for data collection and the fact that meeting the criteria for inclusion in the study did not automatically mean that participants were compelled if they did not want to. To show that the participants were not coerced into participation, they signed the consent to participate, which is attached as Addendum E.

To further ensure the informed consent, the researcher offered participants an opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point of the data collection process. This opportunity to withdraw is defined by Bhandari (2021) as the right of participants to leave the study at any given time when they feel that, for some reason, they cannot continue the study. This issue is covered in item no four (4) of the informed consent form and the researcher explained this right to withdraw to participants during the contracting phase so that participants were aware that since participation is voluntary, so is continuing. The fact that participation is voluntary and up to the participants indicates that discontinuing participation should also be their prerogative (Leavy, 2017:35). Once participants agreed to participate in this study, the researcher accounted for confidentiality.

1.6.2. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is ensured when a researcher assumes the duty of hiding identifying information that can enable outsiders to identify participants (Leavy, 2017:35). This is confirmed by Bhandari (2021) who adds that the researcher can only share participants' information with other people when the participant has given their full consent. The researcher in this study ensured that participant information was kept private by storing their signed informed consent forms and audio recordings in a safe and lockable cabinet where only the researcher has access. The researcher also ensured that all electronic files were password protected. The researcher in the final research report thus only shared information that could not enable other people to trace the participants as advised by Cohen et al (2018:130).

1.6.3. Anonymity

Participants have the right to remain anonymous and not have their identities disclosed to outsiders (Bhanduri, 2021). According to Cohen et al (2018:129), anonymity is ensured when the information shared by participants does not give room for the researcher and other people to identify them. The researcher in this study used pseudonyms as replacements for participants' real names, and to interpret and ascribe identities to recordings and transcripts as advised by Creswell (2014:138) and Hamersley and Traianou (2012:108). During the data analyses process, the researcher also used codes to identify participants to ensure that outsiders could not

identify participants as advised by Nachmias and Nachmias (in Cohen et al., 2018:129).

1.6.4. Harm to participants

Harm to participants in a research study refers to any protocol that harms participants physically, psychologically, emotionally, professionally, and personally (Cohen, et al., 2018:127). According to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:12), harm to participants can be avoided by ensuring that the benefits of participation are greater than the risks and that where risks cannot be avoided, they are as minimal as possible. Of the five possible harms that participants could encounter, there was a possibility of encountering emotional discomfort. Should the researcher have felt that the information that the participant divulged was emotionally sensitive and upset the participant to such an extent that it hindered the participant from functioning physically and emotionally, the researcher was prepared to debrief participants and/or to eliminate such a participant from further involvement in the research. Fortunately, there was no participant who showed signs of distress following the interviews.

1.6.5. Debriefing

Debriefing refers to the opportunity to help participants get back to their normal selves after the session and return to the original mind-set that they were in prior to the interview (Dunn, 2013:262). According to Tracy (2013:161), it is important to spend enough time on debriefing at the end of every interview. The researcher in this study thus provided time for debriefing, feedback and discussion of any feelings triggered from the study. In the event that there were participants who were severely distressed during the discussion, then the researcher was prepared to refer participants to a social worker in City of Tshwane Municipality where they would have received further therapeutic support. Details of the debriefer from the City of Tshwane Municipality are attached as Addendum F. However, as alluded to earlier, there was no participant who requires this service and as such, none was referred for further therapeutic support.

1.6.6. Management of information

Management of information refers to the way in which the researcher handles participants' information (Hamersley & Traianou 2012:123). Dunn (2013:65) advises that participants' information should be managed and kept in a secure place even after

the study has been completed and advises that audio records be destroyed such that no one can access them in future. In this study, data such as field notes, documents, audio tapes and transcripts were and continue to be kept in a secure, locked cabinet where only the researcher alone has access. All electronic documents were and still are protected by a password. This information shall be kept for the duration of five years as per the University's research policy.

1.6.7. Beneficence

Beneficence refers to the researcher's duty to ensure that the benefits of the study are maximised while minimizing the risk (Barrow, Brannan & Khandhar 2022:2). Beneficence speaks to the question of what the research study does for the participants and community and how the study helps the participants (Cohen et al., 2018:128). Both social workers and supervisors shall benefit from this study by gaining significant knowledge regarding the phenomenon of supervision. That is, supervisors and supervisees who face challenges in their supervision relationships identify strategies that they could employ in their own supervision relationships. In turn, productive relationships would contribute to effective services delivery.

1.7. Clarification of key concepts

The following are definitions of key concepts that are used in this study.

- **Strategies**

Gartner (in Gcaza & von Solms 2017:2) uses a battlefield to define a strategy. He states that a strategy refers to the art of distributing and applying military means to fight the enemy or to defend oneself against the enemy. A strategy also refers to channelling an organisation into a plausible future, which requires the capability to "see beyond" (Bolisani & Bratianu, 2017:237). In this study, echoing Aithal (2016:171), a strategy is a plan employed by the supervisor and the supervisee in the NGO sector to ensure the sustainability of their supervision relationship with the aim of overcoming whatever threatens this relationship.

- **Social worker**

According to Pierson and Thomas (2010:493), a social worker is a paid professional whose work is to provide care, protection, counselling, social support,

and community development work with the aim of helping people to overcome challenges that they face in their lives. According to Folgheraiter and Raineri (in Chereni, 2015:1), a social worker is a professional whose work includes improving the living conditions of the poor. The Department of Social Development and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (2012:9) have contextualised their description of social work to the South African context and perceive a social worker as a person who has obtained a social work Bachelor's degree from a recognised university, is registered as a social worker by the Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) in terms of Chapter 2 section 17 of the Social Service Professions Act (Act No 110 of 1978) and renders welfare services to the poor. For this study, the description by the Department of Social Development and the SACSSP was adopted.

- Social work supervisor

A supervisor is a person in the organisation, who is in a senior position and whose duties include checking the work of subordinates and provides feedback during the supervision process (O'Donoghue, 2015:142). Corey et al (2010:23) shares a similar view and states that a supervisor is someone who performs the role of a coach, a guide or/and a mentor. For this study, the definition of supervisor by the Department of Social Development and the Council for Social Service Professions (2012:18) was adopted. The Department defines a social work supervisor in South Africa as one whose qualification and years of experience meet the requirements for supervisor post and has been given authority to supervise social work practitioners.

- Social work supervisee

A supervisee is the person accountable to the supervisor, reports to the supervisor, is expected to offer account of their work to the supervisor and receives feedback from the supervisor (Pilling & Roth 2014:25; O'Donoghue 2015:142). A supervisee in this study refers to a social work practitioner who works under supervision of a social work supervisor, reports, and receives feedback, support, and training from the supervisor.

- Supervision

Supervision refers to the process where a more-knowledgeable other (supervisor) has the responsibility of checking the work of another (supervisee) (Pierson & Thomas 2010:507) with the purpose of encouraging supervisee's learning (Bernard & Goodyear 2014:83). According to the Department of Social Development and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (2012:18), supervision refers to the process where the social work supervisor performs educational, supportive, and administrative roles in supervising the social work practitioner with the purpose of ensuring competent rendering of social work services. For this study, this description of supervision offered by the Department of Social Development and the South African Council for Social Service Professions was adopted.

- Supervision relationship

A supervision relationship refers to the affiliation entered into by the supervisor and the supervisee regarding the workplace and tasks that must be performed by each one in reaching the goals of the organisation (Beinart, 2014:257). The supervisory relationship is also defined by Lofstrom and Pyhalto (2012:1) as a tool that gives a context for developing supervisees and ensuring that they adhere to ethical behaviour. In this study, a supervision relationship referred to that which exists between the supervisor and the supervisee expressly formed for the purpose of professional and competent practice.

- Non-Governmental Organisations

An NGO is an abbreviation for a non-government organisation, which refers to an institution that renders state like services to the community but is not owned by the state (Richard, 2016:9-11). A non-government organisation is also defined by Matsimbi and Mtapuri (2014:712) and Volmink and van der Elst (2017:8) as one that is privately set with the aim of providing government like services to the poor where the government lacks capacity. For this study, an NGO is an establishment that is not formed by the government but provides government like services to vulnerable groups.

1.8. Structure

This research is divided into five chapters.

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the study and formulates the problem, statement of the problem, rationale for the study, research question, research goal and objectives, research approach and design, ethical considerations, clarification of key concepts, structure of the study, and the limitations.

Chapter 2: This chapter offers the literature review of relevant and recent studies on the research problem.

Chapter 3: This chapter presents the research methodology followed in the study. This entails the presentation of the actual application of the research processes and methods.

Chapter 4: This chapter offers the research findings and provides significant connections to and derivations from the literature.

Chapter 5: This chapter summarises the research findings relating to the strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships in the South African NGO sector, the conclusions of the study and recommendations for social work practice, policy makers and future research.

1.9. Limitations of the study

The limitations of a research findings clarify the gaps that must be accounted for. The discussion in the limitations of the study identify the lacunae in the research project and researchers are advised to not shy away from stating these gaps (Ross & Zaidi 2019:261), because there is no research study that is completely free of limits (Sirisilla, 2022:1). It is also important to note that limitations can result from the study's design and/or findings (Neuman 2014:27; Cresswell 2016:490). These descriptions of limitations evidence that no matter how careful a researcher can be, limitations are always there. Consequently, the researcher in this study identified the following limitations:

- The literature review chapter also employed several secondary sources. This is because there were very few original sources that the researcher could locate.
- The researcher intended to use an independent coder to ensure consistency of the study, but due to limited finances, this procedure was decided against. For this study, the researcher received guidance from her research supervisor who had access to the data and findings. Through checking the collected data against the research findings, the research supervisor was able to verify the study's consistency.

CHAPTER 2:

Literature review of supervision as a concept and practice in social work

2.1. Introduction

Social workers in South Africa are employed in different contexts such as government organisations, non-government organisations (NGOs) and in private practice. In their different contexts, social workers fulfil different functions such as the protection of children's rights, protection of the rights of the elderly and ensuring that social services are rendered to all people regardless of colour or background. According to the children's Act No 38 of 2005, social workers have the responsibility of ensuring that children are placed in safe places where they cannot be violated or abused in any form. For the elderly, social workers have the duty of establishing a framework that empowers and protects older persons and maintaining their rights, wellbeing, and any other matter that relates to them in accordance with the provisions of the Older Person's Act No 13 of 2006.

The responsibilities mentioned here thus suggest that regardless of the context of employment, social workers need to be supervised to ensure quality service delivery. For this reason, supervision in social work settings is important because it has an impact on the quality of services rendered to clients (Department of Social Development & the South African Council for Social Service Professions, 2012:14 & Engelbrecht, 2010:458). Supervision also serves as an usher, helping employees in moving from an experienced environment which can be the university or an old position to an inexperienced environment which can be the workplace (Melman, Ashby & James 2016:2). This transition needs to be conducted carefully to ensure that the overall goals of supervision are reached.

In this chapter, I provide an in-depth discussion of supervision as a phenomenon by reviewing existing literature on social work supervision. The researcher also drew from her own experience as a former social work supervisee at the City of Tshwane Indigent Programme at the Mamelodi office in Gauteng province of South Africa to illustrate the practical part of supervision in social work. This chapter discusses general information on supervision, supervision relationships and the need to employ specific strategies in managing supervision relationships for the nurturing of effective supervision. The

discussion commences with a focus on general information on supervision and later, a brief discussion of the NGO sector as a context in which supervision occurs.

2.2. General information on supervision

It is evident from above that supervision is important as it helps ensure that there is quality service delivery. The goals of social work supervision and the functions of supervision are discussed on the following sections.

2.2.1. The goals of social work supervision

The main goal of supervision is to create a safe space for supervisees to gain the required experience that assists them to function independently in the future (Corey et al., 2010:3). Supervision also helps the supervisee to grow professionally (Eagle & Long 2014:475) and use the skills gained to increase the client's benefits (Marzano et al., 2011:2). In social work, the goal of supervision is to enhance the development of social workers into becoming competent and independent social service providers (Engelbrecht, 2019:312), and to ensure that service users receive quality services (Department of Social Development & South African Council for Social Service Professions, 2012:16).

The goals of supervision differ according to settings. That is, they require that supervisors play different roles and responsibilities depending on the stage at which the supervision relationship has developed (Corey et al 2010:3). Various authors espouse different goals of social work supervision. According to Ahmady and Seidi (2021:66), the goal of clinical supervision is to ensure client safety, teach the supervisee, improve standards, identify supervisee challenges, and progress, and support the supervisee. Hafford-Letchfield and Engelbrecht (2018:329) share similar goals on supervision and mention the power to capacitate the social work supervisees, develop the profession and provide support to supervisees. Also sharing similar but not exact goals of supervision is Watkins and Milne (2014:239), who suggest that the goal of social work supervision is to improve the supervisee's knowledge, skills, and social functioning in order to provide quality service to clients. Furthermore, Corey et al., (2010:5) discusses four goals which are designed to (a) promote the social work practitioner's growth and development, (b) protect the client's welfare, (c) monitor social work practitioner's performance and act as gatekeeper for the social work

profession, and (d) empower the social work practitioner to self-supervise and work on reaching goals independently. For this chapter the goals outlined by Corey are discussed in detail because they encapsulate the essence of supervision.

- **Promoting social work practitioner's growth and development**

Supervision is used as a way of ensuring that social workers develop competency in their field (Watkins & Milne 2014:6), increase their knowledge of the profession and the service they deliver (Van Rensburg, Mayers & Roets 2016:4), and enhance their professional development as practitioners (Bernard & Goodyear 2014:13). According to Corey et al (2010:5), this goal enables the social work practitioner to gain the kind of knowledge that enables them to practice independently in the future and to protect the welfare of clients.

- **Protecting the client's welfare**

Supervision serves as a way of ensuring that the welfare of both current and future clients is protected by ensuring that supervisees provide competent and professional services and intervene whenever the client's welfare is compromised (Corey et al., 2010:5). According to Bernard and Goodyear (2014:13), this goal requires the supervisor to monitor the services rendered by supervisees to their clients. This means that the supervisor has a duty of checking whether social work practitioners deliver quality services or not and intervene where necessary (Watkins & Milne 2014:4).

- **Monitoring supervisee performance and acting as gatekeeper for the profession**

Monitoring supervisee performance and gatekeeping for the profession refers to the duty of the supervisor to ensure that supervisees meet the criteria for getting licenced to practice as a social worker, do not behave in ways that paralyse and disrupt the social work profession, and render services that are of good standard (Corey et al., 2010:7). According to Watkins and Milne (2014:4), this goal requires that the supervisor should always keep the wellbeing of the profession in mind.

- **Empowering the supervisee to self-supervise and carry out these goals as an independent professional**

This goal refers to the duty of the supervisor to arm the supervisee with the necessary skills that will enable them to self-supervise, self-evaluate, and implement interventions independently, allowing the focus of the supervision process to move to mature goals (Corey et al., 2010:7). Watkins and Milne (2014:4) concur that the skills learnt during supervision should increase the supervisee's professional functioning and independence.

From this discussion, it is evident that supervision serves different goals which are directed at reaching the overall organisational goals. Like the resilient theory's tenets set in positive results regardless of challenges faced (Wiig & Fahlbruch 2019:1), the goals of supervision also focus on what positive outcomes may be reached regardless of the journey that the supervisor and supervisee may have to walk. While reaching these goals is important, it is also crucial to ensure that the functions of supervision are reached. These functions are discussed in detail below.

2.2.2. The functions of supervision

There are three functions of supervision widely accepted in the profession, which are administrative, educational, and supportive supervision (Weiss-Dagan, Ben-Porat & Itzhaky 2018:341). This is because supervision is an educational, administrative, and supportive process that helps to ensure that professionals develop fully to allow for quality service delivery (Caras & Sandu, 2014:76). The functions are developed to clarify and calibrate the specific roles played by the supervisor (Amour, 2018:23). In concurring with this author, Kilminster and Jolly (2000:829) states that the functions of supervision were developed to define the supervision concept. That is, they give meaning and direction to the process of supervision while clarifying what it is that needs to be achieved and how.

While it is not clear who first coined the three functions of supervision, Kadushin (in Engelbrecht, 2010:4) states that these three functions of supervision existed as early as 1901. According to Hawkins, Turner and Passmore (2019:7), the three functions of supervision being administrative/managerial, educative and supportive functions were

introduced into the social work profession by Kadushin in the 1970s. These authors also state that in the year 1988, these functions were adopted and slightly modified to normative, formative, and restorative functions of supervision by Procter. This, however, did not mean the end of the administrative, educational, and supportive functions, but gave more options to choose from, as both functions as defined by Kadushin and Procter are useful. According to Maluleke (2021:43), authors determine what function they support and determine the order of importance, but whatever the choice, the end goal is ensuring that the function chosen is in line with the supervisee's level of development.

Since this study is conducted within the South African NGO sector, the functions of supervision as espoused by Kadushin are interrogated further because they are the functions that have been widely accepted within the South African social work fraternity. According to the Department of Social Development (2012:24), the three functions of social work supervision include the administrative, educational, and supportive purposes. These meanings are discussed hereunder.

2.2.2.1. Administrative function of supervision

Administrative supervision focuses on the policies of the organisation and on the evaluation of supervisee's level of performance on the work assigned (National Association of Social Workers, 2013:8), and ensures that the work done by the supervisee is professionally executed and in line with the organisation's policies (Engelbrecht, 2019:311). Berger and Quiro, (2014:104) concur with the preceding views that delegation of tasks, monitoring how well supervisee is adhering to the organisation's policies and evaluating the performance of the supervisee are the roles performed to fulfil this function. Vec, and Žorga (2014:104) are also of the view that the focus of the function is on direction and evaluation of supervisee's professional work and evaluation of the quality of service delivered by the supervisee. This involves role definitions, clarifying responsibilities and carrying out agreements.

2.2.2.2. Educational function of supervision

Educational supervision, according to Vec and Zorga (2014:104) and Engelbrecht (2019:311), is about increasing supervisee's skills, development, and competency. This function concentrates on educating supervisees about the organisation's

beneficiaries (Berger & Quiro, 2014:297) with the result being the enrichment of supervisee's knowledge, skills and values which in turn encourage delivering quality services (Engelbrecht, 2019:311). According to Vec et al (2014:104), educational supervision is also about ensuring that supervisee professional skills and development can be depended upon for life by explaining tasks to be carried out by supervisee and monitoring supervisee's work.

2.2.2.3. Supportive function of supervision

Supportive supervision is about identifying both work-related and personal challenges that may hinder the supervisee in rendering effective services, and provide emotional support and/or ways to help the supervisee to address the identified challenges (Berger & Quiro 2014:297). According to Vec et al (2014:104), this function focuses on the emotional wellbeing in relation to work with clients and enables supervisees to acknowledge their own cognitive and emotional response to professional issues. That is, to help supervisees to mobilize their emotional energy required for providing effective services (Engelbrecht, 2019:311). This function of supervision is viewed by Usadolo and Usadolo (2018:3) as an important way of increasing supervisee motivation.

The functions show the role that supervision plays in the workplace and its importance because they infer that if one is not fulfilled, the overall goals of supervision which is quality service delivery will not be met (Caras & Sandu 2014:76). The goals of supervision may also not be achieved if the supervisor and supervisee do not have a good working relationship, hence the discussion in the following section.

2.3. The social work supervision relationships

The discussions above evidence that the supervision relationship is of importance for supervision to occur. The supervision relationship and the components of a supervision relationship are discussed below.

2.3.1. The supervision relationship

The supervision relationship between the supervisor and supervisee is the cornerstone of the supervision process because without such an affiliation, supervision is not possible. Corey et al (2010:52&92) concur that supervision relationship is at the

centre of the supervision process and serves as an essential foundation for supervision. The effectiveness of supervision, according to Van Ransburg, Mayers and Roets (2016:3), depends on this important foundation, which is defined as the nature of the relationship existing between the supervisor and the supervisee. Greenberg and Tomescu (2017:4) describe the supervision relationship, similarly, confirming that it refers to the supervision alliance between the social work supervisor and supervisee which requires that both parties identify the focus for supervision sessions, identify opportunities for intervention and intervening when necessary.

The social work supervision relationship serves as a pillar that holds every aspect of supervision (Bernard & Goodyear 2014:88). The benefits of this relationship are seen in the quality of services rendered to clients and the relationships that supervisee have with clients (Caras & Sandu 2014:76). Consequently, according to Corey et al (2010:52-53), the supervision relationship is the foundation for the supervision process and serves as a model for the relationship that the social work practitioner enters with their client. These authors further view the productiveness of this relationship as a determining factor, which defines the effectiveness of supervision interventions.

2.3.1.1. The roles of the supervisor/supervisee

There are multiple roles that the supervisor/supervisee play, with each role intended to meet a specific goal. In agreement with this, Corey et al (2010:22) states that the title of a supervisor combines and blends many roles that change when the focus of the supervision process changes. When explaining the different roles played by the supervisor and the supervisee, Engelbrecht (2019:315) makes mention of coaching (involving instruction, structure, and support), mentoring (involving learning through identification, internalisation, and imitation), and consultation (requiring supervision intervention only on specific issues).

Engelbrecht (2019:317) also mentions the role of an administrator, educator, supporter, expert, motivator, enabler, broker, facilitator, negotiator, mediator, advocate, and activist. It is also critical to note herein that the roles played by the supervisor and the supervisee are different because the supervision relationship is hierarchical rather than equal (Corey et al., 2010:53).

Hove and Nkamta (2017:2) and Corey et al (2010:22-27) are of the view that the roles played by the supervisor and supervisee are complementary. That is, they have a bearing on each other. Table 1 displays the roles played by the supervisor and the supervisee within their relationship.

Table 2.1 Roles of social work supervisor and supervisee within their supervision relationship

Supervisor	Supervisee
Teacher/coach	Learner
Mentor	Mentee
Consultant	Consultee
Counsellor	Client
Sounding board	Ideas developer
Advisor	Advisee
Evaluator	Evaluatee
Empowerer	Empoweree
Advocate	Client

Source: Hove and Nkamta (2017:2) and Corey et al (2010:22-27)

It can therefore be deduced from Table 2.3.1 that for every role played by the supervisor it exerts an influence on the role assumed by the supervisee. It is also the opinion of the researcher that the supervisor and the supervisee also assume different roles depending on what they are dealing with. Some of these roles are thus deliberated upon extensively hereunder.

- *Teacher/Coach versus Learner*

The role of teaching requires that the supervisor determines what knowledge and skills the supervisee is lacking to become fully competent (Greenberg & Tomescu 2017:17) and then transfer the new required knowledge and skills to the supervisee (Bernard & Goodyear 2014:10). According to Corey et al (2010:22), this role also involves suggestions of books that could help the supervisee gain more knowledge and skills, while coaching involves giving instructions, modelling and suggesting strategies that supervisees could implement. This implies that the supervisee is required to be open to learning, take what is shared with them and implement.

- *Mentor versus mentee*

The role of a mentor requires the supervisor to use own wisdom, history, and experience of the setting to help the supervisee in fulfilling duties and to help the supervisee to grow personally and professionally (Corey et al 2010:22). According to Fowler and Cutcliffe (2011:13), the supervisor assumes a role of inspirer, supporter and investor and encourages the supervisee in ways that show that the supervisor believes in the supervisee's abilities. This requires that the supervisor transmit knowledge, skills, attitudes, psychosocial support, and professional development to meet the main goal of supervision (Department of Social Development & South African Council for Social Service Professions 2012:20). In this role, the supervisee needs to acknowledge that she needs to hear the full experiences of those who have walked the road before (Fowler & Cutcliffe, 2011:13).

- *Consultant versus consulter*

In this role, the supervisor helps the supervisee with ways to solve problems that they currently encounter, the skill to ensure effectiveness in their work at individual, group, organisational levels, and suggest strategies for future recurrences (Corey et al., 2010:22). According to Greenberg and Tomescu (2017:17), this role requires that the supervisor becomes the adviser encouraging the supervisee to trust their own judgments about their work with the client. This kind of advice is only given once the initial goals of supervision have been met and the supervisee asks for help (Department of Social Development & South African Council for Social Service Professions, 2012:19). This means that the supervisee's role is to ask for advice where they are struggling. According to Bernard & Goodyear (2014:10), the overall goal of consultation is helping the supervisee to work effectively and professionally.

- *Counsellor versus client*

According to Corey et al (2010:23), this is an occasional and brief role, designed to help supervisees with ways of helping them cope with stress and burnout, counter transference issues, and personal strengths and weaknesses that can hinder supervisee excellence. Bernard and Goodyear (2014:10) thus adds that the role of the counsellor involves helping the supervisee to address their problematic

behaviours, thoughts, or feelings. Greenberg and Tomescu (2017:17) concur that this role requires that the supervisor facilitate the process of addressing supervisee interpersonal and intrapersonal realities while supervisees openly and honestly share their challenges and are transparent with their weaknesses and strengths.

- *Advisor/empower or advocate versus advisee/empowered or client*

Supervisees are trained to be self-advisors but, in some instances, where the training to self-advise might require unavailable time, the supervisor should advise the supervisee on ways to mitigate the challenge and once the challenge has been resolved, the supervisee can be trained to self-advise (Corey, 2010:23). The supervisor's role of advising requires that supervisor gives the supervisee ways of dealing with their challenges. The role of empower on the other hand, requires the supervisor to teach supervisees how to handle future challenges and know when to seek help through consultation, while the supervisee's role is to implement those ideas in the future should the said challenges recur. On the latter, the supervisor acts on behalf of the supervisee and transfers the skills of advocacy to supervisees to enable them to speak on their own behalf and equally on behalf of their clients (Corey et al., 2010:23-27).

- *Administrator versus worker*

The role of an administrator refers to the duty of helping the supervisee with ways to cope with bureaucracy, ensuring that the supervisee adheres to licensing regulations and discussing the ethical and legal requirements that align with the roles of the supervisee (Corey et al., 2010:23). The supervisor here ensures that the supervisee fulfils their duties in the organisation and that he/she is legally registered and follows the laws (Maluleke, 2021:44). For example, the South African Council for Social Service Professions (2012:5) requires that the supervisee ensure that they renew their practice license every year for them to continue practising.

- *Evaluator versus evaluates*

According to Barnett and Johnson (2010:), the franchisee's role here is to be honest in their reporting while the supervisor is required to monitor and evaluate

the work of the supervisees to ensure that the supervisees continue to grow personally and professionally, and that they maintain proper conduct. The non-equal nature of the supervision relationship is thus exposed in this (Corey et al., 2010:53).

- *Gate keeper versus learner*

The supervisor also has the role of protecting the profession while the supervisee learns from the supervisor about what is ethically right and wrong within the profession (Corey et al 2010:3; Greenberg & Tomescu 2017:16). This function of gatekeeping is viewed by Eagle and Long (2014:479) as important for both the profession and the clients. According to Aasheim (2012:8), gatekeeping refers to the supervisor's duty of ensuring that unprofessional and unethical practitioners are removed from the profession, stopping anyone from tarnishing the profession.

While the roles of the supervisor are discussed in detail here, the roles of the supervisee are short and only include willingness to learn, implement what is learnt, ask for advice, and literally checking with the supervisor on what is legally and ethically correct. The Social Work Accreditation Advisory Board (2017:7) also contends that the most important role for supervisees is to understand what is required of them in the organisation in the spirit of their contracts. With supervisees having fewer responsibilities within the supervision process, it may seem as though they are not as important, but this is not the case because the supervision process would not be possible without the supervisees. Also critical to note herein is that the accomplishment of these roles require that the supervisor show competence by having a clear idea of what role to play to achieve a specific goal (Corey et al., 2010:22). The supervision role thus calls upon the supervisor to be self-aware, that is, to be aware of situations, their emotional reactions, and the behaviours of those around them.

In fulfilling these different roles, there are components that both the supervisor and the supervisee should consider. Hereunder is a discussion of the components of a supervision relationship.

2.3.2. Components of a supervision relationship

According to Aasheim (2012:85) and Holloway (in Cliffe et al 2014:2), the components of the supervision relationship include the interpersonal structure of the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee, the phase of the supervision relationship and the supervision contract. Corey et al (2010:52) also identifies three components of a supervision relationship and are of the view that involved in the interpersonal relationship is the issue of power and involvement, the phase of the supervision relationship and the supervision contract. These components are discussed in detail hereunder.

2.3.2.1. The interpersonal structure of the relationship as a component of a supervision relationship

The interpersonal structure of the supervision relationship is defined by Juneja (2015) as referring to the way in which the association between the supervisor and supervisee is structured. According to Corey et al (2010:52), this interpersonal structuration should include dimensions of power and involvement because the supervision relationship is a platform where issues of power and authority, roles and values of supervisor and supervisee, trust and conflict are handled. There can be good or bad interpersonal structures in supervision relationship. The good interpersonal structures help in the supervision process (Alhamda, 2013:36). According to this author, good interpersonal structures help by motivating supervisees to complete the tasks on time. Good interpersonal structures of the relationship are the culmination of communication, interaction, and compromise from both the supervisor and the supervisee (Juneja, 2015).

While the good interpersonal structure is said to help in the supervision process, the opposite is true. Bad interpersonal relationship is characterised by unsuccessful supervision because it results in incompetence, shame, aggression, and vindictiveness (Fincham in Stephanao & Giorgali, 2020:2). Such a structure is not good for the supervision relationship or the organisation. According to Rasheed, Zaheer and Manzoor (2020:54), this kind of structure generates negative consequences for supervision because it leads to dissatisfied psychological needs in supervisees, making them emotionally unstable, aggressive, and frustrated. The saddest result of a bad interpersonal structure may be that the overall goal of

supervision, which is to provide quality services to clients, may be severely compromised and not be met.

It is evident from the preceding discussion that good interpersonal structure helps to reach the goals of supervision and of the organisation, while bad interpersonal structure leads to unsuccessful supervision and organisation. While being careful what structure the supervisor adopts, it is equally important to consider the phase that the supervision relationship is at. The discussion of the phases of the supervision relationship follows.

2.3.2.2. The phases of the supervision relationship as a component of a supervision relationship

There are three phases of the supervision relationship which, according to the Department of Social Development (2012:26) and Beinart (2014:258), include the beginning phase (also known as the initial phase), the maturing (also known as the middle phase) and the termination phase (also known as the end phase). Tebes et al (2011:192) concurs with the highlighted phases and adds one more phase in that she mentions a preliminary phase, the beginning phase, middle phase, and the ending phase of the supervision relationship. For this study conducted within the South African context, the researcher only discusses the three phases outlined by the South African Department of Social Development.

- **The beginning phase**

In this phase, the supervisor and the supervisee are required to establish ways on how they will impart and receive knowledge and skills, work effectively as a team, and clarify the nature of their relationship and the roles and responsibilities that each party must play (Corey et al., 2010:52). According to Eagle and Long (2014:477), this phase also affords the supervisee an opportunity to understand the basics of their work through the help and direction of the supervisor. For instance, this phase affords the supervisee the opportunity to learn about the policies of the organisation, the objectives, tasks that supervisees must perform and what is expected from them (Department of Social Development & South African Council for Social Service Professions, 2012:26). The study by Beinart (2014:264), found that this stage is characterised by the supervisee's process of adjustment while supervisors strive to

nurture, influence, and commit to the relationship. In agreement with the authors, the researcher in this study believes that this is a stage where the tone/roles are set, and that if certain roles are not clarified at this stage of supervision, it would be difficult to clarify in the phase that follows, which is the mature phase.

- **The middle phase**

This phase is also referred to as the mature phase, and it follows once the supervisees understand the basics and the need to expand their knowledge and skills. This is a stage which requires that the supervisor provides guidance and support, encourages supervisees to work independently, implements own decisions, and to take responsibility (Department of Social Development & South African Council for Social Service Professions, 2012:27). Corey et al., (2010:52) share similar sentiments in that this is the phase where supervisees have gained more self-confidence and are willing to explore personal issues and develop skills of case conceptualisation. The focus at this point is on learning for the supervisee while reaching a sense of security and trust for the focus for the supervisor (Beinart, 2014:264). To succeed during this phase, the guidance provided for by the contract must be followed (Tebes et al., 2011:192).

- **The termination phase**

During this phase, the supervisee can link theory and practice and thus need less direction than they did during the initial phase (Corey et al., 2010:52). Attached to this phase are experiences of resolution and empowerment for supervisees, and experiences of collaboration and satisfaction for the supervisor (Beinart, 2014:264). According to the Department of Social Development and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (2012:28), this phase allows for summative evaluation of the process and discussing issues of termination and emotions associated with it. Whether termination results from supervisor or supervisee quitting the job, getting promotion, or other reason, Tebes et al (2011:192) advice that this phase should be done effectively and that all administrative tasks should be completed accurately.

From the above discussion, a supervision relationship is a process that has a beginning and an end. For this process to succeed, using a supervision contract is advised. This logically leads to a discussion of the supervision contract hereunder.

2.3.2.3. The supervision contract as a component of a supervision relationship

The supervision relationship, like any other relationship, involves more than one person bringing a set of own expectations to the relationship (Aasheim, 2012:86). It is thus important to have a supervision contract from the beginning of the relationship to avoid confusion (Corey, 2010:52). The supervision contract is defined by the Department of Social Development and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (2012:27) as a signed written document of agreement between the supervisor and the supervisee, which serves to clarify the terms and rules of the supervision relationship. Concurring with this, Aasheim (2012:64:86) refers to the supervision contract as a written document, signed by both the supervisor and the supervisee which specifies the agreement that the parties have regarding their roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

The contract contains the duration and frequency of supervision (Department of Social Development & South African Council for Social Service Professions, 2012:27). Also included in the contract are clear boundaries and clarification of roles and responsibilities (Melman et al., 2016:2; Bernard & Goodyear 2014:121), supervisee's needs, goals, resources, learning styles, and the supervisor's methods of supervision (Proctor, 2011:23). In relation to the resilience theory, the components can be regarded cornerstones of the supervision relationship because if they are steadfast then supervision will achieve its purpose, whilst if they are not in place then supervision may fail.

2.3.4. Effective supervision relationships and ineffective supervision relationships

The authors quoted in the preceding discussions thus far all agree that supervision is important. This importance is evident in the fact that supervision helps in raising quality services rendered to clients and that the overall goals of the organisation are reached. However, it is critical to note herein that not all supervision has positive effect on the supervisee and because of this, the discussion of effective and ineffective supervision follows.

- **Effective supervision relationships**

Effective supervision is defined by Zhou (2019:7) as the kind of supervision that has a positive impact on the supervisor, the supervisee, the client, and the organisation at large, and it results in supervisee's professional growth, development, and better service delivery. Effective supervisors are humble, aware of themselves, open to feedback from their supervisees and do not view their supervisees as empty vessels where knowledge is poured rather, they are open to learning from their supervisees and the situation (Corey et al., 2010:59). Also, effective supervision does not just happen on its own but requires that everyone involved in the supervision process be an active member in the team (Corey et al., 2010:59). According to Emilsson and Johnsson (in Van Rensburg et al., 2016:3), the determining factors for effective supervision are the competence of the supervisor, the commitment of the supervisee and the nature of the supervision relationship.

- **Ineffective supervision (also known as abusive supervision)**

As mentioned above, not all supervision is effective. Ineffective supervision is defined by Ellis (in Ellis, Berger, Hanus, Ayala, Swords & Slembor, 2013:2) as referring to supervision processes that lead to psychological, emotional, and/or physical harm to the supervisee. According to the authors, the concept of 'ineffective supervision' is also used as a synonym for negative supervision, bad supervision, hindering supervision, and unsuccessful supervision. This kind of supervision causes the development of negative emotions in supervisees (Pyc, Meltzer & Liu, 2016:4) and may emanate from the supervisor being unable to accept feedback, know-it-all, is rigid and uses supervision as a channel where they can brag about all the information that they have (Corey et al., 2010:170) nor does it take into account, the context of ethical practice.

While supervisees in effective supervision relationships become active members of problem-solving teams and have more confidence and are calm, those in ineffective supervision relationships often experience challenges that hinder them from growing and impede the organisation from meeting the overall goals (Corey et al., 2010:59). According to Ellis et al (2013:6), lack of productiveness within ineffective supervision relationships is related to the supervisor's inability to increase supervisee's professional development, inability to monitor the quality of services that their supervisees deliver to clients and their inability to protect the profession from

inappropriate practices by supervisees. It can thus be deduced in this regard that ineffective supervision generates the development of significant challenges within supervision relationships.

2.3.5. Challenges in supervision relationships

Despite the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa having been established to guard against the challenges within supervision relationships (Department of Social Development & South African Council for Social Service Professions, 2012), challenging issues that are detrimental to the survival of the supervision relationship continue to occur (Engelbrecht, 2013:457). According to Lee (2017:1097), these challenges are the reasons for labelling the supervision relationships as naturally problematic.

The challenges experienced within the supervision relationship may include the potential communication hurdles, prolonged delays in scheduling meetings, not receiving desired feedback from the supervisor and disagreements (Lee, 2017:1100). Wartkins et al (2016:24) states that relationship rupture may occur as a result of these challenges which may also include mismatched expectations and miscommunication, developmentally normative conflicts, and problems of interpersonal dynamics. Some of the highlighted changes are discussed comprehensively below.

With all the supervision relationship challenges mentioned here, if these are not eliminated, they may lead to more serious complications which include conflict and the perception of abuse. According to Lofstrom and Pyhalto, (2012:2), if the supervisor and supervisee are not on the same page with regard to their expectations and beliefs about the supervision process, conflict may arise. These more serious challenges which are the perception of abuse and conflict are discussed in detail hereunder.

2.3.5.1. The perception of abuse by the other

The perception of abuse is defined by Tepper (in Carlson et al., 2012:850) as the event whereby the supervisee perceives their supervisor as being verbally or nonverbally abusive towards them. According to Martinko et al (2013:120), perception of abuse

can have a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of the supervisee (Martinko et al., 2013:120). Examples of 'perception of abuse' may include one party perceiving the other as rude, throwing tantrums, criticising and generally being inconsiderate (Bies in Carlson et al., 2012:850). According to these authors, the consequences of this challenge can lead to supervisees developing negative attitudes, resistance, and psychological distress, lack of performance, family dysfunction, aggression, and workplace deviance.

2.3.5.2. Conflict between supervisor and supervisee

Like any other relationship, the supervision relationship is not immune to conflict (Aasheim, 2012:103; Epps, 2019:56). According to Bambling (2014:447), the consequences of conflict include harm to the supervision relationship and outcome, negative assessment of the relationship, lack of self-efficacy and lack of satisfaction with the supervision process. Bernard and Goodyear (2014:83) state that conflict within the supervision relationship can come from many sources that are not on the same level problematically. Discrepancies within professional objectives, power and status differences, forced interdependence, lack of resources, divergent values and poor communication can constitute the reasons for the occurrence of conflict (Rus̃kus & Kiaunyte 2013:673-674). Since the occurrence of conflict is common in relationships, it is the responsibility of the supervisors to create interventions that help in resolving conflicts (Lockwood, 2019:5).

From this discussion, it is evident that challenges in supervision relationships do arise and according to Engelbrecht (2013:457), challenges may even breach the borders that are specified in frameworks and policies. Therefore, challenges in supervision relationships should be seen as natural occurrences that need to be dealt with (Corey et al., 2010:59-70). People involved in supervision should also handle challenges timeously before they culminate in more problematic complications (Lockwood, 2019:5).

It is thus evident that challenges do not benefit the supervision relationships, therefore, it is important that those involved in supervision should eliminate challenges. This can be done by developing ways of managing the supervision relationship with the goal being either to avoid challenges or to deal with challenges once they occur. This

management of the supervision relationship and its importance are explained in the following discussion.

2.3.6. The importance of managing the supervision relationship

Managing, in generic terms, is defined by Krauss and Ismail (2010:810) as the supervisor or supervisee's way of handling a situation and reaching the intended goal of handling it, while managing the supervision relationship means managing any aspect of the supervision process including the supervisor and the supervisee. Management of the supervision relationship is also viewed by Tsui and Cheung (in Engelbrecht, 2013:458) as a better way of avoiding and/or resolving challenges within the supervision relationship.

In managing the supervision relationship, supervisor and supervisee must realise there is a challenge (situated moment); they must identify avenues of dealing with challenges (structural moment) and together must be committed to implement the proposed solutions to the challenges (system moment) as advised by Macrae (2019:17). Practically both the supervisor and the supervisee need to manage their expectations about supervision, manage time and workload, manage personality and supervision styles, and manage supervisee capacity (Krauss & Ismail 2010:809). Since there are several things that need to be managed within the supervision relationship, there is also more than one way of managing this kind of a relationship. Tebes et al (2011:191) are of the view that a supervision relation can be managed by drafting issues to be discussed in every session. According to Watkins et al., (2016:24), talking about the challenges with the supervisee is one way of managing the supervision relationship which can help by either avoiding or stopping challenges from growing so much that they disrupt, derail, or destroy the relationship. It is also the view of the researcher managing the supervision relationship further requires one to develop strategies that will help during difficult times. The strategies are discussed in detail hereunder.

2.3.7. Strategies used by supervisors to manage supervision relationships

A strategy is defined by Gcaza and von Solms (2017:3) as a plan employed to overcome an obstacle, challenge, or conflict while Webster (in Smartt, Casey & Ferreira 2018:407) sees a strategy as the process of establishing and undertaking a

plan to reach a set goal. Strategies are important for managing the supervision relationship. Concurring with this, Watkins et al., (2016:22) state that strategies help to manage or repair the supervision relationship depending on the need.

In a supervision context Yin (in Goddard & Hunt 2011:424) proposes that organisations should develop strategies (building worker resilience) to manage supervision relationships. Ludwick, Turyakira, Kyomuhangi, Manalili, Robinson and Brenner (2018:7) proposes that strategies should be put in place to produce mutually constructive engagements and relationships. It is, however, not all strategies that result in effective supervision. Aithal (2016:173) mention ten characteristics of an effective strategy. According to this author, a good strategy should be flexible, identify ideal solutions to problems, not be dependent on the type of organisation, give solutions for all challenges, be cost effective, easy to implement, competitive, ensure organisation's success and effectiveness, and be measurable.

Lockwood (2019:5-7) thus reported the following supervision strategies for use during supervision relationships: being honest to each other, demonstrating integrity, treating everyone fairly, explaining reasons for decisions, accepting change, stating clear expectations, being supportive to supervisees, providing feedback, handling commitments, listening, encouraging negotiations, compromise, collaboration, maintaining focus, utilizing humour and empathy, and reaching solutions. Other strategies include understanding each other, clarifying the relationship rules, and reminding one another about the nature of the relationship contained in the contract (Corey et al., 2010:61). In research conducted by Grant et al (2012:531), results show that experienced supervisors employ relational, reflective, confrontational, and avoidance strategies in their relationships with their supervisees. This is discussed below.

2.3.7.1. Relational strategy

When using this strategy Grant et al (2010:532) advises that the supervisor should directly discuss supervisee difficulties, supervision relationship difficulties, parallel processes, and aspects of supervision relationship and supervisee's feelings and attitudes. The supervisor following this strategy is also required to be sensitive to the needs of the supervisees while giving feedback, and to also use open and appropriate

communication (Nellis, Hawkins, Redivo, & Way, 2012:5-6). In addition, Shaffer and Friedlander (2015:2) advises the supervisor to also identify supervision dynamics that take place within the supervisee-client relationship that are or may be projected into the supervision relationship.

2.3.7.2. Reflexive strategy

Rather than dwelling on the relationship rapture and blaming each other, the supervisor and the supervisee pause and ask themselves questions such as why things are the way they are and how things could be done differently to benefit the supervision process and culminate in effective supervision. According to Grant et al (2010:532), this is because the reflective strategy is used to help the supervisor to enhance the supervision bond and to understand difficult issues pertaining to the supervision process. That is, they need to develop a strategy that focuses on the goal of supervision and those of the organisation at large rather than dwelling on what is happening. According to Lee, Kim, Forlizzi and Kiesler (2015:3), this strategy helps supervisors and supervisees by encouraging them to dwell more on the long-term goals while making decisions about their supervision relationship and/or supervision process.

2.3.7.3. Confrontational strategy

This strategy requires that the supervisor and/or the supervisee face the challenge directly by raising difficult issues, give direct instruction and direct confrontation (Grant et al., 2010:532). According to these authors, confrontational strategy can be used to deal with supervisee's problems of inappropriate attitudes and behaviours. This strategy can also be used by the supervisor as the person with more power in the supervision relationship. According to Nellis et al (2012:5), it is the duty of the supervisor to initiate and address relationship problems directly with the supervisee. The supervisor following this strategy should do so in a way that opens opportunity for understanding each other better and lead to both the programme and the supervision process being effective.

2.3.7.4. Avoidant strategy

The avoidant strategy is defined as the relationship strategy where confronting and/or facing the problem is avoided, those involved withdraw from the situation, pretend as

if the problem does not exist and ignore the problem, often with the intention of preventing escalation (Bear, Weingart & Todorova, 2014:214; Boros, Meslec, Curseu & Emons, 2010:541). This is further endorsed in Gelfand, Leslie, Keller and Dreu (2012:1132) who also observe that supervisors and supervisees following this strategy usually pretend not to see the problem and thus do not even discuss it. According to Grant et al (2010:532), the problem is not avoided forever but only when there is not enough time to confront or discuss the issue and when there is little chance that the supervisee can understand or learn from discussing the issue. This author argues that avoidant strategy depends on time, supervisee's ability to learn from confronting the issue and supervisee's stage of development.

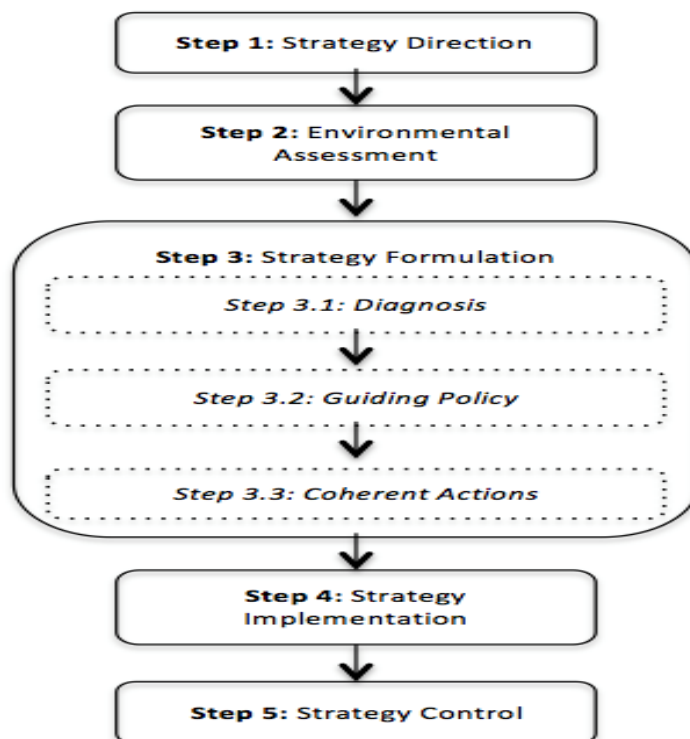
The strategies highlighted above are said to help in managing and restoring relationships. However, these strategies were not conducted within the social work profession, nor were they developed within the South African NGO sector and focus on conflict resolution only rather than managing relationships even before conflict stage. The strategies were developed for the psychology profession in Europe by Grant et al (2012:531), data was collected from psychologist supervisors whose years of supervision experience ranged from 6 to 40 years. It is also important to note that these strategies are one-sided because they represent strategies of supervisors, marginalising the views of supervisees and as a result, the findings are based on experienced supervisors who do not really work in the NGO sector and their level of experience is not the same as those working in the South African NGO sector.

In support of the Africanisation agenda, the researcher believes that if strategies are to be effective within a specific discipline and context, they need to be developed specifically for the discipline and sector for which they are intended. According to Seehawer (2018:454), seeing Africa through the lenses from outside Africa might result in out-of-context or wrong diagnoses that might not even be practical in Africa. It was thus against this backdrop that the researcher sought to identify strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector.

For a strategy to yield positive results, Tsokota et al (in Gcaza & von Solms, 2017:4) advises organisations to follow the 'strategy development approach.' These authors

distinguish between good and bad strategies and according to them, a good strategy contains the elements that are mentioned on the strategy development approach outlined in Figure 1. The step for diagnosis refers to the point of knowing what the exact problem is, the step for guiding policy refers to the plan of how the identified problem will be tackled and the step for coherent actions refers to the practical steps of dealing with the problem. The 'strategy development approach is thus presented in below.

Figure 2.1 the strategy development approach



Source: Tsokota et al (in Gcaza & von Solms 2017:4)

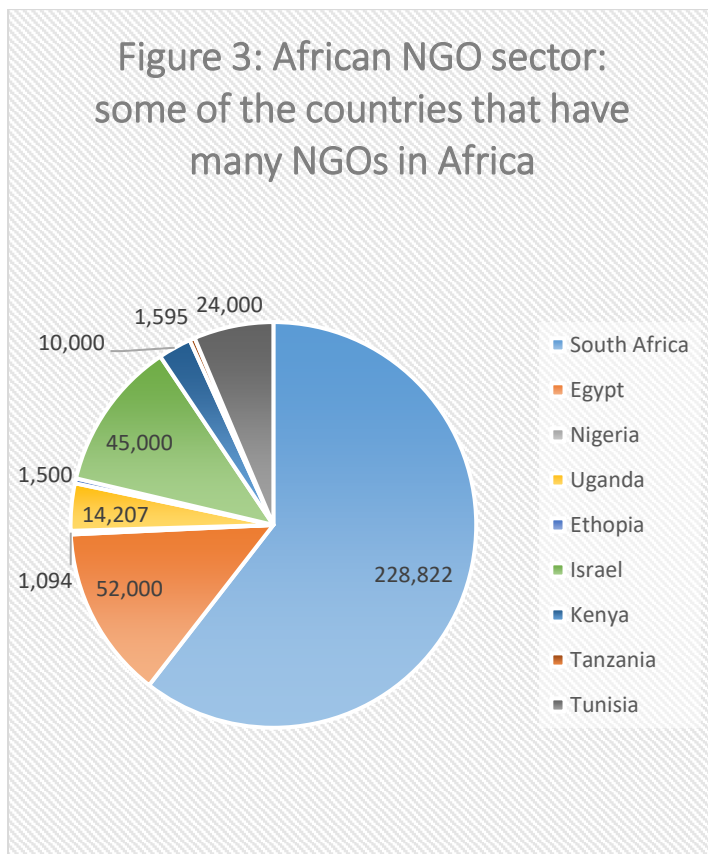
According to Corey et al (2010:61-62), the tone and plan for how challenges are handled should be set before they even become manifest. This means that the supervisor should prepare for any eventuality that may occur in the supervision relationship and should assign a strategy on how they are to deal with it. The researcher also holds the view that strategies on how to deal with difficulty in the supervision should also be discussed with the supervisee, specifying policy matters as well as setting boundaries of what is acceptable and not. By so doing, in the event a challenge is encountered, all parties know how to approach it.

2.4. General introduction regarding the NGO sector

A non-governmental organisation (NGO) is defined as an organisation that is established by private individuals, operates at local, national, or international level and is aimed at catering for a specific social need (Sedlacek, 2014:249). According to Othman and Ali (2012:5), NGOs are independent organisations that are not aimed at making profit and depend on funding from members, the public, the government, and private sectors. They are considered effective in their capacity as secondary service providers (Hasmath & Hsu 2014:937) and in facilitating basic human development which include eradication of poverty and intervening in issues relating to gender equality, peace, environmentally sustainable development, and respect for human rights (Matsimbi & Mtapuri 2014:711). According to Gebreselassie-Hagos and Smit (2013:117), social services rendered in NGOs are aimed at the less fortunate and vulnerable of the society. According to Mazibuko (2013), there are about 10 million NGOs globally.

Africa is one of the continents with a large number of NGOs. Some of the states with large numbers of NGOs in Africa are provided in the figure below.

Figure 2.2 African NGO sector: some of the countries that have many NGOs in Africa



NPOEXPERT (2022), Mounir (2021) Department of Social Development (2020) & Ravelo (2013)

From the figure, only a handful of African countries have NGOs and South Africa is one of the countries with the highest numbers. While NGOs in different countries employ diverse professionals, in South Africa, social services are provided by myriad professionals with the social work profession at the core of organisations in both the governmental and NGO sectors. Lund (2010:503) and Patel et al (2012:215) state that social services are provided by either the social workers employed by government organisations, non-government organisations or private practice. Since this study focused on the social work supervision relationships that take place within the South African NGO sector, a discussion on the South African NGO sector follows next.

2.4.1 The South African NGO Sector

In South Africa, NGOs have become the cornerstone for social development. According to Hasmath and Hsu (2014:937), the state has experienced financial strain which led to severe impediments in delivering service to all clients. The South African government renders services to people in rural areas, townships, and informal settlements, and due to the high growth in population in these areas, the government

can no longer be the only provider of goods and services to the citizens (Lekorwe & Mpabanga, 2017:4-5; Wiggill, 2014:278). This inability to address all societal needs by the government (Gebreselassie-Hagos & Smit 2013:101), has led to NGOs stepping in to address the needs of the society, substituting and complementing those non provided by the government (Kumaran et al 2010:32). In stepping in, NGOs provide essential basic services, mainly in the social, education and health sectors (Gebreselassie-Hagos & Smit, 2013:104).

For an NGO to function in South Africa, it must be registered with the Non-Profit Organisations (NPO) Directorate in accordance with the NPO Act no 71 of 1997 as amended (Matsimbi & Mtapuri 2014:712). According to the National Development Agency (2016:17), the NPO Act No 71 of 1997 was established by the government to enable the NGOs to function effectively in a conducive space.

South African NGO sector plays a critical role. According to Volmink and van der Elst (2017:13), NGOs provide a space for innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving to address South Africa's mounting social, economic and skills challenges. NGOs are also relatively cost-effective, providing services and support for development. They are also dynamic and flexible. According to the Department of Social Development (2021), there were 248 902 registered NGOs in South Africa. As indicated earlier, in Table 1.1, the most prominent NGOs in Gauteng have more than five (5) branches.

While these NGOs may seem successful enough that they have expanded to more than five branches, it is worth noting that they do not generate sufficient income because the goal for starting an NGO is not to gain profit. However, because money is a necessity for the NGOs to function, the NGOs depend on both public and private funding.

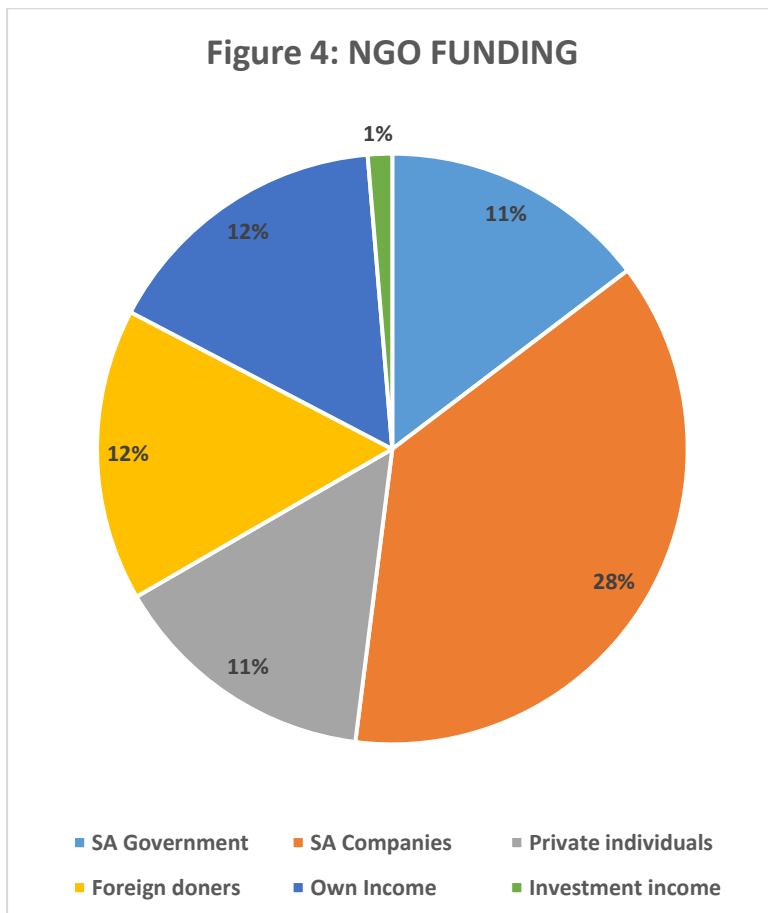
2.4.2 Funding in the NGO sector

In South Africa, NGOs depend on money received from different sources such as foundations, government grants, corporate grants, government contracts, and donations from individuals, membership dues, service-related fees, product-related fees, endowment income and investments (Guo in Ali & Gull 2016:51). According to

Volmink and van der Elst (2017:20), funding for the NGO sector can also come from government subsidies, corporate social investments, national and international donors, foundations, and the public. The South African National Lottery also donates to NGOs (National Development Agency, 2016:10-11). The researcher has also observed that the Motsepe Fondation funds NGOs and churches do the same in some instances.

The findings by the Department of Higher Education (2022:20) show that NGO funders differ in what they donate to the sector. While some donors fund 50% of what the NGO may need, others may donate only 10%. This shows that the NGOs must apply to different sectors for them to have enough funds to run in a sustained fashion. The figure (Figure 4) below shows the most prominent source of NGO funding in South Africa.

Figure 2.3 NGO funding



Source: *Development sector insights 2021:106*

While one may expect the state to donate more since the South African NGO sector renders state-like services, the state is not compelled to fund the NGOs. One should also note that an NGO cannot fully function on one source of funding, especially since donors chose the programmes where they prefer their money to be utilised (Mtapuri & Matsimbi 2014:8). For an example, the NGO where the researcher works receives donations from the government to be used only for support of the early childhood development (ECD) programme. This means that even though there is a farming programme within the NGO, the NGO cannot use the money received for the ECD programme towards the farming enterprise. The most prominent NGO funders in South Africa are the government, private sector, and foreign donors, and these are examined in detail hereunder.

- **Government funding**

The NGO sector receives most of its funds from the government (Ali & Gull 2016:52) and this usually comes in monetary payments to NGOs. These disbursements enable NGOs to render social services to vulnerable groups which include minor children, youth, women, older persons, and people living with disabilities (Western Cape Department of Social Development, 2017:3). This means that for every national and provincial government department in South Africa, there is a budget subsidy directed at NGOs to help them reach their ultimate goals (National Development Agency, 2016:8). In fields such as childcare, mental health, substance abuse and the rehabilitation of offenders, government subsidy is paid in exchange for providing services that are by law supposed a responsibility of the government (Lund 2010:503). These subsidies are guided by the NPO Act no 97 of 1997 and are the government's way of supporting the work of the NGOs (National Development Agency 2016:8).

In an article by the Department of Higher Education and Training (2021:21) all government departments, provincial departments and municipalities donate to the NGO sector. Estimated amounts of government spending on the NGO sector in the year 2019-2023 is depicted in the table below.

Table 2.2 Estimated amount of government spending on the NGO sector

Transfers detail	Medium-term expenditure estimate			Average growth rate (%)	Average: Expense Total (%)
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2019/20 - 2022/23	
R thousand					
Non-profit institutions					
Current	42 620	35 047	36 357	-34,6%	-
South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence	1 811	1 947	2 020	5,6%	-
South African Depression and Anxiety Group	1 783	1 917	1 988	5,6%	-
South African Council for Social Service Professions	2 168	2 331	2 418	5,6%	-
South African Older Persons Forum	1 722	1 851	1 919	5,5%	-
Family and Marriage Society South Africa	880	946	983	5,8%	-
Sonke Gender Justice	-	-	-	-	-
Partner in Sexual Health	-	-	-	-	-
HIV and AIDS organisations	-	-	-	-100,0%	-
South African National AIDS Council	10 019	-	-	-100,0%	-
South African Federation for Mental Health	891	958	993	5,5%	-
South African National Deaf Association	669	719	747	5,6%	-
Disabled Children's Action Group	784	843	875	5,6%	-
Deafblind South Africa	669	719	747	5,6%	-
Autism South Africa	1 003	1 078	1 119	5,6%	-
Albinism Society of South Africa	891	958	993	5,5%	-
Moonlight Foundation for Autism	-	-	-	-	-
ChildLine South Africa	1 183	1 272	1 320	5,6%	-
South African Congress for Early Childhood Development	780	838	869	5,6%	-
Abba Specialist Adoptions and Social Services	1 344	1 445	1 499	5,6%	-
Ntataise	1 225	1 317	1 367	5,6%	-
AFM Executive Welfare Council	557	599	621	5,6%	-
Centre for Early Childhood Development	-	-	-	-	-
Masizakhe	-	-	-	-	-
Future Generation	-	-	-	-	-
Child Welfare South Africa	-	-	-	-	-
Die Ondersteuningsraad	-	-	-	-	-
Humana People to People South Africa	1 337	1 437	1 491	5,6%	-
Uhambo Foundation	1 807	1 942	2 014	5,5%	-
National Institute Community Development and Management (victim empowerment)	1 686	1 813	1 879	5,6%	-
LifeLine South Africa	958	1 030	1 069	5,6%	-
National Shelter Movement of South Africa	695	747	774	5,5%	-
National Peace Accord Trust	695	747	774	5,5%	-
Khulisa Social Solutions	1 552	1 668	1 730	5,6%	-
National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders	1 584	1 703	1 766	5,5%	-
Population Association of Southern Africa	-	-	-	-100,0%	-
Food relief	-	-	-	-100,0%	-

Source: Department of Social Development (2022)

Although this confirms that the government gives large donations/subsidies to the NGO sector, studies in the discussion below verify that the private sector also donate large amounts to the NGO sector.

- **Private-sector funding of NGOs**

There are tens of billions that are donated by the private sector to the NGO sector of South Africa to enable this sector to implement programmes effectively (National Development Agency, 2016:10). The private sector involves funding by businesses and other funders. According to Volmink (2017:21), these businesses make a significant contribution to the sustainability of the NGO sector. The researcher has also observed private business such as the Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Pick'n'Pay supermarket and PEP stores donating money, clothing and food to NGOs for specific needs. At the NGO where the researcher worked as a volunteer, there were shops that used to donate sanitary pads to orphaned and vulnerable girls, non-perishable foods to poor and cakes and bread before the expiry date. Companies that have contributed most in the years 2020-2021 are provided in the table below.

Table 2.3 Companies that contributed to South African NGOs in 2020-2021

COMPANY NAME	ESTIMATED AMOUNT	PROGRAM DONATED TO
CRIMINAL ASSET RECOVERY ACCOUNT	R26 000 000	Victim empowerment
THE DG MURRAY TRUST	Not specified	Early Childhood Development (ECD)
	R459 369	Social welfare services
NELSON MANDELA FOUNDATION	R2 669 281.69	
SOLIDARITY FUND	R23 500 000	Food security during COVID-19
CIC CHURCH	R24 000 000	Food parcels during COVID-19
OLD MUTUAL	R5 675 000.00	Food security
KHULA MILLING	R273 250	Food parcels during covid-19
SPAR GROUP	R12 624 000	Food parcels
PACT SA	R2 994 518	Orphan and Vulnerable Centres (OVCs)

Source: The Department of Social Development (2021:140)

While most funding is in the form of money, Parrie (2020:8), states that there are some companies which donate to NGOs through their Corporate Social Investments (CSI) projects. Companies have made NGOs their priority in directing CSI spending (Department of Higher Education & Training, 2021:22). CSI is defined as the way of companies giving back to the public with the aim of developing communities and not for profit gain (Lefike, 2021:28). The aim of CSIs is like those of NGOs in that they aim to help vulnerable communities by protecting and improving the quality of life (CSI Solutions, 2019). According to Morkel (2019:48) and Parrie (2020:65), the for-profit organisation partners with a not-for-profit organisation in a donor-receiver relationship where the donor provides funding for the NGO to render their day-to-day services.

This act may seem one-sided as it is only NGOs that are benefiting. However, this is not the case as companies also benefit from funding NGOs. According to Derfoldy (2021), donors gain includes income tax savings by claiming deductions of the donation against their taxable income. Confirming this, Devon (2021) and the South African Revenue Services (2021) states that organisations that are not formed for self-gain but for public gain are eligible to donations tax exemption. For the donor to benefit in tax deductible, the organisations receiving such donation is required to register with SARS for tax exemption and have proof of such registration (South African Institute of Professional Accountants, 2022:1).

- **Foreign donors funding the NGOs**

Foreign donors contribute to the NGO sector (Volmink, 2017:22) and have been doing so for years, leading to the significant expansion of this sector (Gebreselassie-Hagos & Smit 2013:102). According to the National Development Agency (2016:10), the major contribution from foreign donors comes from western governments and agencies. Some of the agencies of the Western world that contribute significantly to the South African welfare sector include Sterry Family Foundation, True Colours, Transport Aid Japan, and Maurice Hatter Foundation (Charity Excellence Framework, 2022). As stated above, it is not only the foreign agencies that donate to South African NGO sector, but foreign government/countries also do. The foreign countries that contribute significantly to the SA NGO sector and have donated in the last year are provided in table below.

Table 2.4 Foreign countries/companies contributing to the SA NGO sector

FOREIGN DONOR NAME	AMOUNT DONATED (5YEARS PERIOD)	PROGRAM DONATED TO
GERMAN DEVELOPMENT BANK	£7 668 418	Orphans, vulnerable children and youth
GERMAN EMBASSY	Not specified	NGOs
USAID	\$8 000 000	Children, sexual violence and HIV
JAPAN WATER FORUM	Not specified	NGOs
AFRICAN UNION	Not specified	
UNITED NATIONS	Not specified	NGOs

The Department of Social Development (2021:140) and Advance-Africa.com (2022:1)

It is thus evident that both the government, private and foreign donors contribute to the South African NGO sector. According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (2021:21), programmes that are most funded include health, development and housing, culture and recreation, law, advocacy and politics, social services, religion, education and research, environment, and philanthropy.

Table 2.5 Programmes mostly funded in the South African NGO sector

Program	International	SA Government	Private	Self
<i>Health</i>	61	8	11	2
<i>Development and Housing</i>	26	13	15	40
<i>Culture and Recreation</i>	1	8	18	4
<i>Law, advocacy and politics</i>	5	1	2	0
<i>Social Services</i>	4	62	112	43
<i>Religion</i>	1	3	5	3
<i>Education and Research</i>	1	4	16	3
<i>Environment</i>	1	1	16	2
<i>Philanthropic/Intermediary</i>	0	0	5	3

Source: The Department of Higher Education and Training (2021:21)

Although there are many sources of funding for the NGO sector, this sector still experiences a mountain of challenges that hinder its effectiveness and sustainability. The challenges faced in this sector are provided in the following discussion.

2.4.1. The challenges experienced by the NGO sector in South Africa

The South African NGO sector is faced with a number of challenges such as inadequate funding, lack of skilled workers and insufficient management capacity (Gebreselassie-Hagos & Smit, 2013:102). The National Development Agency (2016:11) also state that the effectiveness of the South African NGO sector is hindered by the challenges that this sector encounters. According to this author, challenges faced in this sector are lack of sustainable funding, managerial and organisational incapacities. The challenges that pose the highest risk include funding (Maboya & McKay, 2019:1), status and weakness of the sector (Volmink & Van der Elst, 2017:23), challenges imposed by the government and inadequate accountability (Wiggil, 2014:278&279). These challenges are explained in the following discussion.

2.4.1.1. Funding

Funding is the biggest challenge faced by most NGOs in South Africa (National Development Agency 2016:8; Lund 2010:506). According to Hochfeld (2010:358), NGOs are underfunded by the government, and this leads to inability to cope with the ever-increasing numbers of people needing their services. Even the NGOs that are funded by the government operate under stressful conditions because subsidies are not paid timeously (Volmink & Van der Elst, 2017:18).

This challenge of 'lack of funding' resulted from the global economic crisis of 2013. The economic crisis of 2013 threatened the sustainability of the NGO sector because international and local funding decreased (Salgado, 2010:105; Gebreselassie-Hagos & Smit, 2013:104; Matsimbi & Mtapuri, 2014:711; National Development Agency, 2016:8). Another reason for lack of funding came in 1994 because some donors diverted their funding to other places in the belief that South Africa did not need their support anymore after the new democracy (Gebreselassie-Hagos & Smit, 2013:102). According to Sargeant (in Wiggill, 2014:279), some of the reasons why funders can decide to stop funding an NGO include a belief that the NGO does not provide the services they need, they no longer believe in the goals of the NGO, or they cannot afford to donate anymore.

While the NGO sector was already faced with the challenge of 'lack of funding', the COVID-19 pandemic also hit hard. According to Dr Mkhize (2020), the first case of

COVID 19 in South Africa was confirmed on the 5th of March 2020. As a strategy for decreasing the number of infections, the state enforced lockdown, which meant that people were not allowed to go to work or run their businesses to generate income (Khandelwal, 2020:68). All this led to more communities needing welfare services, specifically the services of NGOs. However, NGOs were unable to provide quality services to fully meet the needs of all people. According to Wilke, Howard and Pop (2020:11), this was because very few NGOs had any contingency plan on dealing with a situation such as the pandemic and ensuring continuity of sustainable service delivery. While NGOs depend on donations, there are also donors that could not afford to donate anymore, and all this meant that the challenge of 'lack of funding' was worsened.

Furthermore, salaries received by the staff that is employed in this sector are not satisfying. According to Skhosana (2020:4) the workforce of the NGO sector earns less than those in similar posts who work in private practice and government sector. The researcher has observed that her social work friends who started work in the government sector are paid R15 000 per month while those she was working with in an NGO earned around R9 000 per month in 2014. As a result of this discrepancy in remuneration and funding challenges, the NGO tends to lose its workforce to government departments as they appear financially steady and as such offer social workers better security.

2.4.1.2. The status and weaknesses of the sector

There is a notion that the NGO sector is not trusted by the people (Hasmath & Hsu 2014:945), not valued nor respected. NGOs are also perceived as the last option with very little power. It is a sector that does not have a strong, formal voice (Volmink & Van der Elst, 2017:23). This sector is also said to be weak relative to its ability to attract experts because good employees leave this sector for better employment conditions and better salary levels which are associated with working in government and private sectors (Volmink & Van der Elst, 2017:23). According to Skhosana (2020:4), employees in the NGO sector earn less salaries than those in similar posts working in government and private sector. The fact that the NGO sector depends on government for funding is also not helping the sector to be strong. According to Ali and Gull (2016:58), this results in the NGO sector being weak in terms of decision-making and

power, and has to accept all conditions that come with the funding. Among other weaknesses, this sector also lacks 'the requisite transparency' (Hasmath & Hsu, 2014:949).

2.4.1.3. Challenges imposed on NGO sector by government

The NGOs receive pressure from the government to do their chores the right way (Chenhall et al., 2010:739). According to Volmink and Van der Elst (2017:23), while NGOs are not consulted for input when policies are developed, they get pressure from the government to follow the said policies. Government also sets measurable goals for NGOs to meet, and this becomes a struggle for most NGOs (Wiggill, 2014:278). According to Mueller-Hirth (2012:651), NGOs are pressured to run the organisations correctly, be accountable and cost-effective without taking their specific circumstances into account. Government also shifts organisations from their service goals and alters the way the NGO renders services (Ali & Gull, 2016:52). There is a discrepancy between what the government requires from the NGOs and how much the government is willing to donate for the NGOs to meet the standards they set. According to Skhosana (2020:6), these challenges imposed by the government on NGOs also have a negative impact on social workers rendering services in the NGO sector. Details on the impact of these challenges on social workers are provided in sub-section 2.4.4.

2.4.1.4. Inadequate accountability

Accountability is a must in NGOs (Ali & Gull 2016:54) and is defined by Hulme and Edwards (in Mueller-Hirth, 2012:654) as a way that the organisation reports to the donors and is held accountable for decisions taken. According to Volmink and Van der Elst (2017:24), NGO accountability is important for stakeholders that regulate funding, and it determines whether the NGO gets funding or not. With accountability being the determinant of whether an NGO receives funding or not, most NGOs struggle with this responsibility (Wiggill, 2014:278). The inability of NGOs to hire experts has a negative impact on accountability and this leads to the NGOs losing credibility in the eyes of their stakeholders and donors (Kumaran et al., 2010:40).

All the challenges discussed here have a negative impact on the sustainability of the NGOs. The biggest challenge is funding because it has a negative and direct impact on the workforce in this sector. According to Wiggill (2014:283), this sector is often

unable to employ experts because of insufficient funding and as such, are forced to employ unskilled or inexperienced workers. For example, experienced social workers leave NGOs for higher salaries, benefits, and job growth opportunities (Skhosana, 2020:6). This means that inexperienced ones are employed in their place, and this leads to fluidity in the workforce. The discussion on the workforce of the NGO sector follows.

2.4.2. Social work supervision within the South African NGO sector

In the South African NGO sector, supervision usually involves old female social workers and who have been social work practitioners for five years or more, relying more on own supervisee experience rather than any supervisor qualification (Engelbrucht & Bradley et al, 2010:329). The supervision post is at the middle management level and requires that the supervisor perform diverse management tasks (Engelbrecht & Bradley 2010:329). One is either promoted to the supervisor post or applies and gets to interview for screening to fill the post (Engelbrecht, 2010:329). The researcher has also observed that a social work practitioner can be under supervision of a senior colleague (supervisor) while at the same time acting as a supervisor to student social workers and other employees who are in junior positions.

The supervisor in the NGO sector usually employs the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa in their supervision roles (Engelbrecht, 2013:3). According to Shokane, Makhubela and Mabasa (2017:283), the framework answers questions of what both supervisor and supervisees are allowed to do and what responsibilities are assigned to each one. This Framework was developed to ensure effective supervision and ultimately result in good service delivery by practitioners. There are also norms and standards for social work supervision in South Africa, which were developed by the Department of Social Development. These norms and standards of supervision thus specify rules of practice for the social work supervisor (Parker, 2017:3). The norms and standards specify the rules, roles, and responsibilities of social work supervisor and social work supervisee. It is thus incumbent on all social work supervisors that they adhere to the norms and standards as they endeavour to provide social work supervision (Bhuda, 2019:110).

From the above discussion, social work supervision is important regardless of whether it occurs in government, NGO, or private practice. Central to the supervision process is the supervision relationship entered into by the social work supervisor and supervisee. Like any other relationship, the supervision relationship is not immune to challenges. If not adequately and efficiently addressed the challenges can result in ineffective supervision. Consequently, as espoused by the resilience theory, both the supervisors and supervisees have abilities to develop strategies relevant to managing their supervision relationship.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the concepts of supervision and supervision relationship have been discussed in-depth. The importance of supervision within the social work discipline was discussed with more emphasis placed on the fact that supervision is not possible without a dynamic supervision relationship. This chapter also highlighted the importance and components of a supervision relationship, the roles of supervisors and supervisees, the effective and ineffective supervision practices, and the challenges faced within supervision relationships. The chapter delved into some strategies in literature utilised for managing the supervision relationship. Since this study focuses on strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector, an in-depth discussion on the NGO sector was also provided. There was some concerted focus on the South African NGO sector challenges and the social work supervision process within this sector.

CHAPTER 3

Research methodology for this study

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology refers to the path that a researcher takes to find answers to a specific research question (Kumar, 2011:18). This refers to a detailed plan that the researcher in this study developed to explore supervision strategies in mentoring supervisees in social work practice in South African NGOs. According to Creswell (2014:295), research methodology comprises plans that direct the choice of research trajectory from broad assumptions to specific methods of data collection and analyses. Tracy (2013:25) refers to research methodology as tools from which the researcher chooses, depending on the goals. The research methodology that was employed in this study include the research approach, and the research design, which are discussed hereunder.

3.2. Research approach

For the study, a qualitative research approach was adopted. According to Taylor, Bogdan and de Vault (2016:8), qualitative research focuses on bringing to the table the participant's own explanations of a phenomenon using the participant's own words. Qualitative researchers suspend their own understanding of the phenomenon under study and rely on the understanding and frames of reference of the participants. Creswell (2014:32) adds that qualitative research approach is useful when there is little knowledge about the phenomenon under study, when the phenomenon cannot be understood by using numerical descriptions, and when the focus of the study is on understanding the encounter from the participant's own frames of reference. According to Tracy (2013:7), qualitative research is useful for understanding phenomenon that arises from cultural contexts, participants' perceptions of the said phenomenon and their reasons for behaving in a certain way.

In view of the characteristics of qualitative approach discussed, the researcher deemed this approach the most suitable for this study because:

- The study strove to identify and ascertain strategies employed by supervisors and supervisees in managing their supervision relationship by getting the meanings that participants attach to the phenomenon of supervision. The study anticipates building knowledge from participants' own stories and words. This is presented in Chapter 4 of this study wherein the findings of the study are presented from the perceptions of participants themselves.
- The researcher was the key instrument for data collection and analyses in this study, a characteristic of qualitative research discussed by Cresswell (2014:185). That is, she assumed the duties of collecting data from the supervisors and supervisees and analysed the data.
- The study anticipated a full description of strategies employed by supervisors and supervisees in managing the supervision relationship through words rather than numbers and this was achieved by presenting conclusions on the strategies identified by study participants in Chapter 5 of this research report.

Once a decision about the research approach was made, the researcher chose a research design that was in line with the chosen approach.

3.3. Research paradigm

A research paradigm refers to a set of beliefs that guides the researcher in conducting their study and provides plans for handling issues within a specific field (Cresswell 2016:111; Kamal 2019:1388). Researchers have the responsibility of choosing a research paradigm that best suits their field and for the purpose of this study, constructivism was followed. According to Cresswell (2016:114), constructivists believe in collecting data directly from the participants and develop themes from participant's statements. Reality in constructivism is seen through the eyes of the participants (Junjie & Yingxin 2022:10), who are viewed as experts in constructing their own realities (Kamal, 2019:1390).

The researcher believing that the participants are at the best state of providing information to help answer the research question in this study, collected data directly from the social work supervisors and supervisees working in the NGO sector. Themes were also developed from the participant's own statements and participant's realities are captured in this report.

3.4. Research design

There are a variety of quality research designs employed in qualitative research and they include case study, phenomenology, narrative research, grounded theory, and ethnography, exploratory, descriptive, and contextual designs. These designs of enquiry are defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2018:59) as guiding the researcher to specific ways of collecting and analysing data. Not all the identified designs could be adopted in this study, so the exploratory, descriptive, and contextual designs were adopted.

Exploratory research design, according to Neuman (2014:38), can be used when there is not enough information available about a phenomenon or when the phenomenon is new and there is not enough research conducted on it. Exploratory research is also useful when we realise that necessary research has not been conducted regarding the phenomenon and when there is a need to improve research on the under-researched conundrum (Leavy, 2017:5),. As evidenced above, there is minimal information on strategies employed by supervisors and supervisees in managing their supervision relationship in the NGO sector of South Africa hence the applicability of this strategy as described below.

Descriptive research design is a type of research employed when the aim of the study is to describe the phenomena from the participant's own frames of reference (Neuman, 2014:38). The goal of descriptive research is to provide information about the experiences and attitudes of participants towards the said phenomenon (Kumar, 2011:33; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017:161). This design was thus applicable to this study because the researcher describes the strategies employed by supervisors and supervisees in managing their supervision relationship in their own context. The description of the strategies is the substance in Chapter 5 of this research report.

The third and final design employed in this study is the contextual research design, which according to Neuman (2014:77), considers the context in which the phenomenon being studied occurs. Tracy (2013:3) states that the context refers to the scene where the problem necessitating a research study occurs. The context gives the researcher some background information on other issues that may influence

participant's reactions, behaviours, and perceptions regarding the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014:37). For this study, the context in question refers to the South African NGOs, which is where the supervision relationships take place. That is, interviews were conducted in the offices of social work supervisors and supervisees in NGOs, specifically, in the Gauteng province of South Africa. Considering the context in which the supervision relationship occurs helped to ensure that cues that might give important information regarding the supervision relationship were not under-explored.

3.5. Research methods

In this segment, research methods are discussed as tools used for observing and studying what happens in a research project (Dunn, 2013:2). The research methods chosen for a study, according to Neuman (2014:2) and Wertz et al (2011:87), should be appropriate to the study's research question, the goal of the study and the way the research problem is approached. Kumar (2011:xx) states that the importance of research methods lies in that they give the researcher an opportunity to develop a conceptual framework that boosts the researcher's confidence in undertaking the study. The research methods utilised in this study include decisions on population, sample, data collection and data analyses.

3.5.1. Population

A population refers to the larger group of people that can be proposed to participate in a study, from whom answers to the research question can be obtained (Kumar, 2011:55). Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:26), and Bhandari (2020:1) hold a similar view that a population refers to the total number of all people, events or activities that can be included in a study (such as all people in a hospital) from which a sample (such as a group of people suffering from specific illness) which promises more specific information can be drawn. This study was conducted in the NGO sector. Consequently, the population for this study is delineated as all social workers employed in the South African NGO sector and all social work supervisors employed in the same sector.

According to the South African Council for Social Service Professions (2019), there are 30 271 social workers registered to practice in South Africa and of these, there are

13 000 social work practitioners and 630 supervisors employed in the NGO sector in South Africa. Given the amount of time for the completion of this qualification which is two years and the resources such as transport and money available to the researcher, it was not practical to study the whole population mentioned above. Therefore, a sample was drawn from the population.

3.5.2. Sample

A sample is a smaller group of people from whom information necessary for answering the research question can be obtained, chosen from the larger group (population) as Kumar (2011:216) suggests. Choosing a small group from the larger population requires that the researcher employ a sample plan (i.e. the criteria for inclusion), which guides the researcher on procedures in choosing this small group of participants (Tracy, 2013:134). From the above population, a sample of social workers and a sample of supervisors that met the criteria for inclusion in this study was drawn.

Considering the time, resources and accessibility to participants, the study only focused on social work practitioners and supervisors employed in NGOs situated in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. According to the Department of Social Development (2019:47), there are 2 761 funded NGOs in Gauteng Province. The study thus focused only on the NGOs that have more than five branches in Gauteng and that employ both social work practitioners and supervisors. This was done for access to a larger pool of prospective participants. Drawing from the statistics presented in Table 1.1 the following organisations were thus approached for inclusion in the study: Child Welfare South Africa, Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouefederasie (SAVF), Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA), Rata Social Services, SOS Children's Home, North Gauteng Mental Health, Central Gauteng Mental Health, People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA).

It is also critical to note here that not all social workers and supervisors employed in the identified organisation could be included in the study. Yin (2016:17) advises that researchers should create an inclusion criterion. Because there were two categories of participants in this study, i.e., social workers and social work supervisors, then two categories of the criteria for inclusion were formulated. The criteria for inclusion of social workers in this study was as follows:

- Social workers from all racial groupings.
- Social workers who are currently being supervised and have been supervised for more than a year.

The criteria for inclusion of supervisors in this study was as follows:

- Social work supervisors from all racial groupings.
- Supervisors who are currently supervising social workers and have been supervising social workers for more than a year.

The criteria for inclusion discussed above is evidence that not all social workers and supervisors could be included in this study and as advised by Cohen et al (2018:96) there was need to determine exclusion criteria for the study. The criteria for informed the decision on which of social work practitioners and supervisors were excluded in the study (Velasco, 2010:2). Two categories of the criteria for exclusion were formulated as follows:

- Social workers who have less than one year of being supervised.¹
- Social workers who refuse to give written consent for participating in the study.

The criteria for exclusion of supervisors in this study was as follows:

- Supervisors who have been supervising social workers for less than one year.
- Supervisors who refuse to give consent for participating in the study.

The participants were therefore selected by means of a sampling technique as detailed in the upcoming discussion.

3.5.3. Sampling methods

There are different sampling methods that could be employed when selecting participants for a qualitative study, and according to Tracy (2013:34) they include convenience sampling, purposive sampling, theoretical sampling, and snowball sampling. Beuving and de Vries (2015:38) stresses the importance of choosing a

¹ <https://www.statistissolutions.com>

specific sampling method for each study. In discussing the choice for a sampling method, Jason and Glanwick (2016:72) state that there is no method that is better than the other and that the choice of a specific method depends on the objectives and the contexts of the research study.

The researcher in this study employed purposive sampling to obtain a sample of social work supervisors and supervisees in the NGO sector who met the criteria for inclusion in this study. Tracy (2013:134) defines purposive sampling as referring to where a sample is chosen intentionally by choosing participants whose information promises the capacity for obtaining answers to the research questions of the study. Yin (2016:93-94), concurs that purposive sampling technique is employed when participants are chosen intentionally since they know more about the phenomenon under study and are prepared to provide the information necessary for answering the research question.

Adopting purposive sampling afforded the researcher an opportunity to judge and select participants with the best information to answer the research question. The sample was drawn from four NGOs situated in the Pretoria region of the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The reason for collecting data in only four NGOs out of all those with presence in Tshwane was because data saturation was reached before the researcher could approach other NGOs for additional data. The focus on Tshwane region was because it is the closest region to the researcher and would thus not require too much finances for travelling to interviews. Determining the sample for the study enabled the researcher to successfully embark on data collection.

3.5.4. Data collection

Data collection refers to the process where the researcher goes out there to get the information needed for answering the research question, from the people who are in a good position to provide the required information and who volunteer to share such information (Wray & Barrett, 2022). Data collection in qualitative research is a process where the researcher learns more about the participant's experiences of a phenomenon by listening or/and observing participants as they move around and performing their duties in their own natural setting (Jason & Glenwick, 2016:15). In this study, data was collected to get in-depth information that was then translated and

accepted as the answer to the research question. Since the researcher in this study was a key instrument for data collection, the researcher ensured that both the participants and the researcher were prepared for this process as advised by Creswell (2014:185).

3.5.4.1. Preparation for data collection

When preparing for data collection, researchers should discuss how they prepare participants for data collection according to Creswell (2014:185) and according to Cohen et al (2018:520), researchers should also discuss their own preparation for the data collection process. In the preparation of the participants (both supervisees and supervisors), the researcher contacted organisations and asked to make a presentation of her study. The researcher was given contacts of the NGO directors/managers/supervisors, from whom the required permission could be obtained. The researcher contacted managers and asked to do a presentation, but all managers who were contacted asked the researcher to first present to them alone before permission could be granted to present to social work supervisors and social workers. The researcher presented to the managers and the managers eventually granted permission to access the NGO and email addresses of the participants.

Once permission was granted, the researcher sent emails to all social work supervisors and social workers. The emails contained formal requests letters (attached as Addendum B) requesting their participation. The prospective study participants were also furnished with the combined participant information sheet and informed consent form (attached as addendum C). The invitation letter served as a formal invitation while the participant information sheet served as permission form signed by participants clarifying that they were not forced to participate in this study.

The researcher had planned to make follow up telephonically to check whether there were participants who agreed to participate but there is no NGO that agreed to share participants' contacts. Therefore, the researcher had to conduct follow up visits. During the visit, the researcher discovered that the prospective study participants had not read the letters. The researcher had to read the letters to them. It is during this time that the researcher asked participants to choose languages that they understand better and all participants chose English. This meant that the use of an interpreter was

unnecessary since both the researcher and the participants understood English well. Later on, those participants who agreed to participate in this study made appointments for the actual interviews conducted in English. The venue and time for the interviews was decided on by the participants to ensure that there were no disruptions on their part.

As indicated above, the researcher also prepared herself for data collection. The researcher did this by following the guidelines by Cohen et al (2018:520):

- The researcher read more on qualitative interviewing to learn more how she could channel the interviews and balance the different areas of the interview.
- The researcher planned and formulated clear questions that were included in the interview guide
- The researcher conducted a pilot study. The discussion on piloting is discussed later on.

After preparing for data collection, the researcher collected data from those individuals who had agreed to participate in the study.

3.5.4.2. Methods of data collection

In qualitative research, there are different methods that can be used for the process of data collection, and they include interviews, focus groups, and participant observation (De Chesnay, 2015:11). The choice of a specific method for data collection depends on the purpose of the study (Cohen et al., 2018:469). The researcher should keep in mind the purpose of the study when choosing the method for collecting data.

For this study, data was collected by means of interviews and an interview guide with both the supervisors and the supervisees in the NGO sector. Interviews refer to a kind of conversation that is in a question-and-answer format conducted to get an understanding of the others viewpoint (Tracy, 2013:131). Merriam (2009:87) holds a similar view that an interview is a question-and-answer interaction between the researcher as the interviewer and the participant as the interviewee, with the purpose of understanding the view point of the participants with regard to the phenomenon under study. The researcher interviewed participants by asking participants questions

and participants answering the questions. Through question-and-answer interactions, the researcher got to understand the views of the social work supervisors and supervisees regarding their supervision relationships.

There are different types of interviews from which a researcher can choose and for the purpose of this study, semi structured interviews were used. Semi structured interviews are the kind of interview that involves both questions planned prior to the interview and more flexible questions unplanned but asked when necessary (Merriam, 2009:90). In agreement with the preceding author, Holloway and Wheeler (2010:89) state that semi structured interviews refer to interviews that are in-between structured and unstructured interviews. Consequently, the researcher had pre-planned questions contained in an interview guide. The planning was done prior to the interview to give direction for obtaining the necessary information while the unstructured was used when the necessary information was elicited by using follow up questions that allowed participants to delve deeper or clarify. That is, since participants are viewed as experts on the social work supervision relationships, they were given opportunity to share as much as they wanted to and allowed to tell their stories their way. This kind of interview was perceived the most suitable for this study.

The questions for the interviews were divided into biographical and open-ended questions. The biographical questions helped the researcher with background information on the expert level while open ended questions ensured that participants were not restricted to yes and no answers but delved deeper in their answers and gave an in-depth description of their phenomenon (the study questions are contained in addendum 3).

The questions in the study were open-ended since such questions direct participants to delve deeper in their responses and not restrict participants to one word, and yes or no answers (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009:250). To conduct the interviews, the researcher also used the following interview techniques as suggested by Cohen et al (2018:518).

- The researcher ensured that participants were comfortable by building rapport, establishing trust, and handling the sessions sensitively, professionally, and ethically.
- The researcher asked clear questions in a language best understood by the participants. The questions were solely linked to this study, easy to understand and answer, non-threatening, straight forward and brief.
- The researcher avoided interruptions from outside, minimised distractions, listened actively and showed interest in the conversation.
- The researcher also ensured that she understood fully by using the clarifying, probing, and paraphrasing skills goading the participant to clarify what they were saying, probing to encourage the participants to give a more detailed descriptions and paraphrasing to allow the participant to correct the researcher where the researcher had not heard correctly.

The interviews were audio recorded with the written consent of participants and were later transcribed. This enabled the researcher to concentrate fully on the participants rather than what was shared, and this ensured that there were no risks of the researcher forgetting important information. Audio recording is recommended by Cohen et al (2018:520) who states that this makes it a good method enabling the researcher to focus on the participant, does not distract the interview process and limits the risk of forgetting shared information.

It is also critical to note here that it was not possible for the researcher to determine the sample size prior to data collection. This was because in a qualitative research approach more participants may have been added as necessary, even if the researcher was already at the stage of analysis (Yin, 2016:95; Taylor et al., 2016:108). The researcher kept on adding more participants and collecting data until data saturation, which is defined by Jason and Glenwick (2016:16) as a point where new data only gives confirmation to previously collected data. Consequently, the researcher only stopped collecting data when she was convinced that there was nothing new to learn from data as advised by Leavy (2017:137). Jason and Glenwick (2016:17) also concur that in qualitative research, the process of data collection cannot stop until the point of saturation.

Before the actual data was collected, as alluded to earlier, the researcher embarked on pilot testing and the segment below maps the piloting anticipated.

3.5.4.3. Pilot testing

As part of planning, the researcher conducted a pilot study. According to Neuman (2014:307), piloting is conducted to test the efficacy of both strategy and planning. Echoing Yin (2016:39), in this study, the researcher's purpose for pilot testing was to run-through the chosen method for data collection and rectify, amend, and extend where necessary. Kumar (2011:159) confirms that pilot testing is necessary for checking if the interview questions are phrased in an understandable manner. In this study pilot testing was conducted with one supervisor and three supervisees to test the suitability, exhaustiveness and applicability of the data collection instrument and the questions. According to Stake (2010:94) and Holloway and Wheeler (2010:341), the number of participants for pilot testing can be very small since this is a preliminary test preceding the actual study. To confirm this limitation in the scope of the pilot test, Bernard and Goodyear (2014:150) refer to a pilot test conducted with only three participants by Graf and Stebnicki (2012).

In this study, a pilot test was conducted to test the data collection interviews, especially whether this method of data collection would lead to participants sharing information relevant in answering the research question. For this specific test, interviews were conducted with one supervisor and three supervisees who met the criteria for inclusion in the study to test if the interview questions were correctly phrased and understood by the participants, to correct questions and where necessary, to change questions. The pilot participants did not recommend any changes to the questions. The informed consent form was also piloted, and the pilot participants reported that it was readable, and the information contained was clearly articulated.

The researcher had estimated in the proposal that the interviews would take approximately 60 minutes and the researcher decided to test this time frame too. During pilot testing, the researcher found that the interviews for all four participants took about 30 to 45 minutes each. This allowed the researcher to proceed in the confidence that there would be no surprises regarding time spent by the participants.

3.5.4.4. Method of data analyses

The aim of analysing data in qualitative research is to find meaning in the piles of different, non-numerical information that the researcher has collected (de Chesnay, 2015:1). Echoing Jason and Glenwick (2016:17), the process of data collection and analyses in qualitative research are not separate stages; they proceed simultaneously. The researcher in this study also started analysing data once themes began emerging while at the same time data collection continued until saturation was reached. On reaching the data saturation, the researcher transcribed the audio-recorded interviews and then analysed the data by following Moustaka's steps for data analyses outlined by Holloway and Wheeler (2010:286) and Creswell (2014:247)

- Firstly, the researcher transcribed each interview and searched for significant statements presented.
- Secondly, the researcher read all the data to get the sense of the information and reflect on its overall meaning.
- The researcher wrote all relevant and significant statements in the margins of transcripts.
- Statements that were repetitive were deleted. The researcher only left invariant constituents of the phenomenon and organised, linked and developed them into data informed themes.
- The researcher then used the coding process to integrate the themes in a description of the texture of the participant's experiences as told by the participants.
- This was followed by a reflection on the experiences of the participants.
- Finally, the researcher developed thick descriptions of the meanings of the experiences and derived and inferred interpretations.

Once the collected data was analysed, the researcher verified the findings against inaccuracy. This process is discussed in-detail in the segment that follows.

3.6. Method of data verification

Data verification refers to a process where the findings are checked against inaccuracy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:1376). According to Creswell (2009:190) and Merriam (2009:210), the purpose of data verification is to check the accuracy of the findings

and assure others of their trustworthiness. In this study, the researcher followed Guba's and Lincoln's model of ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings in qualitative research as discussed by Merriam (2009:211), Jason and Glenwick (2016:17) and Kumar (2011:184). The model purports that qualitative data verification can be achieved through the credibility of the study, applicability/transferability, consistency/dependability, and neutrality. Each component is discussed in relation to the study in the following segments.

3.6.1. Credibility

Credibility refers to the process of ensuring that the study is based on evidence (Silverman, 2016:812), that the findings are true and that there is confidence to apply them (Tracy, 2013:235). There are different strategies employed to enhance the credibility of a study and according to Kumar (2011:184) these include triangulation, member checks, adequate involvement in data collection, researcher's position, and peer examination. In this study, triangulation and adequate involvement in data collection were adopted to ensure credibility. Triangulation can according to Merriam (2009:215), be achieved by means of "using multiple methods, multiple sources for data collection, or multiple researchers." In this study, triangulation of data sources was employed by means of interviewing two groups of participants, namely the supervisors and the supervisees. This helped to ensure that strategies employed by both the social work supervisor and supervisee were uncovered. In addition, as advised by Merriam (2009:219) the researcher spent enough time on the process of data collection to capture and obtain the true account of participant's experiences from the participants own frames of reference.

3.6.2. Applicability or transferability

Applicability is defined by Kumar (2011:184) and Jason and Glenwick (2016:17), as the ability to apply or transfer the findings to other similar settings. Holloway and Wheeler (2010:303) also refer to applicability as the finding's relevance in other similar settings. The researcher in this study provided a thick description of the research methodology that was followed to ensure applicability as recommended by Merriam (2009:221). This will provide the reader with the specific data to help them in their own settings.

3.6.3. Consistency and dependability

Consistency refers to the ability of the study to produce similar results if it was to be repeated, and it answers the questions of whether the results will be consistent with the data that has been collected (Merriam, 2009:220) and whether similar results will be obtained should the study be repeated (Jason & Glenwick, 2016:17). Various techniques for ensuring dependability of qualitative studies exist and the researcher had planned to use an independent coder, but due to finances available to the researcher, this technique was decided against. For this study, the researcher received guidance from her research supervisor who had access to the collected data and findings. Through checking the collected data against the research findings, the research supervisor was able to verify the study's consistency. The researcher also kept record of the process that was followed as advised by Kumar (2011:184). Consistency also exists when the study is neutral and can be confirmed by others. The discussion hereunder outlines how neutrality was ensured in this study.

3.6.4. Neutrality

For ensuring neutrality, the researcher should suspend her own experiences and feelings during the research process to ensure that the only captured experiences, feelings, and emotions are those of the participants and that the findings are unbiased (Jason & Glenwick, 2016:17). According to Maxwell (in Yin, 2016:85), this involves an act of searching for any rival or competing explanations. The researcher in this study had planned to use member checks to ensure that the findings are bias free by sharing the findings with the participants so that they can give feedback as to whether the researcher's interpretations are their shared stories or not and clarify where necessary as advised by Merriam (2009:217). However, due to time constraints, the researcher decided to follow the advice by Maxwell above. The researcher searched for contradicting experiences and the inability to point out contradicting experiences served as confirmation that the findings are neutral.

3.7. Chapter summary

In this chapter, a description of the research methodology was provided. The choice of a research approach and research design were outlined. The research design included the exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research designs. The research methods such as the population, sampling, sampling methods, data collection and

methods of data collection were amplified. Finally, the researcher defended and justified the method of data analyses and data verification. The following chapter presents and discusses empirical findings of this study.

CHAPTER 4

Empirical findings

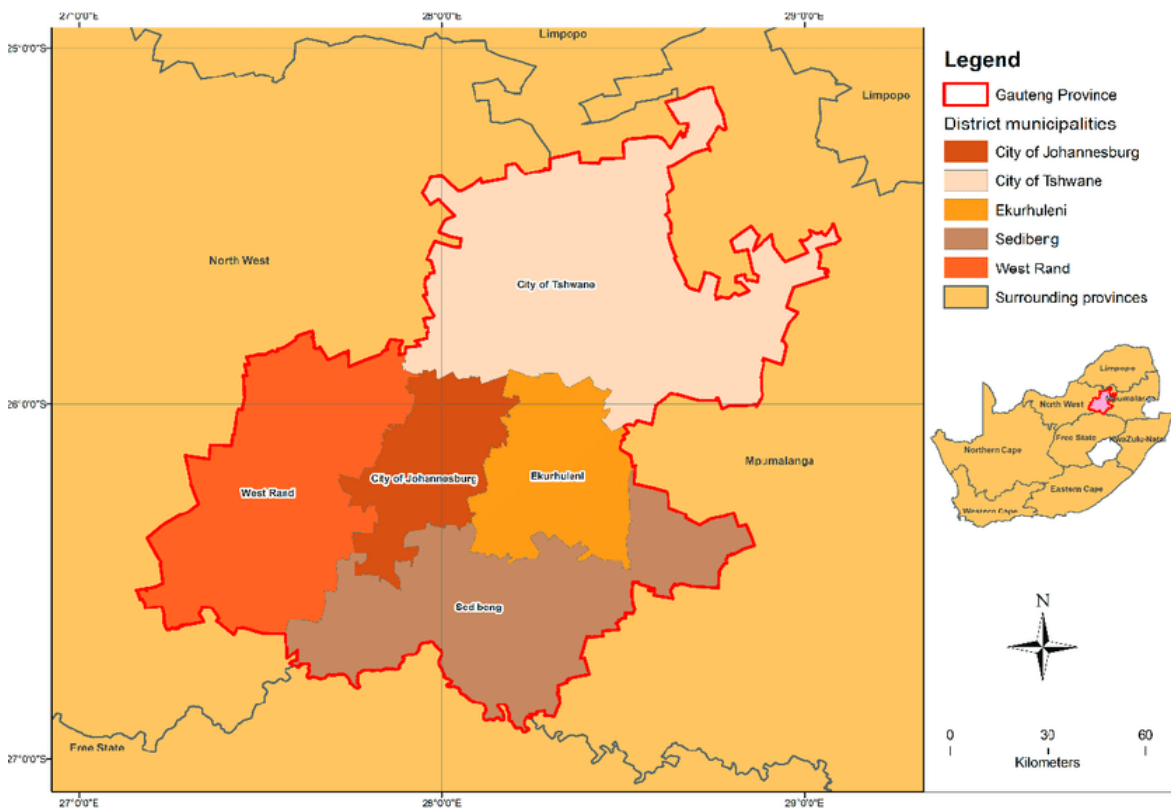
4.1. Introduction

The presentation of empirical findings involves sharing and disseminating findings that answer the research question (McShane & Flanders, 2018:1). This data is obtained through the process of conducting research, and this process includes the collecting, analysing, and sharing of participants' experiences (Bradford & Gordon, 2020:1). That is, the presentation of empirical findings communicates to the reader and interested researchers' findings of the participants' experiences from the process of research. Consequently, this chapter presents the non-statistical evidence from the data collected from social work supervisors and supervisees working in the NGO sector, specifically in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. However, before the findings can be presented, the research site is described because a research site contextualizes the area from which the phenomenon was studied.

4.2 The research site

This study was conducted in the NGOs located in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. Gauteng has eight district municipalities, and it receives more migrants compared to other provinces (Zubaidi, Martorell, Al-Bugharbee, Olier, Khalid & Hashim 2020:3). The map below illustrates the municipal demarcation of Gauteng Province.

Figure 4.1 Gauteng Province district municipalities' map



Source: Kapwata (2020)

From the map, Gauteng is divided into six municipalities and the total number of residents of Gauteng is 15 million (Statistics South Africa, 2023). Gauteng is characterised by suburbs, townships, and informal settlements as well as rural areas. Gauteng is perceived as an economic hub of South Africa. The study sample was drawn from four NGOs located in the Pretoria region of the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The reason for collecting data in only four NGOs out of all the NGOs in Tshwane was because data saturation was reached before the researcher could approach other NGOs. The reason for focusing on the Tshwane region was because the population of all social workers employed in the NGO sector of South Africa was too large for the researcher and it would have been impractical with the limited time and finance available to the researcher. It is also critical to note herein that to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, the exact NGOs wherein data was collected is not disclosed in this report.

There is also many vulnerable groups found in Gauteng and because of this, NGOs became an important constituency in assisting the government by providing state-like

services to these vulnerable groups. This is because according to Lekorwe and Mpabanga (2017:4-5), and Wiggill (2014:278), the South African government renders services to people in rural areas, townships, and informal settlements, and due to the high population growth of these areas, the government can no longer be the only provider of goods and services to the citizens.

4.3. Discussion of the findings

Data was collected from 12 participants through semi-structured interviews. The 12 participants consisted of 8 social workers and 4 supervisors who were interviewed using an interview guide. The questions posed to the participants were divided into biographical and open-ended questions. The biographical information of the study participants is thus illustrated in Table 7 and 8 below. This is followed by a focused discussion of the identified themes and sub-themes.

4.3.1. Biographical profile of the research participants

As alluded to earlier, four social work supervisors and eight social workers were interviewed in this study, and they possessed the following characteristics

Table 4.1 Biographic profile of supervisors

Participants	Participant 1	Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 12
Current position	Social work manager	Social work supervisor	Social work supervisor	Head of office and social work supervisor
Highest qualification	Bachelor of Social Work	Bachelor of Social Work	Bachelor of Social Work	Master of Social Work
Social work experience	10 years	12 years	14 years	33 years
NGO experience	4 years	7 years	14 years	20 years
Years with current employer	3 years	7 years	14 years	20 years
Supervision experience	4 years	2 years	7 years	15 years
Number of supervisees	4 supervisees	20 supervisees	12 supervisees	12 supervisees
Positions of supervisees	Social works and social auxiliary workers	Social workers and child and youth care workers	Social workers	Social workers and social auxiliary workers
Positions of supervisees	Social workers and social auxiliary workers	Social workers and child and youth care workers	Social workers	Social workers and social auxiliary workers

Table 4.2 Biographical profiles of supervisors

	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 8	Participant 9	Participant 10	Participant 11
Participants								
Current position	Senior social worker	Statutory social work	Statutory social work	Social worker	Social worker	Social work volunteer	Social worker	Social worker
Highest qualification	Social work honours degree	Bachelor of Social work	Bachelor of Social work	Bachelor of Social work	Bachelor of Social Work	Bachelor of Social work	Bachelor of Social work	Social work Honours degree
Social work experience	7 years	1 year	1 year	3 years	23 years	3 years	1 year	7 years
NGO experience	7 years	1 year	2 years	3 years	1 year	3 years	3 years	6 years
Years with current employer	6 years	1 year	1 year	3 years	1 years	7 months	1 year	5 years
Supervision experience	7 years	1 year	2 years	3 years	23 years	3 years	3 years	7 years
Number of supervisors	1 supervisor	1 supervisor	1 supervisor	1 supervisor	1 supervisor	1 supervisor	1 supervisor	1 supervisor
Position of supervisor	Chairman of the board	Program manager	Program manager and social work supervisor	Program manager	Chairperson of the board	Social work manager and supervisor	Social work supervisor	Program supervisor

As shown in Table 4.1 and 4.2, the participant pool consisted of social work supervisors and social work supervisees. According to the Department of Social Development and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (2012:9), a social worker is one who has obtained a social work degree from a recognised university, is registered as a social worker by the Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) in terms of Chapter 2 section 17 of the Social Service Professions Act (Act No 110 of 1978) and renders social services. A social work supervisor, on the other hand, is a person who checks, educates, advises, and supports social work practitioners (Miller, 2021:1).

Twelve (12) participants were subsequently interviewed and of these, eight (8) are supervisees and four (4) are supervisors. The reason for interviewing more supervisees than supervisors is because while it is normal for supervisors to supervise more supervisees in their role, it is rare that a supervisee can have more than one supervisor, hence the study by Borders et al (2012:281) found that one supervisor can have either individual supervision sessions or have triadic supervision or even group

supervision where the supervisor confers with more supervisees at a time. The number of years of experience of participants ranged from 1 year to 33 years, with the highest experienced being supervisors. Amongst the supervisors, it is only one who had a master's degree while none of the social work supervisee participants has a postgraduate social work qualification.

4.3.2. Themes and sub-themes

The researcher conducted interviews with the help of an interview guide. The interview guide contained eleven (11) interview questions, which were posed to both supervisors and supervisees. Because supervisors and supervisees exist within an organisational setting, there were thus two categories of questions posed to the participants, those that were organisational-based and those that were supervision-specific. It was also important to have these categories of questions because what happens in the organisation impacts the supervision relationship and vice versa. The questions were thus used as the guide for developing the themes. Consequently, eleven themes emerged from this study out of which sub-themes were also crafted.

Table 4.3 Themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1 The focus of the non-government organisation sector	
Theme 2 The job description of social work supervisors and supervisees	2.1. The supervisor's job description 2.2. The supervisee's job description
Theme 3 The choice for the NGO sector	
Theme 4 The challenges encountered by the social work supervisors and supervisees in their day-to-day work	4.1. Uncooperative clients 4.2. Lack of funding 4.3. Lack of resources 4.4. Unbalanced organisational structure
Theme 5 Mechanisms used by social work supervisors and supervisees to mitigate the identified challenges	5.1. Planning, confrontation, and referrals 5.2. Find other donors and use funds sparingly 5.3. Share resources, use own resources and working over time 5.4. Peer supervision 5.5. No Mechanism
Theme 6 The concept of 'social work supervision'.	6.1. Administrative function of supervision 6.2. Educational function of supervision 6.3. Supportive function of supervision
Theme 7 The advantages and disadvantages of supervision	7.1. The advantages of supervision 7.2. The disadvantages of supervision
Theme 8 The supervision relationships	8.1. Good supervision relationship 8.2. Bad supervision relationship
Theme 9 Challenges encountered by the social work supervisor/supervisee in their supervision relationship	9.1. Perceived supervisor or supervisee difficulty and vice versa 9.2. No challenges experienced
Theme 10 Methods used by social work supervisors and supervisees to resolve challenges in their supervision relationship	10.1. Having supervision sessions 10.2. Early intervention and confrontation 10.3. Communication and understanding 10.4. Disciplinary
Theme 11 Characteristics of an ideal social work supervision relationship	11.1. Good communication 11.2. Mutual respect 11.3. Conducive supervision environment 11.4. Fulfilment of duties 11.5. Growth

4.3.3. Discussion of the themes and sub-themes

Eleven themes emerged from the data analyses phase and each theme is discussed with sub-themes where applicable.

Theme 1: The focus of the non-government organisation sector

The participants were asked to describe the organisation at which they were employed, and they shared working in the NGO sector. A non-governmental organisation (NGO) is defined by Sedlacek (2014:249) as one that is not established by the government but by private individuals, and it is aimed at addressing a specific social need. Othman and Ali (2012:5) adds that NGOs are independent organisations that are not aimed at making profit. According to Gebreselassie-Hagos and Smit (2013:117), the purpose of NGOs is to render social services to the less fortunate and vulnerable of the society.

The participants shared that their employment organisations specialise in the following services: mental health care, protection of vulnerable groups, family preservations and substance abuse interventions. The following statements represent the enunciations of the participants.

“...it is an NGO, and we specialise in mental health, and we give counselling to any mental health related issues such as stress and depression which could be caused by circumstances...” (P2).

“...it’s an NGO focusing on statutory [obligations] which means we deal with court matters; we deal with child protection. We deal with foster care, adoption, including the removal of children. We work within the promulgation of the Children’s Act of 2005...” (P1).

“...it’s a child protection NGO. What we do is render services to children who need care and protection, vulnerable women, vulnerable youths and older persons and the bucket of services that we render is statutory. We do foster care application and supervision we also do child abuse programmes and services to old people...” (P5).

“...We render family preservation, prevention, parenting plans and we also provide parenting skills...” (P4).

“...we do family preservation, we do early intervention services, we do counselling, we do mediation, we do awareness programmes and sometimes they ask us to do

parenting plans if the parents don't get along in terms of sharing custody of the child..." (P5).

"...we are an outpatient centre, so our core business is substance abuse..." (P12).

"...We are an NGO, and we render substance abuse services. In this community there is a lot of children who are into drug abuse, and it is difficult to rehabilitation because sometimes they don't want to admit that they are addicts..." (P1).

It is evidenced in this regard that some NGOs render mental health services in South Africa. Mental health is a complex and a major social issue in South Africa (Pillay, 2019; Kleinjes & Hollander, 2020:2). Approximately one in six people in South Africa deal with mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, substance use disorder, 60 % are suffering from post-traumatic stress, and of all these, only 27% receive the necessary treatment (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021:2). Duong, Bruns, Lee, Cox, Coifman, Mayworm and Lyon (2020:1), also states that people receive mental health social services from many other sources including schools, primary care, juvenile justice, child protection and other organisations.

The participants who shared that their organisations focused on the protection of vulnerable groups reported that they centre particularly on children, disabled people, women and the elderly. This cohort of participants further shared that the protection of children is done mostly through statutory work, adoption, safeguarding and removal, and placing of children in places of safety while the protection of the other vulnerable groups such the elderly, disabled and vulnerable women is done through counselling, skills development programmes, and protection workshops.

The services identified and interrogated by most of the participants was child protection services. The findings show that child protection services are necessary in protecting children who are either neglected, orphaned, or just abused. The intervention services employed for the protection of children include providing psychosocial support, placing children in foster care, and placing children in places of safety. Other sources fuelling child vulnerability in South Africa include poverty, abuse, health issues, homelessness, neglect, and violence (Haffejee & Levine, 2020:11; Munongi & Mawila, 2023:1). The menace of child vulnerability is a serious one in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2021:1) According to Kidman and Thurman (2014:235), parents of children die, leaving children with relatives who become foster parents to

the orphaned children. They have to be salvaged from this vulnerability and precarity through services rendered by NGOs.

The participants shared that part of their responsibilities involve family preservation, which is done through interventions such as counselling, mediation, parental plans, parental skills, and awareness campaigns that focus on the importance of family. Family preservation is defined by Strydom (2012:1) as services that are meant to help families that are perceived to be at risk. According to the author, the goal of this service is to avoid solutions that can somehow dissolve the family structure such as removal of children and placing them in foster care and/or places of safety. According to Bertelsen (2021:47), the interventions for family preservation include parenting skills and parenting plans for separating and divorcing parents.

In the study the participants thus shared that the issues that lead to imbalances in the family, necessitating social service interventions include substance abuse, which is a big threat to most families with which they work. Substance abuse is a significant challenge amongst youth and has consequences such as accidents, overdose, crime, violence, teenage pregnancy, depression, and suicide, all ultimately leading to death (Khatib, Sinha & Syed 2018:3). In some instances, the parents can indulge in substance abuse, leading to the neglect of their familial responsibilities (Sylvestro, Glance & Stephenson, 2023). According to the participants, they assist families through outpatient rehabilitation, which serves to preserve the family instead of removing the child from the care of the parents. The participants also shared that in some situations children can be removed temporarily and then reunited with their parents when the parent's situation change for the better. This is in line with the preceptive observations provided by Font, Sattler and Gershoff (2018:1) that once the parent/s who were addicted to substances are fully rehabilitated, they can be reunited with their children.

The findings of this study further show that the family system is important, hence the need for family preservation. The NGOs render family preservation services to families considered at risk through interventions such as counselling, mediation, parental plans, parental skills and awareness campaigns that focus on the worth of family. Counselling is aimed at ensuring that the parents/family can get back to normal

functioning (American Counselling Association, 2023). Mediation is aimed at helping families reach agreements that would consolidate the family structure (O'Neill, 2023), parental plans are for parents who share custody of their children and ensures that parents do not fight over the children (Bertelsen, 2021:47), parental skills help improve their parenting methods (Gill & Lindberg 2020), and awareness campaigns educate communities about the rights of children and the abuse of substances (Climate Adapt, 2023). It was also found that the use of substances can lead to death; to intervene, social workers render counselling and outpatient rehabilitation services to such clients.

Theme 2: The job descriptions of social work supervisors and supervisees

The participants in this study shared their job descriptions. A job description is defined by Verboncu and Zeininger (2015:606), as referring to the roles and responsibilities of an employee in their workplace. This speaks to what tasks exactly the participants are employed to perform in their NGOs. Since this study focused on two groups, the job description is divided into the following two sub-themes: the supervisor and then the supervisee.

Sub-theme 2.1: The supervisor's job description

The supervisor participants in this study indicated that they are responsible for the running of the NGO, ensuring that the NGO reaches set targets. They also shared that they have human resource duties, fleet management, and supervising social workers. With the following vignettes sum the participant's descriptions:

"...Well as I said am responsible for the whole organisation and my job is to supervise social workers. For example, I give guidance, I direct when it comes to the statutory services, I check reports and check if they are doing the work properly. I also do human resources for example I manage the leaves of my subordinates. I also do fleet management. Basically, I do everything, not just social work. I do everything because it's an NGO, it's not like government where you have someone who is going to do transport and someone doing HR..." (P1).

"...I make sure that the staff is where they are supposed to be. Sometimes I will be working on files, sometimes I will be working on the database, monitoring what they are capturing..." (P6).

“...my job description is long. I supervisee the foster care workers, plus one reunification worker and my work entails guiding, supporting them, and teaching them. I also work in canalising their reports and conduct individual supervision and we also have group supervision or facilitate peer supervision...” (P7).

“...as the head of office I oversee the daily running of the office then as a supervisor I also supervise the social workers and the auxiliary workers, so I have a dual purpose...” (P12).

The findings in this study show that the job description for social work supervisors in the NGO sector include supervising social workers, HR duties, fleet management and sometimes the running of the whole NGO. The findings also confirm that the role of supervising the social workers involve the fulfilment of the three basic functions of social work which are educational, supportive, and administrative functions of supervision. That is, the social work supervisors educate their supervisees about their work, support them in their implementation of the programme and check whether work has been done and if it is done correctly. Harkness (2014:9) and Engelbrecht (2015:2) confirm that a social work supervisor is a person who has a qualification as a social worker and employed to provide administration, education and supportive functions of supervision to their supervisee/s. While DSD and the SACSSP (in Shokane, 2016:19) states that social work supervisor’s responsibilities are to ensure the fulfilment of these specific functions, it is evident from the findings of this study that social work supervisors in the NGO sector find themselves having to perform other tasks such as fleet management, HR and running the NGO, which are not necessarily social work. This was also found by Chenhall et al (2010:749-750), who state that the financial austerity compelled NGOs into failing to employ sufficient staff, a situation that led social workers into performing additional duties not necessarily in line with social work.

It is therefore assumed in this regard that the HR duties of the social work supervisors may include the hiring and firing of staff, ensuring that correct leave forms are filled and that the employees do not more leave days than they have accrued, and ensuring that all the staff complete their tasks, as per their contracts because according to Coursera (2023:2), HR duties entail hiring, updating employee information (such as employee attendance, leave, pay rates and correct working hours) and ensuring that labour laws are followed by the organisation. Another role for the social work

supervisors is fleet management. In this role social work supervisors check if employees use the cars allocated correctly and for valid organisational reasons and if the correct documentation is completed when using the NGO cars because according to Johnson (2021), fleet management entails management of the organisation's vehicles, including managing vehicle costs and monitoring driver behaviour.

Sub-theme 2.2: The supervisee's job description

The supervisee participants in this study indicated that they are responsible for child protection, which involves statutory work and awareness campaigns that focus on child abuse. Participants working in statutory assignments have the responsibility of protecting children by means of foster care intervention, counselling, parental plans/skills and removal and placement of children in places of safety. The participants working in mental health care provide services such as therapy, assessing the intellectual capacity of the children and do awareness campaigns in schools, clinics, and communities halls. For participants working with disabled people, their duties include teaching people with disabilities about their rights, social media dangers and pornography, hygiene, attitudes, and ensure that they are stimulated. The participant's statements concerning their job description is provided below.

"...we render services to children who are in need of care and protection, vulnerable women, vulnerable youth, older people's awareness programmes and we also do child abuse programmes and also services to old people..." (P5).

"...I am doing statutory social work, I am also doing stats, I give counselling to children, I also do parenting skills and conduct campaigns. I also do home visits..." (P9).

"...Well, I mostly do new intakes, I work with the case until finalisation. So, if it's an intake, depending on the problem, I do the necessary interventions. If it requires early interventions such as placing a child in alternative care, I do that, if it requires court proceedings I do that, if it requires monitoring, I also do that..." (P11).

"...I also do admin, I do my monthly stats, I do business proposals, I do progress reports, and I also go to court to place kids in foster care, remove kids from place of safety..." (P10).

“...we are doing counselling, therapy and assessing children for intellectual capacity, awareness in schools when it comes to mental health issues and also life skills...” (P8).

“...teach people with disabilities about their rights and ensure that they are stimulated and not abused they are protected from abuse and exploitation. We do awareness programmes at clinics and schools about mental health problems which include intake, referrals, programmes on social media dangers, pornography and workshops. We also teach them on good hygiene and good or bad attitude. I also supervise students from university...” (P2).

The participants in this study shared that they provide child protection services. These services are provided for by the Children’s Act (Act No 38 of 2005), which stipulates that social workers have the responsibility of ensuring that children are protected from violence or abuse of any form. The protection of children involves statutory services aimed at giving children better lives. The most common intervention is foster care and placing children in places of safety. According to Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:3), the goal of foster care is to protect and nurture children by providing safety. Other services rendered for the protection of the children entail counselling, parental plans/skills and awareness campaigns that teach people about child abuse and child protection.

Within the context of the elderly, the participants shared that they conduct awareness campaigns that are aimed at protecting the elderly. The protection of the elderly is provided for by the Older Person’s Act (Act No 13 of 2006). The participants working in mental health shared that they provide services such as therapy, assessing the intellectual capacity of the elderly and do awareness campaigns in schools, clinics, and communities halls. The goal of the awareness campaigns is to educate people about mental health and encourage them to take care of themselves to prevent mental health challenges and to assist and protect those who have mental health challenges. This is provided for by the Mental Health Care Act (Act No 17 Of 2002). For participants working with disabled people, their duties include teaching people with disabilities about their rights, social media dangers and pornography, good hygiene, good attitude, and ensure that they are stimulated. This is provided for by the Disability Act (Act No 108 of 1996).

Theme 3: The choice for the NGO sector

It is common in South Africa that social workers be employed in the NGO sector, the public sector, and the private sector (Lund, 2010:503; Patel et al., 2012:215). While there were participants in the study that choose to work in the NGO sector, there are some participants in this study who shared that they were forced by circumstances to join the NGO sector.

The social work supervisors and supervisees who chose to work in the NGO sector shared the following:

“...I chose an NGO because it’s a fast environment to learn. In an NGO one gets exposed to different social ills and different sectors ...” (P3).

“...What made me go to the NGO sector is because I am a person who likes different things. I have experience in working at DSD and I thought why not try and explore the NGO sector. Also, I didn’t see myself as a junior social worker for the rest of my life and so when the supervision opportunity presented itself, I took it because I want to grow my portfolio...” (P1).

“...I was looking for something completely different. What I can say here, it kind of different. I can focus on other things other than what I have been doing all these years...” (P8).

The reasons for choosing the NGO sector amongst this cohort of participants included a desire to explore and grow, to learn, and gain experience. However, there was lack of similar findings in literature. Most literature explored the reasons why social workers leave the NGO sector. That includes studies by Skhosana (2020:1) who established that due to certain factors such as benefits and low salaries, social workers leave the NGO sector to the public sector. Wiggill (2014:283) also concurs that the NGO sector employs inexperienced social workers who later leave the NGO sector for better employment once they have the experience required in the other sectors and have reached expert levels. NGOs are thus significant because according to Gebreselassie-Hagos and Smit (2013:104), they provide essential basic services, mainly in the social, educational and health sectors.

As indicated in the introductory remarks of this theme, there were also participants (social work supervisors and social work supervisees) in the study who indicated that

they were forced by circumstances to work in the NGO sector. Part of the circumstances that led to the participants working in the NGO sector was lack of social work employment in the public sector. The vignettes below speak of the lack of choice by the participants.

“...I did not choose the NGO. It’s just that I applied for a job at the NGO and was successful. So, I can say that the sector chose me.” (P1).

“...I did not choose the NGO; I couldn’t find a job in a public sector so I applied in the NGO, and I got the job so that’s the main and honest reason but if I got a job in government, I will leave the NGO honestly...” (P4).

“...Honestly speaking I didn’t choose it; I think it chose me because I am a DSD student scholarship holder, and I was supposed to be absorbed by DSD and I am still on the queue waiting to be absorbed by DSD. When I was applying, I was not checking whether it was NGO or not I was just looking for a job. For NGO I can honestly say it chose me, I did not choose it...” (P5).

“...It’s not by choice, it’s because of the scarcity of employment, given a chance. I will leave for the public sector...” (P6).

“...I think it chose me more than me choosing it. I did not even apply; I was recruited hence I am saying it chose me more than me choosing it. I would like to work in public sector but now I need experience...” (P7).

Issues of lack of employment, DSD’s inability to absorb their bursary holders and the availability of jobs in the NGOs led to some professionals having no choice but to seek employment in the NGO sector. According to Cloete (2022) there is around 9000 unemployed social work professionals in South Africa. The issue of unemployment is not just a social work issue but a national issue facing graduates in almost all professions. Member, Mahlalela and Mbohwa (2017:1), confirm that there is an unemployment crisis in South Africa.

According to the terms and conditions for the DSD social workers bursary contract, the social workers were to be employed by the Department of Social Development upon completion of their degrees, however, there is approximately 5000 bursary holders who are still unemployed (Gray & Lombard, 2022). Unfortunately, the department of social development has failed to employ all their bursary holders, and

this led to the DSD bursary holders having no choice but to apply for employment in the NGOs. In August 2022 the minister of social development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu, conceded that DSD cannot afford to absorb or hire social workers (Department of Social Development, 2022).

Settling for employment in this sector was singled out by almost all social work supervisees in this study. This suggests that this sector is considered only as the last option. This is also corroborated by Volmink and Van der Elst (2017:23), who state that the NGO sector is not valued nor respected, and it is the last option with little power to lure a strong, formal workforce with the requisite skills and competencies.

From the responses of the participants that were compelled by circumstances to work in the NGO sector, it is evident that they wished to be employed in the public sector. Some of the social work supervisors and supervisees expressed a desire to join the public sector where there are significant benefits, streamlined workloads, fairly lucrative salaries, packages, security, and amenable working environment. Below are reasons highlighted by some of the participants:

"...I would like to work for the public sector because of the benefits, here we don't have benefits such as medical aid, housing subsidy and staff..." (P2).

"...We are over worked, for peanuts. For instance, if my position was within a government department, I would be earning triple the amount that I am earning now. The NGO sector has money issues for employees..." (P6).

"...I would like to work for government because of the security. For example, if COVID-19 comes back again, in government job you know that you are secured whereas in the NGO sector there are no guarantees. Also, in government whether you did not go to work for three months or not you know you will still get paid, you won't get retrenched whereas in the organisation there is often threats of them shutting down because of lack of funds. Furthermore, there are also more benefits at a government department, you get car allowance, you get cell phone allowance, retirement annuity, medical aid, and many other benefits..." (P10).

"...In terms of resources it is better if you are working for the department. Government is also better in terms of salaries, working environments. Also, NGOs depend on the department for funding and sometimes the department does not pay the subsidy

timeously and as the results we don't get paid but if you working for department it's much better. Yes, we have experience of not being paid sometimes..." (P11).

The participants' dislike for the NGO sector stems from challenges within this sector, which include heavy workloads, low salaries, absence of retention packages, insecurity and an uninspiring working environment. All these challenges stem from the challenge of funding. According to the National Development Agency (2016:8) and Lund (2010:506), funding is the biggest challenge faced by most NGOs in South Africa because NGOs are not formed with the aim of making profit but are in the business of servicing the most vulnerable groups in society. Hochfeld (2010:358) concurs that NGOs are underfunded by the government, culminating in an inability to cope with the ever increasing numbers of people needing their services. Skhosana (2020:4) affirms that employees in the NGO sector earn less salaries than those in similar posts working in government and private sectors. Consequently, the sector struggles to attract experts because competent and experienced employees leave this sector for better employment conditions and better salary levels which are associated with working in government and private sectors (Volmink & Van der Elst 2017:23).

Theme 4: The challenges encountered by the social work supervisors and supervisees in their day-to-day work

This study confirmed that there are common challenges encountered by the social work participants in their day-to-day work. The challenges include uncooperative clients, lack of funding, the diverse needs of the community, lack of resources and the organisational structure. These challenges are discussed below as sub-themes for theme five.

Sub-theme 4.1: Uncooperative clients

Social services clientele includes children, disabled people, the mentally challenged and elderly and other vulnerable groups such as women, youth on substance abuse and the elderly. Choto, Iwu and Tengeh (2020:592), and Gray and Lombard (2022) concur that social work services vulnerable groups such as children, older people, youth, people with disabilities, and women. As alluded to earlier, different organisations deal with different problems and some of the problems are more challenging than others. The challenges that supervisors and supervisees experience with the clientele include the peculiarity of client's problem, lack of proper

documentation, lack of understanding, lack of cooperation, lack of appreciation, lack of self-care, dishonesty by clients, and problems such as drug use, and the field of work (e.g. substance abuse as a field). The challenges also include clients who are demanding, usually demanding to be helped at an NGO that is not allocated to their residential area and in some instances, clients refusing to be helped by younger social workers. The statements below illustrate the participant's experiences of this challenge.

"...the foreign nationals don't usually have proper documentation, so when it comes to placing or removing the children to homes, without proper documentation, it's really difficult..." (P1).

"...Some clients come with necessary documents while some come with illegal documents. We normally tell them to bring [proper] document[s], on dates and also give them instructions for tasks and they don't do them on time. Parents also do not cooperate, they don't honour appointments, which in turn impact my work negatively..." (P4).

"...In the client system a challenge that we might face is that some of our clients' don't tell the truth..." (P5).

"...the types of problems are the different challenges that clients must deal with. Like the problems of children are becoming more challenging. The children are experiencing a lot of psychiatric problems now, some children must be calmed down using pills. Sometimes the parents also don't work with us in terms of documentation[s] and clients are not honest..." (P7).

"...the biological parents who do not work with the social workers are a challenge. Even if you try to help them to improve their lives in order to take their children back because our job is to reunite them, but you find that the parents are no longer interested in those children, so you find that they have replaced them. Sometimes you can't reunite the children with their parents because the circumstances have not changed..." (P7).

"...there are people who are coming here, they don't understand how we work..." (P9).

“...dealing with teenagers who have behavioural problems is challenging, when you reprimand them, they threaten to kill themselves. Another challenge, older people you know. They feel that they have experience...” (P10).

“...In the field of substance abuse there are a lot of struggles regarding clients and the whole thing regarding substance abuse; clients not pitching up for sessions and having to conduct a lot of home visits to try and motivate them...” (P12).

“...Our beneficiaries’ parents’ don’t understand the disorders of their children...” (P2).

“...We are dealing with clients, some of them don’t appreciate the services that we render to them, others they don’t understand an NGO. Sometimes they would demand services that we can’t render...” (P4).

“...in this community there are a lot of children who are taking drugs, and it is difficult to get them rehabilitated because sometimes they don’t want to admit that they are actually addicts...” (P1).

“...we preach every day to schools that stop labelling, stop discriminating people living with mental health disorders. But people still don’t understand mental illnesses and beneficiary’s parents also don’t understand the disorders of their children. They don’t even know what Down syndrome is, what is autism. So, you must go and ask the doctor what the diagnosis are...” (P2).

The participants also shared that they struggle with challenges of clients in the field of mental health which include stigma and lack of understanding. Riebschleger, Costello and Grove (2019) concur that mental challenges can lead to disabilities, and it is one of the fields that receives much stigmatisation and the lack of understanding mental illness makes it difficult for people to seek help.

There are also issues of dishonesty and lack of cooperation from clients, especially, suicidal teenagers and people who use substances and these challenges make it hard for the participants to render quality services to their clients.

This study confirmed that there are many challenges regarding the clientele of the NGO sector, which are faced by social work supervisors and supervisees in doing their day-to-day work. The pervasive illegal immigration in South Africa means that some people seeking social services cannot be assisted due to lack of proper

documentation. According to Cabral and Cuevas (2020:1), immigrants without proper documentation cannot access services and resources that their documented counterparts have. This thus adds to the social worker's workload because some cases lapse while awaiting correct documentation, causing a serious backlog. This study also found that rebellious teenagers and those using substances make it hard to assist them because they often do not cooperate with the service providers. The rise of teenagers' with drug problems is discussed in detail by Horowitz and Graf (2019:2), who equally observe that there is a rise in teenage bullying, drug addiction and alcohol consumption.

The challenges of clientele that this study established affects the NGOs negatively because this sector is funded based on statistics and the figures must show the number of cases that have been finalised, with low statistics of finalised cases leading to funders questioning the credibility of the NGO. It is thus important that an NGO have credibility because NGOs build relationships of trust with funders to achieve their goals (O'Brien, Pilny & Monge, 2019).

Sub-theme 4.2: Lack of funding

The study found that most of organisations are experiencing funding problems. The participants confirmed that funding from the different funders is not enough for the running of all the programmes in the NGOs, including the payment of salaries. The statements below are the views of the participants regarding funding constraints.

"...another challenge would be funding, we are only funded by one department, the Department of Social Development so if department doesn't pay on time, the social workers suffer. Yes, it happens that social work salaries be paid late by a month..." (P1).

"...then remuneration rates are not the way we [are] supposed to be paid and it makes you feel demoralised, and you can't service people like wholeheartedly even though yes you may have passion for social work..." (P5).

"...The challenge ...hence I have mentioned is reimbursement. As I have mentioned that the salaries that we are getting do not match the number of years that we have studied..." (P7).

“...okay I think firstly as an NGO financially it is a struggle to make ends meet and to make sure that you implement all the programs with the funds that you get and that’s available to you. So, the finance is a bit of a struggle...” (P12).

The participants shared that funding is one of their biggest challenges and it has a negative impact on the running of the organisation and their payment of salaries. The National Development Agency (2016:8) concurs that funding is a big challenge faced by most NGOs in South Africa. The participants also shared that there have been times when salaries were not paid on time and this occurrence was also confirmed by Usadolo and Usadolo (2018:1) who reported that NGOs are sometimes unable to pay staff because of financial constraints. This was also established in a study by Volmink and Van der Elst (2017:18), who stated that even the NGOs that are funded by the government operate under stressful conditions because subsidies are not paid timeously. While all these challenges already exert a negative impact on the organisation and the staff, participants shared that their salaries do not really suffice because they are meagre. Skhosana (2020:4) found similar results in her study where the workforce of the NGO sector earns less than those in similar posts in private practice and government sector. These funding constraints have negative consequences because most social work supervisors and supervisees desire to leave this sector, some NGOs shutdown and as a result clients do not receive quality services.

Sub-theme 4.3: Lack of resources

The participants in this study said that they experience a shortage of physical resources and human resources in their day-to-day work. The participants indicated that the lack of resources hinders progress and culminates in backlog, while the lack of human resources leads to the current staff being over worked. The following are the participants’ verbatim expressions:

“...in my office the challenges that I face is lack of resources. Like I don’t have a printer, so I use my colleague’s printer...” (P2).

“...the other constraint that we have is resources. We lack resources and this leads to us not reaching targets. We work with little, and that is a daily challenge. The lack of resources slows our work because the case load is high, and the resources are low....” (P3).

“...lack of resources. We [are] short staffed, we [are] overworked...” (P11).

The participants stated that they must work with no physical resources such as cars, laptops, and printers. According to Markham and Fonjong (2015:30), there is lack of physical resources in NGOs, and somehow social workers must overlook this for the sake of completing tasks. Skhosana, Schenk and Botha (2014:4) and Sapat, Esnard and Kolpakov (2019:8), concur that social workers in NGOs are challenged by a lack of sufficient resources and trained staff.

In addition, there is also a shortfall in human resources because social workers are under-staffed. According to Skhosana (2020:1), NGOs are understaffed, leading to current social workers rendering less than satisfactory social services. The said shortage is viewed by Ngwenya and Botha (2014:2) as being the result of poor work environments under which social workers must toil.

Both these challenges affect the NGOs and the social work supervisors and supervisees negatively because service delivery gets affected, work moves slowly and this low pace causes piling up of the work, ultimately leading to backlog and overworking. Both these challenges require money to resolve effectively. Unfortunately, funding for closing these identified gaps is not available as donors chose the programmes which they want their money to be used in and are specific with what they want to fund the organisation for (Mtapuri & Matsimbi 2014:8). The South African government, through DSD, has been funding NGO for years but the funding has been dwindling over the years (National Development Agency 2016:4). This means that funding is not guaranteed, and the sectors' survival is threatened.

Sub-theme 4.4: Unbalanced organisational structure

The participants in this study shared that they have challenges regarding their organisational structure. There are two participants who reported being supervised by the board of directors and because the chairperson of the board does not have social work qualifications and experience, their expectations of social work duties are at a tangent with the actual role of a social worker. The statements below show participants' experiences regarding organisational structure challenges.

“...The challenge is within the organisation. We are supervised by the board member who don't know social work...” (P2).

“...somehow it’s like the board does not understand the social work role...” (P2).

“...I find myself having to intercept and explain to the director that no this is how social work function[s]...” (P8).

This is in contradiction to Bradley et al., (2010:329,458-459&780), who stated that a social work supervisor is someone who qualifies as a social worker and has social work experience, and relies more on own supervisee experience rather than supervision qualification. Furthermore, this finding contradicts social work policy because, according to the Code of Conduct for Practice and the Supervision Framework, both stipulate that social workers must be supervised by another social worker on matters pertaining to social work service (SACSSP, 2012:15).

From the findings it is evident that the challenge with organisational structure sometimes compels social workers to report to non-social work professionals. This has a negative impact on the supervisee because the non-social work supervisor has unrealistic expectations not in line with the social work roles. Also, the implication is that a non-social work supervisor cannot provide effective social work supervision. Consequently, the social workers are faced with the impossible challenge of educating their supervisor (board members) about social work roles, and this is time consuming, and slows the work. Such challenges thus call for social workers to remain resilient and to face challenges head on by documenting ‘what has happened’, ‘knowing what to look for’, ‘knowing what to expect’ and ‘knowing what to do’ when faced with challenges.

Theme 5: Mechanisms used by social work supervisors and supervisees to mitigate the identified challenges

The resilience theory purports that organisations should develop strategies (building worker resilience) to manage supervision relationships. In this study, there are participants who shared mechanisms that they use to mitigate the identified challenges while other participants stated that they do not have any alternatives in place. The latter expressed feelings of hopelessness while participants who had mechanisms had different strategies for each challenge. The challenges identified and the mechanisms used for each are provided in the table below.

Table 4.4 day-to-day challenges and mechanisms used to mitigate challenges

Day-to-day challenges of social work supervisors and supervisees	Mechanism used by supervisors and supervisees to mitigate challenges
Uncooperative clientele	Planning, confrontation, and referrals
Lack of funding	Find other donors and use money sparingly
Lack of resources	Share resources, use own resources, and work overtime
Unbalanced organisational structure	Peer supervision

Sub-theme 5.1: Planning, confrontation and referrals

The participants in this study divulged that a major challenge they have with their clients is that clients are uncooperative, dishonest, and demanding. For clients who are dishonest and not cooperating, the participants mentioned that they confront the clients and explain the consequences of not cooperating and dishonesty. The clients demand to be helped at an NGO that is not allocated to their residential area and in some instances they (clients) refuse to be helped by younger social workers. The following statements represent the participant's views:

"...having seen or experienced all these challenges with my clients I plan on time. For example, if I need some documents in December, I will literally call my clients in June to say prepare this document and I will keep on following up until they bring them..." (P4).

"...with regards to client's issue of not being forthcoming, when we catch out on their lie, we confront them, and we tell them the consequences of their lie and that if it preceded to court it is a crime of perjury..." (P5).

"...you ask the client how they would like to be assisted. At the end you can say this is not a right place and refer or also give them a referral letter. This calms clients down..." (P9).

"...usually I stop them, tell them I will get someone older because immediately when you start judging me that I won't be able to help you, whatever I tell you won't listen. So, when this happens, they are not comfortable with me, I get someone else, there are older people here..." (P10).

The above sentiments show that the participants deal with different kinds of people, who need different kinds of attention and thus must employ alternative mechanisms for each challenge. The participants stated that they deal with the challenge of improper documents by doing proper planning. Planning is defined by Ogolo (2019:2) and Sujana (2023:2), as the process of devising a step-by-step guide of reaching the goal and results in future successes. According to this author, planning is the best way of avoiding failure, hence the concept 'failing to plan is planning to fail.' The participants shared that planning helps to ensure that no matter how long it takes the clients to submit documents, they still get them on time.

For clients who are not forthcoming or dishonest, the participants said that they confront them, and explain the consequences of dishonesty to their clients. If the dishonesty is linked to statutory procedures, it is also explained to the clients that the consequences of dishonesty may include perjury. According to Ahmadi (2016:23), perjury refers to an act of intentionally sharing false information under oath. The participants said that regarding clients who demand to be assisted by the NGO that is out of their residential area, they explain the demarcation system of the sector and reasons for inability to assist, and then refer clients to the correct NGO serving their area. Referral is a solution that is defined by SACSSP (2020:7), as sending the client to the relevant organisation or service provider. For instance, younger social workers react to the client's preferences of being assisted by older social workers by referring the clients to older social workers within the same NGO. This study verified that the elderly clients preferred mature social workers. A study by Huni and Chikadzi (2014:468) also found that older clients doubt young social worker's ability to assist them and blamed the client's scepticism on cultural norms and values, while Novell (2013:4) found that the older client's scepticism resulted from the view that the youth is naive.

Sub-theme 5.2: Finding other donors and using funds sparingly

The participants in this study observed that to deal with their challenge of lack of funding, they (supervisors and supervisees) have to engage in fundraising activities within the organisations. The participants also reported that they also use available funds sparingly. Below are the participant's experiences.

“...well, the financial challenge, you work with public money firstly, so you really have to make sure that you don't waste money, we also try to find other donors as possible and other ways of funding and fund raising and so on...” (P12).

“...I think we receive the subsidy from the department, but it takes very long. Since I have been here, it's been a struggle to get the department to pay out so, it is hard. It takes a long time but at the end of the day we must work with what we have...” (P3).

It is clear from participant's statements that the NGO sector has a big challenge of financial insecurity, an issue which was also highlighted by the National Development Agency (2016:2) that one of the biggest challenges facing the NGO sector is financial security. To deal with the identified challenges, over and above their daily activities, social workers and supervisors also must participate in fundraising initiatives. According to Lauro, Tursunbayeva and Antonelli (2019:1), fundraising refers to looking for companies that can fund the NGO and then proposing and building relationships with the said companies. Although finding other donors helps to close the gaps, money received from donors is often not enough for the full running of the NGO, hence the need for using money sparingly. The reason for this is because funding is not predictable (Choto et al 2020:595).

It is concerning that social workers are required to look for other sources of income because this non-core activity adds baggage on top of the workload of social workers which is already huge. The ultimate compromise is evident in the drop in quality of services provided to clients.

Sub-theme 5.3: Sharing resources, using own resources and working overtime

In dealing with the issue of high workload caused by lack of human resources, one social work supervisor shared that she and her teamwork till late at night to reach targets. For the lack of physical resources, the participants share resources and sometimes use their own resources. The following are the participant's statements confirming these mechanisms.

“...sometimes we have challenges that require us to work till 10pm and they (social workers) help me without complaint. So, it's all about understanding...” (P6).

“...well in terms of resources we use our own, I use my car if I have to do home visit in an emergency, I will use my phone, I will use my money...” (P11).

“...sharing is caring, with the printer I email my work and go print in my colleague’s offices...” (P2).

The issue of lack of human resources is time consuming. According to Laurier (2015:13), welfare employees take extra hours from personal time and use the hours to push their workloads. The participants also stated that they often use their own resources to get the job done. This is because just like funding is not predictable, so are the resources. According to Modi and Sahi (2021:1), NGOs must attract resources the same way they have to attract funding. The NGOs can attract resources by doing what Lee and Hung (2022:360) refer to as ‘NGO Collaborative Partnerships.’ According to Sapat, Esnard and Kolpakov (2019:8), NGO Collaborative Partnerships refer to building relationships with the government, private sector and other NGOs for the benefit of the NGO.

It can be concluded that social work supervisors and supervisees deal with their challenges of lack of physical resources by using their own resources and sharing the available resources. The social work supervisor’s and supervisee’s personal resources include their cars, laptops, cell phones and money, while the resources of the NGO that they share include cars, laptops, printers, and offices. The need to use own or share resources can be attributed to the funder’s right to choose where their money is spent. While funding the costs of the programme, a funder can choose to have nothing to do with the indirect costs of implementing that same programme (Radebe & Nkonyeni, 2020:3), forcing social workers in the NGO sector to share tools of the trade to lower costs (National Association of Social Workers, 2020).

Sub-theme 5.4: Peer supervision

The social work participants who reported that they are supervised by non-social workers shared that to cope with their workload’s stress, they have opted for peer supervision. The participants shared some of the following views in this regard:

“...we use each other but with using each other it has its limitations; you can’t just blurt out what you are going through to someone else. They also have their own things going, you can share may be surfaces and choose someone who can help you...” (P5).

“...we use each other but not everybody, you select those you see that this one we have the same challenge or can be able to advise me on what to do in the situation...” (P5).

“...we help each other by sharing whatever challenges we come across during the week and try to help each other find solutions. So, we always have our sessions either by WhatsApp [or] video calls...” (P11).

It can be concluded that the social work supervisees have a serious need for supervision and to do that, they supervise each other. This suggests the use of peer supervision which is defined by Godden (2012:9), as an act of gathering of supervisees to discuss their cases and help each other in handling certain tasks. Also, in dealing with the board, the participants stated that they develop tolerance and understanding towards the board. According to Raihan and Awang (2019:1), tolerance is accepting and understanding those who are different from us. The study shows that social workers opt for the tolerance strategy to deal with their ‘not so interesting’ supervisors.’ In contrast, studies by Kimer (2015:1) and Verma (2019) advise against keeping and tolerating ineffective supervisors because such supervisors lead to ‘supervising poor performance.’

Sub-theme 5.5: No mechanism

There are participants who stated that they have no mechanisms in place for dealing with the identified contextual challenges. The participants expressed feelings of hopelessness. The following statements are the participants’ expressions in this regard.

“...What shall you do? As a social worker you don’t give up. You know we work with families; some you win and some you will not...” (P7).

“...the issue with the board is still not resolved because we cannot control them, there is nothing that we can do...” (P2).

“...Then with the board, I just don’t know if it is going to be solved because there is nothing that can be done on our end...” (P2).

“...Yes, I do feel that there is no solution because the problem of working in the NGO you are governed by the board so whatever the board says, goes....” (P8).

The participants who stated that they do not have any mechanism for dealing with their challenges sounded hopeless. Hopelessness is defined by Gong and Jiang (2019:2), as a state of mind where one feels that something is beyond their control and that there is nothing that can be done from their side to effect change. According to Abbajay (2018:3), supervisees who feel hopeless believe that there is nothing they can do, which is why they never think of ways of dealing with issues, but they often develop emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion refers to supervisees feeling emotionally drained, and it culminates in supervisee burn out, negative attitudes toward work and reduced job performance (The Leadership Quarterly, 2013:125).

The above suggests that supervisees need to choose between finding ways of dealing with unsatisfactorily supervision, and/or emotional exhaustion. The supervisee participants who shared that they do not have strategies for dealing with the challenges may be consciously or unconsciously choosing emotional exhaustion instead of developing alternative ways to deal with unsatisfactory supervision. According to Amaslik, Jawad and Weheed (2022:9), supervisee's choice in this regard may be out of fear of punishment or having rewards taken away since the supervisor is in a position of power.

It can therefore be concluded in this regard that while social work supervisors and supervisees have mechanisms in place for dealing with other challenges which they face in their day-to-day work, there are some challenges which are out of their control, and as such, there is no mechanism in place for dealing with the said challenges.

Theme 6: The concept of 'social work supervision'

Participants described the concept of social work supervision as a process of administering the work of the supervisee, educating the supervisee, and supporting the supervisee. This is done by a more experienced person checking the work of the least experienced. In cases where the supervisee is also experienced, supervision can be done in a coaching or consultative manner. The participant's versions are in line with the three main functions of social work supervision, which include the administrative, educational, and supportive functions (Department of Social Development, 2012:24). The descriptions of the concept "social work supervision" by participants are detailed in the following sub-themes.

Sub-theme 6.1: Administrative function of supervision

The participants indicated that the social work supervisor and supervisees perceive the concept of social work supervision as a process that includes the administrative function of supervision. The supervisor as the person in the NGO with the social work experience has the responsibility of checking the work of her supervisees. This involves checking whether supervisees are where they are supposed to be, whether work is done, if the work done is done correctly and if the organisational policies are observed. Part of doing this is canalising reports before they can be submitted to court or other professionals and checking how well the supervisee grows in terms of their own professional development. The following are some of the participants' descriptions of the concept of social work supervision.

"...As a social work supervisor, your duty is administrative work, like I said, canalising of reports..." (P7).

"...Social work supervision is when my supervisor come checks my files to see if I am on the right track and guide me on what I have to do..." (P10).

"...to check whether you are still in the right path or decision are right. For example, you don't have to take decisions alone, you must be advised so when you are in supervision you will get it right..." (P9).

"...so, supervision to me as an individual is not only checking reports, it's not only saying they do this do that, it's also about you know involving the human aspect of it, you know checking their wellbeing..." (P1).

"...program manager oversees the social worker if they are able to provide services that are needed in an ethical way and are able to uphold the standards of the organisation, are able to uphold you know the ethics of the profession and basically how are they able to function within the role..." (P5).

The views of the participants in this regard are consistent with the scientific description of the administrative function of supervision. According to the National Association of Social Workers (2013:8), administrative supervision focuses on the policies of the organisation and evaluation of supervisee's level of functioning on work assignments. Engelbrecht (2019:311) also states that supervision ensures that the work done by the

supervisee is professionally executed and in line with the organisation's policies. Berger and Quiro (2014:104) concur with the preceding views that delegation of tasks, monitoring how well supervisee is adhering to the organisation's policies and evaluating the performance of the supervisee are roles performed to fulfil this function.

Sub-theme 6.2: Educational function of supervision

The participants in this study also shared that supervision is about educating the supervisee to ensure that they know what to do and how to do it. According to the participants, the supervisor has a responsibility of educating (imparting skills and giving knowledge) and advising/guiding the supervisee on what steps to take. The following statements are the participants' descriptions:

"...As a supervisor you have to import your skills to them so that they can grow in the profession to a place where they can also be independent and work with minimal supervision..." (P1).

"...through supervision, the supervisor would tell you what to do..." (P2).

"...it involves giving them advice, for instance, in terms of how to deal with certain cases, how to run the programs..." (P12).

These findings show that the concept of social work supervision also encompasses the process of educating the supervisees to ensure that they know what they are doing, are well equipped in their field, they grow to a point of self-supervising and are confident in rendering services to clients. Through education, supervisees gain the necessary knowledge and experience needed in fulfilling their posts.

The participant's description is in line with the scientific description of the educational function of supervision. According to Vec et al (2014:104), educational supervision is about ensuring that supervisee professional skills and development can be depended upon for life, by explaining tasks to be carried out by the supervisee and monitoring the supervisee's work. In agreement with this, Engelbrecht (2019:311) states that the educational function of supervision is about increasing supervisee's skills, development, and competency.

Sub-theme 6.3: Supportive function of supervision

The participants further perceived supervision as a platform that supports the supervisees. The role of the supervisor here is to give support to new social workers as the implementing agents and to ensure that the supervisees can get past certain obstacles that would otherwise hinder service delivery. The following statements contain the views on the supervision concept.

"...More than anything I find the concept of social work supervision to be a source of support for me because I came straight from the desk into the working environment..." (P3).

"...Another important role of the supervisor is to guide and support..." (P4).

"...For me I think it's a form of support..." (P5).

"...sometimes social workers would burn out and as a supervisor you must be there for them, you have to be empathetic, you have to provide support to them. You know checking their wellbeing, debriefing, being empathetic..." (P1).

"...also, to be able to support your staff because social work is a very stressful work so if your supervisees don't get support, they can develop mental health issues..." (P7).

"...social work supervision actually is a tool that social work has in terms of supporting supervisees..." (P8).

"...to give supervisees emotional support. It's not just about the program but also how to give emotional support..." (P12).

These descriptions of supportive supervision are consistent with the scientific description of the supportive function of supervision. Supportive supervision is about identifying both work-related and personal challenges that may hinder the supervisee in rendering effective services and provide emotional support and/or ways to help supervisee to address the identified challenges (Berger & Quiro 2014:297). According to Vec et al (2014:104), this function is focused on the emotional wellbeing in relation to work with clients and enables supervisees to acknowledge their own cognitive and emotional response to professional issues. That is, to help supervisees to mobilize

their emotional energy required for providing effective services (Engelbrecht, 2019:311).

When supervisees enter the NGO sector, they are not always on the same level of development hence the need for supportive supervision. There may be social work supervisees who have previous experience and those who enter with no work experience at all. It is therefore important to identify what kind of support a supervisee needs and then provide such necessary support. This ensures that supervisees do not get too stressed out by work to the extent of developing mental health issues and that the work will be done effectively, and quality service will be rendered.

Theme 7: The advantages and disadvantages of supervision

The participants in this study regaled their perceptions of what they believe are the advantages and disadvantages of supervision. Since this study focuses on two groups of participants who are not necessarily on the same level in the NGO, there are thus advantages from the perspective of the supervisees and equally from the perspective of supervisors. The advantages and disadvantages of supervision are discussed in the following sub-themes.

Sub-theme 7.1: The advantages of supervision

The supervisee participants in this study shared that supervision is a good tool that helps them with guidance, growth, learning, debriefing and support, and that it strengthens them, while the supervisors listed the following advantages of supervision: supervision affords them the opportunity to safeguard the profession and to offer guidance to their subordinates. Supervision also reminds some participants to complete certain tasks that they would have forgotten and clarifies the supervisee's role. The following statements thus confirm the expressions of the social work participants.

"...supervision is a form of support. Your supervisor can identify your strengths and your weaknesses and support you accordingly..." (P5).

"...the advantages let me say it's good in terms of growth, it teaches you a lot because it shows you how the future could be and at the same time you can see I am growing to be a better person..." (P6).

“...you will work on the case faster because of supervision. If you are writing reports, if there is a mistake, before taking it to another profession, supervision helps you fix your eras...” (P9).

“...If you are writing reports, if there is a mistake before you take the report to magistrate you will fix your eras before taking it to another profession...” (P9).

“...So, with the supervisor I can be guided to say this you can do this way...” (P10).

“...well, the advantages are that you are guided to do the right thing especially when you are new in the field...” (P11).

The supervisor’s expressions differed slightly from those of social workers and included the following:

“...to help as guidance, as emotional support, and to just make sure that whatever decision is taken, that it was screened before and that it was thought through and to guide the new social worker into how to practically implement...” (P12).

“...when you supervise you get to grow as a leader you know you realise things about yourself, and you learn especially when it comes to your managerial skills and your leadership skills. I learned a lot, I learnt time management, I learnt organisational skills...” (P1).

“...the advantage for me is to be able to guide and strengthen people...” (P7).

The participants mentioned that supervision helps them, teaches, proffers skills development, and provides debriefing and growth. The advantages shared by the participants are in line with the goal of supervision that is discussed by Ahmady and Seidi (2021:66) who see the goal of clinical supervision as ensuring client safety, teaching the supervisee, improving standards, identifying supervisee challenges, and progress, and supporting the supervisee.

Adding to this, Corey (2010:5) summarises the goals of supervision into the following three: (a) promote the social work practitioner’s growth and development, (b) monitor social work practitioner’s performance and act as gatekeeper for the social work profession, and (c) empower the social work practitioner to self-supervise and work on reaching goals independently. The advantages of supervision thus include clarifying supervisee roles, receiving advice, emotional support, knowledge, and guidance, and

strengthening the quality of service received by clients (National Association of Social Workers, 2013:7; Carpenter, Webb, Bostock & Coomber, 2015:3).

It can thus be concluded in this regard that supervision has quite several advantages. For supervisees, the advantages include skills development and growth by way of receiving necessary teaching and guidance. Supervision also helps supervisees with debriefing and support, and reminds supervisees to complete certain tasks that they would not have remembered on their own while for supervisors, the process helps to ensure that work is done properly, quality services are rendered, and that the profession is protected against malpractice (gatekeeping). Also on the supervisor's personal development, supervision helps them to grow and learn skills necessary for their work. The view by Borders et al., (2012:285) and Knight (2018:20), that the advantages of supervision for supervisees include guidance, support and education, while for supervisors, the advantages include self-awareness and growth supports the finding.

Sub-theme 7.2: The disadvantages of supervision

This study found that while there are a lot of advantages for supervision, there are also disadvantages. For supervisors, the disadvantages include lack of support for them, being overloaded, being seen as a problem-solver, being pressured, and the difficult part of disciplining supervisees which sometimes leads to being hated by supervisees. For the supervisees, disadvantages include being criticised, pressured, dictated to, spoon-fed, micro-managed, policed and monitored. The supervisees also mentioned that supervision can be time consuming, disrupt the schedule and it being too formal. There can also be disagreements concerning interventions and the supervisor does not always have the capacity to resolve matters. The following statements are the supervisor's expressions of what they perceive the disadvantages of supervision.

"...the disadvantage is that as a supervisor sometimes you have your own personal problems and it's difficult for you to supervise someone if you are also having your own difficulties and they must not see that. So, you must constantly be strong all the time and there is not a lot of support in social work for social work supervisors like maybe provide EAPs for supervisors..." (P1).

“...sometimes a disadvantage would be the disciplining part where one doesn’t do their work. Sometimes people tend to think you hate them when you discipline them...” (P1).

“...The disadvantage is that you are overloaded, your work is overload and then again they (social workers) think that you are the problem solver...” (P6).

The disadvantages of supervision for the supervisors as per the vignettes above include being overloaded with work, lack of support and having to discipline supervisees. Overloading supervisors and not giving them support results in supervisor frustrations, which may ultimately lead to abusive supervision as reported in one study by Eissa and Lester (2017:307). The disciplining of supervisees is also seen as a disadvantage of supervision because supervisees can perceive discipline as hate. This negative perception is like the perception of abuse discussed by Martinko et al (2013:120) where the perception of abuse can have a negative impact on the ability of the organisation to meet the intended goals and the health and wellbeing of the supervisee. Examples of ‘perception of abuse’ may include one party perceiving the other as rude, throwing tantrums, criticising and inconsiderate (Bies in Carlson et al., 2012:850). This perception can hinder progress in supervisees and hinder the NGO from reaching the intended goal because little effort is put in the work when one feels under appreciated.

The social work supervisees, on the other hand, shared the following with regards to disadvantages:

“...except that it is time consuming. I could be busy with other things during that time when the supervisor is talking to me...” (P2).

“...our supervisor schedules supervision sort of calendar where on that specific day she has to see you but unfortunately, on that day other things are happening on your calendar, so all of that is time consuming and it takes time away from your work...” (P3).

“...the supervisor can be under pressure and when they are under pressure, they have to put the supervisee under pressure also because I have to deliver as a supervisee, they have to deliver as a supervisor. So basically, it’s a hierarchy, so having a supervisor who cannot resolve conflict constructively is a problem because conflict

depends on the nature and the course, and it can reduce productivity of the organisation as a whole...” (P4).

“...Yoh err being criticised, nooo. I take it that it might be constructive criticism, but I hate being criticised, you find that she held you on a corner and it’s so formal you can’t even add a personal need, the setting is so formal that you skip the personal...” (P5).

“...You can get those who micro-manage you, who monitor or police you...” (P8).

“...Dictating...” (P11).

“...disadvantage it may be that maybe you are under stress constraints where may be you are not reaching agreement with your supervisor so it means that it won’t be a proper way to deal with the situation especially when you will be controlled by emotions...” (P9).

“...Spoon feeding for me would be for example when I do an intake, I write the problem, okay client came to report this, I take the file to my supervisor to say this is my problem, the supervisor tells me what to do without giving me an opportunity to try to sort it out myself...” (P10).

The findings of this study show that while supervision is important, there can be negative feelings about it. For the supervisees, disadvantages of supervision include being criticised, pressured, dictated to, spoon-fed, micro-managed, policed and being monitored. These disadvantages are similar to the challenges raised by Lee (2017:1100). Supervision relationship challenges may include not receiving desired feedback or criticism from the supervisor and disagreements over one’s methods. Sen (2022) confirms that micromanagement is the least preferred style of supervision and is defined as an act of being controlled and asked about every detail of one’s work.

Theme 8: The supervision relationship

The supervision relationship refers to an alliance between the social work supervisor and supervisee (Greenberg & Tomescu, 2017:4). The participants in this study also identified their supervision relationship as a relation between the supervisor and the supervisee. When describing their supervision relationships, the participants' descriptions further contained two different views (good and bad supervision relationships), which are discussed as theme 8.1 and 8.2 below.

Sub-theme 8.1: The good supervision relationship

According to some of the participants, their supervision relationships are good. The participants characterised a good supervision relationship, as having a harmonious workplace, teamwork, an open-door policy, mutual respect, good communication, growth and understanding of each other's roles. The following statements confirm the views of the participants regarding the characteristics of a good supervision relationship.

"...I have good relationships, I always encourage teams, you know, you must be a team you know I always say you spend 95% of your time at work and it must be a harmonious place. I have found that as a supervisor, if you give respect to people, automatically it's gonna bounce back to you. I approach them in a good manner, and I don't get involved in their personal lives. There is also an open-door policy..." (P1).

"...Quit positive, she is my supervisor and there were times where we really bumped heads so because we have such a positive relationship, I am able to take that as positive criticism and she really approaches the situation in a mature way possible and I don't ever hear her shout at anyone, she is never rude..." (P3).

"...I can confidently say it is very good. I understand my work description, I can really render services confidently to my clients, it's all thanks to her..." (P4).

"...My relationship with my supervisor I think I could say it is positive because I have been growing since, I came here. She plays her role as a supervisor, and she is very supportive when it comes to cases and challenges that we face with clients..." (P5).

"...For me they are good, they are very good for me because they listen, and they take orders. My work relies heavily on their work example, what am I going to report if they don't report?" (P6).

"...I believe it's good, they do respect me, that's what I know so far but I don't know what they say about me so..." (P7).

"...we have a good relationship. She is a very understanding person but when she is angry, she is not the kind of a person who would let you get away with something and when she confronts you, hell will break. But otherwise, she is a good person, we have a very good relationship..." (P10)

“...It’s very good, we understand each other. Yes, I am satisfied with our relationship where it is...” (P11).

“...well, I hope, I think it is good. I think that especially with us in this office because there is an open- door policy and also that as much as you guide them and oversee, they must not feel that you are not confident in them. You must also be approachable as well...” (P12).

The findings in this study show that social work supervisors and supervisees are satisfied with their supervision relationships and classified it as good. According to the participants, a good supervision relationship is characterised by a harmonious environment, understanding each other, mutual respect, teamwork, open door policy, positive criticism and good communication. A good social work supervision relationship thus helps to motivate supervisees to complete the tasks, it is simple and fast and result from communication, interaction, and compromise from both the supervisor and the supervisee (Juneja, 2015). The satisfaction of supervisors and supervisees in this regard may also imply that the supervision is effective. Effective supervision is defined by Zhou (2019:7) as having a positive impact on the supervisor, the supervisee, the client and the organisation at large, and results in supervisee’s professional growth, development and superb service delivery.

Sub-theme 8.2: Bad supervision relationship

There is one participant (a supervisee) who stated that her supervision relationship is bad. The said relationship is characterised by micro-managing, dictating and the fact that her supervisor is not a social worker by profession, nor does she/he have social work experience. Below is how the participant rating her experience.

“...My supervisor does not understand the role of social work. So sometimes he micro-manages us. Like, he dictates...” (P2).

This study found that supervision does not always yield positive results, and this explains why some people perceive supervision as bad. The participant believes that her supervisor’s inability to supervise comes from the fact that the supervisor does not have a social work qualification, nor does he/she has social work experience. Bad supervision relationship is defined by Rasheed, Zaheer and Manzoor (2020:54), as generating negative consequences for supervision because it leads to dissatisfied

psychological needs in supervisees, making them emotionally unstable, aggressive, and frustrated. This shows that the end goals of supervision cannot be met, and supervision can thus be deemed ineffective. In opposition to effective supervision which that leads to positive results, ineffective supervision relationships yield a negative impact. According to Corey et al (2020:59), ineffective supervision hinders the supervisees from growing and impedes the organisation from meeting the overall goals.

Theme 9: Challenges encountered by social work supervisors and supervisees in their supervision relationships.

There are participants who stated that they have had challenges in their supervision relationships while others mentioned that they have never experienced challenges. The challenges are thus discussed as sub-themes 9.1 and 9.2 below.

Sub-theme 9.1: Perceived supervisor or supervisee difficulty and vice versa

The supervisee participants in this study disclosed that the challenges that they have experienced within their supervision relationships include being supervised by a person who does not have a social work qualification nor experience, the approach used by supervisors when talking to supervisees and disagreements on how or what should be done or what is deemed fair or appropriate. The supervisor participants, on the other hand, shared that the challenges that they have experienced within their supervision relationships such as the dereliction of duties, unteachable supervisees, and issues of comfort for new supervisees.

The following are the statements of the supervisee participants regarding their challenges.

“...My current supervisor does not have social work experience and education. He has a lot of experience yes but it's in the education and business fields and not social work...” (P2).

“...When she talks to someone she shouts (laughs). She shouts even when she is not fighting, like she has a loud voice, so she shouts and sometimes we take it bad...” (P10).

“...Just to add, I will just tell you what is going on like currently we found the lapsed orders already in the organisation. The cases lapsed under the previous staff's watch

but now we are the ones suffering the consequences. We found the lapsed orders so we really, now suffering for the actions or the recklessness of the lack of accountability because how did the court orders lapse? I find doing this damage control a bit unfair because there is no order that lapsed under our care...” (P4).

“...Maybe I don't submit on time, you find that I wrote it but a crisis comes up while busy with crises, deadline passes and that is dereliction...” (P5).

The following are statements of the supervisor participants regarding their challenges.

“...sometimes you may put a point of correction and you seem like 'know it all' to them. Sometimes when they have these feelings, they do not say it out loud, you can hear it in their responses...” (P6).

“...When a person doesn't do her/his job, I am a person who is focuses and a task-oriented person, a person who don't do their job is really a problem for me...” (P7).

“...sometimes you would encounter people who think they know everything you know. And it is difficult to supervise such a person because they will always challenge you with everything that you say because they think they know better...” (P1).

“...I had a challenge with an employee where I made a recommendation on the report when I said you must supervise those visits between the father and that child. So, he/she went ballistic around the office and when people test your authority. People who are not teachable, who think they know everything...” (P1).

The findings in this study show that supervision relationships are not immune to challenges. While the experiences of supervisors may not be the same as those of supervisees, both groups experience challenges. The supervisor's challenges include poor performance by supervisees and their negative perceptions of the supervisee's behaviours. Supervisors perceive their supervisees as being unteachable, know it all, failing to accept correction, disrespect and testing their authority, while supervisee's challenges include disagreement on interventions, approach of supervisors such as shouting at them, being charged with insubordination because of dereliction of duty and perceptions of being micromanaged, policed or monitored. Another challenge was disagreement on what should be considered as dereliction of duty as one may not submit because of a crisis and the other may feel disrespected and charge the other with insubordination.

Lee (2017:1100) shared similar challenges and stated that the challenges experienced within the supervision relationship may include potential communication issues, prolonged delays in scheduling meetings, not receiving desired feedback from the supervisor and disagreements over one's methods. Corey et al (2010:170) confirms that there could be challenges where the supervisor/supervisee are reluctant to accept feedback, know it all, is rigid and use supervision as a channel where they can brag about all the information that they have and, echoing Lofstrom and Pyhalto (2012:2), if the supervisor and supervisee are not on the same page with regard to their expectations and beliefs, then the supervision process becomes quite challenging.

Sub-theme 9.2: No challenges experienced

There are four participants who submitted that they have not experienced any challenges in their supervision relationships. This cohort of participants classified their relationships with their supervisors/supervisees as good. The said participants likened their supervision relationships to those of a family member and the supervisor shared that her supervisees follow her orders. The following are the expressions of the participants.

"...None for now..." (P8).

"...honestly speaking up to so far, I have not had a challenge with either of my colleagues. The relationship its fine. We are like family, when someone is in trouble, they can assist wherever they can..." (P9).

"...I haven't really come across something I can think of. Yes in 5 years of being here I was supervised by her. And yes, since then we have never had a challenge sometimes the others will complain that it seems like she favours me..." (P11).

"...I must say I haven't really, not something that I can pinpoint, I think with all of them if we can discuss together on the way forward, they do implement it you know so the relationship is good..." (P12).

The findings of this study demonstrate that not all social work supervision relationships are acrimonious. Where supervision relationships are well managed, challenges can be avoided. Watkins et al., (2016:24) concurs with the researchers' sentiments and that talking about everything with the supervisees helps in managing the supervision relationship. Adding to this, Krauss and Ismail (2010:809) states that what also helps

in avoiding challenges in a supervision relationship is if both the supervisor and the supervisee manage their expectations about supervision, time and workload, personality and supervision styles, also in addition to recognising supervisee capacity.

It can also be deduced that managing social work supervision relationship involves managing expectations, time, workload, personality, supervision styles and supervisee capacity. These results in the overall supervisee, supervisor and NGO client satisfaction.

Theme 10: Methods used by social work supervisors and supervisees to resolve challenges in their supervision relationships

The participants have methods for resolving the challenges that they experience in their supervision relationships. Gcaza and von Solms (2017:3) define a method as a plan employed to overcome an obstacle, a challenge or conflict. According to Watkins et al (2016:22), methods help to manage or repair the supervision relationship depending on the need. According to Fletcher and Sarkar (2011:3), the supervisors and supervisees should identify and use the strengths of the supervision relationship to overcome challenges and in this study, the participants mentioned the following methods: having supervision sessions, early interventions, communicating grievances, planning for solving problems and being understanding.

The supervisor participants also shared that if all these strategies fail, disciplinary actions are taken against the supervisees.

Sub-theme 10.1: Handling supervision sessions

The participants said that they attend supervision sessions where work achievements and challenges are discussed. The following are the participants' statements regarding handling supervision sessions.

"...Like I said, we have supervision sessions, where we sit and rate our work, our performance, and discuss other issues if there are any. Then we would conclude..."
(P1).

"...we then initiated that weekly supervision where she sees me every week so we can talk about everything that is happening instead of sitting with it..." (P3).

According to the participants, scheduling supervision sessions helps them deal with their supervision challenges. Having supervision sessions is encouraged by Tebes et al (2011:191) who states that the most important strategy is starting the supervision process and drafting issues to be discussed in every session. A study by Borders et al (2012:285) also found that supervision sessions help supervisors to get feedback from supervisees, enhance the supervision relationship and allows them to have a deeper interaction with their supervisees while for supervisees, supervision sessions help to build their confidence, are specific to their needs and places the focus on them as individuals. Pearce, Phillips, Dawson and Leggat (2013:150) also adds that supervision sessions involve reflecting on one's work (identifying gaps and achievements) and working on the identified gaps and challenges (task oriented), while at the same time helping the supervisees to develop stress management tools.

Having supervision sessions is also important to the supervision process. Both the supervisor, the supervisee, the organisation, and the community benefit because issues that could hinder good service delivery can be dealt with on time and whatever may need to be corrected can be corrected.

Sub-theme 10.2: Early intervention and confrontation

Early intervention refers to an act of correcting identified challenges before they escalate and potentially cause serious harm (Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, 2018:4). Early intervention was also shared by the participants as one of the methods that they use to deal with the challenges that they face in their supervision relationships. According to the participants early interventions involves confronting the issue and planning. The statements below represent the participants' views in this regard.

"...Its better you intervene early. Yes, because anything not done comes back to you..." (P6).

"...I am a confronter, head on (laughs). I am confrontational and I will not say this one did that to me and keep quiet without saying anything to that person..." (P2).

"...Yes, we confronted the issue and we spoke about it..." (P10).

"...I like now I may not be fine with something but immediately if I tell you about it, I become fine..." (P6).

“...if you are looking for a good result and also not to stay longer with issues because the more you stay longer is the more you become so frustrated...” (P8).

“...if there are challenges call and arrange that I won't be able to submit this on time, can I submit a day later you see, plan better...” (P5).

“...that is if we scheduled for supervision but that day I have court, that is where we must reschedule either earlier or later, like after the court. if you miss that appointment without making arrangements, it is at the organisation's non-compliance so then you would get into trouble Yes planning is very important in everything you do, my supervisor always says, 'if you do not plan, you will perish'...” (P3).

Early intervention is defined by participants as confronting the issue and making necessary arrangements where needed. The researcher could not find literature specifically on early intervention as a strategy in social work supervision. However, the participants' discretion matched the definition by Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (2018:5) and Purcell, Gwyther and Rice (2019:46) which are studies on banking and mental health respectively. This method is also in line with what Grant et al (2010:532) identified as a confrontation strategy. According to these researchers, confrontational strategy requires that the supervisor and/or the supervisee face the challenge directly by raising difficult issues, giving direct instruction and direct confrontation.

The findings also illustrate that as a way of dealing with the challenges, social work supervisors and supervisees intervene early. This method of early intervention encourages confrontation, leaving no room for holding grudges. Confrontation involves talking about issues that both or another party is not comfortable to talk about. Early intervention can also involve making arrangements in time in order to make sure that small issues do not blossom to serious ones. This would mean informing the supervisor when the supervisee is running behind schedule so that the supervisee is not charged with insubordination.

Sub-theme 10.3: Communication and understanding

The participants shared that communication and understanding helps to deal with supervision challenges. The statements below are the views of the participants on communication and understanding.

“...the best thing may be to communicate because there is nothing that beats communication...” (P9).

“...it got to a point where I have to speak to her, I have to address it...” (P3).

“...I went to her to complain that why do you have a meeting behind my back. So, yah talking helps a lot...” (P2).

“...we talked about it so we agreed that deadline should be deadline...” (P5).

“...I did talk to her to say mam I don't find this to be fair because now we must do damage control of things that we don't even know. So basically, we express our concerns, and she understands, she empathises we talk about it, and we reach a common ground...” (P4).

“...So yes, I talk it out and then let go but don't come with the same problem again tomorrow...” (P6).

“...we spoke with her to say we don't like how you shout at us...” (P10).

“...it's important to listen and if you are wrong, because sometimes you can make a wrong judgement on a person, you apologise, I think I am a very good problem solver, because as I said I listen, I don't talk over, if I see that the person is intense, I will let the person cool off. As I said as a supervisor you must never think you know everything and you must never come with that approach...” (P1).

“...the only thing you must do is to remain you in whatever circumstances and respect the person regardless of what challenges you have with him/her...” (P8).

“...it's kind of some of the things that are beyond her control because she started supervising not so long ago. So, we are all new here including her and this is beyond our control...” (P4).

“...and she understood where we were coming from...” (P10).

“...I think firstly you must try to go for a 'win win' you know, not that you as a supervisor must force your will on the person. So, I think that it is just important to hear both parties' reasons or both parties' situation and try to resolve it in a 'win win' situation...” (P12).

The participants in this study indicated that communication is what they use to overcome challenges. This is in line with managing supervision relationships as discussed by Wartkins et al (2016:24). The authors state that talking about the challenges with the supervisee helps by either avoiding or stopping challenges from growing so much that they disturb, derail, or destroy the relationship. The participants also mentioned that communication involves respecting, understanding, and being non-judgmental. Kyaw, Posadzki, Paddock, Car and Campbell Car (2019:1) confirms that communication involves showing respect to those communicating with and both parties must talk about their issues in a warm, non-judgmental, and friendly way.

Communication is also directly in line with the relational strategy of conflict resolution according to Grant et al (2010:532). According to this author, following the relational strategy means that the supervisor should directly discuss supervisee difficulties, supervision relationship difficulties, parallel processes, and aspects of supervision relationship and supervisee's feelings and attitudes. The supervisor following this strategy is also required to be sensitive to the needs of the supervisees while giving feedback, and using open and appropriate communication (Nellis, Hawkins, Redivo, & Way, 2012:5-6).

The findings show that communication is one of the strategies that supervisors and supervisees in the NGO sector use to deal with supervision relationship challenges. This includes communicating what one likes and what he/she dislikes without fear. This is because communication helps by either avoiding or stopping challenges from growing so much that they disturb, derail or destroy the supervision relationship. The requirements for communication include respect, understanding and being non-judgmental.

Sub-theme 10.4: Disciplinary proceedings

Since this study involves two groups of participants, this method was only mentioned by the supervisors because they are in positions of authority. The supervisors divulged that in cases of serious issues where different methods were tried to resolve challenges with supervisees with no success, they discipline the supervisee. Discipline should be an imperative in an organisation to ensure that the overall goals of the organisation are met (Sitopu, Sitinjak & Marpaung 2021:72). The participant's narratives are shared below.

“...if there is no change then through disciplinary because we do have disciplinary processes. You first have to engage with the person verbally, then verbal warning, then written warnings and then disciplinary...” (P7).

“...I will end up charging you with insubordination. Insubordination means you can't take instruction from me whereas I am your supervisor...” (P6).

The participants in this study stated that should all their mechanisms to resolve disputes with subordinates fail, where necessary disciplinary procedures are applied. Discipline is the organisation's way of exercising control over its employees and ensuring that employees perform their duties (Sitopu et al., 2021:72). According to the participants, discipline can include verbal warning, written warnings and/or an insubordination charge. Insubordination refers to an act of deliberately ignoring the supervisor's instructions, which may include not doing the work that one is employed for and just not following legal and ethical principles of the organisation (Parikh, 2019:89). Manamela (2019:1), and Maloka and Matsheta (2023:7) mention that insubordination is a form of misconduct, and the consequence of insubordination is dismissal.

This study found that when all has been tried to resolve the challenges experienced by social work supervisors in the supervision relationship, disciplinary action is used as last option. Disciplinary action is a way in which the supervisor acting on behalf of the NGO controls the supervisees and ensures that work is done. Disciplinary measures include verbal warnings, written warning and/or a charge with insubordination. Insubordination charge is used when the supervisor has reason to believe that the supervisee is purposefully ignoring instructions. This study also confirmed that some supervisees accept discipline when they believe that it was deserved.

Theme 11: Characteristics of an ideal social work supervision relationship

The participants in this study stated that the ideal social work supervision relationship is characterised by good communication, regular supervision sessions, mutual respect, good supervision environment, fulfilment of duties, and growth. These characteristics are elaborated upon as sub-themes below.

Sub-theme 11.1: Good communication

According to the participants, good communication involves providing constructive feedback and criticism, being open and honest, teamwork, trust, advice, guidance and making the work environment a safe space. The expressions of participants regarding these characteristics are captured in the following statements.

“...if you are able to sit with your supervisees and be able to discuss cases with them in a nice way, it can be good...” (P3).

“...Ideally you want to be supervised by someone you are able to communicate with freely, I think it comfortable, someone you can express yourself to and someone who can provide you feedback, criticism and advice and guidance...” (P4).

“...have good constructive criticism...” (P1).

“...I think it is working together, and it's like any other relationship when the person is receptive on the guidance that you are giving...” (P7).

“...like were people trust your guidance because you can have people, but they don't trust your leadership or your guidance, so you find that behind your back they supervise each other or they go to other supervisors...” (P7).

“...there should be an open and honest relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee...” (P4).

“...An ideal social work supervision relationship is one where you are able to voice your concerns without fear of judgement...” (P5).

Good or bad supervision is dependent on the ability to communicate. Communication is sharing/receiving news by talking or writing while the other party receives the news through listening and reading (Common Sense Media, 2020:1). The participants also said that it is important that communication be done in a safe environment where both parties can express themselves without fear of judgment. This is seconded by Corey et al (2010:3) who states that supervision should create a safe space for supervisees.

This does not mean that the supervisor must tip toe around the supervisee; rather it means that criticism should be constructive. This is because while criticism plays a big role in relationships, the way in which it is communicated and/or received by the supervisee has direct consequences for the organisation because it can encourage or

impede further communication (Tripathy, 2021:1). Consequently, it (constructive criticism) should be given in a respectful and non-hostile way (Lovheim & Stenmark, 2020:190).

The supervisors added that an ideal social work supervision relationship is one where the guidance of the supervisor is received and trusted by the supervisee. This is because the supervisor's role of teaching requires that the supervisor determines what knowledge and skills the supervisee is lacking to become more competent (Greenberg & Tomescu, 2017:17) and then transfer the new required knowledge and skills to the supervisee (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014:10), while the supervisee learns from the supervisor (Corey et al 2010:3; Greenberg & Tomescu, 2017:16). It is therefore important that supervisees take their supervisors guidance. This is in line with the supervisee's role that is defined by the Social Work Accreditation Advisory Board (2017:7). According to this board, the most important role for supervisees is to understand what is required of them in the organisation as per their contracts.

The study findings show that social work supervisors and supervisees view an ideal social work supervision relationship as one that is characterised by good communication. Good communication involves constructive feedback and criticism, being nice, open, and honest, teamwork, trust, advice, guidance and a safe space. The safe space is important for enabling both the supervisor and the supervisee to talk without fear of judgement. Constructive criticism is important for good communication because how supervisees perceive feedback from their supervisors can hinder or encourage further communication. It is also encouraging for the supervisor when the supervisees receive their guidance and implements it because if not, the supervisor may be discouraged to provide further supervision.

Sub-theme 11.2: Mutual respect

The participants in this study shared that an ideal social work supervision relationship is one where there is mutual respect. According to the participants, mutual respect involves approaching each other in good faith, where boundaries are maintained, mistakes are acknowledged, respect is reciprocal, and supervisees are not micromanaged. The following expressions are participant's perceptions of the supervision relationships.

“...I think the ideal social work supervision relationship is respect, respect each other, have a good approach from both parties...” (P1).

“...So, there should be respect from the social worker to the supervisor and from supervisor to social worker...” (P10).

“...Well, the one with mutual respect you know, respect another person’s views and opinions...” (P11).

“...for me what works is mutual respect, what also works is seeing the social workers potential and understand that you are not there to tell them what to do but you work together to implement a program...” (P12).

“...I don’t like the feedback am getting but when someone talks to you at a tone you are okay with it, you will not be upset because the tone is fine...” (P3).

“...if the supervisor is wrong, they should acknowledge their mistakes and do verify, the same with their supervisees...” (P4).

“...the ideal social work relationship I think is to maintain boundaries, you must know your lane. For example, we are in a work relationship but if you want to invade my personal life then it would invoke some situations or emotions...” (P9).

“...you must have a dual relationship where both parties give or take...” (P12).

“...I am not so happy with my supervision relationship because the person macro manage, is not well informed about the social work but I don’t have a choice...” (P2).

Mutual respect refers to an act of giving and/or receiving respect to and/or by both parties involved in the relationship (Master Class, 2022). The participants added that mutual respect involves approaching each other in good faith, where boundaries are maintained, mistakes are acknowledged, respect is reciprocated, and supervisees are not micro-managed, with micro-management referring to an act of frequent criticism by the supervisor and a supervisor who watches every move of the supervisee (Kagan, 2022:1). It is also the researcher’s view that mutual respect further means that mistakes are acknowledged, and boundaries are maintained.

Sub-theme 11.3: Conducive supervision environment

The participant's shared that the supervision environment should be a good one, holding no threat to any party. This would mean an environment where confidentiality is guaranteed, supervision is for work and not the person, none of the parties are harsh, and there is an open-door policy. Below are the participant's expressions on having a good supervision environment.

"...I think most things that are going on in the NGO is that we fear voicing them out with our supervisors because we think what if I am sharing and the supervisor take it to the director, and I would then be treated in a certain way. So, it's like you choose what you say to certain people very carefully, so an ideal relationship would be one where you are not afraid to share your views and your concerns out of fear that your supervisor will start treating you differently..." (P5).

"...I think supervisors forget that what I share is confidential between the two of us. I don't expect you as my supervisor to discuss me with another colleague. I have heard other colleagues being discussed with me so that makes me think that oh this means that I am also discussed..." (P5).

"...if the supervisor can share all of that feedback without being too harsh, without attacking you and without it feeling like an offense to you..." (P3).

"...to have the open-door policy, that they must feel free whatever time they need help..." (P12).

"...the environment can be conducive if the supervisor doesn't supervise the person, supervise the work..." (P1).

The findings show that one of the characteristics of an ideal social work supervision relationship is the supervision environment. The supervision environment must be safe to encourage both the supervisors and the supervisees to feel free to express themselves. This kind of an environment can be reached through having an open-door policy, guaranteed confidentiality and supervision directed at the work and not the person. The importance of an open-door policy lies in the fact that supervisees can be free to seek the supervisor's assistance whenever there is a need, while confidentiality guarantee ensure the supervisees that they can feel free and share whatever they want to share without being limited by fears of having their issues discussed with other

people. Regarding confidentiality, social work supervisees do not believe that there are any guarantees because some have experienced the bridge of confidentiality before. This means that confidentiality is not guaranteed, and this can unfortunately limit the supervisee's ability to share.

The participant's expressions are in line with the definition of good supervision relationship by Greenberg and Tomescu (2017:17). According to these authors, supervisees in good supervision relationships can openly/honestly share their challenges and be transparent with their weaknesses and strengths. Confidentiality and an open-door policy are characteristics that are also encouraged by Babbie (2013:20) and Decker (2022). According to these authors, confidentiality means an act of keeping to oneself everything that was shared by another and not sharing it with other people, while an open-door policy means that the supervisor's door is always open should the supervisee wish to discuss something. The guarantee of confidentiality is according to the participants, hard to guarantee because she has observed her supervisor discussing the other supervisees.

Sub-theme 11.4: Fulfilment of duties

The participants who shared this characteristic were supervisors. According to the supervisor participants, the supervisory duties are to educate, support and administer the work of the supervisee while the duties of the supervisee include to learn, deliver services, and accept the supervisor's support. The following statements contains the participant's expressions in this regard.

"...as a supervisor, just be a good teacher without giving supervisees everything. Yes, do your job of motivating them..." (P2).

"...Basically, supervision relationship is a two-way street. There are expectations from the supervisor and expectations from the supervisee. I expect support and guidance, as much as the expectations of my side I deliver..." (P4).

"...I think it is support. Like as a supervisor I will be giving the supervisee the kind of support that he/she want..." (P8).

This study has revealed that one of the characteristics of an ideal social work supervision relationship is the fulfilment of duties by both the supervisor and the supervisee. This is done by ensuring that the supervisor educates the supervisee

about the program, gives support to the supervisee when necessary and checks the work of the supervisee. The responsibility of the supervisees in this regard includes learning from the supervisor, delivering quality services and asking and accepting support when given.

The responsibilities of supervisors are in line with the basic functions of a supervision in that the supervisor is expected to teach, support and administer the work of the supervisee while the supervisee is expected to learn, deliver and accept the support given as advised by the Department of Social Development (2013:24) while by Kocyigit (2023:3) found that the duties of supervisees also include professional, effective and ethical behaviour, coupled with completing and submitting work on time, and being an active participant in supervision processes.

Sub-theme 11.5: Growth

The participants mentioned that for supervision to be ideal, supervisors need to help supervisees to grow. According to the participants, part of the enablers of growth includes building supervisees, having no jealous and not spoon feeding them. The following expressions contain the participant's thoughts regarding this characteristic.

"...it's nice to work when you can also see there is growth..." (P7).

"...don't be jealous of your supervisees but build them. You must always want to see them on the next level. If your social workers don't grow, it means there is a problem with the leader we must grow them to be leaders, we can't spoon feed them forever you see..." (P1).

"...you must not give your supervisee everything on a plate, for instance if your supervisee comes to you today and say I have a difficult case how do I go about it, don't just give him/her answers..." (P2).

The participants in this study have shared that an ideal relationship is where there is growth. This expectation of supervisee is in line with the core of social work supervision because supervision is used as a way of ensuring that social workers develop competency in their field (Milne & Watkins 2014:6), increase their knowledge of the profession and service they deliver (Van Rensburg, Mayers & Roets 2016:4), and enhance their professional development as practitioners (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014:13). The participant's views also show that they believe that if there is no spoon

feeding, the supervisee can grow to a point where regular supervision is not necessary and Corey et al (2010:5) concurs that supervision should enable the social work practitioner to gain the kind of knowledge that will enable them to practice independently in the future. The researcher thus believes that if supervisees can be allowed opportunities to come up with solutions on their own and not be given everything on a silver platter, the stage of growth can be reached.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the empirical findings, beginning with a description of the research methodology and then followed by the data analyses. The analyses commenced with a description of the biographical profile of the participants and then the themes and sub-themes that were developed. The themes that were developed include the non-government organisation, the job description of social work supervisors and supervisees, the social work supervisor/supervisee choice of the NGO sector, the challenges encountered by the social work supervisors and supervisees in their day-to-day work, mechanisms that social work supervisors/supervisees use to mitigate the identified challenges, the concept “social work supervision”, the advantages and the disadvantages of being supervised or of supervising, the relationships with supervisor/supervisee(s), challenges encountered by the social work supervisor/supervisee in their supervision relationship, strategies used to resolve challenges in a supervision relationship and the characteristics of an ideal social work supervision relationship. The themes and sub-themes were developed and validated by participant’s experiences as captured in the vignettes presented to corroborate. Following this chapter, that the terminal chapter summarises the research report, consolidates conclusions and proffers recommendations developed from the findings of this study and from the literature reviewed.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of the study's summary, conclusions, and recommendations because according to Alvior (2014:1), researchers need to provide a chapter of summary, conclusions, and recommendations. The purpose of this study was to uncover the strategies employed by the social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector. The conclusions for each theme that emerged during data analyses are thus discussed hereunder followed by the discussion on the recommendations.

5.2. Summary of the study

The study is structured into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the study and formulated the problem statement, rationale for the study, research question, research goal and objectives. The chapter also discusses the research approach and design, ethical issues considered, clarifies the key concepts, provides a delineation of the structure of the research report, and the limitations.

Chapter 2: This chapter offers the literature review of relevant and recent studies on the research problem.

Chapter 3: This chapter presents the research methodology followed in the study. This entails the presentation of the actual application of the research processes and/or methodologies.

Chapter 4: This chapter offers the research findings and provides significant connections and derivation from the literature.

Chapter 5: In this chapter, the summary of the study findings relating to the perspectives of social work supervisors and supervisees on strategies they employ to manage their supervision relationships are presented followed by the conclusions of the study and the recommendations for social work profession, social work supervisors and future research.

5.3. The goal, objectives and research question of the study

The researcher determined and developed the goal and objectives of this study to answer the research (study) questions. This is detailed in the following discussion.

5.3.1. The research goal

The goal of this study was designed to:

Explore the strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector.

The goal of this study has been achieved because the strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationship within the South African NGO sector were established and clarified. The strategies are presented in Chapter 4 as empirical evidence.

5.3.2. Objectives of the study

To attain the said goal, there are objectives that needed step-by-step examination towards achieving the goal. The objectives are as follows:

- To conceptualise theoretically the phenomenon of social work supervision and the supervision relationship.
- To explore and describe the strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to managing their supervision relationship within the South African NGO sector.
- To make recommendations for social work practice, policy makers and future research.

The said objectives were achieved in the study. The first objective was achieved in Chapter 2 where the researcher interrogated the literature describing the phenomena under study. The second objective was achieved because using the data that the researcher collected, the researcher managed to explore and describe the said strategies. The third objective was achieved in this Chapter 5 of the study which presents the study's conclusions and recommendations for future research and social work practice. Through following the objectives of this study, answering the research question was systematically actualised.

5.3.3. Research questions

The research question for this study was formulated as follows:

What strategies are employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationship within the South African NGO sector?

This research question was answered in Chapter 4 of this study where eight supervisees plus four supervisors were asked to share strategies they employ to manage their supervision relationship within the South African NGO sector. The questions that were asked in the interviews are as follows:

1. Describe the organisation you are employed at.
2. Share with me your job description.
3. What made you to choose the NGO sector?
4. Can you explain the challenges you encounter in your day-to-day work?
5. Which mechanisms do you use to mitigate the identified challenges?
6. Describe the concept “social work supervision”.
7. Can you explain the advantages and the disadvantages of being supervised or of supervising?
8. How would you describe your relationship with your supervisor/supervisee(s)?
9. What challenges have you encountered in your relationship with your supervisor/supervisee(s)?
10. How did you and your supervisor resolve those challenges?
11. What do you think is an ideal social work supervision relationship?

The participant’s answers to these questions were transcribed and thereafter analysed and the analyses resulted in the identification, clarification and classification of strategies. The strategies are also summarised and presented as part of the conclusions below.

5.4. Conclusions

The conclusions are derived from the findings of each theme and are presented hereunder. Providing conclusions is important in every study because it puts the whole study in a comprehensible format by providing the most significant parts of the study and outlining the robustness of the findings (Bouchrika, 2022:1). In this study, the conclusions include those pertaining to the biographical profile of the participants,

conclusion on the non-government organisations, conclusions on the job descriptions of the social work supervisors and supervisees, the choice of an NGO sector, challenges encountered by the social work supervisors and supervisees in their day to day work, the mechanisms that social work supervisors/supervisees use to mitigate the identified challenges, conclusions on the concept of 'social work supervision', the advantages and disadvantages of supervision, the social work supervision relationships, conclusions on the challenges encountered by the social work supervisor/supervisee in their supervision relationship, conclusions on the methods used by social work supervisors and supervisees to resolve challenges in their supervision relationship and conclusions on the characteristics of an ideal social work supervision relationship.

5.4.1. Conclusions on the biographical profile of the participants

The study participants are all working in the NGO sector in Gauteng province of South Africa and have been working in this sector for more than one year (12 months). All participants have a social work qualification and their experience as social workers ranged from 1 to 33 years, with the highest experienced being supervisors. Of all the participants (12), only 1 has obtained an additional postgraduate qualification. The supervisee's work as generic social workers while supervisors occupied management positions such as programme manager, programme coordinator and social work supervisor. The study also found that most social work supervisors do not have a postgraduate education or any other supervision training or qualification.

5.4.2. Conclusion on the non-government organisation

This study verified that the NGO refers to organisations that are not established by the government but assist the government by rendering state like services to the vulnerable groups who are not reached by the state. Unlike business organisations, NGOs are not established for the purpose of making profit but to run and reach their intended goals, they depend on money that comes from donors rather than the service users.

The study also illustrated that there are quite a few social work supervisors and supervisees who are working under the NGO sector in South Africa and that the areas of focus for the NGO sector includes mental health interventions, child protection

services, protection of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled and women, as well as family preservation and substance abuse interventions.

5.4.3. Conclusions on job descriptions of the social work supervisors and supervisees

This study verified that the job description of social work supervisors and supervisees working in the NGO sector is quite large and, in some instances, involves tasks that are not in line with the actual role and responsibilities of social work. The job description of social work supervisors include supervising social workers (requiring the fulfilment of the three basic functions of supervision: educational, supportive and administrative), HR duties (involving the hiring and firing, approval/disapproval of leaves), fleet management (ensuring that cars are used correctly), and the running of the whole NGO to ensure that targets are reached and that all categories of employees (including cleaners and security personnel) do their work, which means that they also supervises none-social workers.

The social work supervisees, on the other hand, render generic social work. Their job description includes the protection of children, elderly, disabled, women, mentally and physically challenged, and the abused and render micro (at the individual level), meso (at the group level), and macro (at community levels) services in the form of counselling. Regarding mental health, social workers offer counselling, educating, and enrolling in special schools and skills development workshops and awareness campaigns. Children who are orphaned, vulnerable or lacking care, are protected through influencing the family system for the better and/or placing children in foster care or places of safety. Women are assisted through counselling, psychosocial support, or enrolment in skills development programs, while the elderly and disabled are protected by means of enrolling them in protective workshops and some of the topics covered in workshops for disabled people include social media dangers, pornography, good and bad attitude, and good hygiene. There are also outpatient rehabilitation services offered to people who are using substances in order to help them to get back to their normal function and ultimately be reunited with their families, including their children if they were placed in places of safety. The social work supervisee's job description also involves family preservation interventions for families that are at risk through mediation, parental plans, and parental skills.

5.4.4. Conclusions on the choice for an NGO sector

This study has revealed that there are very few social work supervisors and supervisees who choose to work in the NGO sector because several participants believed that they were forced by circumstances to join the NGO sector. The said circumstances include lack of employment, DSD's inability to absorb their bursary holders and the availability of NGOs. For these social work supervisors and supervisees, these circumstances meant that these employees entered this sector as a last option because they had no choice but to settle for it.

5.4.5. Conclusions on challenges encountered by the social work supervisors and supervisees in their day-to-day work

This study revealed that the challenges experienced by social work supervisors and supervisees working in the South African NGO sector include those pertaining their day-to-day work with their clientele as well as organisational challenges. The clientele challenges include lack of proper documentations especially by migrants, lack of understanding of mental health by clients or their families and communities, dishonesty (especially when applying for foster care grants) and lack of cooperation (especially teenagers and substance users).

Regarding organisational challenges this study verified that the NGO sector faces a challenge of funding, which is the results of being depended on donors for funding. As a result of this challenge, salaries are too little compared to those offered by state departments, certain programs cannot be implemented, and there are no benefits and allowances. The issue of funding also results in challenges of lack of physical and human resources. This is because unless a post for more human resource is funded or a purchase for a specific physical resource is donated for, employing staff or buying resources is not possible. The shortage of human resource leads to overworking of current employees while the shortage of physical resources slows the work even further.

Another challenge faced by social work supervisors and supervisees is the organisational structure. There are some NGOs that do not have social work supervisor posts and as such, social workers report directly to, and are supervised by the board of directors. The challenge here is that the social workers are supervised by someone who has no social work qualification nor experience, leading to ineffective

supervision. Part of the structural challenges is also issues of debriefing because some organisations focus on very stressful social issues, necessitating debriefing services for social workers, which unfortunately they cannot be offered.

5.4.6. Conclusions on mechanisms that social work supervisors/supervisees use to mitigate organisational challenges

This study established that social work supervisors and supervisees have various ways they use to mitigate the day-to-day challenges, which include planning and communicating timeously, confronting dishonest and non-cooperating clients, and informing clients about the consequences of behaviours such as dishonesty which include perjury (which is a criminal offence). Referrals are also utilised in this regard. For instance, the social workers refer clients who are not comfortable being assisted by younger social workers or by social workers of different genders to other social workers within the organisation who fit the criteria for the client.

The participants also stated that to deal with lack of funding which results in lack of physical and human resources, they are continuously involved in fundraising efforts by their employers to try and secure new donors although looking for donors is time consuming and adds on the workload of the social work supervisors and supervisees. To deal with funding constraints, the participants said that they also use money sparingly.

On the other hand, to mitigate against lack of human and physical resources such as printers, laptops, cars, money, cell phones, and offices and to complete all their tasks, social work supervisors and supervisees sometimes opt for using their own resources or share the available resources and that to deal with human resources they often have to work extra hours in a day.

Furthermore, the social work supervisors and supervisees reported that in cases where the supervisor cannot provide effective supervision due to lack of social work knowledge, qualification, and experience, they supervise each other in order to deal with the pressure that comes with a high workload and then try to be understanding and tolerate their non-social work supervisor. This is done by carefully choosing one social worker that one trusts and then asking for assistance.

Moreover, this study also confirmed that there are social work supervisors and supervisees who have no mechanism in place for dealing with their challenges. The said social work supervisors and supervisees were hopeless and felt that their challenges are out of their control and that there is nothing that they can do to change/mitigate them.

5.4.7. Conclusions on the concept of 'social work supervision'

This study found that social work supervisors and supervisees share similar views on what is meant by 'social work supervision'. The findings show that the social work supervisors and supervisees define the concept of social work supervision using the three basic functions of supervision. According to the participants social work supervision refers to the process of educating supervisees, supporting supervisees, and overseeing the administration of supervisees by the supervisor, who is a person that has more knowledge and experience.

The educational function of social work supervision refers to the supervisor's role of educating (imparting skills and giving knowledge) and advising/guiding the supervisee on what steps to take when rendering services to clients. This is done so that the supervisees are well equipped in their field, be confident in rendering services to their clients and grow to a point of self-supervising. The supportive function of social work supervision on the other hand refers to the supervisor's role of identifying both work-related and personal challenges that may hinder the supervisee in rendering effective services and providing emotional support and/or ways to help supervisee to address the identified challenges. And the administrative function of supervision refers to the supervisor's role of checking supervisee's work to see if work is done, if work is done properly, canalising reports before they can be submitted to court or to other stakeholders, and checks how well the supervisee is growing in terms of their own professional development. These findings thus further evidence that supervisees are guided by their supervisors, who guide using their own previous social work experiences.

Moreover, it has also been uncovered that while the supervisor educates, supports, and administers, the role of the supervisee is to learn, accept support and deliver/render quality services.

5.4.8. Conclusions on the advantages and disadvantages of supervision

This study reached the conclusion that social work supervision has advantages and disadvantages. For the supervisees, the advantages of supervision include receiving guidance as to how to fulfil a certain task, growing as a professional, learning new skills, getting debriefing services, and being supported and strengthened. Supervision can apparently also serve as a reminder about tasks that are still to be completed and protects the social work profession (gatekeeping). For the supervisor's, the advantages of supervision are that it helps to ensure that work is done properly, the profession is protected against malpractice (gatekeeping), there is personal growth, and development of leadership, management, and organisational skills.

The disadvantages of supervision for supervisors includes being required to support others where there is no support for the supervisor, being overloaded with work, being seen as a problem solver and disciplining sub-ordinates. Disciplining supervisees can result in negative perceptions by the supervisee. That is, the supervisee may perceive their supervisor as hateful, rude, throwing tantrums, criticising and being inconsiderate, and all of these can hinder supervisee and NGO progress. Overloading supervisors with work can result in supervisor frustrations and result in abusive supervision relationships.

For the supervisees, disadvantages include being criticised, pressurised, dictated to, spoon-fed, micro-managed, policed and being monitored. The social work supervisees also mentioned that supervision can be time consuming, it messes with their schedules because time allocated for other tasks is often spent in supervision sessions and it can be too formal. There can also be disagreements concerning interventions and that the supervisor may not always have the ability to resolve matters, which in turn may render supervision ineffective.

5.4.9. Conclusions on the supervision relationships

This study has revealed that most social work supervisors and supervisees have good supervision relationships and there is one who have bad supervision relationships. The characteristics of a good supervision relationships according to the participants include having a harmonious workplace, teamwork, open door policy, mutual respect, constructive criticism, good communication and understanding, growth and knowledge of one's roles and responsibilities. It has also been illustrated that the good supervision

relationship results in effective supervision which it (effective supervision) in turn contributes to quality service delivery and NGO success.

This study has also revealed that there are few social work supervisors and supervisees who are in bad supervision relationships. The bad supervision relationships are characterised by micro-managing, dictating, being policed, and being monitored, lack of proper induction and mentoring. This is the case in NGOs where social work supervisor is not a social worker by profession and does not have social work experience. It has also been found that the ultimate results of a bad supervision relationship is that it becomes ineffective, in that the overall goals of supervision cannot be reached.

5.4.10. Conclusions on challenges encountered by the social work supervisors and supervisees in their supervision relationship

The findings in this study confirmed that social work supervision relationships are not immune to challenges. While the experiences of supervisors may not be the same as those of the supervisees, both groups can experience challenges. The challenges encountered by the social work supervisor in their supervision relationships include poor performance by supervisees (which can sometimes require disciplinary actions) supervisee's behaviours such as being unteachable, know it all, inability to receive correction, disrespectful and testing of authority. On the other hand, the challenges encountered by the social work supervisees in their supervision relationships include disagreement on what should be done inappropriate behaviour by supervisors such as shouting, being disciplined, being micro-managed, policed, monitored, and being supervised by a person who is not a social worker by profession. It is thus concluded in this regard that the challenges encountered by both the social work supervisor and supervisee can result in ineffective supervision where goals of supervision cannot be reached.

Further to the above, this study also found that not all social work supervisors and supervisees encounter challenges in their supervision relationships. This happens where the relationship is well managed through the process of managing expectations, time, workload, personality, supervision styles and supervisee capacity.

5.4.11. Conclusions on the strategies used by social work supervisors and supervisees to resolve challenges in their supervision relationship

This study revealed that social work supervisors and supervisees have developed several different techniques that they use to resolve the challenges they encounter in their supervision relationships. The identified methods include having regular supervision sessions, early interventions (such as confronting the issue), communicating (in a non-judgement, respectful and understanding manner), tolerance and being understanding. This shows that social work supervisors and supervisees can survive and forge on amidst challenges faced (resilient) in both the supervision relationships and the NGO sector.

This study also found that supervisors use disciplinary as another method of resolving the challenges they encounter in their supervision relationships. This method is used as last option and includes verbal warnings, written warnings and/or an insubordination charge.

5.4.12. Conclusions on the characteristics of an ideal social work supervision relationship

The social work supervisor's and supervisees reported that an ideal social work supervision relationship is characterised by good communication, regular supervision sessions, mutual respect, good supervision environment, growth, and fulfilment of duties by all parties involved. Good communication involves giving constructive feedback/criticism, being nice and honest, trust, advice/guidance rather than instruction, no fear of judgement, teamwork, and a safe space.

Having regular supervision sessions would help to ensure that the relationship grows. Mutual respect involves approaching each other in a good manner, where boundaries are maintained, mistakes are acknowledged, respect is reciprocal, and supervisees don't feel as though they are being micro-managed. The good supervision environment is one where confidentiality is guaranteed, supervision is for work and not the person, none of the parties are abusive, and there is an open door-policy. It is also important that both parties involved fulfil their duties and that supervisors do not spoon feed the supervisee, are not jealous of and do not micromanage their supervisees so that their supervisees can grow.

5.5. Recommendations for this study

The following recommendations are based on the findings derived from the investigation into the strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships in the South African NGO sector:

5.5.1. Recommendations for the social work profession

The study established that most social work supervisors do not have a postgraduate education or any other supervision training or qualification. Most of these supervisors use their previous experience to supervise their supervisees. Based on this finding, the researcher recommends that there should be higher requirements for supervisor posts such as added advanced qualification in the field of supervision rather than looking only at experience. Acquiring an advanced qualification in supervision (supervision, management, and leadership skills) will aid supervisors in their supervision endeavour.

This study also found that social work supervisors and supervisees working in the NGO sector render state-like services to people who are supposed to be the responsibility of the state, but the state does not provide them with enough resources to render the said services. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the state meet the NGO sector half-way. The kind of half-way recommended is not the 50/50 funding but should be that the government pays for everything satisfactorily while the NGO renders the services satisfactorily. This would enable the NGOs to fill identified gaps without worry of how they are going to get funding.

The study also found that social work supervisees focus on a few responsibilities that are not under one umbrella such as doing foster care interventions and substance use interventions at the same time. This result in giving too little time to each task because tasks become many. The researcher recommends that the social work role in the NGO sector move from generic (every challenge brought), to specialisation. That is, move from having a social worker who is responsible for child protection, disability cases, etc., to say a social worker working in the mental health unit who would only focus on mental health cases. These areas of specialisation will also help reduce the workload. This can be achieved if NGOs get the funding recommended above.

This study has verified that most social work supervisors and supervisees did not want to be employed in this sector, and that they are only working in this sector for the

purpose of acquiring experience and that they are planning to leave for employment where there are benefits, allowances, and better salaries such as the government sector. This renders this sector as a training institution. The researcher thus recommends that the government on top of giving NGOs enough funding (as discussed in second recommendation), should also ensure that these employees are paid the same as their colleagues in the government departments. This would assist in ensuring that the social work supervisors and supervisees stay in the NGO sector even after they have reached expert level.

This study further confirmed that social work supervisors and supervisees face challenges of lack of physical/human resources. The researcher recommends that the NGO (with the help of adequate government funding) hire more social workers and buy physical resources so that the work can be done speedily, and the workload can be reduced. Again, this can only be achieved if the government increases its funding of the salaries of social worker posts in NGOs. This will help to ensure that social work supervisors and supervisees can balance their lives by not taking work home and not working overtime.

5.5.2. Recommendations for policy makers

The researcher, based on the findings, recommends that the Department of Social Development should, when funding a supervision post, add a requirement that for one to be appointed as a social work supervisor, they should have a postgraduate qualification or certificate in supervision.

This study has verified that there are still NGOs that have social workers who are still supervised by a person who has no social work knowledge, qualification nor experience. Because this issue related only to supervisors, the researcher recommends that supervisors in similar situations should report to their non-social work managers on the administrative components of their work and that the social workers should engage in peer-supervision with other fellow supervisor on social work case related matters. The department of social development in conjunction with the SACSSP as guardians of social work services in the country should develop a policy specifying what should happen wherein a social work supervisor reports to a non-social worker.

5.5.3. Recommendations for future research

This study was conducted with only 12 participants, which is a small number for substantiative generalisation. It is therefore recommended that a similar study employing quantitative methods be conducted to include other provinces and thus allow for generalisation.

The researcher also recommends that research be conducted on the number and reasons of social work supervisors and supervisees who leave the public sector for employment in the NGO sector. This is because this study found that there are some social workers who left the government sector for employment in the NGO sector. Conducting such a study would provide answers as to why social work supervisees would leave the public sector for the NGO sector and thus come up with ways of retaining social workers in the public sector rather than ways that focus only on retaining social workers in the NGO sector.

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Addendums

Addendum A: Ethical clearance letter



COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

25 July 2022

Dear Ms Nompumelelo Lydia Mahlangu

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 25 July 2022 to 25 July 2025

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
45364117_CREC_CHS_2022

Researcher(s): Name: Ms Nompumelelo Lydia Mahlangu
Contact details: 45364117@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Dr GB Bhuda
Contact details: bhudag@unisa.ac.za

Title: Strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector

Degree Purpose: MSW

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 may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy 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 July 2025)**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **45364117_CREC_CHS_2022** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Signature: 

Prof. KB Khan
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature: PP 

Prof. K. Masemola
Exécutive Dean: CHS
E-mail: masemk@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 2298



Addendum B: A letter requesting social work supervisors and supervisees to participate in this study

“Strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector”

Dear participant

I, Nompumelelo Lydia Mahlangu am doing research with Doctor BG Bhuda, a lecturer in the Department of Social Work towards a MA in Social Work at the University of South Africa. We do not funding. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled strategies employed by the social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationship within the South African NGO Sector.

The aim of the study is to identify and unearth the strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees in managing their supervision relationship within the South African NGO sector

Your organisation has been selected because it renders social work services and employs both social work practitioners and social work supervisor.

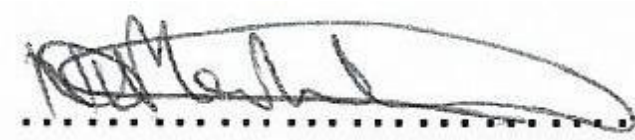
The study will entail one on one semi-structured interviews with the participants (social work supervisor or supervisees) which will take approximately 60 minutes. Collected data will then be transcribed and data gathered will be transferred to a research report.

The benefits of this study are that the researcher hopes to enhance the supervision relationship of social work supervisors and their supervisees because she and other supervisors may adapt, renew and employ the strategies identified and examined in their own supervision relationships

Potential risks are include discomfort which may result from sharing information that is emotionally disturbing or triggers experiences that were not comfortable. In case of risks encountered, participants will be referred to a social worker at Tshwane Municipality for debriefing.

Feedback procedure will entail a typed research report.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nompumelelo Lydia Mahlangu', written over a horizontal dotted line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'N'.

Nompumelelo Lydia Mahlangu

Student researcher

Addendum C: Participant information sheet

07 May 2022

Title: Strategies employed by the social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationship within the South African NGO sector

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Nompumelelo Lydia Mahlangu and I am doing research with Doctor BG Bhuda, a lecturer in the Department of Social Work towards a MA in Social Work at the University of South Africa. We do not have funding. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

I am conducting this research to identify and unearth the strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees in managing their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

Why did you choose this particular person/group as participants?

In recognizing that you are well informed about the topic, I hereby approach you to request your participation in this study. In order to help you understand the study and decide whether or not to participate, I provide you information concerning the aim of the study, the need for the study and the risks, and benefits involved in participating in the study. Furthermore, you will be informed about your rights as a participant in the study and what your involvement entails (i.e. what you will be asked or requested to do during the study).

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Should you agree to participate, you are requested to participate in a one-on-one, semi structured interview conducted at a place and time of your preference and convenience. It is estimated that the interview lasts sixty minutes. During the interview

you will be expected to answer biographical questions and open ended questions pertaining to your supervision relationship with your supervisor/supervisee.

With your permission, the interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed word for word. Your response to the interview will be kept strictly confidential. The audio tapes will be coded to disguise any of your identifying information. The tapes will be stored in a locked place at home and only I will have access to them. The transcripts with invented names will be made available to my research supervisor with the sole purpose of assisting and guiding me in this research undertaking and to an independent coder who will help make sure that I have presented your views correctly. The independent coder will sign an undertaking to treat the information shared by you in a confidential manner

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

If you agree to take part, you have the right to change your mind at any time during the study. You are free to withdraw this consent and discontinue participation without any loss of benefits. However, if you do withdraw from the study, you would be requested to grant me an opportunity to engage in an informal discussion with you so that the research partnership that was established can be terminated in an amicable manner.

Statement that participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form.

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

The information gathered from this study will help new supervisors such as myself with strategies they could employ in their own supervision relationships. The information could also assist existing relationships to resolve difficulties.

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

Participating in this study can lead to emotional discomfort resulting from sharing experiences that are associated with negative feelings. Should I feel that the information shared leads to discomfort, the researcher will dismiss you from participating and refer you to the social worker at City of Tshwane Municipality for debriefing.

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

The information you share in this study will be kept confidential. Consequently, the researcher will only share information that will not enable other people to trace your identity. The researcher in this study will also ensure that participant's information is kept private by storing their signed informed consent forms and the audio recordings in a safe and lockable cabinet where only the researcher will have access. The researcher will also ensure that all the electronic files will be password protected. The researcher in this study will use pseudonyms as replacements for participant's real names and interpret and ascribe new identities to the recordings and transcripts as advised. The only people that will be able to identify you is the researcher and those responsible for ensuring that the study is conducted correctly.

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

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in her house for future research and academic purposes, and 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. Once the period stated has passed, the materials will be destroyed permanently.

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

Please note: since this is a study by a student, there will be no payment for participation.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

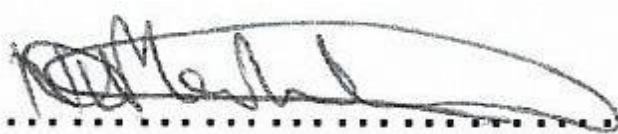
This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

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

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Nompumelelo Lydia Mahlangu on 0815078851 or send an email to nompumelelolydia@gmail.com. The findings are accessible. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact 0815078851 or send an email to nompumelelolydia@gmail.com.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Doctor BG Bhuda on 012 429 4807 or send an email to bhudag@unisa.ac.za. Alternatively, contact the research ethics chairperson of the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work, Dr JK Malesa, telephone number: 0124294780, or email maleskj@unisa.ac.za

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nompumelelo Lydia Mahlangu', written over a horizontal dotted line.

Nompumelelo Lydia Mahlangu

Addendum D: An informed consent form for social work supervisors

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

Title: "Strategies employed by the social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector"

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 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, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interviews.

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

Participant Name & Surname.....

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname.....Nompumelelo Lydia Mahlangu.....

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

Addendum E: Interview guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE



Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview. We are interviewing you to better understand what strategies you employ in managing your supervision relationship in your work place (NGO). There are no right or wrong answers to any of our questions, we are interested in your own experiences.

Questions

Biographical questions

1. What is your highest qualification?
2. What is your current position?
3. How many years of social work experience do you have?
4. How long have you been working in the NGO sector?
5. How many years have you been with your current employer?
6. How long have you been working under supervision? Or how long have you been working as a supervisor?
7. How many supervisors are currently supervising you? Or how many social workers are you currently supervising?
8. What is the position of your current social work supervisor or supervisee(s)?

Open-ended questions

9. Describe the organisation you are employed at
10. Share with me your job description
11. What made you to choose the NGO sector?
12. Can you explain the challenges you encounter in your day-to-day work?
13. Which mechanisms do you use to mitigate the identified challenges?
14. Describe the concept "social work supervision".
15. Can you explain the advantages and the disadvantages of being supervised or of supervising?
16. How would you describe your relationship with your supervisor/supervisee(s)?
17. What challenges have you encountered in your relationship with your supervisor/supervisee(s)?

18. How did you and your supervisor resolve those challenges?
What do you think is an ideal social work supervision relationship?

Addendum F: Editing certificate



Office: 0183892451

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Cell: 0729116600

Date: 11th December, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

I, **Muchativugwa Liberty Hove**, confirm and certify that I have read and edited the entire dissertation, **Strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector**, submitted by **NOMPUMELELO LYDIA MAHLANGU**, in accordance with the requirements for the degree **MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA NOMPUMELELO LYDIA MAHLANGU** was supervised by **Dr. G.B. BHUDA**.

I hold a PhD in English Language and Literature in English and am qualified to edit such a dissertation for grammatical correctness, cohesion and coherence. The views expressed herein, however, remain those of the researcher/s. Yours sincerely

Professor M.L. Hove (PhD, MA, PGDE, PGCE, BA Honours – English)



Addendum G: Turn it in Report

Digital Receipt

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Assignment title: Complete dissertation/thesis DRAFT
Submission title: Dissertation for Nompumelelo Mahlangu
File name: Dissertation_Mahlangu_NL_Final_Edited_2023.docx
File size: 486.79K
Page count: 161
Word count: 49,547
Character count: 276,738
Submission date: 13-Dec-2023 06:07PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID: 2257951321

Submission date: 13-Dec-2023 06:07PM (UTC+0200)

Submission ID: 2257951321

Strategies employed by social work supervisors and supervisees to manage
their supervision relationships within the South African NGO sector

NOMPUMELELO LYDIA MAHLANGU

Dissertation submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: Dr. G.B. BHUDA

DECEMBER 2023

Dissertation for Nompumelelo Mahlangu

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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