

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUPERVISION
FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN
SOUTH AFRICA BY A DESIGNATED CHILD PROTECTION
ORGANISATION**

by

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DISSERTATION PRESENTED

FOR THE DEGREE OF



DOCTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

IN THE

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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April 2022

DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Supervision plays a significant role in social work because social work practice depends largely upon the organisation's administrative structure, which includes supervisors to continue training new social workers and provide ongoing professional guidance. Despite the predominance of supervision within the social work profession, and the weight placed upon its role and function by policymakers, practitioners, and organisation managers alike, it remains an under-researched area of enquiry when it comes to evidence-informed supervision policies. In South Africa, the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession seeks to conceptualise, contextualise, and provide norms and standards that guide the execution of supervision in the country. However, since its inception in 2012, no study has been conducted on how the Supervision Framework is implemented in various organisations. Hence, the aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the stories of social workers in a designated child protection organisation regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework. Given the knowledge gap and limited voices of social workers, a constructionist theoretical approach guided this study to explore the perspectives and stories of social workers and their supervisors on how the Supervision Framework is implemented in their organisation.

This study employed a qualitative research approach. A case study research design that was exploratory and descriptive in nature was adopted in this study. Semi-structured telephonic interviews were conducted with 28 participants employed in a designated child protection organisation in the Western Cape of South Africa. Twenty social workers and 8 supervisors within the organisation were selected through purposive non-probability sampling. Data were analysed through thematic content analysis using ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software for coding and management of data.

The findings of the study indicate that the case study of the child protection organisation may be regarded as a best practice example of the implementation of the Supervision Framework based on the linear stories of supervisors and frontline social workers. However, what is novel about this study is that it brings together previous findings, theory, policy, and legislation about the implementation of the Supervision Framework in a child protection organisation by further analysing the subtext stories of participants in line with the constructionist approach. Thus, although the organisation under study has thrived in developing a supervision policy and implementing the policy in line with the stipulations of the Supervision Framework, there

remains challenges related to the dominance of the administrative function of supervision within the organisation and, in some instances, lack of emotional support.

The key recommendation based on the study's findings is that clinical supervision can be salvaged by introducing innovative ways of conducting supervision, such as peer supervision, to develop a community of supervision practice; by adopting an external supervision model to place the primary focus of supervision on clinical dimensions instead of administrative tasks; and by investigating the potential of online supervision in promoting the accessibility of supervisors.

OPSOMMING

Supervisie speel 'n belangrike rol in maatskaplike werk, want die praktyk van maatskaplike werk is hoofsaaklik afhanklik van die organisasie se administratiewe struktuur, wat onder andere behels dat supervisors nuwe maatskaplike werkers deurlopend oplei en voortgesette professionele leiding bied. Ondanks die dominante rol van supervisie in die professie van maatskaplike werk en die gewig wat deur beleidsmakers, praktisyns en organisasiebestuurders op die rol en funksies daarvan geplaas word, is beperkte navorsing oor bewysgerigte supervisiebeleide uitgevoer. In Suid-Afrika is die doel van die Supervisieraamwerk vir die maatskaplikewerkprofessie om norme en standaarde wat supervisie in die land rig, te konseptualiseer, te kontekstualiseer en te verskaf. Sedert die instelling daarvan in 2012 is daar egter nog geen studies gedoen oor die manier waarop die Supervisieraamwerk in verskeie organisasies geïmplementeer word nie. Die doel van hierdie studie was dus om begrip te verkry van die stories van maatskaplike werkers in 'n aangewese kinderbeskermingsorganisasie rakende die implementering van die Supervisieraamwerk. Gegewe die kennisgaping en beperkte stemme van maatskaplike werkers het 'n konstruksionistiese teoretiese benadering hierdie studie gerig ten einde die perspektiewe en stories van maatskaplike werkers en hul supervisors rakende die implementering van die Supervisieraamwerk in hul organisasie te verken.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering is in hierdie studie gebruik. 'n Gevallestudie-navorsingsontwerp wat verkennend en beskrywend van aard is, is aangewend. Semigestruktureerde telefoniese onderhoude is met 28 deelnemers gevoer wat in 'n aangewese kinderbeskermingsorganisasie in die Wes-Kaap van Suid-Afrika werk. Twintig maatskaplike werkers en agt supervisors in die organisasie is deur doelgerigte niewaarskynlikheidstreekproefneming gekies. Data is deur tematiese inhoudsontleding met behulp van ATLAS.ti-sagteware vir die ontleding van kwalitatiewe data ontleed vir die kodering en bestuur van die data.

Die bevindinge van die studie toon dat die gevallestudie van die kinderbeskermingsorganisasie as 'n voorbeeld van beste praktyk ten opsigte van die implementering van die Supervisieraamwerk beskou kan word op grond van die lineêre stories van toesighouers en toonaangewende maatskaplike werkers. Wat egter nuut in hierdie studie is, is dat dit vorige bevindinge, teorie, beleid en wetgewing oor die implementering van

die Supervisieraamwerk in 'n kinderbeskermingsorganisasie byeenbring deur die subtekstories van deelnemers ingevolge die konstruksionistiese benadering te ontleed. Alhoewel die organisasie wat bestudeer is wel uitstekend gevaar het met die ontwikkeling van 'n supervisiebeleid en implementering van die beleid ingevolge die stipulasies van die Supervisieraamwerk, is daar steeds uitdagings verbonde aan die oorheersing van die administratiewe funksie van supervisie in die organisasie en in sommige gevalle 'n gebrek aan emosionele ondersteuning. Die hoofaanbeveling op grond van die studiebevindinge is dat kliniese supervisie benut kan word deur die bekendstelling van innoverende maniere van supervisie, soos ewekniesupervisie, om 'n gemeenskap van supervisiepraktyk te ontwikkel, deur toepassing van 'n eksterne supervisiemodel om die primêre fokus van supervisie op kliniese dimensies te plaas in stede van op administratiewe take, en deur 'n ondersoek na die potensiaal van aanlyn supervisie ten einde die toeganklikheid van die supervisors te verhoog.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those who in one way or another helped bring this study to fruition:

- First, I would like to thank my Comforter, Morena Jakobo, for bestowing upon me the wisdom and strength to see this PhD journey through until the end.
- To the love of my life, my dear husband. Thank you for always supporting me in my career choices. You were my cheerleader on days that I felt like giving up on this PhD journey and continuously encouraged me until the end.
- To my children – Sabbath, Blessing, and Jasper – who were patient with me on days that I could not play with them, watch a movie with them, or go to the park, thank you for bringing joy into my life and making this PhD journey worthwhile.
- I love and appreciate my mother Emily Ngobeni, who took care of my children when I could not. She was my pillar of strength.
- Professor Lambert Engelbrecht, thank you for your guidance, wisdom, and inspiration. You recognised my capabilities and pushed me to greater heights even when I did not believe in myself sometimes. Your words of encouragement and support is what kept me going and working all those long hours.
- I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to all the frontline social workers and supervisors who participated in this study. I would like to thank you for sharing your stories with me which made this study possible. To the management of the organisation under investigation, thank you for granting me permission to use your organisation as a case study without hesitation because you recognised the value of this research.
- Finally, a sincere thanks is extended to the National Research Fund (NRF) for granting me the sabbatical grant (Black Academics Advancement Programme) to carry out this research endeavour. However, the opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at in this study are those of the researcher and not that of the NRF.

Thank you all for your unique contributions!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AASW	Association of Australian Social Work
ANZASW	Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers
ASASWEI	Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions
ATLAS-ti	Archive for Technology, Lifeworld and Everyday Language-text interpretation
BASW	British Association of Social Workers
CAQDAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CCI's	Children's Court Inquiry
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CYCC	Child Youth Care Centre
CYCF	Child and Youth Care Facility
DDG	Deputy Director General
DSD	Department of Social Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ETD	Electronic Thesis and Dissertations
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HR	Human Resource
IDM	Integrative Development Model of Supervision

IDPs	Individual Development Plans
LMIC	low- and middle-income countries
NASW	National Association of Social Work
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
NQSWs	Newly Qualified Social Workers
PADI	Performance, Administration, Development and Integration
PDP	Personal Development Plan
REC: SBE	Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACSSP	South African Council for Social Service Professions
SBS	Strengths-Based Supervision
SSP	Social Services Professions
SW	Social Workers
SWAAB	Social Work Accreditation and Advisory Board
SWRB	Social Work Review Board
SWS	Social Work Supervisors
TPA	Transfer Payment Agreement
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. PRELIMINARY STUDY AND RATIONALE

Throughout the history of social work, both international and local prominent scholars, such as Kadushin (1992), Tsui (1997), Botha (2002), O'Donoghue (2003) and Engelbrecht (2014) have advocated for the need and significance of supervision in social work practice. In South Africa, the subject of supervision was first documented in the early 1960s focusing on supervision as a form of field guidance (Pieterse, 1961). Later, Du Plessis (1965) observed that supervision in social work practice was neglected, and this had a negative impact on the quality of services provided by social workers. Having said that, Botha (2002) noted almost two decades ago, that some opponents argue that supervision is unnecessary because it appeared to be ineffective, and it seems to encourage dependency amongst social workers. This, she argued, had nothing to do with the nature of social work supervision; rather, it was due to the faulty or weak way supervision was applied.

Engelbrecht (2014:125) affirmed that supervision is important in social work because "...it defines the unique historical and future attributes of the profession". Kadushin and Harkness (2014) concur that supervision seeks to facilitate competence and independence amongst practitioners and minimise dependency. In addition, O'Donoghue and Engelbrecht (2021) assert that the quality of social work supervision is central to the development and maintenance of high standards of social work practice and contributes to competent professional practices. This postulation encapsulates the international notion that supervision of social workers is essential in social work practice and, given the changing world and developing environment with multifaceted social problems, the execution of supervision can never be overemphasised (Mo, O'Donoghue, Wong & Tsui, 2020; O'Donoghue & Engelbrecht, 2021).

The main purpose of supervision is to serve the best interests of service users by enabling social workers to provide effective and efficient services (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). This means that service users benefit from supervision because social workers are empowered and encouraged to perform appropriate duties effectively through supervision. Moreover, supervision does not only benefit practitioners and service users, but welfare organisations

employing social workers and the profession in its entirety are also enriched. For instance, social work as a profession can maintain its standards of practice and enhance professional ethics amongst practitioners through supervision. For organisations, social work supervision ensures accountability in compliance with agency standards of service and policies. In a nutshell, supervision of social workers has been identified as one of the key factors that contributes to job satisfaction as well as high quality service delivery in social work practice (Calitz, Roux & Strydom, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).

When looking at the origins of supervision in social work, historically it has always been regarded as a middle management position focused on administrative tasks such as overseeing the work of employees and ensuring that it is in line with the agency's policies (Kadushin, 1992). However, over the years, supervision has become more clinical internationally compared to South Africa. For instance, clinical supervision focuses on the dynamics of the client's situation and the social worker's interventions. Hence, it is more likely to include educational and supportive functions wherein the clinical supervisor is assigned to assist in and direct a supervisee's practice (Munson, 2002).

The South African context is different; emphasis is placed on the administrative function of supervision, specifically in designated child protection organisations, wherein supervisors find themselves carrying out predominantly administrative tasks of signing off reports as required by the Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005, and neglecting the educational and supportive functions of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2010; VETFUTI, GOLIATH & PERUMAL, 2019). This can be attributed to several challenges facing the profession in South Africa, such as high caseloads, unavailability of supervision, lack of resources, and the poor working conditions of social workers (Calitz et al., 2014). In the year 2015, the then Deputy Director General (DDG) of the national Department of Social Development (DSD), which is the main employer of social workers in South Africa, acknowledged these challenges during the Social Workers Indaba hosted in Durban. The DDG stated that given the nature of work performed by social workers, such as dealing with cases of child abuse, domestic violence, disaster management, traumatic events, and the socio-economic issues in the country, they require support from supervisors to minimise burnout (Morning Live, 2015). However, due to the unreasonable ratios of supervisors vs supervisees, which is approximately 1:10, depending on where they are working, the DDG maintained that this results in some of the social workers not being supervised, which then affects the quality of services provided to service users. Therefore, the supervision of social workers needs to be context specific and encompass all the key functions

of supervision equally to be effective. To accomplish this, supervision policies must clearly prescribe how these functions (administrative, educational, and supportive) can be implemented in different welfare organisations. This inference is made in light of the suggestion proposed by Engelbrecht (2010) that organisations need to review their supervision practices and adopt supervision policies that are context specific and aimed at recruiting and retaining social workers. This notion was also implied by the Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers (DSD, 2006), which highlighted the need to improve the quality of social work services.

The Recruitment and Retention Strategy (DSD, 2006) recommended the evaluation of supervision practices and the development of a supervision framework for social work. It is on these grounds that the DSD and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) developed the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), henceforth the Supervision Framework. The Supervision Framework seeks to “...conceptualise, contextualise and provide norms and standards guiding the execution of supervision” (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:14). Since its inception in 2012, no study has been conducted on how the Supervision Framework is implemented in various organisations. The framework stipulates the functions of supervision, different methods of supervision, as well as the roles of both supervisors and supervisees (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). However, how organisations have unpacked and contextualised the Supervision Framework to achieve their mandate and meet the needs of their client systems has not been investigated.

Engelbrecht (2013), in his critique of the Supervision Framework, postulates that it is essential to explore how organisations have implemented this framework, because according to him, one size cannot fit all. This means that, although the Supervision Framework outlines norms and standards of supervision in South Africa, organisations employing social workers are expected to customise the framework to best suit their context (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). This is because organisational policies and legislations influence supervision (Bogo & McKnight, 2006). In a South African child protection organisation, the Children’s Act, No. 38 of 2005, is one example of legislation that directs how social workers function and ultimately how supervision is implemented. A designated child protection organisation is unique in that it is assigned with the responsibility to ensure the protection of children as stipulated in Chapter 7 of the Children’s Act 2005. Furthermore, due to the nature of services provided by child protection organisations, which amongst others include the investigation and assessment of

child abuse cases as well as the removal of children where necessary, supervision is of paramount importance (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2005). In carrying out these responsibilities, social workers are required to write reports after their investigations which will be presented to the Children's Court, either for placement or removal purposes. The supervisor must sign off the reports before they are presented in the Children's Court. This puts supervisors under the pressure of having to sign a lot of reports depending on the number of social workers they supervise. This may limit supervisors to provide educational or supportive functions of supervision as their duties merely become administrative. Moreover, supervisors cannot escape their administrative responsibilities because the Social Service Professions Act (RSA, 1978) legally binds them as co-responsible for supervisees' work. Therefore, it is imperative to explore how the Supervision Framework is being implemented in such a designated child protection organisation.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Given that social work is practiced in the context of supervisory relationships, effective supervision is essential, hence the DSD and SACSSP (2012) developed a standardised Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa. The Supervision Framework was in response to the Recruitment and Retention Strategy for social workers' (DSD, 2006) recommendations that supervision practices need to be evaluated due to a decline in quality social work services because of lack of supervision. The Supervision Framework outlines norms and standards for supervision practices in all organisations employing social workers in the country. Individual organisations are expected to customise the norms and standards depending on their context (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), though clear guidelines on the "how" are not stipulated in the framework. It was therefore imperative to investigate how a designated child protection organisation in South Africa with unique features, has contextualised the Supervision Framework to meet its own needs.

Moreover, although a standardised framework for supervision in social work does exist, other issues can influence how the Supervision Framework is implemented within various settings. These issues include heavy caseloads, low salaries, and poor working conditions, just to name a few (Parker, 2017; Chibaya, 2018). Hence, this study focused on how a designated child protection organisation has implemented the Supervision Framework within its context despite any evidence-based data on the implementation thereof and within the parameters of the effects of the Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005 on supervision. Besides the significant

contribution of some recent research on supervision in social work practice in South Africa (Ncube, 2018; Atkins, 2019), no study has been conducted on the actual implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession within a child protection organisation. This research intends to fill this identified gap by reporting on the experiences of social workers and supervisors working in a child protection organisation on the implementation of the Supervision Framework.

1.3. THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

This study is guided by a constructionist theoretical approach (O'Donoghue, 2010), which combines the social constructionism and constructivism metatheories. Both social constructionism and constructivism reject an objective reality and argue that cognition, language, culture, as well as social experiences, influence how one views the world (Franklin, 1995). Sandu and Unguru (2017) add that these paradigms represent two models of understanding the social construction of reality, in which *constructivism* focuses on construction at the level of the individual, while *social constructionism* places an emphasis on the interactions between individuals and the social environment. Thus, the constructionist approach focuses on the significance that individuals attribute to the world and the social environment in which they are a part.

O'Donoghue (2003:28) asserts that this approach gives a voice to the participants in the study as well as the “stories” (narratives/experiences/perceptions/cultures) they share about their own practice and the meaning they assign to it. Hence, this is an alternative approach to identifying how social and personal discourses influence the development and process of social work supervision. According to Noble and Irwin (2009), this theoretical approach can also be used to analyse and review the implementation of supervision as a professional practice to deviate from an approach which falls within the paradigm of supervision functions, such as education, administration, and support. The constructionist approach towards supervision offers a way of both exploring (1) the influence of the environment upon the supervision relationship and (2) processes of supervision (O'Donoghue, 2003). It is therefore important to view supervision within the realm of a constructionist approach, because, firstly, how social workers understand supervision will determine how they approach and implement it. Secondly, how the environment influences the practice of social work also affects how supervision is executed. This approach is expanded on in Chapter 4.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTION

To respond to the rationale of the study, problem statement, and theoretical point of departure, the following research question was formulated:

What are the “stories” of social workers in a designated child protection organisation, regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012)?

1.5. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this study was to gain an understanding of the stories of social workers in a designated child protection organisation regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework.

The objectives of the study were to:

- Present an overview of contemporary research (theory and practice) on social work supervision within both a global and local context.
- Analyse the Supervision Framework based on contemporary research on the supervision of social workers.
- Contextualise child protection organisations in South Africa and their implementation of the Supervision Framework within the realm of a constructionist theoretical approach.
- Empirically investigate the stories of social workers and supervisors in a designated child protection organisation regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework.
- Make conclusions and recommendations to a designated child protection organisation and other role players regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework.

1.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presents a brief overview of the research approach, research design, sampling methods, data collection and data analysis procedures.

1.6.1. Research approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach. According to Henning (2004), qualitative research is mainly applicable to studies that seek to gain an in-depth inquiry into phenomena. Hence, a qualitative approach was best suited for this study to obtain rich descriptions of the social workers' experiences regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework. Marshall and Rossman (2011) indicate that qualitative research is valuable because it aims to investigate phenomena where little research has been conducted. Qualitative research was deemed suitable for this study because no study has been conducted on the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa within a child protection organisation. According to Fouché (2021), qualitative research is concerned with exploring the subjective reality from the perspective of an insider. This approach stresses the process in which individuals create and give meaning to their experiences and lived realities. Furthermore, qualitative research emphasises the importance of context in gaining an understanding of the stories of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Thus, through a qualitative approach, the researcher was able to capture the stories (narratives/experiences/perceptions/perspectives) and understanding of social workers and supervisors in a designated child protection organisation about the implementation of the Supervision Framework.

1.6.2. Research design

A case study research design was employed to achieve the goal of this research. A case might be a person, a classroom, an organisation, a programme, or a policy (Yin, 2014). Simons (2009) argues that the subjective data is an integral part of case studies, and it is through the analysis and interpretation of how people think, feel, and act that many insights and understanding of the case are gained. Simons (2009) adds that case studies value multiple perspectives of stakeholders and participants. The purpose of a case study is to obtain intimate familiarity with the social world and to look for patterns in the research participants' lives, words, and actions in the context of the case as a whole (Schurink, Schurink, & Fouché, 2021a). A case study design was therefore applicable for this research because the researcher was interested in the supervisors' and supervisees' supervision experiences within their work environment from a constructionist lens.

Case studies can be exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. This study is both exploratory and descriptive. Exploratory research is concerned with the “what” question, while descriptive research answers the “how” or “why” question (Yin, 2012). The study is exploratory in nature since there is no research documented on the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa. Exploratory studies are useful when the researcher examines a new interest or subject area (Babbie, 2016). Thus, using an exploratory research design helped answer the research question of the study: “What are the experiences of social workers in a designated child protection organisation regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the social work profession?” Furthermore, the study is descriptive, in that it describes the experiences of social workers and their supervisors on “how” the Supervision Framework is implemented within a specific child protection organisation and why the participants hold such views.

1.6.3. Sampling

The study population consisted of social workers and supervisors employed in a specific designated child protection organisation in the Western Cape Province. At the time of the study, the organisation had 88 social workers (supervisees) and 9 supervisors also referred to as regional managers. *Non-probability purposive sampling* was utilised to select 20 social workers and 7 social work supervisors from the organisation to participate in the study. Although all 9 supervisors were invited to participate in the study, only 7 supervisors were available. Additionally, the national manager of the organisation served as a key informant in the study. Purposive sampling was suitable for this study because it is based on the researcher’s judgement that the sample contains most of the characteristics and representative attributes of the population being studied (Strydom, 2021). Moreover, purposive sampling is mainly recommended in qualitative research that employs interviews as a method of data collection because participants are selected due to their relevance to the research questions (Babbie, 2016). Therefore, a total sample of 28 participants was selected based on the recommendation that qualitative samples are usually below 50 (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). This also supports the finding by Green and Thorogood (2014) that data saturation is likely to be reached after the 15th interview, meaning that no new data will come to the fore.

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the organisation. After permission was granted, a list of supervisors with their contact details was requested to recruit participants. The inclusion criteria of the study were that the participants must be registered with the

SACSSP as social workers and be accessible to the researcher. Although another criterion was that the supervisees and supervisors must at least be employed for two years in their positions in the current organisation, this was not feasible given the unavailability of potential participants. Not all potential participants who were recruited participated in the study citing work commitments and time constraints. Consequently, three social workers and one supervisor with less than two years in the organisation were included in the sample after considering their years of experience in social work practice.

1.6.4. Data collection

In 2020, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic impacted the world in unprecedented ways. Many countries across the globe introduced lockdown regulations that restricted public gatherings and led to the closure of most sectors of the economy to curb the spread of the virus. In South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a nationwide lockdown which commenced on the 27th of March 2020. The initial period of the lockdown required all citizens to stay home unless they were essential workers or needed to obtain essential goods and services, collect social grants, or seek emergency medical treatment. All businesses and other entities had to cease operations during lockdown unless providing essential goods or services (South African Government News Agency, 2020: n.p.). The higher education landscape was no exception; higher education institutions (HEIs) also had to shut down given restrictions on face-to-face gatherings. Many HEIs, including Stellenbosch University, imposed emergency teaching and learning to salvage the 2020 academic year.

The lockdown did not only affect teaching and learning in universities, but how research was conducted as well. Stellenbosch University took a proactive decision to suspend all social, behavioural, and education research that required physical contact with participants (Stellenbosch University Communication, 20 March 2020). Researchers were encouraged to consider alternative ways of collecting data that did not require physical contact. For this reason, I had to revise the data collection method of face-to-face interviews initially proposed during the conceptualisation of the study and submitted an urgent amendment to the Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE) at Stellenbosch University for review and approval. After receiving amended ethical clearance, data was collected through telephonic interviews.

Given that the purpose of the study was not to compare the experiences of social workers and supervisors, but rather to obtain the various stories in the organisation based on a constructionist approach, different semi-structured interview schedules for supervisors and social workers were utilised as the research instrument (See Annexes 2 & 3). The interview schedules were comprised mainly of open-ended questions. Since the aim of semi-structured interviews is to obtain the views of participants, Marlow and Boone (2005) observe that the questions should be structured in such a manner that they initiate dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. The semi-structured interviews were flexible and allowed the researcher to probe further and seek clarity on some of the interview questions. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were audio recorded. These were then transcribed to enable data analysis.

1.6.5. Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Marshall and Rossman (2011) state that, thematic data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data collected. Themes from the data were identified, organised, and presented. The researcher followed the six steps of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) using ATLAS-ti qualitative data analysis software for coding and management of data. This software was deemed necessary in this study to organise the data that was collected, given that ATLAS-ti offers tools to manage, extract, compare, explore, and reassemble meaningful pieces from large amounts of data in creative, flexible, yet systematic ways (Friese, 2020).

The initial coding of data was done via ATLAS-ti by identifying possible patterns from the data. Each transcript was coded, and notes were written in the comments section of the document being analysed based on my impressions of the data. The relationship between the codes and themes that emerged from the existing literature were noted. The themes were further reviewed, refined, and ultimately defined as determinants of supervision emerging from the literature and informed by the Supervision Framework. An analysis of each individual theme was conducted and quotes from the data were used to support each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Literature that supports or disconfirms the data was also cited to make an argument in relation to the research findings. The trustworthiness of the data was verified through *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The data analysis process and data verification are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

1.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and protection from harm are the ethical considerations observed in this study. These ethical considerations are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. This study was categorised as low risk and obtained ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee at Stellenbosch University prior to the commencement of the study (see Annexure 6). Given the lockdown regulations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the data collection method had to be redesigned to align with Stellenbosch University's position on social science research (Stellenbosch University Communication, 20 March 2020). This meant that the research proposal had to be resubmitted to the REC to allow approval for telephonic interviews to avoid the potential of any physical harm to the participants. This study did not possess any harmful risks to the participants.

Permission from the organisation and consent from the participants was sought before any interviews were conducted. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed in relation to the number and duration of interviews, as well as the risks and benefits associated with participation, before they provided consent. Consent was also obtained from all the participants beforehand to audio record the interviews. Moreover, participants were allowed to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Participants have the right to privacy and their information needs to be kept confidential. To achieve this, the data was stored on a password-protected computer, and the audio-recordings were kept in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher. According to Padgett (2008), the researcher must ensure that the identity of participants is never revealed or linked to the information they provide without their permission. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms rather than the participants' real names were used to safeguard their identity.

1.8. IMPACT

Although there is literature on social work supervision, especially on the functions, methods, the process, and challenges of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2021a; Wynne, 2020; Ncube, 2019; Vetfuti, 2017; Parker, 2017; Shokane, 2016), no study has been conducted on how the Supervision Framework is implemented in various welfare organisations across South Africa. Hence, this study was necessary to explore the views of social workers working in a child protection organisation on how the Supervision Framework has been implemented since its inception in 2012. The study contributes to the body of knowledge within supervision in South

Africa. Moreover, it gives a voice to social workers and supervisors to share their experiences of the implementation of the Supervision Framework. It is envisaged that the study will contribute significantly to understanding the role of social workers and supervisors in the supervision process, which will have the potential to strengthen supervision practices within child protection organisations.

1.9. CHAPTER LAYOUT

This study consists of the following 7 chapters:

Chapter 1 provides a description of the study, detailing the rationale of the study, the problem statement, theoretical framework, goal and objectives as well as an overview of the research methodology. The chapter concludes with an outline of the forthcoming chapters.

Chapter 2 discusses international and local literature on contemporary research in social work supervision.

Chapter 3 provides an analysis of the Supervision Framework in South Africa.

Chapter 4 presents a secondary analysis of several empirical studies conducted within the field of child protection in South Africa to determine the implementation of the Supervision Framework in this sector.

Chapter 5 illustrates the methodology that was used in the empirical study, motivating why certain research decisions and procedures were followed.

Chapter 6 discusses the empirical findings on the implementation of the Supervision Framework within a designated child protection organisation.

Chapter 7 concludes the study and provides recommendations for future research.

1.10. CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced this study on the implementation of the Supervision Framework in a designated child protection organisation in South Africa. Included in the chapter was a brief description of the main elements of the research process followed when conducting this research. Attention now shifts to Chapter 2 that provides an analysis of social work supervision both locally as well as in the global context.

CHAPTER 2

AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION WITHIN A GLOBAL AND SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Supervision is significant in social work practice. This is mainly because social work practice depends largely upon the organisation's administrative structure, which includes supervisors to continue training new social workers and provide ongoing professional guidance. In this chapter, contemporary and cutting-edge research on supervision internationally and in South Africa will be reviewed. This will assist in providing a background to and information on recent developments in the field of social work supervision, before focusing on policies and frameworks on supervision, which will follow in Chapter 3. The chapter is arranged using determinants of authentic social work supervision, as outlined by Engelbrecht (2019a). Although the determinants were developed within a South African context, they cut across supervision practices globally, as observed in the literature discussed. Firstly, the evolution of supervision globally and in South Africa will be discussed, followed by the conceptualisation of supervision, and then an in-depth discussion of the literature that focuses on key determinants of social work supervision. Finally, challenges in the field of social work supervision will be discussed.

2.2. EVOLUTION OF SUPERVISION GLOBALLY AND IN SOUTH AFRICA

Social work supervision has evolved worldwide. This section discusses how supervision emerged as an integral part of social work practice internationally, and specifically in South Africa. Case examples will be drawn from different countries to illustrate both similarities and differences in the development of supervision in various contexts. The specific countries were chosen because empirical evidence exists from research conducted on supervision in these countries on the varying nature of their supervisory practices, which has in one way or another contributed to the discourse of social work supervision in South Africa.

2.2.1. The development of supervision within a global context

Supervision in social work originated in the nineteenth century within the Charity Organization Society movement in Europe and North America (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). According to Kadushin and Harkness (2002), supervision was initially viewed in terms of administrative tasks because it focused mainly on ensuring that the resources and funds of social service agencies used in helping service users were accounted for. Although administrative in nature, the key purpose was to oversee volunteers and later paid workers (Davys & Beddoe, 2016). Tsui (1997) states that the educational function of supervision was introduced in the 1920s due to an increased number of professional social workers in training. The emergence of an educational function of supervision led to the first course in supervision being offered by Mary Richmond in the United States of America (USA). Tsui (2005) maintains that social workers primarily supervised student social workers and volunteers in the helping professions. However, a need for supervision of social workers, after obtaining a qualification, was later deemed necessary because more social workers were being trained and started practising. Consequently, experienced social workers took on the role of supervision and supervised beginner social workers. This was done to increase the accountability of social work services rendered within organisations. Thus, the educational function of supervision emerged alongside administration as paid staff members directed new volunteers to see if the work was satisfactory and make the necessary suggestions.

However, the major duty of paid staff was still administration, which included directing and assigning work to the volunteers. Supervisors were then expected to provide emotional support to volunteers who felt frustrated in their work (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). This historical background clearly points out the three main functions of supervision, namely: *administrative*, *educational*, and *supportive* functions, as identified by Kadushin (1976). Bogo and McKnight (2006), however, posit that the educational and supportive functions were employed to facilitate broader administrative goals. Hence, the middle-management position of the supervisor still dominates, with social workers being supervised under the authority of agency administrators (O'Donoghue & Engelbrecht, 2021).

Throughout the history of social work globally, supervision has been characterised by managerialism, neoliberalism and, more recently, professionalism. Hair (2012) argues that the growing dominance of business management approaches in human service organisations has particularly transformed the work settings of social workers and the shape of supervision

internationally. This is mainly because the primary tasks of the supervisory relationship have shifted to administrative needs rather than the practice needs of the social workers (Beddoe, Ferguson, Warwick, Disney, Jadwiga & Cooner, 2021).

In **the United Kingdom** (UK), for example, social work supervision initially focused on the administrative function, and thereafter education and supportive functions were subsequently introduced (Wonnacott, 2012). A psychoanalytic model was adopted in the 1930s that emphasised the therapeutic nature of supervisory relationships. Although support and reflection were applicable in casework practice, managerialism emerged in the 1980s, focusing on performance management and accountability. This shifted the focus of supervision to compliance, practice audit, and task completion (Bradley, Engelbrecht & Höjer, 2010; Boahen, Geoghegan, & Brown, 2021). As part of the government's agenda, supervision assumes an administrative and management format, with the goal of giving feedback to the government concerning outputs and achievements. However, due to accountability pressures from the government, there seems to be limited time for education and support; instead, supervision tends to be a functional discussion about cases (Wilkins & Antonopoulou, 2018). For instance, within the child welfare sector in England, targets and checklists were introduced according to which social workers were expected to meet specific targets within a given timeframe. This placed pressure on supervisors because, although they wished to utilise supervision for critical reflection, it was not possible as task completion was made a priority (Manthorpe, Moriarty, Hussein, Stevens & Sharpe, 2015). The question arose whether the focus should be on quantity or quality. Relating this to South Africa, child protection organisations are funded by the state and need to comply with the memorandums of agreement, which specify the targets that need to be met before funding is released to the organisations. This therefore perpetuates a "target driven approach" (Wonnacott, 2012).

On the extreme continuum, and different from the South African context, the main modality of supervision adopted in **Sweden** is external supervision. This means that organisations hire supervisors on a contract basis in their private capacity to support social workers and offer consultations (Bradley et al., 2010; Höjer, 2021). External supervision came about due to the demand to support workers in their difficult jobs to prevent burnout and enable them to remain within the profession. Emphasis thus is placed on self-awareness and reflection. Since the 1980s, external supervision has co-existed with agency supervision, which is usually on an individual basis and undertaken by line managers within an organisation. With its roots in

psychotherapy, external supervision in Sweden forms part of reflective group supervision that focuses on supporting and enhancing the professional development of social workers instead of exerting managerial control (Höjer, 2021). Although there is a clear distinction between supervision and management in relation to the content of supervision, internal supervision offered by the agencies was criticised for prioritising administrative demands and undermining the supportive function of supervision, while concerns about confidentiality and the need for relational boundaries were noted in external supervision (Bradley & Höjer, 2009).

Nevertheless, several scholars have advocated for external supervision, by arguing that it is beneficial for social workers, service users and the organisation's effectiveness. Hence, the independent form of supervision has been integrated into most fields of social work in Sweden, with dominance in child welfare agencies (Höjer, 2021). Some organisations, however, combine this supervision model with internal supervision by the line manager, with a focus on case management and administrative control, which often causes tension between the external supervisor and management when there are different priorities in supportive supervision or administration (Bradley & Höjer, 2009). Therefore, social workers need both internal supervision that focuses on accountability and solving cases, and external supervision that concentrates on the feelings and emotional well-being of social workers. Hence, Höjer (2021) opines that the dual internal and external supervision model adopted in Sweden is still relevant despite existing challenges.

In countries such as New Zealand and China (Hong Kong in particular), which are rich in culture, cultural competence has been an essential component in understanding social work supervision in their contexts. For instance, the evolution of social work supervision in **New Zealand** has paralleled the development of social work and the recognition of a bicultural code of practice (O'Donoghue, 2021a). Just like South Africa, New Zealand was confronted with a neoliberal social policy that influenced social services, as supervisors were perceived by their organisations to be managers and expected to change their casework supervision to a more managerially focused approach (O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2013). On the flipside, however, the positive nature of supervision was identified regardless of managerialism tendencies observed (Beddoe et al., 2021). O'Donoghue (2008) found that a supervisory relationship was regarded as a conducive environment in which progressive, effective, interactive, and safe practice occurred within a supportive, trusting, honest and open relationship with a supervisor, who demonstrated professionalism and shared practice expertise, knowledge, and experience.

Related to New Zealand in terms of embracing diverse cultures, supervision in **Hong Kong** is also conducted and practiced with influence from the cultural context (Tsui, 2006). Regarding the purpose and functions of supervision in Hong Kong, the supervisor and the supervisee have the same professional goals, and the most distinctive feature of the supervisory relationship is a dual perspective on personal and professional building, which is maintained through reciprocity and consensus (Tsui, 2004). Although some of the practices are adopted from North America and England, supervision in Hong Kong is conducted informally and is unstructured. For instance, there is often reliance on verbal agreements between the supervisor and supervisee, and the supervision sessions are infrequent (Tsui, 2006). This is also a common aspect in South Africa, with evidence suggesting that social work supervision is mostly unstructured (Engelbrecht, 2019b; Wynne, 2020). Although the emphasis of supervision in Hong Kong was initially placed on the educational and supportive functions of supervision, recently there has been a shift towards accountability leading to administrative focus to meet the demands of regulating bodies (Ng, Tsui & Leung, 2021).

While studying the development of supervision in various countries, it was observed that there is limited literature in the African context that shapes how other countries conduct supervision. Although there are international examples of contemporary, context-specific supervision literature in Hong Kong and New Zealand for example, Akesson and Canavera (2018) have identified a gap in terms of supervision literature outside of America and Europe. The authors aver that knowledge about how effective supervision can strengthen the social service workforce is especially limited in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs); rather, the existing supervision research tends to favour perspectives from the Global North (Beddoe, Karvinen-Niinikoski, Ruch & Tsui, 2015). Thus, there is a need for evidence-based research to include voices from the Global South, which this study aims to achieve.

2.2.2. The development of supervision in South Africa

The history of social work as a profession in South Africa has shaped how supervision emerged as an essential tool to hold workers accountable and enhance service delivery in social work practice. Social work supervision was rooted in a need for administrative practices within human services organisations (Botha, 2002). In South Africa, the subject of supervision was firstly documented in the early 1960s, focusing on supervision as a form of field guidance (Pieterse, 1961). Later, Du Plessis (1965) observed that supervision in social work practice was neglected and that this had a negative impact on the quality of services

provided by social workers. As such, an argument was made for the inclusion of both administrative and educational functions of supervision in a supervision system operating in the then Department of Social Welfare and Pensions (Engelbrecht, 2010). Botha (2002) being regarded as one of the founders of supervision in South Africa has paved the way for a theoretical foundation for the training and practice of supervision in South Africa, which was popular between the 1970s and the 1990s. That said, Botha (2002) noted that some critiques of social work supervision have deemed it unnecessary because it appears to be ineffective and seems to encourage dependency amongst social workers. This, she argued, had nothing to do with the nature of social work supervision; rather, it was due to the faulty or weak way supervision was applied. Meanwhile, Engelbrecht (2019b) maintains that supervision is imperative in social work because it speaks to the unique historical and future attributes of the profession in South Africa.

It is worth noting, however, that the history of social work in South Africa is interwoven with colonisation and apartheid. The apartheid government perpetuated the dominance of a White minority while discriminating against and disregarding the Black majority, alongside the Indian and Coloured populations. As a result, welfare services were offered on an unequal basis to the different racially classified groups (Patel, 2015). With the dawn of democracy in 1994, the democratic government was faced with the enormous task of dismantling the apartheid system and addressing the triple problems of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. This became the focus of government, and minimal attention was paid to the development of human services, including social work supervision. With the arrival of the new era, many social workers left South Africa and migrated to other countries, resulting in a considerable shortage of social workers and supervisors (Engelbrecht, 2006). Consequently, this had an impact on the deterioration of supervision knowledge and skills in South Africa. With the aim of retaining social workers in the country, the DSD developed the Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers (DSD, 2006). The main goal of the strategy was to identify conditions that had a negative impact on social services, as well as to provide guidelines that would ensure the recruitment and retention of social workers. Within the Retention Strategy, effective and quality supervision of social workers was identified as a key tactic in ensuring social worker retention. This led to the development of the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) which seeks to encourage competent professional supervisory practices for social work.

The development of the Supervision Framework aimed at indigenising social work supervision practices in South Africa (Engelbrecht, 2019a). With students having called for decolonised and quality education through national protests in 2015, academics throughout South African universities, including social work educators, embarked on a journey to decolonise the curriculum. In social work education in particular, this was observed by holding a Social Work Conference in 2017, with the theme: 'Rethinking social work in Africa: Decoloniality and indigenous knowledge in education and practice'. The conference awarded academics, practitioners, students, and policymakers an opportunity to engage in robust discussions on this topic. The theme intended to address the need to construct a social work profession that is embedded in post-colonial and indigenous contexts in South Africa and across the continent, and that speaks to the unique and local nature of these contexts (Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions [ASASWEI], 2017).

In the field of supervision, scholars such as Engelbrecht (2019a), Mamaleka (2018) and Ncube (2018) have responded to the call in their research, which seeks to decolonise and authenticate social work supervision within the South African context. For example, Engelbrecht (2019a) has developed a local model of social work supervision that expounds key determinants when defining social work supervision in South Africa. The determinants were generated as themes recurring in contemporary empirical research on supervision, which forms the basis for the analysis of the literature in this chapter.

2.3. CONCEPTUALISATION OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

When conceptualising supervision in social work, it is essential to understand both the context and how the concept has evolved over time. It was therefore first necessary to set out the evolution of social work supervision globally, before defining it. It has been argued that it is complex to define what the supervision of social workers entails. Over the years, social work supervision has been conceptualised and contextualised by various scholars internationally (Kadushin, 1976; Munson, 2002). Although there is no clear consensus on the definition of social work supervision globally, Kadushin (1976), in his primary work, refers to social work supervision as a process by which a supervisor performs administrative, educational, and supportive functions whilst interacting with a supervisee in a positive relationship. Expanding further on the definition, Kadushin criticised the definitions of Burns (1950), the *Encyclopaedia of Social Work* (1965) and Towle (1945, cited in Kadushin, 1992), arguing that their definitions are one-sided because they focus either on the administrative or

educational functions. Meanwhile, he emphasised the supportive function on the basis that supervisees need moral support to perform their duties effectively. In recognising the key elements of each of the supervision functions, as well as the objective of each function, Kadushin (1976) coined the functional definition of social work supervision, which recognises the ultimate purpose of supervision as providing efficient and effective social work service to service users.

The key objectives of supervision are to improve the supervisee's capacity to do the job effectively through educational supervision; to provide clear guidelines on and familiarity with the organisation's mission policies to enable workers to perform their duties; and lastly, to provide emotional and moral support to the supervisees so that they can get a sense of belonging and satisfaction in their job (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). This means that social work supervision is an ongoing process aimed at assisting social workers in practice so that they can eventually learn how to use the supervisory process for their own professional development and competence, while serving clients effectively.

Magnussen (2018) cites a summary of three definitions of social work supervision that are each one decade apart – by Kadushin (1976), Proctor (1986), and Payne (1996), respectively. The essence of the three definitions is that social work supervision is concerned with providing support to supervisees, creating a conducive learning environment for supervisees' development and growth, as well as managing and holding supervisees accountable for the services they provide to protect the clients. Supervision is further defined as an indirect social service, meaning that supervisors provide services to clients via their supervisees by monitoring the work done by social workers and providing guidelines where necessary. Supervision is also a process that is implemented within a supervisory relationship that needs to be collaborative, based on partnership, and is participatory in nature, with mutual respect from both the supervisor and the supervisee (Magnussen, 2018; Mamaleka, 2018). Wonnacott (2012:14) concurs that supervision is the “relationship between two people with the ultimate goal of improving social work practice and outcome for service users”.

Furthermore, Sewell (2018) defines supervision as the relationship between supervisor and supervisee in which the responsibility and accountability for the development of competence, demeanour, and ethical practice takes place. Meanwhile, Tsui's (2005) approach to defining social work supervision focuses on the normative, empirical, and pragmatic elements of supervision. What emerges from these three approaches are the tasks of supervision and the

role of the supervisor in supporting the supervisee to foster a successful supervisory relationship. All the definitions emphasise the key functions of supervision, but also note the importance of supervisory relationships that will enable adherence to the ethical principles of the profession. Thus, supervision is a process of overseeing the ability of social workers to meet the goals of the organisations in which they work, while ensuring that clients get the best quality service and social workers do their work effectively.

Notwithstanding the general perception of supervision as an ongoing process that allows the supervisees and supervisors to maintain working relationships in which they can grow and develop, Kadushin's (1976) classical definition is popular due to its incorporation of the key functions of supervision. The same definition is often cited by South African scholars (Mamaleka, 2018; Parker, 2017). According to Engelbrecht (2012), Kadushin's definition is applicable to South Africa because it led to the 1995 definition of social work supervision, wherein it is viewed as a "process whereby the supervisor performs educational, supportive and administrative functions in order to promote efficient and professional rendering of services" (Terminology Committee for Social Work, 1995:64).

Within the South African context, the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:11) defines *supervision* as an "interactional process based on distinct theories, models and perspectives on supervision whereby a supervisor with the required experience and qualification and to whom authority is delegated, supervises a social worker". Although the definition is critiqued for not acknowledging the significance of supervisors' tacit knowledge, the definition refers to different levels and stages of social workers' professional development, which is unique and not distinguishable in other international or local definitions (Engelbrecht, 2021a). Given the need to decolonise and contextualise supervision knowledge, this study adopts the definition of supervision by Engelbrecht, which exemplifies the determinants of authentic supervision within the South African context. Engelbrecht (2019a:18) defines "supervision" as:

The *brief* of supervision of social workers is a mandated formal arrangement by an agency supervision policy, which entails the execution of supportive, educational, and administrative functions by a designated authoritative and trained supervisor with the goal to render the best possible services to the user system. Supervision is *operationalised* by means of structured, interactional supervision sessions; directed by adult education principles in a cyclical process with associated tasks, methods, and activities according to a predetermined timespan; based on appropriate theories,

perspectives, and practice models; and guided by distinct values and ethical conduct. The *scope* of supervision is determined by a professional, constructive supervisor-supervisee relationship, context of the work environment, and resultant roles, which the supervisor must fulfil.

Although the definition was developed based on the South African context, it covers specific domains essential to supervision. An emphasis is also placed on the professional supervisory relationship that guides supervision sessions, namely that they are interactive and structured with associated tasks and methods. What stands out from the definition the most is the importance of adult education principles and the use of theories, models, and perspectives in supervision practices. Therefore, in comparison with the aforementioned definitions (see Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Magnussen, 2018), this definition incorporates the fundamental elements of supervision that are clustered into determinants, and hence it is useful for this study. The determinants are discussed next.

2.4. DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

Engelbrecht (2019a) proposes a process model to define and contextualise social work supervision. Of key importance in the model are determinants that encompass: *Mandate of supervision; agency supervision policy; supervision functions; designated authoritative and trained supervisor; goal of supervision; structured interactional supervision sessions; adult education principles; cyclical process; associated tasks; methods; activities; predetermined timespan; theories, perspectives and practice models; values and ethical conduct; professional constructive relationship; context of the work environment; roles of the supervisor*. These determinants will be used to guide the discussion and analysis of the literature in this chapter. The determinants were generated as themes recurring in the contemporary empirical research on supervision that forms the basis for the analysis of the literature. However, in this chapter, the determinants will be clustered together in terms of their categories, namely *brief, operationalisation and scope*, to understand and contextualise social work supervision.

2.4.1. Brief

The *brief* refers to the directives that guide supervision practices. Within this category, key determinants, including the training of supervisors, functions, and the goal and mandate of supervision, will be discussed.

2.4.1.1. Mandate of supervision

Many aspects of supervision are mandated and prescribed in the policies of professional bodies (Beddoe, 2017; Engelbrecht, 2019a). Supervision is an important component of professional learning, growth, and development in the helping professions. It is at the heart of professional practice on a career-long basis for some professions, and a significant element in education and internship for others. Although supervision practices do differ at the regional and national levels, Akesson and Canavera (2017) observed that supervision is likely to be subject to highly localised variations that will challenge attempts at creating universally applicable paradigms. In the South African context, Botha (2002) notes that there have been debates on the need for supervision in social work practice. However, with the enactment of the Social Service Professions Act, No. 110 of 1978, and the Policy Guidelines for the Course of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2007), supervision of social workers in South Africa became statutorily mandated and guided by a constituted ethical code (Engelbrecht, 2021a), which makes it pivotal in influencing social work practice.

Related to the mandatory obligation of social workers to be supervised in South Africa, organisations employing social workers are required to develop supervision policies which have to stipulate certain parameters pertaining to the practice of supervision per organisation such as the ratio of supervisor to supervisees, statement on non-discriminatory practices, and requirements for performance evaluation (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Agency supervision policies, in some instances referred to as frameworks or guidelines form an integral part of supervision practices globally (Bartoli & Kennedy, 2015; Unguru & Sandu, 2018). For this reason, this determinant of supervision will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3 with the aim of analysing the Supervision Framework as one of the key guiding documents for supervision within the South African context.

2.4.1.2. Goal of supervision

Having conceptualised supervision in social work, Engelbrecht (2019a) points out that the goal of supervision is linked to the definition. The goal of supervision is to enhance supervisees' professional knowledge, practice skills and social functioning, and to develop the quality of professional service that is provided to clients (Bogo & Sewell, 2018). Through supervision, social workers' abilities are strengthened, and it is ensured that social workers are held accountable for the services they render. In addition, supervision is linked to job

satisfaction and the retention of social workers (Carpenter, Webb, Bostock & Coomber, 2012). Beddoe et al., (2015) identified supervision as central to good practice and found that supervision contributes to competent professional practices that benefit service users. There is also a strong correlation between effective supervision and outcomes for service users with evidence suggesting that supervision may promote empowerment, fewer complaints, and more positive feedback (Akesson & Canavera, 2017). This means that service users also benefit in the supervision process because social workers are empowered and encouraged to perform their duties properly.

Tsui (2004) concurs that supervision aims to improve the delivery of services and monitor how social workers perform, while at the same time assisting them to develop professionally, and to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to practice independently. Carpenter et al., (2012) add that when social workers receive supervision, they perceive it as an indication of support from the organisation that employs them. Meanwhile, the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) (2010:3) argues that “the quality of social work supervision is central to the development and maintenance of high standards of social work practice”. The AASW (2010) further states that social work supervision is important for agencies because it ensures accountability in compliance with agency standards of service and enhances professional ethics amongst practitioners. Thus, supervision does not only benefit practitioners, but also the agency and the profession.

Hafford-Letchfield and Engelbrecht (2018) observed that the purpose of social work supervision has constantly been contested by researchers in the field of social work supervision, resulting in its re-positioning to serve more neoliberal oriented, managerial, and restrictive environments. These developments have also given rise to the emergence of contradictory viewpoints about the key purpose of supervision. Hence, they have called for a review and re-examination of the state of knowledge, research, and practice about social work supervision to capture any new developments that might inform critical practice, professional development, and well-being, as well as the wider impact of the field on accountability, effectiveness, and work performance (Hafford-Letchfield & Engelbrecht, 2018). As such, this study is a response to this call with the intention to give a voice to social workers and supervisors on their role in the supervision process, which will have the potential to strengthen supervision practices within child protection organisations.

2.4.1.3. Functions of supervision

According to Magnussen (2018), the function of supervision is three-fold: (1) to support social workers (supervisees), (2) to develop social work, and (3) to govern social work. This notion correlates with the three main functions of supervision, namely: administrative, educational, and supportive, as originally coined by Kadushin (1976).

a) Administrative function

The administrative function of supervision is one that has been emphasised in the history of social work supervision. The administrative function focuses on monitoring the social workers' performance and ensuring that they comply with the agency's standards and meet the objectives of the organisation (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). In performing this function, supervisors play the role of middle management, in that role they participate in the formulation of programmes and policies, ensure staff development, and set standards for service delivery (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2010). Tsui (2005) agrees that supervisors need to ensure that supervisees adhere to the policies and procedures of their organisations and, at the same time, promote the organisations' goals and structures. The AASW (2010) states that this function requires supervisors to clarify roles to employees, plan and assign work to them, and later review and assess the employees' work. This function of supervision enables social workers to deliver social services effectively and sufficiently. Furthermore, it should be noted that social workers are expected to render services that are in line with their organisational structure, policy, procedure, and objectives (Cloete, 2012). According to Kadushin and Harkness (2002), supervisors are also expected to monitor, review, and evaluate the work assigned to their supervisees.

In a nutshell, supervisors are responsible for reviewing the work of social workers administratively and ensuring that supervisees are familiar with the agency policies and comply with them. In South Africa, research has shown that there is lack of structured supervision in social work practice due to priority being placed on the administrative function of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2013; Vetfuti et al., 2019). This is mainly because supervisors are too busy to provide supervision; they either attend meetings or workshops, or are preoccupied with administrative tasks, rather than supporting social workers to ensure effective service delivery. Thus, the focus should not only be on the administrative function of supervision, rather there must be balance at all levels of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2021a).

b) Educational function

When performing the educational function, the supervisor is expected to reflect on and monitor the work performance of supervisees and identify gaps in their performance. Tsui (2005) argue that the focus of this function is to equip social workers with the relevant knowledge and necessary skills required to practice. According to the AASW (2010), this means that educational supervision is a core component in the professional development of the worker because it increases social workers' self-awareness in relation to their work. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) are also of the view that, through the educational function, social workers receive information on their own work and the skills to evaluate their own work. Moreover, through the educational function, supervisors enable social workers to use their knowledge and skills when performing their daily activities (Budeli, 2018).

Through the educational function, the supervisee is enabled to differentiate between good and bad practice. That is, the supervisee is empowered to understand their clients better and to become more aware of their own reaction and responses to clients. In addition, supervisees get to understand the dynamics of how they and their clients are interacting (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). According to Kadushin (1992), educational supervision should empower supervisees to intervene in various situations on different levels. However, depending on the education, competencies and experiences of each worker, the content of educational supervision should shift its focus to meet the needs of each supervisee.

Kadushin and Harkness (2014) further state that the knowledge and skills social workers acquire through the educational supervision gives them confidence and a sense of assurance in their job performance. The supervisor is therefore responsible for developing staff competence that can be achieved through individual and group supervision. Carpenter et al., (2012) allude to the fact that, through educational supervision, social workers can develop professionally and the emotional and social support they receive from supervision can enhance reflective social work practice. Furthermore, they indicate that supervisors should be viewed as experts in their areas of practice. This means that supervisors should possess the right theoretical foundation, knowledge, and skills to prove that they are experts, and that supervisees can turn to them for support at any given time (Botha, 2002; Engelbrecht, 2014; 2019b). Hence, continuous professional development is very critical in social work practice, and supervisors need to be role models by keeping abreast of developments in the profession. This will keep supervisees interested in the profession.

c) Supportive function

Given the fact that social workers work under emotionally demanding circumstances, supportive supervision plays a critical role in enhancing the worker's well-being. Kadushin and Harkness (2014) state that the aim of supportive supervision is to promote the psychological well-being of workers by preventing the likelihood of them developing stress and burnout and helping them cope with their work. They further describe the supportive function as the maintenance of a harmonious and caring relationship between the supervisors and supervisees aimed at preventing stressful situations. This view is supported by Sheafor and Horejsi (2010) who argue that the supportive function of supervision is concerned with supervisees' job satisfaction, morale, and personal development of knowledge and skills necessary to render effective services, while at the same time minimising job-related stress. According to the AASW (2010), this will increase the morale of the workers, which will give them a sense of professional self-worth and a feeling of belonging in the agency. Sheafor and Horejsi (2010) are of the view that a happy and motivated employee is likely to perform better.

However, if such support is not offered, the chances of new practitioners experiencing stress and burnout are high (Munson, 2002). Calitz et al., (2014) concur that job satisfaction and boosting employees' morale are critical when offering supportive supervision. The authors emphasise that a good working relationship between supervisors and supervisees has a positive impact on the performance of supervisees. Therefore, supportive supervision plays a critical role in social work practice and social workers become engaged in their job when they receive such support. Skidmore (1995) adds that an enabling environment should be created during supportive supervision to enhance productivity, and job-related stressors and tensions should not be ignored because if left unattended they may impact negatively on service delivery. Hence, the educational and supportive functions should not be neglected because most new and inexperienced social workers require supportive supervision and education which will assist them to integrate theory and practice (Mamaleka, 2018). Additionally, supportive supervision plays a critical role in social work practice as employees become engaged in their job when they receive support from supervisors. Beddoe (2017) emphasises that, through supportive supervision, social workers can develop professionally, and they can enhance reflective social work practice through the emotional and social support they receive from supervision.

2.4.1.4. Training of supervisors

Social work is a demanding job that requires social workers to reflect continuously on their practice and to develop skills as well as competencies (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Thus, supervisors and supervisees need to be capacitated to strengthen their supervisory relationship. More importantly, supervisors need to be exposed to the functions of supervision, its methods, and the process of supervision. These can be attained from academic institutions that offer social work training. However, they cannot only obtain this from formal education, but have a responsibility to remain up to date with developments in supervision and the profession holistically (Engelbrecht, 2019b). Organisations employing social workers also have the duty to continue providing education and to capacitate social workers with relevant skills to enable them to provide supervision. It is therefore imperative for supervisors to receive training before they carry out their supervisory roles for them to offer effective supervision (Munson, 2002). Often, supervisors take on the role without proper training, which results in them neglecting the educational and supportive functions of supervision and only focusing on the administrative function. This is because, without a theoretical background in what supervision is about, supervisors will not give effective supervision (Engelbrecht, 2019b).

Fleming and Steen (2004) have identified a need for proper training of supervisors. They state that it is imperative to ensure that professions providing psychological therapy are seen to be self-regulating and working towards offering high standards of care that adhere to strict ethical codes. This also applies to social workers. They further argue that, given the weight of responsibility that supervisors carry, which includes maintaining the future development of professional practice, they require a good foundation through comprehensive and in-depth training so that they can be prepared.

The literature shows widespread recognition of the importance of the supervision process in the socialisation of social workers in the profession. Various researchers emphasise the complex role of supervision and the skills required to implement it (Munson, 2002; O'Donoghue & Engelbrecht, 2021). What is of concern according to Patterson and Whincup (2018), however, is that most of the methods and theories in the supervision courses address the educational, developmental, and personal needs of supervisees, but not enough is taught about supervisors' more complex issues, such as feelings, work overload, dissatisfaction, and

dilemmas. Thus, South African universities can draw on lessons from other countries when implementing undergraduate courses and postgraduate diplomas in social work supervision.

With new challenges emerging with the expansion of integrated services, issues of cultural competence and focus on the impact of supervision on outcomes for service users, supervision training is essential (Beddoe, 2016; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2013). Despite such complexity, the quality and availability of training for supervisors remains inconsistent, including a lack of preparation or developmental opportunities for many stepping into their supervisory positions. Patterson and Whincup (2018) explored some of the learning points from a post-qualifying module in professional supervision in Scotland, which identified both intended and unanticipated benefits, and highlighted the contribution of an accredited training course to participants' confidence and competence in their supervisory practice. Participants in the training course benefited because they gained a theoretical foundation to complement their previous experience as supervisees, while established supervisors valued the opportunity to update their knowledge, which suggests that a structured and collaborative learning experience makes a worthwhile contribution to their professional development, enhancing their confidence and capability in supervising others (Patterson & Whincup, 2018).

2.4.2. Operationalisation

This category is about how supervision directives can be operationalised. The key determinants to be discussed in this category are methods, tasks, and activities that are guided by specific theories, alongside adult education principles and ethical conduct within supervision.

2.4.2.1. Adult education principles

Adult education principles are essential elements in social work supervision. Adult education principles are based on the pioneering work of Knowles (1971). Knowles (1971) argues that a person's readiness to learn is dependent on the developmental tasks of his/her social roles. Botha (2002) expounded that an adult's self-concept changes from being dependent to autonomous which often determines their learning activities. In social work supervision, the principles of adult education are primarily applicable when carrying out the educational function of supervision. Consequently, when various learning principles and techniques are utilised during the supervision process in accordance with the adult's needs, it will develop supervisee's competence and eventually effective service delivery (Engelbrecht, 2014).

Therefore, supervisors should be aware that supervisees are autonomous and self-directed, what they need is a conducive environment for learning so that they are motivated and enthusiastic (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Moreover, supervisees should be regarded as partners in the supervisory relationship. This can be achieved by encouraging supervisees to set their own goals, to agree on their learning pace and to participate in agenda planning for the supervision sessions. By doing this, the supervisor will be acknowledging that supervisees have accumulated life experiences, tacit knowledge, skills, and values which need to be respected and included in their learning experience. This therefore ensures supervisee's active involvement in the learning process (Engelbrecht, 2014).

Adult learning in supervision addresses the learning needs of individual supervisees and his/her unique learning style. Meaning that the supervisor should consider the supervisee's pace of learning and individualise teaching according to differences in their pace of learning (Engelbrecht, 2019b). The influence of adult learning theory in systemic supervision through the spiral learning process accommodates individual learning styles. This enables supervisees to become conscious of their own processes in a way that enables choice with respect to future action, supporting them to continuously adapt to the context in which they are working (Dugmore, Partridge, Sethi & Krupa-Flasinska, 2018).

2.4.2.2. Methods of supervision

The section that follows discusses two main methods of supervision, namely: individual and group supervision.

a) Individual supervision

According to Sheafor and Horejsi (2010:597), individual supervision refers to “one-on-one meetings between the supervisor and supervisee”. This form of supervision promotes personal growth of the supervisee because it is intense. The individual session allows the supervisor to give sufficient emotional support to address the supervisees’ weaknesses and strengths in their practice (Coulshed, Mullender, Jones & Thompson, 2006). During this form of supervision, the supervisor assists supervisees by assessing and reviewing their work records in order to identify learning points and develop a teaching programme for the supervisee (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002).

During individual supervision, the supervisee is immersed in their work, which recognises each supervisee's stage of development, experience, and confidence (Coulshed et al., 2006). Kadushin and Harkness (2014) state that the advantage of individual supervision is that the supervisee gets adequate time and attention from the supervisor, thereby ensuring a clear focus on problems and concerns during supervision. This enables the individual needs of supervisees to be addressed, while promoting personal growth at the same time. This method of supervision, however, requires proper planning and preparation by both the supervisor and supervisee. Kadushin and Harkness (2002) argue that the disadvantage of individual supervision is that communication and interpersonal relationships among colleagues are minimised, and supervisees are unable to learn from one another. This method of supervision can also be time consuming, especially because supervisors find themselves having more than five supervisees (Bradley et al., 2010).

b) Group supervision

This method of supervision takes place between the supervisor and a small group of supervisees, during which the supervisor leads the group. This enables supervisees to share their experiences, knowledge, and challenges when providing social services (Coulshed et al., 2006; Sheafor & Horejsi, 2010). Carpenter et al., (2012) argue that group supervision promotes critical thinking amongst social workers. This means that, in group supervision, social workers have an opportunity to expose their views, expertise, and strengths in their work amongst colleagues. Although group supervision saves time, Bogo and McKnight (2006) maintain that it should be used as complementary to individual supervision and not as a standalone mode of supervision.

Group supervision is useful for supervisees on the same level who have similar educational needs. Skidmore (1995), in his seminal work on social work administration, avers that group supervision is more effective for the educational function of supervision, because social workers learn from each other. The disadvantage of this method is that dynamics are likely to exist in groups that might hinder learning and foster competitiveness between supervisees. Hence, the DSD and SACSSP (2012) point out that caution must be taken when providing group supervision and that it is necessary to ensure that group members are not too diverse in terms of their levels of professional training or practice experience.

2.4.2.3. Theories, perspectives and practice models

The terms “concepts”, “theories”, “perspectives”, and “models” are often used interchangeably by different authors in diverse contexts. In this chapter, the focus will be on *models of supervision* that have been tested in various contexts over time. A model of supervision can be defined as a structured, adaptable, and simplified picture that seeks to explain reality (Tsui & Ho, 1997). Tsui and Ho (1997) argue that, compared to theories, models are useful to apply due to their flexibility and unambiguity. Thus, a social work supervision model can be made up of interrelated techniques used to guide supervision practices. By adopting a model, the supervisor has a framework from which to work to achieve specific goals in accordance with the supervisees and organisation’s needs. Tsui and Ho (1997) conducted a review of theoretical models of social work supervision in which they identified five models of supervision that have also been espoused by Engelbrecht (2019b) and Tsui (2005). The models include the practice theory model, structural-functional models, agency models, the interactional process model, and the feminist partnership model.

The practice theory model focuses on how supervisors can adopt theories from therapy to provide concrete guidance on practice skills during supervision. Examples of these models are the person-centred, psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural, and strengths perspectives (Engelbrecht, 2019b). The advantage of these models is that they are well developed, and the supervisor can therefore build on theories that are already in existence. Additionally, there are resemblances between the processes of therapy and supervision. However, if these models gain momentum in supervision, they may hinder the development of specific theories of social work supervision (Tsui & Ho, 1997).

The structural functional models focus on objectives, functions, and authority structures of supervision. The first of these models is the integrative model, which combines organisational demands, professional values, and the educational aspects of supervision. The second is the supervisory functions model, which focuses on the administrative, educational, and supportive functions of supervision. Last are the models of authority, in which authority is built into the supervisory relationship and is used to meet the needs of the supervisee (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Tsui & Ho, 1997).

The agency models reflect different levels of administrative accountability and professional autonomy within the agency. The structure of the organisation and how supervision is

managed within the organisation are of paramount importance. In some organisations, the functions and activities of supervision may be executed by different people through various modes of supervision. A good example of this is in Sweden, where most organisations have adopted external supervision. The supervisor is not part of the organisation and some of the functions of supervision are outsourced. Other examples are England and South Africa, where case work has a high level of administrative accountability and control within supervisory relationships (Bradley et al., 2010; Engelbrecht, 2019b).

The interactional process model refers to the interactions between the supervisor and the supervisee in the supervisory process. In this model, instrumental, goal-oriented behaviours refer to the administrative and educational functions, while expressive behaviour denotes the supportive function. There are two types of process models; firstly, the developmental models, which focus on the stages of development of the supervisee in the supervisory process. Second are the growth-oriented models, which are supervisee oriented and focus on helping the supervisee to develop a better understanding of his/her personal and professional self (Tsui, 2005).

The **feminist partnership model** assumes that supervisees can be self-directing, self-disciplined, and self-regulating. This model views supervisees as equal partners with supervisors in the supervisory relationship. Proponents of this model oppose the hierarchical structure of supervision by arguing that the traditional supervision models perpetuate patriarchal tendencies. The model correlates with the social work values of partnership and social justice. Therefore, this model can be promoted by encouraging group and peer consultation (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Tsui & Ho, 1997).

Tsui (2004) observed that all the existing supervision models pay little attention to the effects of the cultural context on supervisory practice, and as such argues that models of social work supervision for different cultures will contribute to theory building. To support this, he provided an analysis of a **comprehensive model of social work supervision**, proposed by Tsui and Ho (1997), which offers a holistic view of the context of social work supervision. The model views culture as a major context-shaping supervision practice. Based on this model, the effectiveness of supervision depends on the interactional process involving four parties, namely the organisation, the supervisor, the supervisee, and the service user; the contract, format, and developmental stages of the supervisory process; the balance among various supervisory functions; and the culture of the external environment are also essential

factors that need to be considered (Tsui, 2004). A comprehensive model of supervision considers how each party shapes the supervision process, instead of looking only at the supervisor-supervisee relationship. This is in line with the recommendations by O'Donoghue and Tsui (2013) that research efforts should focus on the development of empirically based supervision models and the evaluation of the impact of supervision on client outcomes. They argue that there is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of supervision research and its contribution to supervision theory and practice. O'Donoghue and Tsui (2013) conclude that the challenge for the current generation of supervision researchers is to advance social work supervision theory and practice by evaluating the effectiveness of supervision practices across various formats to develop empirically supported supervision practice models and an international understanding of the nature and practice of supervision.

Based on the above authors' recommendations, O'Donoghue, Wong and Tsui (2018) recently proposed an **evidence-informed supervision model**, which consists of five key areas, namely: the construction of social work supervision, the supervision of the practitioner, the supervision alliance, the interactional process, and the supervision of direct practice. The model was developed based on international empirical research published from 1958 to 2015, with a key focus on the application of evidence for supervisory practice. In a nutshell, the model incorporates the tasks, process, and context of supervision, thereby advancing the professional social work supervision culture, which will aid social workers to develop and maintain their professional identities, regardless of neoliberal and managerial influences. Moreover, the model may assist in curriculum development for supervisor training, as each of the five aspects of the model provides the foundations for developing an education programme that assists social workers and supervisors to deepen their understanding of the nature of social work supervision (O'Donoghue et al., 2018). Although, the model provides a new theoretical understanding of supervision internationally, it is based only on a research review from Europe, North America, Asia, New Zealand, and South Africa. This concurs with the observation by Akesson and Canavera (2018), who state that LMICs are often not well represented in supervision literature.

Although there have been commendable attempts to develop models tailored for social work supervision specifically (Boahen et al., 2021; O'Donoghue et al., 2018; Tsui, 2005), social work has often borrowed concepts from other disciplines, such as psychology and sociology. Moreover, social workers do not function in isolation, but practice in different

multidisciplinary settings like hospitals and rehabilitation centres. Therefore, some of the models and theories in social work have been adopted from various disciplines in the social sciences. For example, Stoltenberg, Bailey, Cruzan, Hart and Ukuku (2014) developed an **integrative development model of supervision** (IDM). Although the model is based on psychotherapy through social psychology lenses, it may be applied to the training of supervisees in diverse therapy orientations, including social work.

The IDM describes supervisee development as a movement through three levels after gaining the necessary experience and training. Engelbrecht (2019b) refers to these levels as beginner (Level 1), intermediate (Level 2), and advanced (Level 3). In Level 1, supervisees are beginners, often with limited knowledge of, skills, and exposure to the specific domain of focus in the supervisory context. Supervisees move to Level 2 after successfully resolving Level 1 challenges and gaining confidence to fulfil work requirements. Movement to Level 3 is characterised by a more stable, intrinsic motivation toward most activities within the given domains of professional practice, which leads to higher reality-based perceptions of self-efficacy and competence. Within the different levels of professional development there are three fundamental structures (motivation, autonomy, awareness) that need to be attended to, alongside competence across domains of professional practice. Furthermore, each level of the supervisees' growth must be matched with an appropriate level of supervision and related training for a given domain. For example, a supervisee may be functioning at a particular level of professional development in general, but as training and experience progress, the likelihood is that the supervisee may be functioning at various developmental levels of clinical practice (Stoltenberg et al., 2014). Within the South African context, Engelbrecht (2019b) argues that most supervisees function at Level 2 due to a lack of awareness and limited ownership of continuing education, which is addressed by the competence model discussed next.

A competence model of supervision focuses on the outcomes of supervision and how outcomes are reached. The model enables the supervisor to adopt a facilitative role to assist the supervisee to achieve the necessary outcomes (Engelbrecht, 2014). Guttman et al., 1988 (cited in Engelbrecht, 2019b) identified specific competence categories, namely intellectual, performance, personal, and consequence competence. *Intellectual competence* is about an awareness of various systems involved in the supervisory process. The transfer of these competencies from one situation to another is key and the ultimate outcome is to develop the supervisee's critical thinking and analytical abilities. *Performance competencies* entail how

to act appropriately in a situation and provide indicators for supervisees on how to operationalise their skills in interventions. The focus is specifically on how to integrate the theory and practice of social work. *Personal competencies* comprise the promotion of the supervisees' self-awareness and self-development. Aspects such as the development of the supervisees' professional identity, personal traits, values, and emotional intelligence to the benefit of interventions with service users are the focus of these competencies. *Consequence competencies* point to the supervisees' abilities to reflect and evaluate all the potential multidimensional aspects affecting their interventions (Engelbrecht, 2019b). Parker (2017) argues that this model is relevant to South Africa because social workers need to demonstrate specific competencies which can be harnessed through an empowering supervisory process to meet the demands of professional practice in their working environment.

The analysis of the models shows that they were developed in threefold. Some of the models were developed based on research reviews, some on practice experience, and others were founded on theory. The three focus areas are presented in Table 2.1 to provide a clear illustration of the models and their distinct foundation.

Table 2.1: Foundational basis of supervision models

Research-based Models	Practice-based Models	Theory-based Models
Comprehensive model of social work supervision (Tsui & Ho, 1997)	The interactional process model (Tsui, 2005)	Integrative development model (Stoltenberg et al., 2014)
Evidence-informed supervision model (O'Donoghue et al., 2018)	Agency models (Bradley et al., 2010)	Feminist partnership model (Tsui & Ho, 1997)
	The structural functional model (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014)	Practice theory model (Tsui & Ho, 1997)
	A competence model (Guttman et al., 1988)	

The models have been adopted from different theoretical, practice, and cultural contexts to improve supervisory practices internationally. Supervision, and other domains of professional practice, will benefit from considering and integrating the models based on theory and research to inform social work supervision. Therefore, research endeavours in terms of the different supervision models will refine the existing supervisory practices and facilitate the supervisory process. This effort will help both supervisors and supervisees understand their supervisory practice and improve their delivery of direct services with the intention of benefiting service users.

2.4.2.4. Supervision sessions, process, tasks and activities

A **supervision session** is described by Kadushin and Harkness (2002) as a dynamic process that has three phases: a beginning, middle, and end. Each phase involves certain activities which need to be carried out such as preparation for the session and outlining the session's agenda, commencement of an interactive reflective problem-solving process based on the aim of the session and the session being summarised and ultimately concluded (Engelbrecht, 2019b; O'Donoghue & O'Donoghue, 2019). Although there is limited literature in social work supervision that details what takes place in supervision sessions globally (O'Donoghue, 2021b), within the South African context Chibaya (2018) has explored this element of supervision, with key emphasis on the need for reflective supervision sessions instead of focusing on administrative procedures guided by managerialism. O'Donoghue et al., (2018) encourages social work practitioners to acknowledge social, cultural, and ethnic differences in the supervisory relationship and in executing supervision sessions. Such consideration will strengthen the **supervision process**, which is cyclical, strengths-based, and focuses on competencies and capabilities instead of problems and pathology (Engelbrecht, 2019b).

The supervision process consists of three main components, namely: the supervision contract, an appropriate method of supervision, and a developmental plan (Tsui, 2005). Meanwhile, Engelbrecht (2019b) outlined a cyclical supervision process which encompasses engagement, assessment, planning, contracting, implementation, and evaluation guided by associated tasks. The **supervision tasks** include compiling an inventory of job specific competencies for the supervisee and assessment of the supervisee's personal development, which may be recorded in a register to assist with the design of a personal development plan for the supervisee in the planning phase. After compiling a personal development plan, both the supervisor and supervisee need to agree on the supervision format, outcomes, responsibilities

for each party, and frequency of supervision sessions, for example, by a contract which must be executed through agreed upon supervision sessions (Engelbrecht, 2019b; O'Donoghue, 2014). Related to the supervision tasks are **supervision activities** which include coaching, mentoring, and consultation (Connor & Pokora, 2007; Engelbrecht, 2019b).

2.4.2.5. Values and ethical conduct

Values and ethics are an integral part of social work practice, which makes them pivotal in supervision. Despite this, there is a lack of recognition of values and ethics in social work supervision. In their review paper, O'Donoghue and O'Donoghue (2019) established that social work ethics are not integrated into supervision processes and that limited research has been done in this field. Additionally, they observed that the Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles (International Association of Schools of Social Work [IASWW], 2018) does not seem to recognise the importance of ethics in supervision because it is rarely mentioned in the statement. As such, they recommend that ethics should be at the forefront of supervision and intentionally present within supervision. This can be achieved by integrating ethics into the supervision process and emphasising the supervisor's duty of care to the supervisees, their clients, and the community. Caras (2013) concurs that supervision practice may guarantee ethical compliance of social work practice because the supervisor serves as a distributor of justice by applying a set of principles that influences clients' quality of life. For instance, an ethical supervisor as a gatekeeper of ethical compliance will consider the antidiscrimination policies in social practice and aim to improve the professionals' motivation by developing an efficient work environment that follows the highest professional standards and ethical intervention.

In addition to the ethic of care, social justice is a central professional value of social work and social workers are often criticised for not clearly incorporating this professed commitment into practice. Thus, supervision is an optimal space within which social workers can develop knowledge and skills to attend to the issues related to social justice and ethical dilemmas in their practice (Reamer, 2021). Asakura and Maurer (2018) argue that clinical supervision is a pedagogical space to promote social justice in clinical practice. This can be achieved by placing emphasis on the educational function of supervision, which "aims to develop the professional capacity of supervisees through enhancing their knowledge and skills" (Bogo & McKnight, 2006:52). It is pertinent though, that in carrying out the responsibility of embodying social justice, supervisors must first and foremost focus on developing a strong

learning relationship with their supervisees before they engage in this type of supervision. This will help to cap power dynamics that may arise due to differential experiences of marginalisation, oppression, and privilege based on race, class, and social position. Thus, collaborative engagement is essential to ensure that those with marginalised social identities do not have to carry all the burden of initiating and engaging in discussions of social justice. In relation to power dynamics, focusing on power relations, reflective practice and advocacy may help strengthen the supervisory relationship (Asakura & Maurer, 2018).

Within the South African context, *ubuntu* is one of the foundational principles of the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997a) which serves as a cornerstone for developmental social work services in South Africa. Similarly, *ubuntu* has also been adopted as a guiding principle within the draft Supervision Framework for Social Service Professions (Forthcoming) compared to the existing social work Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). *Ubuntu* entails caring for each other's well-being and ensuring that a spirit of mutual support is fostered which then promotes human interdependence and sense of togetherness (Makhubele, Matlakala & Mabvurira, 2018). It is therefore applicable in supervision because it draws on the importance of humanity and respect for others. Moreover, *ubuntu* as the notion of humanness, provides the moral basis for behaviour and that it is often emphasised in relationships, in processes of decision making, and efficiency and leadership, which are all fundamental elements of supervision. Although there is no specific literature on the operationalisation of this principle in social work supervision per se, the DSD's move to embrace this principle in their draft Supervision Framework for Social Service Professions (Forthcoming) shows an aspiration towards implementing standards of ethical practice that resonate with the African context. This correlates with Makhubele et al.'s (2018) assertion that African philosophies, values and ethics, such as *ubuntu*, togetherness, and symbiotic relationships, can be weaved well in social work education and training to engender values and ethics with an African outlook.

2.4.3. Scope

This category covers the context in which supervision is performed. As such, a constructive supervisory relationship is essential and needs to be nurtured within a conducive working environment that will enable supervisors to perform their roles effectively.

2.4.3.1. Professional constructive relationship

A supervisory relationship is central to effective social work supervision. In order to foster a safe supervisory relationship, contemporary knowledge, leadership skills, and an enabling organisational and community context are essential (Engelbrecht, 2019a; McPherson, Frederico & McNamara, 2016). Given that the supervisory relationship is experienced by many supervisees as an unsafe practice context (Chibaya, 2018), the foundational requirement for effective supervision is the maintenance of a safe supervisory relationship that is founded on trust, collaboration, joint accountability, honesty, openness, and a non-judgemental approach (Mamaleka, 2018). Furthermore, Wonnacott (2012:30) notes that a highly skilled supervisor will “inspire, motivate and act as a leader of social work practice”. Effective supervision also considers issues of power, gender, culture and difference, and effective supervisors’ value their staff, imprinting a sense of trustworthiness and predictability. A calming supervisory presence attuned to supervisees’ needs further facilitates and empowers staff to work with uncertainty and anxiety, thereby proactively addressing the emotional impact of the work. This finding is consistent with research emphasising the significance of relationship-based social work and the value of workplace contexts that offer practitioners sufficient security to contain uncertainty and anxiety (Bogo & McKnight, 2006).

Cultural competence in supervision refers to the ability of supervisees and supervisors to relate to each other to achieve the objectives of clinical supervision, regardless of any differences. It involves subtle considerations in interpersonal communication and interaction (Lusk, Terrazas & Salcido, 2017). In short, cultural competence is a sincere and humble way of embracing diversity among colleagues in the supervisory process. Thus, diversity must be identified, addressed, valued, and respected before a professional practitioner becomes culturally competent. In this sense, the existence of diversity is a necessary condition for achieving cultural competence (Tsui, O’Donoghue, & Ng, 2014).

Culturally competent practices are progressively seen as requisite for effective social work practice. Similarly, the practice of social work supervision must respond by incorporating the supervisee’s cultural orientation, values, and social position. Social workers must therefore take the next step to practice critical cultural competence by incorporating analyses of privilege and power in their practice and in supervision. Lusk et al., (2017) are of the view that culturally competent supervision is aligned with the strengths-based perspective, and it assumes that the culture and identity of social workers are among the person’s best assets.

Lusk et al., (2017) have found evidence that, among supervisors and supervisees, there potentially is a wide range of critical awareness of power and privilege, as well as structural and interpersonal forms of oppression. Each relationship is unique, as each person brings with him/her personal and inter-generational histories, including affective and objective experiences of racial and other social forces of injustice and oppression. O'Neill and Del Mar Fariña (2018) contend that space is needed for these internal and interpersonal reactions and processes to become conscious. The authors proffer a critical conversation model that is designed to pace the conversation to foster agency so that each person is authentically present with themselves and purposely present with each other (O'Neill & Del Mar Fariña, 2018). Thus, the model proposed by O'Neill and Del Mar Fariña (2018) offers an opportunity for both parties to critically engage with each other to build a trusting relationship that in the end will benefit service users. Moreover, an understanding of the power dynamics in supervision is essential to maintaining appropriate supervision boundaries.

2.4.3.2. Roles of supervisors

Supervision is a middle-management position in which the supervisor is responsible for the performance of social workers and needs to account to senior managers of the organisation. Therefore, supervisors play a crucial role in the organisation because they are a bridge between the employees and management. It is essential for such position to be occupied by competent, skilful, and people-oriented leaders. This is also necessary because supervisors are overseers of employees' performance within the organisation (Beddoe, 2016). The key roles of the supervisor include being a teacher, trainer, facilitator of learning, adviser, sharer of knowledge and experience, and helping workers solve problems (Engelbrecht, 2019a).

Social workers experience stress and burnout due to several factors. The factors are individualistic, supervisory, and organisational in nature, such as remuneration, caseload, unavailability of supervision, resource support, and the overall working conditions of social workers (Carpenter et al., 2012). Due to the influence of supervision on social workers' job satisfaction, this means that if supervision is provided effectively there are chances that social workers' vulnerability to burnout can be lessened. Therefore, the supervisor should be and is the most appropriate resource for dealing with such difficulties, because without supervision as a resource, supervisees will struggle on their own, either turn to colleagues or draw on their own experiences, and such strategies may lead to increased stress (Calitz et al., 2014).

According to Tsui (2004), the roles of supervisors not only concern the structures and processes of the organisation, as traditionally expected. This means that supervisors no longer focus mainly on planning programmes or drawing up policies, but rather are required to assess how services are rendered, the relationship between external environmental activities, and the influence of the internal organisational activities on service delivery. In evaluating both internal and external factors that influence service delivery, supervisors will be able to identify and develop the resources necessary to monitor and manage these activities. They are also expected to encourage innovation and creativity among supervisees (Engelbrecht, 2013). This can be achieved by offering support and motivating staff. Hence, it is important that supervisors should possess the relevant managerial skills to fulfil their supervision roles effectively. Some of the managerial skills supervisors should have include conceptual skills, human relations skills, specialised skills, and communication skills (Engelbrecht, 2019b).

2.5. CHALLENGES OF SUPERVISION

There are numerous challenges encountered during the supervision process. Some of the challenges might vary depending on the context in which supervision is practiced meanwhile others cut across different context. This section presents the main challenges in social work supervision that are applicable in diverse context, both internationally and in South Africa.

2.5.1. Unstructured supervision

The effectiveness of supervision in social work practice has often been questioned. This is because many social workers report that they do not receive supervision – either because their supervisors are too busy, or they are not able to give them good supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). Even in South Africa, a lack of effective supervision in social work is a major problem. For instance, studies by Calitz et al., (2014), Engelbrecht (2013) and Mokoka (2016) found that there is a lack of effective and structured supervision in social work practice, especially in the public sector. Drawing from these studies, there is a need for an empirical study that provides an analysis of the nature of social work supervision provided within the NGO sector. It should be noted that most of these studies were conducted within the DSD, which is the major employer of social workers in South Africa. Hence, the current study was conducted within a designated child protection organisation.

There are various factors that contribute to a lack of supervision, ineffective supervision, and unstructured supervision in social work practice. A lack of training and preparation of social

work supervisors has been identified as one of the contributory factors to ineffective supervision and a major challenge in supervision (Bradley & Höjer, 2009). According to Kadushin and Harkness (2014), most social workers are rarely prepared to assume the role of being a supervisor and receive very little support in their new job responsibilities. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) observe that training and preparation for assuming a supervisory role are crucial and should take place within the first year of functioning as a supervisor. They argue that training affords supervisors an opportunity to perform their duties effectively. This means that, without proper training, supervisors will not fulfil their roles effectively because they might not even know what their job entails (Fleming & Steen, 2004). In brief, the consequences of inadequate or negative forms of supervision constitute a major threat to workforce stability, capacity, competence, and morale (Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010).

Within the South African context, Engelbrecht (2013) recommends that academic institutions should work collaboratively with practice organisations to introduce supervision training that will focus on theories, models, and perspectives of supervision to produce scholarly professionals who are able to apply the relevant knowledge and skills in their supervision. Chibaya (2018) concurs that the shortage of supervisors and high caseloads are some of the challenges affecting how supervision is provided in social work. Parker (2017) found that a lack of time management skills was a contributing factor to ineffective supervision. This can be due to the demands on both social workers and their supervisors. It could also be attributed to the fact that, in most cases, supervisors spend more time attending workshops and meetings than on ensuring that service delivery takes priority (Engelbrecht, 2014). They therefore spend more time planning and strategising interventions than performing the key functions of supervision.

2.5.2. Power dynamics

Another challenge in supervision is the power struggles that may exist in the supervisory relationship. Beddoe (2017) is of the view that the existence of power dynamics in a supervisory relationship raises questions about the maintenance of an effective participatory relationship that ideally allows both parties to have an equal say. For instance, when conflict emerges because of the supervisee not feeling satisfied with the supervisor, it is not adequately communicated between the supervisor and the supervisee. Hence, supervisees are faced with a dilemma when dealing with conflict due to a fear of repercussions. Scholars such as Munson (2002) argue that it is crucial to have sound power relations in a supervisory relationship for

effective supervision. Thus, accountability should be emphasised, even if it means exerting pressure, because supervisees can take advantage of the situation if a supervisor is lenient. However, one should acknowledge that authority may also be abused by supervisors, leading to power struggles. Hair (2012) observes that social workers cannot be emotionally safe to discuss ethically sensitive practice issues if they have fears about the potential for supervisors to abuse their position of power during performance evaluation. Therefore, supervision need to change to achieve a balance between clinical practice and the administrative function.

Within the supervisory relationship, personalities may also clash, thereby hindering progress during the supervision process. This could be in a case where a senior social worker is not open to guidance from the supervisor, particularly if there are age gaps or the supervisor and supervisee are of the same age. Watkins et al., (2018) propose that supervisor humility is a critical variable for effective supervision, and that it can be fundamental and potentially transformational in its impact. Supervisor humility supports supervision best practices through (a) enhancing multicultural competence, (b) fortifying the supervisory alliance, (c) rendering receptivity to supervisee's feedback, and (d) fostering engagement in peer consultation. O'Neill and Del Mar Fariña (2018) argue that supervision provides space for critical analysis to identify the dynamics of power, privilege, and social oppression. Their critical conversations (CC) model provides a framework to illuminate and examine power dynamics to produce change within the supervisory relationship. Thus, the supervisee and supervisor gain the capacity to engage in reflection, examine personal and professional values, and tolerate ambiguity and critically articulate ideas thoughtfully during supervision sessions.

2.5.3. Managerialism

Another detrimental factor in social work supervision is the impact of managerialism on the balance of functions within supervision, in particular the risk of undermining a reflective space with detrimental consequences for safe practice (Chibaya, 2018). International studies stress the importance of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee in relation to fulfilment of the objectives of the supervision. However, several studies indicate that this relationship rarely achieves the desired outcome (Lusk et al., 2017; Tsui, O'Donoghue, Boddy & Pak, 2017). This is often due to the supervisor also being the supervisee's line manager, which means that managerial and administrative concerns are prioritised during supervision. Management-led supervision faces challenges regarding the balance between operational considerations and the supervisee's professional development (Bradley et al., 2010). Hence,

it has been suggested that both the failure to institutionalise fixed supervision practices and a lack of trust between the supervisor and social worker are impediments to positive outcomes (Magnussen, 2018). Morrison and Wonnacott (2010) argue that whilst good supervision needs to be recognised, there are inconsistencies and the increasing dominance of managerial agendas to the detriment of reflection and emotional support for the worker.

There are indications, however, of the tide turning as the limitations of task-oriented performance management are increasingly acknowledged (Tsui et al., 2017). This, to some extent, is accompanied by recognition of supervisors' training needs, although there remains variation in the training opportunities available and the formal standards expected for supervision practices globally (Patterson & Whincup, 2018). Although supervision serves as a tool for ensuring that social workers are accountable for the quality of their work, Engelbrecht (2013) has criticised the development and shape of supervision within a bureaucratic management system. In such a system, supervision serves primarily as a yardstick for measuring the quantity of supervisees' work, more than the quality of services, which removes the element of impact in the service users' lives. This type of supervision may be more harmful than helpful to the supervisees and service users (Beddoe, 2017).

2.6. CONCLUSION

The literature reviewed in this chapter depicts that supervision is occupying the minds of policymakers, managers, and academics across the globe, and there are signs that there is more appreciation for reflective approaches regardless of the neoliberal tenets within the social work supervision space. This approach to supervision promotes supervisors' professionalism and training, which enables them to adapt to the supervisory relationship in a flexible manner. However, there is still lack of clear theoretical models about the nature, influence, and critical elements of effective supervision, though there are several attempts to develop specific models tailor-made for social work, instead of borrowing from other helping professions. What remains a hinderance to supervision is the influence of neoliberalism within the welfare sector, which does not only affect the quality of supervision, but also the services rendered to service users due to the emphasis on quantity instead of quality. Thus, there is a need to hear social worker's and supervisor's voices on how they are operationalising supervision within their various contexts, amidst government's attempt to standardise social work supervision through the Supervision Framework. The following chapter presents an analysis of the Supervision Framework.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF THE SUPERVISION FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Supervision forms an integral part of social work practice. This was highlighted in Chapter 2 which discussed research trends in supervision and the evolution of supervision globally. Supervision contributes to the professional development of supervisees and effective provision of services for service users while maintaining ethical standards for the profession. One way of upholding high-quality standards in social work is through supervision policies that guide supervision practices within organisations. This chapter reviews the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The Supervision Framework as a policy guideline for supervision in South Africa will be analysed and compared with supervision policies developed in Australia, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, the USA, and the UK. The chapter begins with an overview of research in supervision to provide a background and motivation for supervision policies. This is followed by an exposition of the ecology of social work supervision. Thereafter, the development and analysis of the Supervision Framework in South Africa is discussed. An analysis of supervision policies worldwide using examples from various countries will follow. The chapter concludes by outlining the possible best practices drawn from different countries in line with the determinants of authentic social work supervision.

3.2. RATIONALE FOR SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION POLICIES

It is important to first look at the trends in social work supervision before shifting attention to the review of supervision policies. Despite the predominance of social work supervision within the profession, and the weight placed upon its role and function by policymakers, practitioners, and managers alike, it remains an under-researched area of enquiry (Bartoli & Kennedy, 2015). Beddoe et al., (2015) discovered that research on supervision is very scarce in comparison to therapy research, despite almost all therapeutic work requiring supervision. Hawkins, Turner and Passmore (2019) have also called for additional research on supervision to understand its benefits and contribution to practice. They proposed that universities need

to promote the importance of evidence-based practice and research to explore the impact of supervision and provide evidence-based data. Consequently, such research might trickle down to evidence-informed policies and evidence-informed supervisory practices.

Mo et al., (2020) recognised that although knowledge in social work supervision has evolved over time, a research gap on policies and standards that guide supervision practices still exists. O'Donoghue et al., (2018) have similarly noted that, no universally accepted guidelines for supervision have been observed. The gap was also evident through a lack of recognition of values and ethics in supervision. O'Donoghue and O'Donoghue (2019) observed that social work ethics are not integrated into supervision processes and that the Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles (IASWW, 2018) does not recognise the importance of ethics in supervision because it is rarely mentioned in the statement. Hence, it is important for researchers and practitioners to develop standardised measures to propel the supervision field in its understanding of what takes place within the supervision process. In social work supervision, this has been supported by the publication of policies and guidelines such as the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) (BASW, 2011) and the AASW (2014), which provide standards and statements of intent pertaining to supervision.

However, supervision standards can be contentious if framed within a political agenda that focuses on the need to produce outcomes for auditing purposes to the detriment of nurturing relationship-based supervisory styles. Several authors (Bartoli & Kennedy, 2015; Engelbrecht, 2019a; Nickson, Carter & Francis, 2020) concur that a 'tick-box approach' to supervision versus relationship-based approaches have become increasingly evident within social work practice, with the focus being placed on targets rather than reflection. This is despite the growth of evidence-based practice that has provoked discussion regarding modalities of supervision practice and advocated for reflective supervision practices to meet the multifaceted needs of practitioners (Turner-Daly & Jack, 2017).

3.3. ECOLOGY OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

The ecology of supervision centres on the interrelations between service users, practitioners, supervisors, and social service organisations (Engelbrecht, 2019b). This means that supervision does not only benefit practitioners, but their agency, clients, and the social work profession. For instance, supervision is important for agencies because it ensures accountability in compliance with agency standards of service to the clients in an efficient

and effective manner. Meanwhile, the profession maintains its standards of practice and enhances professional ethics amongst practitioners (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). Moreover, social work practitioners benefit from supervision because their needs for professional development and growth are met (Sewell, 2018). These elements – *agency, supervisor, supervisee, and client* – are interwoven in the definition of social work supervision outlined by Kadushin. Kadushin (1992) refers to supervision as a process wherein the supervisor, as an agency administrative staff member, directs, coordinates, enhances, and evaluates the job performance of supervisees by implementing administrative, educational, and supportive functions in a positive supervisory relationship. Through this process, the ultimate objective is to deliver the best possible service to clients in accordance with agency policies and procedures. This definition clearly depicts how each element is connected to the other to realise the goal of supervision.

Research has shown that the nature of the supervisory relationship and the process of supervision can have a profound impact on the social worker's attitude toward the practice setting, as well as the social worker's direct practice and efforts toward professional impact (O'Neill & del Mar Fariña, 2018). Shulman (2010) identified a parallel process whereby the way in which supervisors related to practitioners tended to impact the way social workers related to their clients. Also, supervision is based primarily on the mandate of the organisation (Engelbrecht, 2019a). Thus, all these elements connect to the ecology of supervision, which can be further espoused using an ecosystems approach.

Lesser and Pope (2007) argue that, due to the nature of social work practice and its perspective on human behaviour, concepts from the systems and the ecological models are integrated to create what is referred to as an ecosystems approach. This approach gained philosophical and intellectual momentum as a framework for social work practice due to its emphasis on person-in-environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Germain & Gitterman, 1980). This is applicable to social work supervision in the sense that the goal of supervision is to oversee the ability of social workers in meeting the goals of organisations where they work and to ensure that clients get the best quality service (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). Service users become part of the system when they seek social work services. Thus, clients, social workers, supervisors, and organisations employing social workers form interdependent systems that are related or connected. Johnson and Yanca (2010) argue that an imbalance in one system contributes to an imbalance in others. For example, social workers' difficulties, such as burnout, influences

how they relate to other people, including clients. On the other hand, environmental factors, such as hostile working conditions, can affect the social worker's interpersonal functioning. This interconnectedness is illustrated in Figure 3.1 below, which represents the ecosystem of social work supervision.

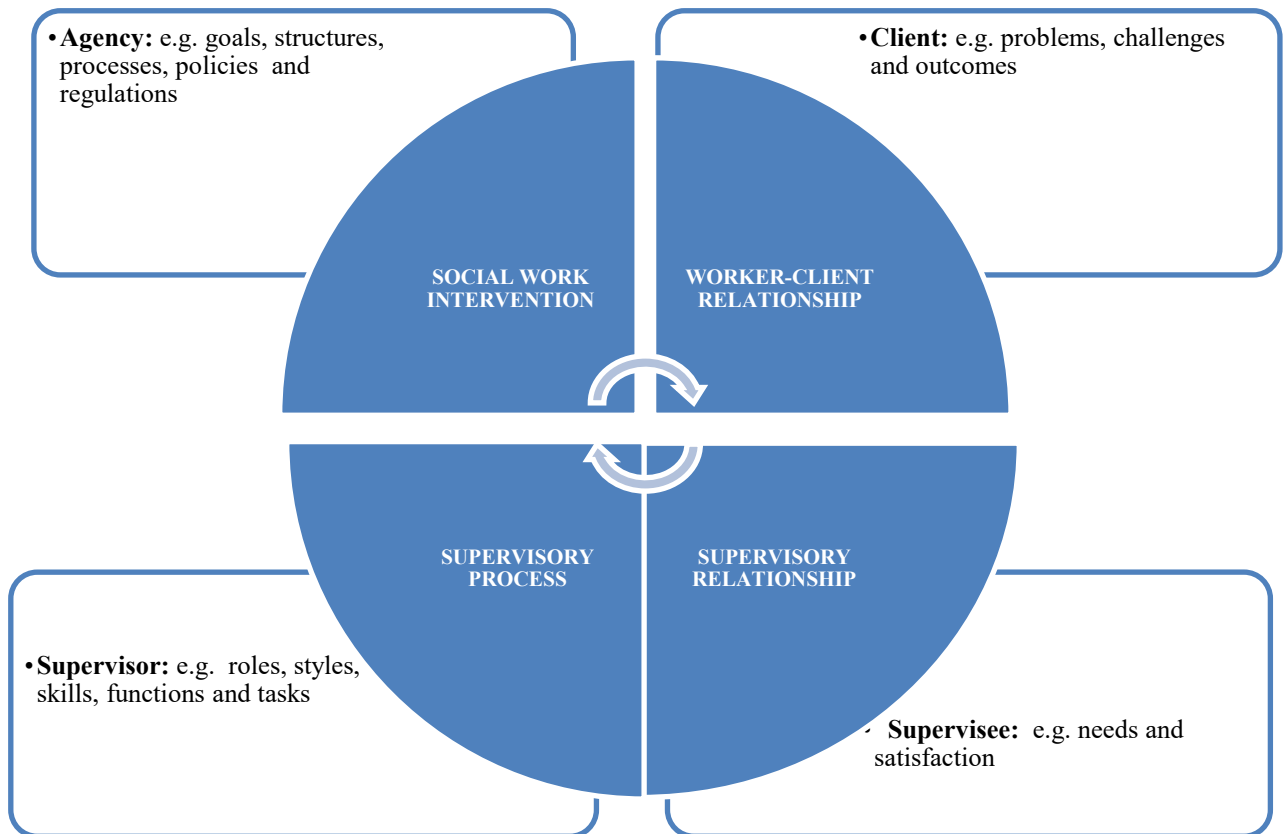


Figure 3.1: The ecosystem of social work supervision
(adapted from Tsui, 2005)

The above diagram illustrates the four key interconnected elements of social work supervision. In discussing the ecology of social work supervision holistically, the supervisory relationship should be viewed as a multifaceted relationship involving the agency, the supervisor, the supervisee, and the client. According to Tsui (2005), the agency's goals, structures, policies, and the organisational context influences the process of supervision. For instance, most social work agencies regard supervision as a tool used to achieve organisational objectives because supervisors are required to report the progress and outcomes of service delivery to top management. Thus, the supervisor serves as a mediator and liaison between the agency and the supervisee. In addition, supervisors are expected not only to follow the

agency's policies and procedures, but they also need to pay attention to the morale and satisfaction of supervisees (Carpenter, Webb & Bostock, 2013; Tsui et al., 2017).

In terms of the supervisee and the client, there is a worker-client relationship, which is guided by the profession's code of ethics and the agency's policies. In this professional relationship, supervisees use the knowledge they acquired from their professional training and follow the advice given by their supervisors to achieve the intervention objectives. Furthermore, the agency must also account and respond to the needs of clients to achieve the common good in society (Turner-Daly & Jack, 2017). Therefore, effective client outcomes are the ultimate objective of social work supervision. In essence, this shows that the failure of one system to carry out its assigned responsibilities leads to the whole system becoming affected. For instance, if supervisors do not carry out their administrative, educational, and supportive roles, supervisees will not be empowered to apply social work knowledge, skills, and values effectively to assist their clients. Consequently, clients will not receive quality and efficient social work services (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; O'Donoghue, 2015). This means that organisations need to create an enabling environment for successful supervision practices, such as preparation for supervisors to occupy the supervisory role as well as the promotion of supportive supervision to render effective supervision. Such an enabling environment can be realised by adopting evidence informed supervision policies that take into cognisance all these elements that are interconnected in the supervisory process.

3.4. A REVIEW OF THE SUPERVISION FRAMEWORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

Existing research shows that there is a gap in LMICs on the development of supervision standards and policies (Akesson & Canavera, 2018; Unguru & Sandu, 2018). However, South Africa is one example of a middle-income country where there is evidence of support for supervision. Scholars, such as Botha (2002), have noted that in the history of the social work profession in South Africa, there have been debates on the need for supervision in social work practice. With the enactment of the Social Service Professions Act, No. 110 of 1978 (RSA, 1978) and the Policy Guidelines for the Course of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2007), the supervision of social workers in South Africa became statutorily mandated and guided by a constituted ethical code (Engelbrecht, 2015). This led to the development of the Supervision Framework in South Africa, which is discussed next.

3.4.1. Process of developing the Supervision Framework

Due to the legal mandate of the Social Service Professions Act, No. 110 of 1978, the DSD partnered with the SACSSP to develop the Supervision Framework to address the need for a policy to regulate supervision in the country. The aim of the Supervision Framework was to provide standardised tools for the implementation of effective supervision of social workers based on the recommendations of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers (DSD, 2006) to improve social work services. The Supervision Framework was developed after consultation with various role players in the social work field where it was established that there is a decline in the productivity and quality of services rendered due to the lack of supervision. This was the result of high caseloads, high stress levels experienced by social workers due to personal and professional demands, and lack of resources to deliver services.

The Supervision Framework intends to provide a framework for the effective supervision of social workers and sets out norms and standards guiding the execution of supervision. Issues such as the lack of adequate training, structural support, and unmanageable workloads were identified as having a negative impact on the supervisor's ability to offer effective supervision. All employees of social workers and social auxiliary workers, including government departments, the NGO (non-government organisation) sector, and private practitioners are expected to implement the framework. It is based on this requirement that the current study investigates how a designated child protection organisation as a case study has implemented the Supervision Framework. By developing the Framework to guide supervision practices in South Africa, it was envisaged that professional supervision would contribute to employee motivation, retention of social work skills, and an increase in social work competencies. Moreover, employers are required to customise the Supervision Framework to suit their organisational culture and context (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

3.4.2. Content of the Supervision Framework

The Supervision Framework clearly stipulates that it does not serve as a theoretical basis for social work supervision. Rather, it outlines the definition of supervision, the functions of supervision, the types of supervision, and the roles of supervisors and supervisees without citing any research on this subject area. Although the content information can serve as a refresher for supervisors (Parker, 2017), the Supervision Framework does not address the day-to-day challenges encountered by supervisors in the field. The rationale, aim, and objectives

of the policy document are outlined in the Supervision Framework. This is followed by a distinction between key concepts related to supervision, including management, consultation, and mentoring, which often overlap in supervision (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The Supervision Framework also touches on supervision models but does not explain how they are operationalised in practice.

Although there is a section on the contextual nature of the Supervision Framework, the political, socio-economic, or cultural context within which supervision is practiced in South Africa was not described. Instead, the section merely outlines the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and supervisees. It would have been beneficial to highlight what political and socio-economic contexts inform supervision practices in South Africa. The Supervision Framework concludes by pointing out the expected norms and standards when implementing supervision practices across social service organisations in South Africa. The norms and standards outlined include, amongst others, the supervision legislative requirements, requirements for supervisors, and the need to comply with the code of ethics that applies to the social work profession in South Africa (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The Supervision Framework also makes provision for how supervision sessions should be structured, how they should follow a personal development plan and be executed according to a set agenda. However, Chibaya (2018) observed that the Supervision Framework does not explicitly explain how individual reflective supervision sessions need to be conducted.

3.4.3. Analysis of the Supervision Framework

South Africa's movement to support supervision to capacitate social workers and therefore benefit service users, arguably serves as a model for other LMIC settings (Akeson & Canavera, 2018). Despite the existing Supervision Framework, which may serve as an exemplary model for other countries, there are still challenges in social work supervision in South Africa. For example, one of the key standards outlined in the Supervision Framework is that organisations employing social workers need to formulate their own supervision policy and align it with the Supervision Framework. However, there seems to be a gap in implementing this recommendation amongst different welfare organisations employing social workers. In her local study, Silence (2016) found that there is no supervision policy within the Department of Health as one of the employers of social workers. This is not surprising as the national DSD also does not have a supervision policy.

The South African social development sector has adopted an inclusive approach to promote collaboration amongst different social service professions in line with the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997a), which is the cornerstone for welfare service provision. This is evident in the ongoing process of developing a supervision framework for social service professions which includes occupations within the social development sector, such as Community Development and Child and Youth Care Workers (DSD, 2019), which is unique to the South African context. However, changes within the social welfare sector in South Africa has seen social work lose its predominance through the involvement of other social service professionals. Initially, social workers were at the forefront of providing social services. This ceased as most welfare organisations and government departments began to employ non-professionals due to limited budget for the employment of social workers (Mazibuko & Gray, 2004). This is a significant factor that distinguishes South African social work practices and, consequently, social work supervision, from many other countries that do not use a social development approach. Moreover, social workers are trained as general practitioners and not specialists in South Africa. Meaning that social workers are not only focusing on, for example, child protection, the elderly, or substance abuse, but most likely are working in all areas of intervention. However, within child protection organisations the focus of social workers is on services and interventions directed to children and their significant others (Parker, 2017). Hence, to investigate supervision practices in South Africa it would be beneficial to examine a designated child protection organisation as a case study, especially because of the multifaceted problems that social workers encounter in this field.

Engelbrecht (2013) examined the strengths and limitations of the Supervision Framework. He views the practice of social work supervision in South Africa from a neoliberal perspective wherein the government may use the standardised framework as a managerial tool to evaluate the performance of supervisors and social workers. Although Carpenter et al., (2012) argue that standardised supervision norms on a national level can improve the quality of supervision practice, Engelbrecht (2013) cautions that the Supervision Framework should not become a primary yardstick for measuring the performances of organisations, supervisors, and supervisees. It is stated in the Supervision Framework that “Supervision enhances the individual development and professional growth of supervisees. It ensures high quality of service and protection of service users by promoting adherence to the Code of Ethics for the Social Work Profession” (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:2). However, Engelbrecht (2013) suggests that to improve the quality of supervision, supervision policies should seek to address the

unmanageable workloads and counterproductive working conditions of supervisors and supervisees. Furthermore, Engelbrecht (2021b) recommends that academic institutions should work collaboratively with welfare organisations in both the private and public sector to introduce supervision training that will focus on theories, models, and perspectives of supervision to produce scholarly professionals that will benefit social work in the country.

Although the Supervision Framework is helpful in outlining the basic principles and expectations of social work supervision, it has significant shortcomings for addressing the practical and contextual issues that South African supervisors face in daily practice. For example, Parker (2017) argues that the Supervision Framework does not address the issues identified in the Recruitment and Retention Strategy such as to increase the capacity and competence of supervisors, meaning that addressing supervisory shortcomings will require more than an overview of theory and basic supervision techniques. Increasing capacity and competencies will require addressing how supervisors are promoted and equipped for their position and supported to deal with managerial and supervisory requirements and pressures (Parker, 2017). In brief, despite the existence of a standardised framework for supervision in South Africa, there are several issues that affect supervision practices, and which are not necessarily outlined in the Supervision Framework. Hence, this study seeks to explore how some of the identified challenges have influenced the implementation of the Supervision Framework in a child protection organisation selected as a case study for this investigation.

3.5. AN ANALYSIS OF SUPERVISION POLICIES WORLDWIDE

Across the world, it appears to be a general practice that some aspects of supervision are mandated and prescribed in policies of professional bodies (Beddoe, 2017; Engelbrecht, 2019a). Although supervision practices do differ at regional and national levels (Beddoe, 2016), Akesson and Canavera (2018) observed that supervision policies are likely to be subject to highly localised variations that will challenge attempts at creating universally applicable paradigms. There are different viewpoints regarding these standardised procedures for supervision practices in social work. Some scholars argue that these standards provide bureaucracy and promote managerialism (Engelbrecht, 2013), while some opponents state that it is significant to have control over supervision practices in social work (Unguru & Sandu, 2017). It is based on the latter assertion that various countries, such as South Africa, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, the USA, and the UK, have developed supervision policies to guide supervision practices. In these countries, the process of

developing supervision policies was mainly led by social work boards and/or associations of social workers. Boahen et al., (2021) posit that professional associations of social work play an important role in building communities of practice that promote reflection and learning in supervision. Thus, the associations of social workers in the purposefully selected countries recognised that the knowledge base of the social work profession has expanded, and due to the ever-changing socio-economic and political climate, issues faced by clients have become more complex. Hence, social workers need to be equipped to handle such growing challenges, and supervision is one way of maintaining the best quality social work practice.

Having analysed the South African Supervision Framework, the focus now shifts to a review of supervision policies in Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, the USA, and the UK. These countries' supervision policies will be analysed in comparison with the South African context. The selection of the countries under discussion in this chapter serves merely as examples and is in no way intended to be complete and exhaustive, as the selection was based on (i) English written national supervision policies or guidelines available online, (ii) the supervision policy must only focus on social work practitioners and not be interdisciplinary, and (iii) should focus on existing, relevant, and substantive publications by scholars about those countries in order to provide an empirical foundation and scholarly evidence. Interestingly, from the selected countries there is some form of representation from each continent. It was observed that different countries use different terminology to refer to documents that guide supervision practices, such as supervision "policy", "standards", "guidelines", "outcomes", and "frameworks". For the purposes of this chapter, the term "policy" and "standards" will be used as overarching concepts and to refer to all the documents under discussion that guide supervision practices. Essentially, all the supervision policy documents reviewed were aimed at providing a set of standards for supervision.

3.5.1. Supervision policy in UK

Although the UK is developed and advanced in terms of welfare policies, it has supervision practices common to South Africa, a developing country. One of the common denominators between these two countries is the managerial focus of supervision (Bradley et al., 2010). Wilkins and Antonopoulou (2018) noticed that supervision has often assumed an administrative and management format wherein the focus is on compliance, practice audit and task completion, with the goal of giving feedback to the government concerning outputs and achievements. The need to comply with government mandate resulted in the production of

reviews, such as the Social Work Review Board [SWRB] (2009), which recommended that employers of social workers need to have clear binding standards that guide supervision. With the review's recommendations in mind, the SWRB introduced the Employer Standards and Supervision Framework that set out the expectations of employers, with an emphasis on good quality supervision as a vehicle to improve social services outcomes (BASW, 2011). The BASW (2011) observed that due to the lack of reflective supervision practices and the loss of professional judgement amongst practitioners, this led to poor social service delivery. It is against this backdrop that the BASW developed a UK-wide supervision policy whose purpose is to outline the professional rights for social workers as well as the importance, purpose, and functions of supervision (BASW, 2011; Bartoli & Kennedy, 2015).

The supervision policy begins by providing background and context, which shapes how supervision is practiced in the UK. The policy further highlights the rationale and purpose of the policy as well as the principles guiding supervision practices, which are, that social workers should receive supervision, engage in peer learning, and participate in essential continuous professional development (BASW, 2011). Although the aim of the policy is to clarify the responsibilities of the agency, the worker, and the supervisor, the policy mainly focuses on the role of the employer and neglects the responsibilities of social workers and supervisors. Whereas in the South African supervision framework, the responsibilities of supervisees, supervisors, and organisations are clearly indicated (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Like the South African context, organisations are encouraged to have supervision policies in place that provide clear standards of acceptable supervision practices. This is pointed out in the 12 policy statements that inform supervision practices in the UK (BASW, 2011). Considering the lack of reflective supervision that was observed prior to developing the supervision policy, Boahen et al., (2021) explored the role of BASW as a professional association in engaging with a reflective supervision model in the UK. The authors observed that the reflective supervision model that is advocated for in the policy is not universally practiced because some of the social workers have created what they refer to as "safe spaces" to receive supervision that is not provided by their employers. That is, it remains the responsibility of the employer to create an enabling working environment that does not only focus on performance and accountability, but also promotes a positive supervisory culture and supports reflective supervision.

3.5.2. Supervision policy in New Zealand

New Zealand, like South Africa, is rich with culture. This means that supervision practices in these countries are, in one way or another, influenced by cultural diversity. According to the SACSSP's (2007:37) Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and Rules for Social Workers, supervisors are responsible for understanding and setting "clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries". Therefore, having cultural competence is critical for supervisors to work effectively and constructively in diverse environments. However, cultural competence and the ability to set appropriate boundaries is a skill that supervisors need to learn and foster. Therefore, it cannot just be assumed that they will be culturally competent (Engelbrecht, 2006; Parker, 2017).

In New Zealand, the association of social workers spearheaded the process of developing a policy for social work supervision. The development of social work supervision in New Zealand paralleled the development of social work and the recognition of a bicultural code of practice unique to the country's cultural diversity (O'Donoghue, 2021a; Beddoe, 2016). Like South Africa and the UK, supervision in New Zealand became more managerially focused due to the influences of social policies adopted in the country (O'Donoghue, 2015). Moreover, supervision was reduced to managerial oversight, with performance management and accountability systems replacing education, development, and critical reflection on the practitioner's use of self (O'Donoghue, 2008). Hence, the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) Supervision Policy set out the standards for social work supervision for the profession to ensure accountability of social workers and protect clients' safety. The policy clearly outlines the roles of social workers, supervisors, and organisations. Different from the supervision framework in South Africa which lacked an exposition of values and principles in supervision, the ANZASW supervision policy (2015:1) pointed out the key principles guiding supervision in New Zealand, namely:

- Supervision recognises cultural and ethnic diversity and is cognisant of specific tangata whaiora/client needs.
- Supervision ensures safety for participants.
- Supervision is a shared responsibility between the supervisee, the supervisor, and the agency.
- Supervision promotes anti-discriminatory practice.
- Supervision is based on the principle of adult learning.

3.5.3. Supervision guidelines in Hong Kong

Related to South Africa and New Zealand in terms of embracing diverse cultures, supervision in Hong Kong is also conducted and practiced with influence from the cultural context (Tsui, 2004). Although some of the practices are adopted from North America and UK, social work supervision in Hong Kong was often informal and unstructured. Hence, in 2005, the Social Workers Registration Board (2009) conducted a large-scale survey of the practice of supervision among all social workers in Hong Kong wherein recommendations to formulate a set of guidelines for the practice of supervision was made. The main aim of the guidelines was to develop a set of recommended basic standards for practice in the social work field. In addition, the guidelines clarify the responsibilities of agencies, social workers, and supervisors with regards to professional supervision. In the supervision guidelines, the fundamental aspects of supervision have been identified as: the format, the purpose, the nature of the supervisory relationship, and the process of supervision which corresponds with the notions by Kadushin and Harkness (2014) and Magnussen (2018). The guidelines advocate for supervisory relationships that are collaborative in nature; based on trust, openness, and mutual respect; and takes into consideration sensitivity to gender, culture, and the context in which supervision is being carried out (Social Workers Registration Board, 2009). Arguably the supervisor and the supervisee should have the same professional goals within the supervisory relationship. However, recent research has shown that supervision in Hong Kong is dominated by administrative necessity instead of social work professional building, which can be maintained through supervision reciprocity and consensus (Ng et al., 2021).

3.5.4. Supervision guidelines in Singapore

In Singapore, social work supervision guidelines are aimed at promoting effective supervision while supporting social workers to develop as competent professionals (Social Work Accreditation and Advisory Board, 2017). The guidelines were developed after a review of supervision guidelines in countries such as Hong Kong, New Zealand, US, UK, and Australia. The guidelines provide a general framework of developing supervision practices to ensure consistency and uniformity of practice for all social service organisations. Like the South African context, each organisation is required to contextualise the specifics of supervision in line with its own organisational culture. Organisations are also tasked to develop written supervision contracts that need to define the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and supervisee. The guidelines cover the functions of supervision, types of supervision, the

supervisory relationship, and emphasise the values of respect for diversity and social justice that serves as a guide for supervisors and supervisees in managing ethical issues (Social Work Accreditation and Advisory Board, 2017). According to Wong (2021), supervision gained momentum amongst organisations after the development of the supervision guidelines, and this is evident through increased funding of supervision services wherein supervisors are matched with social workers without supervisors in their organisations.

3.5.5. Supervision standards in the USA

Supervision standards in the US focus on the formative dimension of supervision and the transfer of skills involved in the supervision process. This is encouraged by promoting a combination of administrative, supportive, and educational supervisory functions to enhance competent and ethical services by social workers (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2013). In their supervision standards, the NASW (2013) draws attention to the importance of cultural context in substantiating the supervision process. Moreover, emphasis is placed on the supervision process to include responsibilities that contribute to increasing accountability to the outcomes of practice, which are meant to ensure that clients are protected during the intervention (Unguru & Sandu, 2018). The policy highlights the importance of interdisciplinary supervision wherein social workers are encouraged to seek clinical supervisory consultation outside of the organisation or to use peer models of supervision as an alternative (NASW, 2013). This is not the case in South Africa as legislatively social workers can only be supervised by a registered supervisor with the necessary knowledge and skills within the organisation (Engelbrecht, 2015; SACSSP, 2007). Also in South Africa, the supervisor is a line manager in the organisation and the organisational policies and climate have a substantial influence on the process and outcomes of supervision (Parker, 2017).

According to Bogo and McKnight (2006), since supervision in the US is clinical in nature and focused more on the dynamics of the client, supervision tends to include only educational and supportive features, with less attention being directed toward administration. The prioritisation of these two supervision functions in the US is commendable given that supervision policies in countries like South Africa and the UK focus much on the administrative function of supervision, which may promote a checklist mentality. For instance, Bradley et al., (2010) argue that there is a heavy focus on administrative control in the South African context, with little time or training devoted to the educational or emotional support needs of supervisees. Engelbrecht (2021a) contends that clinical supervision practices

are incompatible with the social development paradigm of South Africa. Like supervision guidelines in Singapore and the supervision framework in South Africa, the NASW (2013) supervision standards uphold the principles of fairness, justice, and respect for others.

3.5.6. Supervision standards in Australia

The supervisory standards introduced by the AASW aim to convey the purpose, functions, and values of professional supervision for social workers as understood by the AASW. The standards outline the modes and processes of supervision deemed acceptable and the requirements and responsibilities of supervisors and supervisees (AASW, 2014) like the South African supervision framework. Supervision is defined by the Australian Association as a forum for reflection and learning based on interactive dialogue between supervisors and supervisees. The process of dialogue guides the evaluation, critical reflection, and re-planning of the professional work done by social workers. Congruent to the AASW's definition of supervision, mutual respect and confidentiality are cornerstone values in creating a platform for reflective practice in an Australian supervision context (Nickson et al., 2020). Emphasis is placed on a collaborative supervisory relationship built on trust, confidentiality, support, and empathic experiences (AASW, 2014).

In addition, the Australian standards are operationalised through indicators such as setting clear boundaries in the supervisory relationship by avoiding engaging in professional relationships with persons in a social, business, or sexual nature to uphold ethical supervision practices (Unguru & Sandu, 2017). Although the importance of supervision is clearly outlined and specific standards guiding supervision are set, Nickson et al., (2020) state that some of the agencies employing social workers do not prioritise supervision, making it inaccessible to some of the social workers in Australia, especially those based in rural areas. Egan and Wexler (2021) also caution that lack of a regulatory body for the social work profession leaves the supervision standards by the AASW as the main guidelines for supervision in Australia, even though non-members of the association are not accounted for.

3.6. THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING SUPERVISION POLICIES GLOBALLY

Supervision policies in social work are relatively uniform throughout the world, reflecting the evolution of the social work profession (Bartoli & Kennedy, 2015; Unguru & Sandu, 2018).

What stemmed from the review of the supervision policy documents in this chapter was that standards were also set to guide organisations to develop their context specific supervision policies. In essence, a supervision policy does not only provide a context for supervision practices within an organisation, but it also reveals how serious an organisation is about supervision (Morrison, 1993).

Regarding the development of the supervision policies, Hawkins and Shohet (2006:242) suggested a seven-stage cycle of developing supervision practice and policies, namely:

- i. Creating an appreciative inquiry into what supervision is already happening.
- ii. Awakenning an interest in developing supervision practice and policy.
- iii. Initiating some experiments.
- iv. Dealing with resistance to change.
- v. Developing the supervision policies.
- vi. Developing ongoing learning and development for supervisors and supervisees.
- vii. Having an ongoing audit and review process.

Although not all the policy documents reviewed in this chapter outlined the process followed in developing their supervision policy or guidelines, it appeared that most of the associations of social workers utilised the steps suggested by Hawkins and Shohet (2006) when developing their supervision policies. According to Hawkins and Shohet (2006), in the **first stage** of the process, organisations need to appreciate what is already happening regarding supervision and collaborate with existing supervision pioneers to develop current supervision practices. From the policies reviewed in the chapter, various role players were consulted to arrive at the final product of the policy. For instance, in South Africa, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the US, task teams were appointed to spearhead the process.

Linked with **stage two**, the consultations and surveys conducted leading to the policy development were meant to stimulate interest amongst social workers about the importance of establishing supervision standards within organisations. The purpose of this is to ensure that social workers can identify the problem themselves and recognise the need and benefits of developing supervision policies so that they can be part of the change required (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). What propelled the associations of social workers worldwide to develop

supervision standards was that supervision had been neglected and conducted in an unstructured manner without clear guidelines. This happens even though supervision plays an essential role in the training and continuing education required for the skilful development of professional social workers, protects clients, and ensures that professional standards and quality services are delivered by competent social workers.

To initiate experiments in **stage three**, some of the social work boards and associations reviewed policy documents from other countries. The policies were then contextualised to fit the social work sector in that country. This in turn allowed social work practitioners to own their supervision guidelines and acknowledge the benefits of such policies in advancing good supervision practices. In most of the countries, a bottom-up approach was followed by listening to social workers' voices on their experiences and experiments into supervision approaches. This was done to minimise resistance from practitioners because when people are involved in the thinking and the planning of the changes they need, it gives them an opportunity to react, to understand the need for change and adapt to their future necessities, which is part of **stage four** in the process (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

Stage five comprises the actual development of the supervision policy document. All policies reviewed in this chapter complied with Hawkins and Shohet's (2006) recommendations. In their policy documents, all the countries outlined the purpose of supervision. Overall, what was drawn from the policy documents that were reviewed is that supervision ensures that supervisees obtain advanced knowledge so that their skills and abilities can be applied to client populations in an ethical and competent manner. Minimum standards of the content and conduct of supervision is evident in all the policies reviewed. Guidelines in terms of minimum requirements for supervision contracts are included. For instance, organisations are encouraged to outline a statement of anti-discriminatory practice, as well as guidelines regarding ethics and principles in the supervisory relationship.

Roles and responsibilities of both supervisor and supervisees are highlighted within the reviewed policies, although organisations such as the NASW focused mainly on the roles of supervisors. Meanwhile, the BASW did not explicitly state the role of supervisors and supervisees in their policy. In terms of conflict resolution, the supervision policies mandate employers to develop clear methods for resolving disagreements and the grievance process that needs to be followed. In addition, organisations are encouraged to develop supervision contracts in line with the set standards in each country. This will be informed by what the

focus of supervision is on each agency and how prioritised supervision is in relation to other tasks. Thus, it remains the key responsibility of employers of social workers to create an enabling environment for positive supervision practices to thrive. One way to achieve this is by establishing ongoing training programmes for supervisors.

In line with **stage six** of the process, developing on-going learning and development for supervisors and supervisees should be made a priority within agencies. The purpose of this is to develop skilled and competent supervisors. This is also highlighted by most policy documents reviewed in this chapter as a prerequisite for one to take on the supervisors' role (AASW, 2014; NASW, 2013). However, Hawkins and Shohet (2006) caution that the best learning on how to supervise emerges from the actual supervision and that the first step to becoming the skilled supervisor is to receive good supervision.

Given that supervision is a continuous process, the **last stage** of the cycle emphasises that policies need to be reviewed constantly. However, from the policies reviewed, only Hong Kong specified a need to review their supervision guidelines periodically. This demonstrates lack of acknowledgement of the need to continuously review policies to revise supervision practices that are valuable.

What is evident from the policy documents reviewed in this chapter is the fact that supervision policies should move beyond the practice of merely 'ticking the box' to rather creating a foundation that will enable supervisors to balance the management and support functions of supervision (Bartoli & Kennedy, 2015). A question that begs to be answered is whether these policies are fit for purpose. This question emanates from the fact that some of the reviewed policies do not necessarily address issues which prevent ineffective or even harmful social work supervision (Beddoe, 2016). For instance, in a South African study by Wynne (2020), research findings reveal that some social workers experience supervision practices as more harmful than helpful, and sometimes supervisors who are contributing to harmful supervision practices even draw on the Supervision Framework to substantiate that they indeed successfully following specific requirements of the policy document.

This means that some of these policies do not necessarily address issues that prevent effective supervision. Unguru and Sandu (2018) argue that supervision standards are blamed for the fact that they do not consider the national context of policies guiding social services. For example, in South Africa, the Supervision Framework was adopted as one of the tools to

address ineffective supervision. Despite the existence of such a framework, there are numerous challenges which affect supervision practice that are not outlined in the Supervision Framework. Some of these challenges include instances where supervisors are preoccupied with managerial tasks, procedures, norms, standards and cost-efficiency measures, rather than allowing a space for debriefing or support of social workers (Ornellas, 2018). Hence, it is crucial to consider the context in which a supervision policy is developed. The governments' policies also influence the nature and practice of supervision in different countries. If the policies are neoliberal oriented, pressure is likely to be exerted on the quantity rather than the quality of social work services, which in turn affects how supervision is conducted.

The global neoliberal shift led to the infiltration of a managerial agenda in all spheres, including the public sector, and particularly, the role of the supervisor. With the expectation for social service organisations to run as businesses, an emphasis on outputs, procedures, standards and accountability, have served to limit, and often override the functions of the supervisor. Additionally, these expectations limit the practice of social workers themselves as they attempt to balance their professional values with organisational output demands (Magnussen, 2018). Stiglitz (2019) argues that there is no magic bullet that can reverse the damage done by decades of neoliberalism. However, social workers and supervisors together with agencies can dismantle this mentality by functioning as an ecology that is interdependent and values the impact of each system on the supervision process.

3.7. BEST PRACTICES IN DEVELOPING SUPERVISION POLICIES

Emanating from the discussion in Chapter 2 on the need to contextualise supervision knowledge, this study adopted the definition of supervision espoused by Engelbrecht (2019a). The definition identifies key determinants of authentic social work supervision. The very same determinants will be used to assess best practices in developing supervision policies based on an analysis of supervision policies in seven countries already discussed. The determinants include: *mandate of supervision; agency supervision policy; supervision functions; designated authoritative and trained supervisor; goal of supervision; structured interactional supervision sessions; adult education principles; cyclical process; associated tasks; methods; activities; predetermined timespan; theories, perspectives, and practice models; values and ethical conduct; professional constructive relationship; context of the work environment; and roles of the supervisor*, as illustrated in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Determinants of authentic supervision within supervision policies

Determinants of social work supervision	Australia	Hong Kong	New Zealand	Singapore	South Africa	United Kingdom	United States
Mandate of supervision	√		√	√	√	√	√
Agency policy	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Goal of supervision	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Functions of supervision	√	√		√	√	√	√
Training of supervisors	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Principles of adult education	√		√	√	√		√
Methods of supervision	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Supervision timespan	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Theories, perspectives, and practice models					√		√
Supervision process, sessions, tasks, and activities	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Values and ethical conduct	√		√	√	√	√	√
Professional constructive relationship	√			√			√
Roles of supervisors	√		√		√		√
Context of work environment	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Table 3.1 lists the determinants that were included in the supervision policies reviewed in this chapter. From the policies reviewed in different countries internationally, it was evident that **supervision is mandatory** in most countries. This propelled social work professional bodies and associations to take the lead in developing supervision policies to guide supervision practices within different organisational and cultural contexts. As previously mentioned, supervision in South Africa is mandated by legislation (Social Service Professions Act, No. 110 of 1978) and guided by the social worker's ethical code (SACSSP, 2007). Similarly, in other countries, including Australia, Singapore, and the USA, the social work associations' code of ethics serves as a foundation in the development of supervision policies (NASW, 2013; AASW, 2014; Social Work Accreditation and Advisory Board [SWAAB], 2017).

In all the supervision policies reviewed in this chapter, one of the key standards pointed out is that **agencies need to develop context specific policies** suited to their contexts. This is mainly because supervision takes place within the organisational context. Thus, policies developed by associations and professional boards merely serve as guidelines and set standards to promote effective supervision practices within agencies. Interestingly, majority of the countries set clear standards when it came to developing agency supervision policies. The standards set mostly corresponded with Hawkins and Shohet's (2006) suggestion of what needs to be included in an agency supervision policy.

In each of the supervision policies reviewed, **the goal of supervision** was made clear and linked to the country's context. The three common goals identified include: Firstly, supervision enhances the professional skills of social workers, enabling them to apply their knowledge to service users in an ethical and competent manner. Secondly, supervision creates a space for social workers to engage in ongoing professional learning that enhances capacities to respond effectively to complex and changing practice environments which may lead to retaining social workers in organisations. Lastly, the goal of supervision is to enable social workers to provide effective services to clients.

Majority of the countries adopted Kadushin and Harkness' (2014) **supervision functions** in their supervision policies, namely: *administrative*, *educational*, and *supportive*. However, countries like South Africa, Australia and Singapore added Proctor's (1986) *formative*, *restorative*, and *normative* functions in their supervision policies (cited in Magnussen, 2018). The essence of all these functions is to promote performance management and accountability, supportive professional supervision, and continuing professional development. However, in

practice though, what remains a challenge is the impact of managerialism on the balance of these functions within supervision. Although there is a move towards more reflective supervision approaches, there is still an emphasis on targets, which undermines a reflective space in the supervisory relationship (Parker, 2017; Patterson & Whincup, 2018).

Regarding **supervision methods**, although individual and group supervision are more prominent in the literature (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002), *peer supervision* was also identified as a common practice in the supervision policies reviewed. According to Hawkins and Shoet (1989), peer supervision refers to a group of professionals who meet regularly to review cases and share their experiences without a designated supervisor. Skidmore (1995) states that during this type of supervision, all peers have an equal opportunity to participate and there is no authority figure. However, this can be risky in instances wherein supervisors are co-responsible for the performance and ethical practice of supervisees (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). This means that peer supervision must not substitute individual or group supervision. Rather, to ensure that peer supervision is effective, it is necessary for all practitioners engaging in such an arrangement to be sufficiently experienced to know their own limitations and their strengths. What is also worth noting is the different forms of supervision advocated for within the policies reviewed in this study. For example, in South Africa, the form of supervision that usually takes place is *internal supervision* provided within organisations. Whereas in countries like Hong Kong, New Zealand, and the USA, *external supervision* is deemed necessary due to limited supervisory capacity. In instances where supervision is procured externally, the focus tends to be largely on the educative and supportive functions, meanwhile the administrative function remains the employer's responsibility.

Supervisors require proper training so that they can be prepared for the supervisory role (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Fleming & Steen, 2004). Within the supervision policies in the different countries, organisations employing social workers are mandated to continue providing education and capacitate supervisors with relevant skills to enable them to provide effective supervision. The lack of supervisors' training may lead to the neglect of the educational and supportive functions of supervision, which can be detrimental to the development of supervisees. Using South Africa as an example, supervisors are required to have the relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies to supervise and cope with increased job pressures, expectations, and requirements related to current supervisory practices (SACSSP, 2007). However, this poses a challenge because supervisors do not receive

sufficient, if any, training for their supervisory or managerial responsibilities (Carpenter et al., 2012; Parker, 2017). The common practice in South Africa is that social workers often find themselves promoted to the position of supervisor without receiving any training for the new position (Engelbrecht, 2013; Parker, 2017). Although the Supervision Framework states that supervisors need to attend supervision courses and keep a portfolio of evidence which serves as proof for attending the accredited supervision courses (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), there is no means of monitoring if training is taking place or whether portfolios of evidence are being kept by supervisors (Parker, 2017). In all the supervision policies, there are specific requirements for one to occupy a supervisory role. The common requirements stipulated in the supervision policies are that supervisors should have:

- A social work degree from an accredited HEI.
- A current license to practice as a social worker (e.g., Registration with SACSSP as a social worker in South Africa).
- A minimum of three years and above experience as a social worker. But, in South Africa and Hong Kong, supervisors must have at least five years' experience prior to occupying a supervisory role.
- A clear understanding of the contemporary professional and practice issues, and legislation and policy relating to the supervisee's field of practice.
- Should engage in continuing professional development for the provision of professional supervision by attending an accredited coursework in supervision for example.

Having said that though, supervisees have a responsibility in the supervisory process, as is evident in the ecology of supervision. This is also linked with the **adult education principles**. Adult education in supervision addresses the learning needs of supervisees congruent to their learning styles. This means that to avoid an imbalance in the ecology of supervision, supervisors should consider the supervisee's pace of learning and individualise teaching according to differences in their pace of learning (Engelbrecht, 2019a). In addition, supervisors should be aware that supervisees are autonomous and self-directed, what they need is a conducive environment for learning so that they are motivated and enthusiastic (Engelbrecht, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Although a discussion of the adult education principles is espoused in Chapter 2, within the supervision policies, tasks of supervisees are specified to promote adult education.

In terms of **supervision time span**, the policies are unanimous that supervision is a continuous cyclic process where the nature and depth of the process varies, depending on the supervisees' needs and level of experience. From the analysis of the supervision policies in this chapter, on average supervisees should receive supervision at least fortnightly for an hour during their first year of practice. Thereafter, a minimum of an hour at least once a month will suffice (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; AASW, 2014). The guidelines for supervision in Hong Kong emphasise that supervision should mostly be on an individual face-to-face basis every month (SWRB, 2009). Social workers with three or more years of practice experience should have received at least 1.5 hours of supervision every two months (NASW, 2013; AASW, 2014).

According to Engelbrecht (2014), **theories, models, and perspectives underlying supervision** are based on an agency's school of thought in management because supervision may be regarded as one of the management tasks in agencies. None of the policies reviewed in this chapter specified what theories, models, and perspectives can be used to advance supervision practices. What was made clear though was that supervisors need to familiarise themselves and keep abreast with various practice theories and models to accurately evaluate the application of these by supervisees. Although the supervision guidelines in Hong Kong and New Zealand (SWRB, 2009; ANZASW, 2015) point out that the main purpose of supervision is to identify and relate social work theories and models to practice, examples of these in supervision are not highlighted. In the South African Supervision Framework and supervision standards in the US, there was an indication that a range of supervision models described in the literature may be employed to guide the supervisory process (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; NASW, 2013). Some of the models and theories ranging from traditional, authoritarian models to more collaborative models were discussed in Chapter 2.

Every **supervision process** has a beginning, middle, and ending (evaluation) phase. The supervisory process should facilitate critical reflection on practice that encourages analysis of values and ethics, power dynamics, inter-personal dynamics, structural factors, and theoretical perspectives (AASW, 2014). At the beginning of the supervision process, what is critical is the positive engagement and negotiation of a supervision contract or agreement, which forms the basis of the nature of the supervisory relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee. Although specifications on the process, tasks, and activities of supervision were not highlighted within the policies in this chapter, there was an emphasis on developing clear written supervision agreements which need to be mutually negotiated and periodically

reviewed by the supervisor and supervisee (NASW, 2013; AASW, 2014; ANZASW, 2015; SWAAB, 2017). This means that the supervision contract should specify, for example, the roles and responsibilities of both the supervisor and supervisee, long-term professional development objectives of supervisees, and how professional intervention will be discussed in the supervision sessions. In brief, the supervision process must provide a safe, supportive environment for reflecting on practice and making ethical and informed decisions (Engelbrecht, 2019b; O'Donoghue, 2014).

The supervision policies point out the importance of adhering to **professional ethical codes** in social work while embracing various principles and values in the supervision process. Although most of the policies indicated the principles and values guiding supervision practices in their country, the operationalisation thereof remains to be seen. Some of the core values highlighted in the supervision policies include respect, fairness, social justice, and integrity.

The values and principles mentioned above form the basis for a **professional supervisory relationship**. Thus, social workers need to maintain their professional ethical responsibilities when engaging in the supervisory relationship. Within the supervisory relationship, supervisees should be regarded as partners and actively participate in the supervisory process. This will in turn stimulate a safe supervisory relationship that is founded on trust, collaboration, joint accountability, honesty, openness, and a non-judgemental approach (O'Donoghue, 2008; Mamaleka, 2018). Even though maintaining a positive supervisory relationship is key within the supervision process, very few policies provided a section on the significance of this. What was highlighted within the policies is that the supervisory relationship should be characterised by many of the following qualities: constructive feedback, safety, respect, and self-care. Moreover, the relationship needs to take into consideration sensitivity to gender, culture, and the context in which supervision is being carried out (AASW, 2014; SWAAB, 2017).

Some of the **supervisor's roles** that were highlighted in the policies reviewed from different countries include the role of an administrator, educator, and a facilitator. Supervisors are expected to: Firstly, provide direction to the supervisee on the application of social work theory and skills in the practice setting; secondly, ensure that the supervisee provides competent, appropriate, and ethical services to the client in order to protect service users from harm; thirdly, identify the training needs of supervisees; fourthly, ensure correct interpretation

of policies and legislation; and finally, evaluate the performance of supervisees in a fair manner with clearly stated criteria (NASW, 2013; AASW, 2014; ANZASW, 2015). This is evident in practice, as supervisors do not mainly focus on planning programmes or drawing up policies, but rather they also evaluate how services are rendered, the relationship between external environmental activities, and the influence of the internal organisational activities on service delivery (Engelbrecht, 2013).

The **context of the work environment** is crucial in advancing positive supervision practices within organisations. Social workers practice in government settings, community organisations, as well as non-profit and private organisations. Thus, the nature of the organisation and the type of social work services rendered is imperative when defining supervision. Similarly, the rural and urban divide of organisations also influences how supervision is implemented (Parker, 2017; Nickson et al., 2020). For instance, in Australia, some of the social workers based in rural areas do not receive supervision regularly (Nickson et al., 2020). Supervision policies reviewed in this chapter advocate for employing agencies to make a positive commitment to promoting and supporting the supervision culture by making sure that effective supervision happens. One way of showing support is for employers to consider individual capacity, experience, and the workload of supervisees and supervisors.

Based on the principles of authentic social work supervision as observed within the policies reviewed in this chapter, it is recommended that when developing supervision policies, organisations need to incorporate the following best practices in their policies:

- Background and policy formulation process
- Aim and scope of the policy
- Definition and purpose of supervision with a specific organisational context
- Supervision values, principles, and ethics
- Supervision functions
- Methods of supervision
- The nature of the supervision process
- The importance of a positive supervisory relationship
- Roles of supervisees, supervisors, and employing organisations
- Requirements for supervisors to occupy the supervisory role
- Requirements of a personal development assessment of the supervisee based on essential competencies for practice

- Requirements of a personal development plan of the supervisee
- Requirements of a performance management system
- A detailed supervision contract
- Specification on the frequency and duration of supervision
- A review process that will be followed

3.8. CONCLUSION

The content of social work supervision policies addresses four main areas: *direct practice*, *professional impact*, *continued learning*, and *job management*. For this reason, supervision standards are necessary to provide a framework that promotes uniformity in supervision practices and reinforces the idea that supervision is an essential professional and ethical responsibility for all social workers. However, the supervision policies need to recognise the ecology of supervision and clearly outline the role of each supervision element, though the implementation thereof remains a challenge. A noteworthy point is that when developing such policies, it is essential to steer away from the ‘tick-box approach’ to supervision and rather move towards humanising supervision and working from a developmental perspective. Instead of social workers and supervisors being the promoters of the neoliberal agenda, they need to question its intention and intensity, and strive for social justice which the profession pronounces. Thus, although challenges arising from a global neoliberal discourse affects the supervision of social workers with its managerial focus on control and accountability, the power and influence still lies within the supervisory relationship. These paradigm shifts take into consideration changes and transformation in the supervisory discourse. Thus, every social work practitioner has a role to play as social work champions promoting trust, integrity, justice, equity, and fairness within supervisory relationships. This leads to Chapter 4, which contextualises a child protection organisation and its implementation of the South African Supervision Framework.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXTUALISATION OF A CHILD PROTECTION ORGANISATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: SUPERVISION STORIES FROM A CONSTRUCTIONIST LENS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Research in supervision has increased globally over the past 40 years (Mo et al., 2020). Supervision of social workers in the child welfare sector, which encompasses child protection services, has formed a site of the available supervision research to date. While much of the existing research has mainly focused on social workers' supervision experiences; the practice of supervision; and supervisees and supervisors' perceptions of the quality of supervision (Shokane, 2016; VETFUTI, 2017), none have examined the implementation of a supervision framework within a child protection organisation in South Africa, identifying a gap in the literature. The area of particular concern in this study is supervision in child protection. Given the nature of child protection cases, supervision is an important factor that affects the job satisfaction and retention of child protection social workers.

In their evaluation of social work supervision within the child welfare sector, O'Donoghue and Tsui (2013:624) identified research evidence showing that "supervision was focused on the oversight of casework to ensure the safety of children, manage risk, and regulate the effects of the emotional nature of the work upon the worker". Supervisors face the challenge of finding a balance between operational considerations and the supervisee's professional development (Tsui et al., 2017). This means that organisations need to create an enabling environment for successful supervision practices, such as preparation for supervisors to occupy the supervisory role, as well as the promotion of supportive supervision to render effective supervision. It is for this reason that this chapter will contextualise supervision practices within the child welfare sector, before exploring how child protection organisations in South Africa are implementing the Supervision Framework. The chapter will begin by discussing the theoretical point of departure guiding this study. This will be followed by an overview of supervision in child welfare globally. Thereafter, a discussion and analysis based on the South African context with particular attention given to supervision within a designated child protection organisation will follow.

4.2. CONSTRUCTIONIST THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Supervision in child welfare practice requires a theoretical framework that addresses the complex nature of this field of social work practice. McPherson et al., (2016) spell out the inherent complexity of the supervisor's role and argue for the need for a theoretical framework that responds to the multidimensional nature of social work practice and supervision, especially within the child welfare sector. It is for this reason that this current study is guided by a constructionist theoretical framework (O'Donoghue, 2010) that combines the social constructionism and constructivism metatheories (Franklin, 1995). Both social constructionism and constructivism reject an objective reality and argue that cognition, language, culture as well as social experiences influence how one views the world. According to O'Donoghue (2010), constructivism originated from the personal construct theory developed by Kelly (1955). Constructivism views reality based on one's biology, development processes, and cognition. Social constructionism, on the other hand, is based on the work of Berger and Luckmann. Their book, *The social construction of reality* (1966), has been cited by O'Donoghue (2010) as the founding text that unpacks knowledge formation and social problems based on culture, language, and sociohistorical narratives. Thus, a combination of these metatheories emphasises human agency and the interactions between people and their social environment (Franklin, 1995; Teater; 2010; O'Donoghue, 2010).

Hair and O'Donoghue (2009) posit that the construction of social work supervision has been influenced by positivism, which assumes that one truth can be determined. While not negating the premise of the foundational scholars of social work supervision, their narratives are predominately Eurocentric and informed by North American discourses. Hence, Hair and O'Donoghue (2009) have called for a need to deconstruct social work supervision within the constructionist lens. Noble and Irwin (2009) propose that the constructionist approach offers an alternative for understanding supervision based on the social environment that shapes supervision processes and supervisory relationships. A constructionist approach explores what characterises supervision, the external influences that shape supervision, as well as how supervision is constructed and practiced by supervisees and supervisors (O'Donoghue, 2003).

O'Donoghue (2003:28) asserts that a constructionist approach gives voice to research participants and the "stories" they share about their own practice and on which they construct meaning. Hence, this is an alternative approach to identifying how social and personal discourses influence the development and process of social work supervision. According to

Noble and Irwin (2009), this approach can also be used to analyse and review the implementation of social work supervision as a professional practice to deviate from an approach that falls only within the paradigm of supervision functions, such as education, administration, and support. The authors argue that the traditional functional model of social work supervision is inadequate because it views supervision merely as an organisational mandate rather than a professional practice. They therefore advocate for a move towards approaches that are responsive to the changing world and an environment with multifaceted social problems, which influence supervision in social work practice. Thus, the constructionist approach towards supervision offers a way of both exploring the (i) influence of the environment upon the supervision relationship, and (ii) processes of supervision (O'Donoghue, 2003). It is therefore important to view supervision within the realm of a constructionist approach, firstly, because how social workers understand supervision determines how they will approach and implement it; and secondly, the influence of the environment on the practice of social work also affects how supervision is executed.

Additionally, the rise of social constructionist theories in the early 21st century placed great emphasis on supervisor-supervisee interactions and how they construct their reality within a supervisory relationship (Mo et al., 2020). When supervisors are guided by a constructionist framework, conversations with social workers about their practice become opportunities for collaboration, critical reflection, and support. Although the relationship is not positionally equal, supervisors can reduce hierarchical differences and stimulate co-constructive conversations by presenting ideas using tentative language and being curious and supportive about the knowledge of social workers. According to Hair and O'Donoghue (2009:79), "Unspoken beliefs, statements, and social practices that have been marginalised or silently endorsed can be surfaced through supervisory questions for shared examination". Hair (2012) further postulates that the practice of generating many diverse ideas simultaneously helps social workers claim their own knowledge and reveal uncertainties and mistakes, since the co-creation of preferred knowledge is an intended outcome.

Along with opening space for collaborative knowledge exploration, constructionist assumptions encourage supervisors to initiate transparent discussions with social workers about their expectations of each other and the power differences between them. In pursuit of deconstructing supervision practices, Sandu and Unguru (2017:55) argue that "the term of supervision, coming from vision from above, is associated with the sense of surveillance. The

process of constructing supervision as surveillance takes place in professional environments, where administrative supervision or supervision of persons in the training period, predominates". Therefore, emphasis on the administrative function of supervision promotes hierarchical and power-based relationships (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009).

However, supervisors can encourage a process with social workers that collaboratively determines how such administrative tasks are completed and what information is included. This is particularly relevant and necessary within the child welfare sector wherein administrative work forms the key basis of social workers' daily functioning and has direct implications for supervision. If social workers are prepared and the information is shared in a transparent and dialogical way, it provides social workers with a sense of safety and trust in their supervisors, instilling confidence in the supervision process (Selicoff, 2006, cited in Hair, 2012). From a constructionist lens, learning happens as ideas are reconstructed through dialogues that invite exchanges of opinions, questions, and feelings from both supervisees and supervisors. Thus, in a constructive supervisory relationship, "the exercise of power is not a binary relationship of dominator and dominated, but a complex interrelationship that can be dynamic, liberating, and transformative" (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009:77).

Teater (2010) posits that the constructionists view individuals as active participants in the creation of their own knowledge through interaction with their environment. It is therefore concerned with understanding reality from the participant's point of view, based on personal experiences within their social context (O'Donoghue, 2010). From a constructionist lens, supervisors shape a supervisory relationship that encourages transparency, collaboration, and an exchange of ideas (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009). Thus, the constructionist approach lends itself to believing that knowledge is created through dialogue (Biggerstaff, 2012). Dialogue is at the heart of supervision, which makes a constructionist approach relevant in this study to understand the implementation of the Supervision Framework based on the stories and voices of social workers and supervisors in a designated child protection organisation.

Based on this approach, the construction of supervision is a socially and personally defined activity shaped by stories that are embedded in a context specific environment (O'Donoghue, 2003:28). These stories, according to O'Donoghue (2003), include the social story, supervision story, and the stories of both supervisors and supervisees. These stories are integrated and influence supervision practices within organisations. Congruent with the ecology of supervision discussed in Chapter 3, the constructionist approach advocates for the

interaction of the personal supervision stories of managers, supervisors, social workers, and clients. Consequently, such stories influence how the content, process, and dynamics of supervision are created. It is for this reason that participants' stories in the empirical study are viewed from a constructionist lens. The constructionist approach informed the aim of the study, which was to gain an understanding of the implementation of the supervision framework in a specific organisational context based on the stories of social workers and their supervisors. This approach, therefore, addresses the processes and influences that shape supervision and how it is understood and practiced by individual supervisees and supervisors within a designated child protection organisation.

As alluded to earlier, social constructs shaped by the environment influence people's behaviour and their participation in supervision. Thus, a supervision framework as a social construct can influence supervision practices within an organisation. Moreover, an organisational supervision policy provides a mandate of how supervisors and supervisees need to interact with each other. However, the interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee will not be in isolation or merely directed by the organisation's supervision policy. Rather, it will also be guided by the supervisor and supervisee's understanding of supervision, the experiences they bring into the supervisory relationship, and their own views of the world. Therefore, the idea that supervision is constructed by the context in which it is embedded and by those who story it, is central to a constructionist perspective. In other words, a constructionist approach to supervision is unique because its foundation is the situation and context within which supervision is practiced (O'Donoghue, 2003). For instance, this study was conducted in a designated child protection organisation with unique challenges and opportunities that inform the supervision processes and how the Supervision Framework is implemented within the organisation. In summary, using O'Donoghue's sentiments, the key unique element of the constructionist approach relevant to this study is that "the cloth of supervision is cut to fit the setting and the people involved, by the people involved" (2003:26).

4.3. THE NATURE OF SUPERVISION WITHIN CHILD WELFARE GLOBALLY

There is consensus amongst policymakers, managers, practitioners, and academics that effective supervision is essential for high quality social work practice (Bartoli & Kennedy, 2015; Wilkins, Forrester & Grant, 2017). However, supervision within the child welfare sector is unique and demanding due to the nature of this field. "The child welfare work context

is the most complex in social work because employees are legally mandated to protect children who often are in families affected by substance abuse, mental illness, mental retardation, violence, adolescent parenthood, incarceration, homelessness, and poverty” (Ellett, Ellis, Westbrook & Dews, 2007:265). Globally, social work practice within the child welfare sector is usually directed by specific child protection legislation and policies, which have an impact on the work of social workers. Consequently, the role of the supervisor is often more managerial orientated, as adherence to these policies and legislation is of paramount importance and may be binding to social work supervisors as well. Child welfare is different from other contexts where supervisors may solely focus on clinical supervision, without having to supervise specific execution of statutory regulations (Wilkins, 2021; Rankine, Beddoe, O'Brien & Fouché, 2018). Goddard and Hunt (2011) posit that to provide supportive supervision of child protection workers, the full context of child protection practice and its complexities need to be acknowledged and understood. Against this backdrop, it is important to explore the nature of supervision in child welfare globally.

Supervision is a core activity in social work globally and is widely associated with a range of positive outcomes, such as effective service delivery, and retention of social workers (Saltiel, 2017). While there is widespread unanimity on the importance and value of supervision, research has shown that there are challenges pertaining to the implementation of supervision in environments that are resource scarce (O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2013). One such work environment dominated by numerous challenges observed worldwide is child welfare settings. Child welfare encompasses the broad scope of involvement by the government and its authorised professionals in assisting children and their families in cases of abuse and neglect, and when families and children are found to be in need (Khoo, 2010).

Child welfare work is challenging and complex. Kim and Mor Barak (2015) observed that social workers in the child welfare sector experience high levels of stress and burnout due to the overwhelming demands of the job. In addition, child welfare organisations face the challenge of adhering to changing government policies and must manage the change that comes with implementing the policies effectively (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015). In the process of implementing policies and meeting the managerial demands, social workers are often required to fill in forms that entail ticking boxes (Bartoli & Kennedy, 2015; Wilkins, 2021). In South Africa, for instance, social workers are mandated by the Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2005) to assess children in need of care and protection and investigate child abuse

cases. In carrying out these responsibilities, social workers are required to write reports within 90 days after their investigations, which are then presented to the Children's Court, either for placement or removal purposes (Vetfuti et al., 2019). The South African child protection context will be discussed later in this chapter.

Lack of supervision within child welfare in the UK has been identified as a contributory factor to social workers struggling with complex cases that influence their judgement and critical thinking (Munro, 2011). There are concerns about managerialism within social work supervision (Wonnacott, 2012; Wilkins & Antonopoulou, 2018). Manthorpe et al., (2015) noted that supervision is often regarded as a tool for performance management by many managers in the UK. In her report on UK child protection systems, Munro (2011) highlighted that frontline social workers felt that their managers prioritised caseloads and how to meet performance indicators, rather than focusing on the quality of work and sufficient time spent with children and their families in need of protection services.

According to Bartoli and Kennedy (2015), efficient supervision is essential for best outcomes for service users and to developing practitioners' expertise and job satisfaction. This is especially important in the child welfare sector, given that social workers need to form a relationship with the child and their family using professional reasoning to judge how best to work with parents. Therefore, supervision provides the space for critical reflection essential for reducing the risk of errors in professionals' reasoning. Munro (2011) reported that although both the management of caseloads and the professional supervision of practice are significant, within child protection the administrative function often predominates, and minimal attention is given to professional supervision with a focus on clinical practice. This is regardless of professional supervision being the main contributing factor enabling social workers to reflect on their practice to enhance service delivery (Wilkins, 2021).

Turner-Daly and Jack (2017) conducted a small-scale survey to examine the supervision experiences of a group of childcare social workers in England. The aim of their study was to discover effective elements of supervision and those that need improvement. Their findings revealed that while most employers had appropriate supervision policies in place, there was a noticeable difference in the way supervision was practiced across various child welfare organisations due to the lack of national supervision standards. It was further established that the quality of supervision was dependent on the characteristics of the supervisor and the organisational context rather than the needs of the supervisee (Turner-Daly & Jack, 2017).

Thus, administrative supervision is prominent in child welfare due to statutory requirements, with minimal reflective and clinical supervision being practiced. This is despite evidence revealing that reflective supervision enhances reasoning skills and enables good judgements to be made from often uncertain or conflicting information (Munro, 2011).

There is further evidence confirming that supervision is performed differently in various countries. In Sweden, Bradley and Höjer (2009) found that social work supervision is commonly conducted in a group and often provided by someone external to the supervisee's agency. Meanwhile, Hair (2012) reported that the value and importance of supervision are taken for granted in child welfare practice in Canada. Moreover, a study conducted in Australia found that social workers within child protection received very limited formal supervision and described supervision as being administrative focused and bureaucratic (Stanley & Goddard, cited by Goddard & Hunt, 2011). Davys and Beddoe (2010) express a related concern within a New Zealand context. They argue that rather than benefiting staff and ultimately service users, supervision as it is currently practiced increasingly becomes "...part of a system of surveillance of vulnerable and dangerous populations" (Davys & Beddoe, 2010:222). These concerns are especially pertinent to child welfare practice in the public sector and cuts across different countries, even though service systems and qualifications of staff vary.

The examples shown illustrate that supervision in the child welfare sector plays a significant role in safeguarding the well-being of children and their families all over the world. It is alarming, though, to note that supervision is often used as a way of enabling surveillance of child welfare practice (Wilkins et al., 2017). Given that the child protection field is guided by legislation, there is high levels of administrative oversight. Emotional support is also seen as a crucial function of effective supervision as it potentially mitigates reasons for dissatisfaction and turnover in this field (Chanyandura, 2016). In South Africa, Wynne (2020) found that social workers outside of the child protection field believed that child protection social workers require more support, yet they received minimal supportive supervision. Therefore, there is a growing concern that social work supervision is not primarily focused on education or support but on managerial administration only (Wilkins, 2021). It is therefore important to examine the overemphasis on performance management within child protection organisations given the importance of combining education, administration, and support to guide the role of supervisors within child protection organisations.

4.4. SUPERVISION IN A CHILD PROTECTION ORGANISATION

This section discusses two key elements essential to child protection supervision, namely: (1) *the role of a supervisor*, and (2) *the significance of reflective supervision within child protection organisations*.

4.4.1. The role of a supervisor in a child protection organisation

Although the role of a supervisor was discussed in Chapter 2 as one of the determinants of supervision, there is growing attention on the importance of the role of child protection supervisors, given that child protection organisations are pushed to achieve outcomes. The role of a supervisor varies, depending on the field of social work practice and the organisational context. As in any other field of social work practice, child protection supervisors perform administrative, educational, and supportive functions, as they oversee frontline social workers who are direct service providers (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). These functions reflect some of the key tasks child protection supervisors are expected to undertake, such as communicating organisational goals, acting as practice change agents, and contributing to staff retention. Supervisors play an important role in developing supervisees' skills necessary to respond effectively to cases in child protection organisations. This is achieved through educational supervision by prompting a discussion on critical thinking that can enhance the analytical skills needed within the complex child protection practice (Goddard & Hunt, 2011).

According to McPherson and Macnamara (2017), child protection supervisors are often the link between management and frontline social workers, with their main responsibility being that of managing supervisees' performance, while supporting and facilitating their learning and development. Balancing these roles can sometimes be challenging, especially when the supervisor manages the supervisees' workloads and is also responsible for the maintenance of supervisees' learning and growth. McPherson and Macnamara (2017:23) quoted one child protection supervisor who explained that "*There is a tension. I am the line manager of those I supervise. There is tension always between management or administration or support, but it is possible to manage that tension*". Due to this complexity, there is increasing recognition in the literature, as alluded to in Chapter 2, of the need to provide training and extensive support to supervisors as they carry out their roles (Patterson & Whincup, 2018).

Child protection supervisors are also tasked with translating changing legislation and policy guidelines into operational concepts that supervisees are required to implement (McPherson & Macnamara, 2017). This gatekeeping supervisory role ensures that social workers comply with ethical guidelines to safeguard the welfare of children and their families. Ethical practice of supervision influences clients' quality of life in that the supervisor can uphold social justice by applying the set ethical principles of the profession and ensure adherence to anti-discriminatory policies in social work practice (Caras, 2013). This was also alluded to in Chapter 3 where various associations of social workers worldwide called for organisations to have anti-discriminatory statements in their supervision policies to promote fairness within supervisory relationships (See DSD & SACSSP, 2012; NASW, 2013; ANZASW, 2015). The role of a child protection supervisor is therefore aimed at improving the performance of professionals by increasing their motivation and developing an efficient work environment that follows the highest professional standards and ethical intervention.

In South Africa, supervisors are directed by policy guidelines for course of conduct, code of ethics, and the rules for social workers (SACSSP, 2007) to supervise registered social workers on social work matters. Such supervision encompasses the evaluation of supervisees' performance in a manner that is fair and respectful. It is further espoused in the policy guidelines that the supervisor could be held liable if a complaint of alleged unprofessional conduct is lodged against their supervisee (SACSSP, 2007). Against this backdrop, child protection organisations employing social workers are required to comply with the aforesaid policy guidelines and adhere to the supervision standards stipulated in the Supervision Framework.

Given the high number of caseloads and increasing admin in child protection, social workers often struggle to maintain their workloads (Carpenter et al., 2013). The results of a study by Juby and Scannapieco (2007) suggest that supervisor support and availability of resources have a direct impact on workload management. Additionally, the study found that supervisor support is significantly associated with worker ability and availability of resources. Frontline social workers in the study commended the importance of supportive supervision in contributing towards making their jobs bearable and manageable. This support can be invaluable for workers dealing with high caseloads and paperwork (Juby & Scannapieco, 2007). Supportive supervision was reported to have made the job of child welfare social workers feasible and tolerable (Calitz et al., 2014).

Within the South African context, the supportive function of supervision is deemed significant in enhancing the morale of social workers and increasing job satisfaction (Vetfuti et al., 2019). However, the absence of supportive supervision in child protection has been highlighted in contemporary research (Chibaya, 2018; Jacques, 2014). Engelbrecht (2013:463) posits that “the educational and support functions of supervision are inevitably not regarded as a priority of supervision” by supervisors and that these functions have become “compliance checking” mechanisms to organisational mandates. Therefore, several issues remain that have an impact on the quality of supervision provided to child protection social workers, such as administrative supervision being prioritised, which compromises supportive, reflective, and integrated approaches to supervision (Engelbrecht, 2013; Vetfuti et al., 2019).

In consideration of the aforementioned, it is imperative to provide supervisors with professional development opportunities to assist them in their supervision role – beyond their administrative tasks and responsibilities – to achieve high capacity for addressing the clinical and educational components of supervision. Additionally, since child protection practice involves working with power and authority, it is important for supervisors to have a positive understanding of child protection issues, including an awareness of the way in which they use their inherent power in their professional role. Such an awareness will enable supervisors to support social workers and avoid micromanaging supervisees, overreacting to case situations, and creating conflict in the supervisory relationship (Dill & Bogo, 2009). This is more so in the child protection sector where the best interest of the child is of paramount importance. This context necessitates supervision to be viewed as an ecology that incorporates the role and voices of social workers, supervisors, service users, and the organisation in general (Tsui, 2005).

As discussed in Chapter 3, if supervisors do not carry out their administrative, educational, and supportive roles, supervisees will not be empowered to apply social work knowledge and skills for the ultimate benefit of children and their families (O'Donoghue, 2015). This means that child protection organisations need to create an enabling environment for successful supervision practices, such as preparation for supervisors to occupy the supervisory role as well as the promotion of supportive supervision to render effective supervision.

4.4.2. Reflective supervision in a child protection organisation

Globally, the available literature underscores the importance of reflective practice to meet the multifaceted needs of practitioners (Turner-Daly & Jack, 2017). The wider context within which child protection work and supervision takes place is also influential and shows a need for organisational policies and a working environment that actively supports reflective practice and high-quality supervision (McPherson & Macnamara, 2017). In the field of child protection, there is a struggle to ensure that supervision provides reflective spaces for social workers to develop in their work with service users despite the demands of meeting organisational imperatives. Reflection in child protection supervision is fundamental for advancing the quality of practice when seeking to ensure the safety and well-being of children (Rankine et al., 2018).

Lietz (2008) indicates that the process of supervision is essential to child welfare practice because it prompts reflection and builds analytical thinking skills needed to address complex situations involved in the protection of children. Although the importance of clinical supervision is recognised, supervision within child protection organisations focuses primarily on administrative tasks due to organisational settings and neoliberal policies that push this administrative agenda (Bartoli & Kennedy, 2015; Vetfuti et al., 2019). However, clinical supervision allows the practitioner and supervisor to apply theory and evidence-based practices to each individual case while reflecting on one's own reactions, values, and ability to make decisions grounded in evidence (Lietz, 2008).

Several scholars (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Wonnacott, 2012) advocate for the inclusion of clinical elements in the supervisory relationships. Highlighting the challenges connected to administrative agendas, Lietz and Rounds (2009) emphasised the need to include an educational focus within child protection supervision. To foster both supportive and educational functions of supervision, Lietz (2013) proposed the strengths-based supervision (SBS) model. This model was developed to (i) increase child protection supervisors' intentionality regarding the importance of infusing clinical supervision into child protection supervision, and (ii) advance the skills needed to implement this practice effectively to address an ongoing challenge. Furthermore, Lietz and Julien-Chinn (2017) found that SBS is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction amongst social workers. The findings also support the benefit of SBS as a model for enhancing the overall quality of supervision.

Wilkins (2017) assert that social workers in child protection organisations need critical thinking skills to make and articulate difficult decisions in complex situations observed in child welfare. More specifically, Lietz (2013) advocates for educational supervision that seeks to develop critical thinking skills through reflection and dialogue. She argues that this dialogue-driven process through case review and consultation is situated within the educational function that can foster critical thinking. Important to this process is a trusting supervisory relationship between supervisee and supervisor. Her study suggests that child protection organisations can use supervision processes to initiate the kind of reflection that can model and foster critical thinking (Lietz, 2008). The educational function is therefore an opportunity for development of cognitive processes that allow social workers to incorporate various topics in supervision, such as policy and procedures in the context of complex cases.

The educational function also promotes reflective supervision. Reflective supervision is essential to counter the perceived negative impacts of managerialism on child welfare practice. Research has shown that social workers working in child welfare settings “are influenced by factors associated with self-awareness, relationships, organisational and professional obligations within a changing and risk-averse managerial environment” (Rankine et al., 2018:1). For supervision to be effective, a reflective learning space must be created in a supervisory relationship. Reflective supervision promotes development opportunities for supervisees, enables them to link theory to practice, and helps advance the knowledge and skills of both supervisors and supervisees (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Carpenter et al., 2012). Furthermore, supervision within child protection organisations requires supervisors to form emotionally supportive and collaborative relationships with their supervisees that facilitate reflection and analysis throughout the supervision process for the benefit of children and their families (Ruch, 2012).

Such collaboration is in line with the constructionist approach, which encourages supervisors to initiate transparent discussions with social workers about their expectations of each other and the power differences between them (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009). For example, supervisors and social workers must comply with organisational requirements, such as performance evaluations. However, for social workers, effective reflective supervision promotes professional confidence and important ethical decision-making, rather than simply being a tool for monitoring performance. Reflective supervision provides an opportunity for both social workers and supervisees to discuss stressful situations and their negative impacts

to resolve practice dilemmas. Supervisors within child protection organisations thus play an important role in supporting social workers to juggle sensitive relationships with service users and statutory professionals, locating the necessary resources and safeguarding children (Rankine et al., 2018).

4.5. SUPERVISION WITHIN A SOUTH AFRICAN CHILD PROTECTION ORGANISATION

Having discussed supervision practices within child welfare globally, this section aims to conceptualise and contextualise supervision within a child protection organisation in South Africa. Although the South African Supervision Framework was thoroughly reviewed in Chapter 3, the focus of this section is to analyse the implementation of the Supervision Framework within the ambit of a child protection organisation. This will be achieved by drawing on the best practices discussed in Chapter 3 and integrating these with existing research on supervision conducted within the child protection sector in South Africa.

4.5.1. Conceptualising child protection services in South Africa

Child protection services form an integral part of child welfare practice. Social workers globally, and in South Africa specifically, deal with a range of child protection issues, including child fatalities; prevalent child sexual, physical, and emotional abuse; maltreatment and neglect. There has also been an increase in the number of child abductions, kidnappings, and trafficking in the past years (Chanyandura, 2016). Social work interventions in child protection are designed to promote and safeguard children's rights and well-being (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015). According to Khoo (2010:21), "Child protection emphasises the legal grounds upon which social workers can intervene to identify children who have been harmed or are likely to be harmed, and to then intervene to protect children from future harm. Child protection is often used to delimit specific services for children in need of protection from abuse and neglect". McPherson and Macnamara (2017) concur that child protection ranges from statutory investigation of child abuse and neglect to voluntary family support, with a common factor being the interaction between vulnerable children and their families. Globally, the child welfare sector is concerned with protecting children through general prevention services, including health, education, recreation, family support, and treatment services (Khoo, 2010). In South Africa, the focus is more on child protection services.

Designated child protection services in South Africa include statutory services that support court proceedings related to children and implementation of court orders. It encompasses prevention services; early intervention services; reunification of children in alternative care with their families; integration of children into alternative care; adoption of children; investigation and assessment of child abuse, child neglect, and child abandonment cases; and removal of children when necessary (RSA, 2005). All of the services highlighted demand administrative work from social workers. The heightened pressure from dealing with constant crises in the child protection environment is further exacerbated by tight deadlines to finish investigations and submit reports (Vetfuti et al., 2019). Social workers must provide a report to the Children's Court about their investigations regarding child abuse and child abandonment cases for removal. Research has shown that the nature of work in child protection is overwhelming for practitioners because they need to continuously conduct investigations to determine children in need of care and protection (Schiller & Strydom, 2018). This points to the complexity of child protection work and the need for supervision within the child protection field (Vetfuti et al., 2019).

4.5.2. Contextualising a child protection organisation in South Africa

The South African legislation has delimited designated child protection organisations tasked with providing statutory services for children in need of care and protection. According to the Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2005), a designated child protection organisation is defined as an organisation tasked with providing child protection services. Although the Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2005) makes provision for prevention and family preservation services within child protection organisations, with heavy caseloads confronting frontline social workers and the administrative burden associated with statutory intervention, social workers hardly have enough time to render child welfare services holistically (Schiller & Strydom, 2018).

Designated child protection organisations are subsidised by government and therefore need to comply with specific norms and standards set by the national DSD. Although such organisations are funded by government, there are limited resources in the child protection sector, leading to a shortage of social workers and reduced supervision capacity (Vetfuti et al., 2019). Schiller and Strydom (2018) concur that South Africa has a shortage of social workers to deliver comprehensive services, and those that are working often get bogged down with administrative tasks to comply with government regulations for families to obtain social

security, rather than focusing their undivided attention on holistic family intervention to safeguard the future well-being of children. Despite the shortage of social workers and lack of supervision, child protection social workers in South Africa are tasked with protecting the rights and enhancing the well-being of children and families (Vetfuti et al., 2019). Owing to the inherent vulnerabilities of children, child protection social workers primarily work with vulnerable children and their families and are often engaged in cases involving statutory work delineated by designated child protection organisations.

Social work in the child protection field, therefore, presents an opportunity to positively transform the lives and future of vulnerable children, but frequently at a cost to the mental health and well-being of the social workers concerned. This is because social workers are constantly dealing with children's trauma and their families' emotions, while having to manage with constrained resources (Carpenter et al., 2013). Vetfuti et al., (2019) are of the view that compliance with the minimum standards set out in the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) to incorporate peer mentoring to support practitioners could contribute significantly to enhancing the mental well-being of child protection social workers.

4.6. THE SOUTH AFRICAN SUPERVISION FRAMEWORK IN A CHILD PROTECTION ORGANISATION

Although knowledge in social work supervision has evolved over time (Mo et al., 2020), a research gap on policies that guides supervision practices still exists. One way of upholding high-quality standards in social work practice is through supervision policies that guide supervision practices within organisations. In all the national supervision policies reviewed in Chapter 3, one of the key standards pointed out is that agencies need to develop context-specific policies suited to their contexts. This is mainly because supervision takes place within organisational contexts, which is child protection in this study. Moreover, given that social work is practiced in the context of supervisory relationships, effective supervision is essential. There is a need for supervision practices to be guided by supervision policies. As reflected on in Chapter 3, supervision policies are necessary to provide a framework that promotes uniformity in supervision practices and reinforces the idea that supervision is an essential professional and ethical responsibility for all social workers. In South Africa, the Supervision Framework envisaged the improvement of supervision practices in the country thereby contributing towards employee motivation, retention of social work skills, and an increase in social work competencies (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

The Supervision Framework was analysed comprehensively in Chapter 3. This section, however, emphasises key points that emanated from the Supervision Framework and guides the development of organisational supervision policies. One of the key standards highlighted in the Supervision Framework is that organisations employing social workers need to formulate their own supervision policy and align it with the Supervision Framework. The latter outlines norms and standards for supervision practices in all organisations employing social workers in the country. Of particular interest in this study is the relationality of child protection work and social work interventions in this field often seek to prevent and resolve the abuse, negligence, abandonment, and exploitation of children in all environments (Chanyandura, 2016). Against this backdrop, several empirical studies conducted within the field of child protection in South Africa were analysed to determine the implementation of the Supervision Framework in this sector.

4.6.1. Content analysis of research findings on supervision within the field of child protection in South Africa

This section provides an exposition of the methodology followed to identify and select recent empirical research on supervision within the field of child protection. This will be followed by an analysis based on generated themes from previous research within the realm of a constructionist approach. For this reason, social workers' narratives will be cited as examples to demonstrate child protection social workers' stories of supervision. According to Strydom and Delport (2011:384), *content analysis* "is usually performed directly on existing material by using a sampling procedure that extracts the main themes from the mass of existing information on a subject". To establish the universe for content analysis, 20 empirical research studies focusing on social work supervision in South Africa were identified from several databases including Electronic Thesis and Dissertations (National ETD Portal), IRSpace, Nexus, ProQuest, Sabinet, and SunScholar (see Annexure 4). From the research universe, a total of 10 empirical research studies were selected and analysed. The studies were purposively selected using the following inclusion criteria:

The study must –

- Have been conducted between the period of 2016 and 2020 (thus, not be older than 5 years).

- Be conducted on social work supervision within the child protection sector (either NGOs or DSD).
- Have followed a qualitative research approach with data collected either from frontline social workers or supervisors.

The following research reports met the inclusion criteria: Chanyandura (2016), Hunter (2016), Maupye (2016), Mokoka (2016), Manthosi (2016), Baloyi (2017), Vetfuti (2017), Ncube (2018), Chibaya (2018), and Wynne (2020). Based on the content analysis, all these selected research reports investigated the experiences of the child protection social workers and supervisors in relation to supervision provided within their organisations. The process of content analysis followed in this section is in line with the guidelines for secondary analysis. Secondary analysis provides an opportunity to develop new insights from the existing data (Strydom & Delpont, 2011) to elucidate how social workers and supervisors perceive supervision practices within the child protection sector. The analysis focuses on the narratives of participants from the selected research reports. This aligns with the constructionist approach that seeks to understand participants' stories of supervision (O'Donoghue, 2003) within the child protection sector.

The research analysed was conducted in different provinces of the country, which offers a diverse overview of supervision practices within the child protection sector in South Africa. Social workers employed in NGOs rendering child protection services, and the DSD as the main employer of social workers in South Africa, were interviewed in the selected studies. Although all the studies explored the experiences of the child protection social workers and supervisors in relation to supervision, some of the research particularly investigated supportive supervision (Vetfuti, 2017); reflective supervision (Chibaya, 2018); and the danger of harmful supervision practices within child protection (Wynne, 2020).

The themes identified for content analysis of the selected research reports emanated from the determinants of authentic supervision discussed in Chapter 2 and the best practices outlined in Chapter 3 when developing supervision policies. The themes presented are supported by social workers' narratives with the purpose of deconstructing supervision practices within child protection organisations in South Africa. In accordance with the constructionist approach (O'Donoghue, 2003), these narratives are essential because they should shape how supervision policies are developed within the child protection sector, which ultimately influences the supervision practices within organisations.

4.6.1.1. Social workers' perceptions of the Supervision Framework

It is important to first establish what social workers think is the purpose of the Supervision Framework before delving into the specific themes identified. One social worker quoted by Maupye (2016:47) said, “*I think the Framework regulates that the social workers must only be supervised by the person who is the social worker by profession and must be registered with the SACSSP*”. Indeed, the Supervision Framework clearly states that a manager who is not a social worker may manage the organisation but cannot supervise social workers (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). This is particularly important within child protection organisations wherein social workers require emotional support and guidance, not just managerial surveillance. Engelbrecht (2015) has also cautioned that non-social workers should not be allowed to supervise social workers due to the statutory mandate and ethical code of the social work profession in South Africa. However, Silence (2017) found that social workers within the Department of Health in the Western Cape are not supervised by qualified social workers, but rather they report to health care professionals with limited knowledge on social work issues. Consequently, the primary focus is on the administrative processes of managing an employee without engaging the developmental needs of social workers and the profession’s contribution within the health sphere. Although the majority, if not all, social workers within child protection are supervised by qualified social workers, the administrative emphasis is not unique to the health sector but is prominent in the child protection sector as was alluded to earlier in this chapter and observed in the experiences of the social workers as expressed in the identified themes that follow.

4.6.1.2. Definition and purpose of supervision with a specific organisational context

The definition of *supervision* adopted in this study was espoused by Engelbrecht’s (2019a) view of supervision and based on the brief, operationalisation, and scope of supervision, as discussed in Chapter 2. Although supervision was thoroughly conceptualised in Chapter 2, the focus here is on how social workers perceived the purpose of supervision within child protection organisations across the country. Following are some of the narratives from the selected studies with emphasis of participants’ stories underlined throughout the chapter:

“Supervision for me is a chance to sit with your supervisor to discuss whether it be cases, workflow progress and processes” (Chibaya, 2018:67).

“According to my understanding, supervision is [the] process of overseeing and coordinating the work that is done by supervisees in order to improve quality of services rendered to clients” (Maupye, 2016:50).

“... I think the purpose of supervision is to support and give information with regard to challenges I face as a supervisee” (Mokoka, 2016:92).

“I do not know, writing my reports and they correct them” (Chibaya, 2018:67).

“In most cases the supervision only concentrates on workload, how many cases you have; the cases which they need to allocate to you and the things which you didn't do which you were supposed to do ... So in other words, it's not quality supervision. It concentrates more on numbers than on the quality of work you are producing in children ...” (Chanyandura, 2016:62).

Some of the narratives demonstrate a balanced view of what supervision ought to be and what it is for child protection social workers. Ideally, supervision seeks to develop supervisees' professional skills, knowledge, and attributes within a collaborative relationship to improve the quality of services to service users (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). However, it appears that some of the child protection social workers experience supervision as a quantity measure, rather than a safe environment for the provision of guidance and support. The focus on quantity rather than quality disregards the purpose of supervision which is to assist supervisees to utilise their skills and knowledge to deliver effective services to clients. Consequently, human service delivery and the professional growth of frontline social workers is compromised.

4.6.1.3. Supervision functions

From the analysis of the selected studies, it was clear that social workers within child protection understand the functions of supervision as illustrated by the following well-articulated views:

“A social work supervisor is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance, and evaluate the performance of supervisees for whose work he is held accountable. In implementing responsibility, the supervisor performs administrative, educational, and supportive functions in a positive relationship” (Hunter, 2016:30).

“Functions of supervision are supportive, educational and administrative. Supportive is when I offer support to employees which is minimal not personal, educate supervisees on policies and also to help them in administrations such as monthly reports, quarterly assessments and etc” (Manthosi, 2016:51).

“The functions of supervision are supposed to be educational, administrative and support ...” (Mokoka, 2016:92).

What was also evident is the fact that there is a difference between what the supervision functions are ‘supposed to be’ and the lived experiences of child protection social workers, as is evident in the next few quotations:

“I feel that it's time that I change and move from child protection to something else because it can be also emotionally draining because there is also no debriefing” (Vetfuti, 2017:58).

“Supportive supervision, we need it as social workers from the supervisors. We are being loaded with lots of work and we don't get support where you are being called by the supervisor trying to find out how are you coping with the cases?” (Vetfuti, 2017:75).

Lack of supportive function does not only lead to staff turnover, but can also be discouraging to social workers, resulting in burnout.

“There are no supportive programmes or activities in the organisation. We suffer from burnout. Organisations and supervisors only focus on us pushing files, numbers, statistics and targets as per their business plan for funding” (Chanyandura, 2016:65).

“In terms of support, zero, I had no support, just nothing ...” (Wynne, 2020:74).

Similarly, social workers in Manthosi’s study shared the following stories regarding educational and supportive supervision (2016:54):

“It's all about giving supervisees support and education on things they do not know”

“Supervision session is more educational than supportive. She teaches us how to complete intakes and we never get to debrief”.

Furthermore, the following was observed about educational supervision:

“Supervisors should identify the training needs of the supervisees and implement professional development” (Maupye, 2017:48).

“I'd say education not so much. So, I don't receive, I wouldn't say I receive education in supervision but if there's training that I require, she's supportive of that and I could seek it elsewhere” (Wynne, 2020:75).

The aim of the administrative function of supervision is to establish accountability of the supervisee to the organisation and service users; it is therefore concerning when it is the main focal point at the expense of educational and supportive supervision. According to Ornellas (2018), supervision has become about management, with emphasis on outputs and the ticking of boxes above the quality and process of interventions within the NGO environment due to funding requirements. Chibaya (2018) concurs that such administrative emphasis can be attributed to neoliberalism which focuses on effectiveness and efficiency of social service management. In addition, Wynne (2020) also found that social workers deemed this kind of supervision harmful.

“I think sometimes it can be harmful when it's mainly just like an administrative thing. So, you are just, like going through, like reports or deadlines” (Wynne, 2020:73).

From the analysis, it can be deduced that although the supervision framework stipulates the significance of all the three functions of supervision, in reality, supportive and educational functions are neglected in the child protection field.

4.6.1.4. Methods of supervision

As discussed in Chapter 2, the main methods of supervision are individual and group supervision. Although Engelbrecht (2019a) found that many supervisors in South Africa utilise individual supervision, this content analysis revealed that the favourable mode of supervision within child protection is group supervision. This could be attributed to the

limited supervision capacity and strained resources within child protection organisations in South Africa. For example, one participant in Ncube's (2018:162) study said:

“There is a supervision policy in this agency where we are supposed to have one-on-one supervision (sessions) with a supervisor twice a month. This is not happening at all because the supervisor is overloaded. According to the policy, a supervisor must supervise up to 13 supervisees, but our supervisor has more than twenty supervisees”.

Similarly, other participants commented as follows:

“I have been exposed to group supervision and individual supervision. I usually find them useful especially when I have difficult situations” (Ncube, 2018:165).

“I have two supervision sessions per month. One is individual and the other is group supervision” (Ncube, 2018:165).

“I engage all my supervisees (senior Social Workers and inexperienced Social Workers) in a group supervision” (Baloyi, 2017:61).

“... mainly utilise unstructured group supervision because of the many cases we are dealing with and the number of social workers I have to supervise” (Chanyandura, 2016:65).

“I thought I was going to be provided with individual supervision to adjust and to develop a mutual relationship with my supervisor. I feel we need to be having a structured supervision either individual or group to share needs and concerns” (Mokoka, 2016:91).

One of the developing modes of supervision expressed by one supervisor in Baloyi's (2017:61) study is *peer supervision*:

“Most of my time I engage my supervisees in a peer supervision, I think supervisees learn better from one another”.

Related to peer supervision, VETFUTI et al., (2019) advocated for peer mentoring wherein novice child protection social workers could collaborate with their senior colleagues to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills in a non-threatening environment. There is,

however, limited research evidence of structured peer supervision or peer mentoring within child protection in South Africa. What is evident though is that supervision is unstructured in child protection organisations as illustrated next.

4.6.1.5. The nature of the supervision process

Supervision is a major determinant of the quality of services provided to service users, the level of professional development of social workers, and the level of job satisfaction (Baloyi, 2017). It is therefore worrying when it is not prioritised, nor structured. This seems to be the case, especially in the DSD, as shown by the following quotes:

“Supervision is not structured at all within the DSD. I do not understand why it is not structured. There is no supervision structure or process I am exposed to. I need to sit down with my supervisor and share my frustrations, concerns and experiences” (Mokoka, 2016:88).

“I mean I was never exposed to any processes of supervision, for the past eight years. I think that new social workers should be exposed to all the processes of supervision in order to understand what is expected of them” (Mokoka, 2016:89).

“In my experience it [supervision] has not been prioritised... they are always busy sometimes they are busy attending meetings and workshops and attending to other urgent matters” (Vetfuti, 2017:81).

Maupye (2016) found that the workload of supervisors as well as the wide geographical distance between supervisors’ and supervisees’ offices hinders the process of supervision within the DSD. Congruent with the description of the supervision process in the Supervision Framework, Engelbrecht (2019b) asserts that the supervision process should be cyclical, consisting of the following phases: *engagement, assessment, planning, contracting, implementation, and evaluation*. This process, however, appears to be an ideal rather than a reality for child protection social workers. Both Chibaya (2018) and Wynne (2020) found that most supervisors within child protection organisations exercise an open-door policy.

“We really do not have one on one sessions. We only see the supervisor at the main office where we discuss any challenges that might require her insight. She however has an open-door policy” (Chibaya, 2018:69).

“So, she's got, like an open-door policy where if I'm struggling with a specific client I can sort of hop in and just ask her a question about it, yeah” (Wynne, 2020:67).

Noble and Irwin (2009:351) refer to this as ‘on the run’ supervision whereby social workers have limited access to regular supervision. Wynne (2020) is of the view that ‘on the run’, non-structured supervision may be harmful because no specific supervision process is followed. Such supervision entails supervision without a contract or the execution of associated supervision tasks creating a barrier for developing learning goals and objectives in the supervisory relationship. Therefore, ‘on the run’ supervision fails to fulfil the supervision determinants outlined in Chapter 2. This is also evident in the three themes discussed next which form part and parcel of the supervision process.

4.6.1.6. Requirements of a personal development assessment of the supervisee based on essential competencies for practice

Supervision within child protection has become a routine, with no learning opportunities created to meet the needs of supervisees. This is illustrated in the following quote:

“... from the supervisor's side it has always been the same procedure, same questions and I will be providing the same answers. Hence, I am saying supervision has become more of administration procedure” (Chibaya, 2018:84).

Wynne (2020) is of the view that if supervisors do not understand the importance of structured and reflective supervision sessions based on a personal development plan of the supervisee, it is likely to become a routine activity of simply checking the boxes. Consequently, such supervision becomes managerial and harmful, as opposed to fulfilling its intended function, as is seen in the next quote:

“I feel that supervisors should provide a conducive environment characterized by trust and respect; where the challenges of critical self-reflection and professional growth can occur” (Mokoka, 2016:96).

4.6.1.7. Requirements of a personal development plan of the supervisee and a performance management system

Given the unstructured way in which supervision is conducted within child protection, there was no evidence of the requirements of a personal development plan (PDP) for a supervisee

being implemented. According to Engelbrecht (2019b), a PDP is a tool that indicates the learning needs of the supervisee in order of priority based on a personal development assessment. The PDP defines what the supervisee will learn, and how this learning will take place in the supervision session. Chibaya (2018) found that in instances where supervisees receive structured individual supervision, supervisees' PDP is not considered during sessions. Therefore, supervisors fail to facilitate critical reflection during supervision sessions that allows supervisees to learn and grow and become competent practitioners. Such practices are not in line with the Supervision Framework. The Supervision Framework extrapolates under its norms and standards that records of every social worker's personal development plan, supervision contract, reports, and performance appraisals should be kept, and be available for monitoring and evaluation by relevant authorities.

“... The supervisor should monitor work performance of supervisees by reading their records, reviewing statistical reports, and providing feedback for improvement” (Mokoka, 2016:94).

Wynne (2020:91) observes that:

“[W]hen there is no personal development assessment, personal development plan and contract as part of the supervision process, as well as agendas based on the personal development plan for supervision, there is space for error and non-compliance to the standard of supervision, thus resulting in harmful supervision”.

This sentiment was shared by some of the social workers who raised concerns related to performance appraisals.

“... My supervisor only comes to me when he wants the monthly reports, but he never came to supervise me ...” (Maupye, 2016:58).

“We are only supervised once in three months when it comes to times for reviews and we are not given enough time even for that because it's like we are rushing to finish so that the next person must come ...” (Vetfuti, 2017:66).

In a recent study conducted by Pretorius (2020) in the Western Cape, newly qualified social workers raised concerns that they do not receive sufficient supervision which is in line with the expected standards stipulated in the Supervision Framework. Furthermore, Ncube (2018)

argues that performance appraisals should be developmental wherein supervisees are afforded space to determine the course of action regarding their PDP.

4.6.1.8. A detailed supervision contract

A *supervision contract* should be discussed and agreed upon by the supervisor and the supervisee. In this regard, one social worker in Maupye's (2016:48) study said,

"[T]he Framework makes reference to an agreement that should be done between the supervisor and the supervisees".

Others commented the following:

"I have seen it before because at the beginning of the year there are documents that we signed with the supervisor on supervision" (Maupye, 2016:48).

"... Just recently we started with working on supervision contracts with the supervisor... but that process is not yet complete" (Ncube, 2018:162).

Contracting is necessary in supervision and the supervisory contract forms part of the PDP.

"The supervisor and the supervisee are expected to have a contract. They should contract about the date, time, venue and agenda for the session. Minutes of the session should be taken and thereafter signed by both parties as a sign of agreement on what had transpired" (Chibaya, 2018:71).

Although contracting is an essential phase of the supervision process and in accordance with the Supervision Framework, some social workers do not seem to be inclined with the development of their supervision contract.

"We made one because [the] Department of Social Development made us make one" (Wynne, 2020:70).

"Since I joined the DSD, I have never been exposed to supervision. I did not contract with my supervisor on supervision" (Mokoka, 2016:87).

Even though a supervision contract should be discussed and agreed upon by the supervisor and the supervisee, some of the narratives have shown that this phase of supervision is rarely implemented. Failure to implement this critical phase of the

supervision process has implications on the frequency and duration of supervision. This is discussed next.

4.6.1.9. Specification on the frequency and duration of supervision

As part of the supervision contract, the frequency and duration of supervision should be agreed upon by both the supervisor and supervisee. The Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) and the Australian Supervision Standards (AASW, 2014) stipulate that a supervision contract should outline:

- The purpose, goals and functions.
- Roles, responsibilities and conduct of participants.
- Frequency and duration of supervision.

Recent research in South Africa has shown that supervision of social workers lacks structure and many supervisors have adopted what is commonly known as an "open door policy", which means that supervisees can walk into the supervisor's office to quickly discuss a case that requires the supervisor's immediate guidance (Pretorius, 2020; Wynne, 2020). From the content analysis, unstructured supervision and 'on the run' supervision once again has implications on the frequency of supervision.

"... I can say that I get supervised three to four times a year, quarterly. It is not the way it is supposed to be. So, proper supervision happens on quarterly basis" (Ncube, 2018:158).

"According to [the] supervision contract, we must supervise newly qualified social workers bi-weekly, however due to workload, I end up supervising them once per quarter. Mostly, I do group supervision because there is not enough time to conduct individual supervision" (Maupye, 2016:58).

"There is no set time, the supervisor has an open-door policy" (Chibaya, 2018:69).

"Not that frequent, it happens but it is not religiously followed" (Chibaya, 2018:70).

"Because we have such an open-door policy, the scheduled time is more for the care part of supervision. Where the open-door is always there, because there is

consistently e-mails and admin of checking in and checking in on files” (Wynne, 2020:67-68).

For some social workers, the experience is different and more encouraging:

“I can consult my supervisor on a daily or hourly basis, but I also receive weekly supervision” (Ncube, 2018:158).

On the other hand, Baloyi (2017) found that in the Limpopo DSD the experience of supervisors varies, even though they are employed by the same organisation.

“... I meet them twice in a month, and I also meet the senior social workers once a month ... I no longer deal with the clients” (Baloyi, 2017:52).

“I only meet my supervisees when there is an emergency, I am currently supervising twelve senior Social Workers, and four Social Workers who are just being employed, and I also deal with clients’ every day. I cannot manage to focus on supervision at all, I have a lot of work” (Baloyi, 2017:53).

“We do not have supervision regularly. We are hijacked and the sessions are hurried...” (Manthosi, 2016:53).

Related to the latter quote, there seems to be variation, with the duration of supervision sessions ranging from 5 minutes to an hour. This is another demonstration of how unstructured supervision is within the child protection sector. Social workers in Chibaya’s (2018:72) study commented as follows:

“It will depend on what I have to discuss. So, anything from 5 to 20 minutes”.

“Maybe 45 minutes to an hour”.

Based on the preceding stories of social workers, frequency does not necessarily give an indication that functions such as support and education are taking place in supervision. The frequency may just point to “contact” between a supervisor and supervisee – hence this may not even be defined as supervision.

4.6.1.10. The importance of a positive supervisory relationship

Research has shown that a positive supervisory relationship fosters job retention and satisfaction, which is likely to reduce stress and burnout amongst social workers (Carpenter et al., 2012; Bartoli & Kennedy, 2015). Therefore, a positive working relationship between the supervisor and supervisee is important in the supervision process. Atkins (2019) concurs that a good relationship between supervisors and supervisees has a positive impact on the delivery of child protection services.

Following are the views of child protection social workers about their supervisory relationships:

“We have an open relationship in which we both constructively argue and discuss work related manners. It is a good relationship” (Chibaya, 2018:74).

“I would say the relationship with my supervisees is fair, I won’t say is good, because some are not satisfied because they feel that we don’t have time for them as they are not supervised as expected ...” (Maupye, 2016:69).

From the narratives, it appears that some social workers had good supervisory relationships. This is further supported by one social worker who described supervision as follows: *“Supervision entails a collaborative and mutual relationship between supervisor and supervisee ... The supervisor and the supervisee share responsibility for carrying out their role in this collaborative process” (Chanyandura, 2016:57).* However, despite the significance of maintaining a collaborative relationship, not all social workers have positive experiences. For instance, one social worker said: *“The kind of relationship I share with my supervisor, I do not know hey. I would say it is very hierarchal, I am at the bottom and she is at the top and that is it” (Chibaya, 2018:74).* This is contrary to Baloyi’s (2017) view that the relationship between supervisor and supervisee with mutual respect should bestow power to both parties. Mokoka (2016:99) also quoted one social worker who said:

“Supervisors should understand that supervision is not one-sided where they decide about the content of the supervision process but need to involve supervisees in the process. Supervision process should benefit both the supervisor and supervisee”.

The content analysis has revealed that for the supervision process to thrive, the supervisory relationship needs to be mutually respectful to safeguard the well-being of practitioners. However, an abusive use of power by supervisors affects their relationship with their supervisees and this influences service delivery. Thus, due to the collaborative nature of the supervision and the constructionist approach, supervisees do not exist as mere passive beings in the supervisory relationship, rather they can also advance their power in the supervision process (O'Donoghue, 2010).

4.6.1.11. Roles of supervisees, supervisors, and employing organisations

Social workers in the child protection sector are generally overburdened and therefore require effective supervision. Atkins (2019) reported that, in her study, participants had caseloads ranging from 30 to 166 cases at the time of the interviews. Child protection cases encompass foster care placements and supervision, family reunification, intakes, and statutory work (Chibaya, 2018).

Vetfuti (2017:58) quoted one child protection social worker who said that,

“We are supposed to have sixty per social worker, but I had over 120 [cases]”.

Another social worker said that,

“So, if you are busy doing all your CCI's [Children's Court Inquiry] the prevention programmes are lacking at the end” (Vetfuti, 2017:62).

With such workloads, social workers require the support of their supervisors who are tasked with overseeing appropriate intervention techniques and identifying training and personal development needs of supervisees while conducting performance management appraisals (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Following is some of the narratives of child protection social workers from the selected studies:

“... with that lack of support at times I would deal with issues in the foster care system such as abuse and neglect and I would need a bit of debriefing a bit of support, but I wouldn't get any formal supervision for that ...” (Hunter, 2016:97).

“As a supervisor ... my roles include support, delegation, allocation and being an intermediate between management and staff” Chanyandura (2016:61).

“... *She just manages us and because she's middle management, she's also the link between us on the ground level and our management ...*” (Wynne, 2020:82).

Baloyi (2016) pointed out three key supervisory roles, namely: teacher, counsellor, and consultant. These roles coincide with those identified by Engelbrecht (2019a) and in the narratives below:

“The supervisor is there to mentor, to provide counselling and somewhat play an educative role to enable the supervisee to perform the functions and responsibilities assigned to him/her... It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the supervisee provides competent, appropriate, and ethical services to the client” (Chanyandura, 2016:57).

“Some of my duties as a supervisor are to give advice to subordinates and ensure quality assurance of reports and statistics. I also instil confidence in supervisees and impart knowledge and skills in the implementation of the Children's Act” (Chanyandura, 2016:58).

“The role of supervision is to empower, support, guide and educate. When I have difficult or challenging cases, I expect the supervisor to give me direction. There is no guidance since I have been employed and there is no supervision” (Mokoka, 2016:93).

Although the roles of the supervisor are clear, as expressed by the cited narratives, sometimes it can be challenging when supervisors have dual roles. This is evident in the next quote.

“... as supervisor we don't not have time to supervise as we are performing dual roles, which is being a manager and a supervisor at the same time” (Maupye, 2016:63).

The dilemma of balancing these dual roles was also found in studies conducted in Australia (McPherson & Macnamara, 2017) and Singapore (Wong, 2014). A common denominator observed in these studies is that the supervisory relationship tends to suffer because managerial and administrative matters are prioritised during supervision.

Supervisors were not solely blamed for the lack of supervision, but employers were deemed responsible as well.

“... I felt there wasn't enough support from the supervisor or from the organisation as a whole” (Wynne, 2020:71).

“There are no supportive programmes or activities in the organisation. We suffer from burnout. Organisations and supervisors only focus on us pushing files, numbers, statistics and targets as per their business plan for funding” (Chanyandura, 2016:65).

“The Framework compels the social workers, supervisors including the employer to ensure that supervision is conducted in line with the Framework” (Maupye, 2016:48).

Therefore, it is significant for employing organisations to ensure that regular supervision occurs and that proper supervision processes are followed for the benefit of service users. Employers should also ensure that supervision practices are executed to the satisfaction of both supervisors and supervisees. From the analysis, it can be deduced that social workers who were satisfied with supervision had supervisors who were available and maintained a positive supervisory relationship.

4.6.1.12. Requirements for supervisors to occupy the supervisory role

According to the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), the supervisor of a social worker should, amongst others, have a minimum of five years' experience as a social worker and should attend a supervision course presented by an accredited service provider recognised by the SACSSP. Supervisors need to be knowledgeable in the field of child protection to guide supervisees in the right direction, as expressed below:

“Supervisors need to be adequately trained so that they are able to provide mentorship and guidance to their subordinates. Given the complex nature of the social work profession, high caseloads and the pluralistic nature of the clients we serve, there is imperative need to equip us with the necessary skills to deliver competent and ethical social work services ...” (Chanyandura, 2016:67).

Some of the social workers expressed that their supervisors were not well equipped to provide supervision.

“... I tried to stay away from supervision as much as possible because umm in my opinion our supervisor or the head of the organisation she didn't know anything. She had been out of social work for more than ten years ... then she returned to social work, so she had no idea about the new Children's Act” (Hunter, 2016:95).

“I think our supervisors are not well equipped on how to supervise, but I don't know why because they are having enough working experience. I think they lack skills on how to conduct supervision” (Maupye, 2016:65).

Juby and Scannapieco (2007) assert that supervisors who are supportive continue to provide education and training to supervisees beyond the orientation period required in most child protection organisations. Therefore, child protection organisations need to support supervisors by clearly defining their job expectations and providing training on carrying out those tasks.

4.6.1.13. Supervision values, principles, and ethics

Values and ethics are fundamental to social work practice, which makes them critical in supervision. Child protection social workers in South Africa are assumed to have a certain level of values, principles, and ethics, which are enhanced through the ethical guidelines set out by the SACSSP (2007). The supervisor should be able to articulate knowledge of their own principles and values during interactions, and to show awareness and critical reflection of their own moral shaping. Parker (2017) notes that supervisors tend to be shaped more by the organisation's rules than by broader social work values, principles, and ethics. It is therefore not surprising that there was no evidence from the analysis about the implementation of values and ethical principles in supervision.

4.6.2. Synthesis of content analysis

The decline in quality social work service delivery, which necessitates supervision, is attributed to high caseloads; high stress levels due to personal, professional, and social demands; lack of resources to deliver services, as well as the unstructured supervision of social workers (DSD, 2006). Child protection social workers are particularly challenged by additional factors, such as working in dangerous areas, emotional exhaustion, and public criticism (Van Westhreenen, 2017). Therefore, the standardised South African Supervision Framework is a benchmark for gauging the performances of organisations, supervisors, and

supervisees. It is consequently important for organisations to consider the best practices recommended in Chapter 3 in line with the realities of social workers as shown from the stories shared from the selected studies analysed in this chapter.

Based on the content analysis, the supervision stories shared emerged from different parts of the country. This provided a diverse overview of the lived experiences of social workers and supervisors employed by the DSD and NGOs rendering child protection services. Child protection social workers' stories were captured in accordance with the constructionist approach that seeks to understand reality from the participants' viewpoint informed by their personal experiences within their environment (O'Donoghue, 2010). The stories revealed that supervision within child protection organisations is primarily administrative with less focus on support and education. The stories further showed that supervision in child protection is unstructured and lacks reflection, resulting in many incidences of harmful supervision. The main factors contributing to unstructured supervision are: (i) lack of resources within child protection organisations, (ii) limited supervision time due to supervisors' heavy caseloads, and (iii) a significantly uneven supervisor-to-supervisee ratio owing to the shortage of supervisors. Due to the unreasonable supervisor-supervisee ratios, supervisors attempt to avail themselves to supervisees, hence they exercise an open-door policy. However, such open-door policies lead to rushed conversations which may not be deemed adequate since no supervision process is followed. Supervision has thus become a response to a crisis in child protection, whether it be to intervene because of the Children's Act requirements or to canalise supervisees' reports. The consequence is that even though supervisors may wish to implement the supervision contract, due to the crisis intervention the supervision process hardly goes beyond establishing supervisees' PDP. The analysis has revealed that the implementation of the Supervision Framework in child protection practice is hindered by structural causes that perpetuate managerialism, productivity, and the ticking of boxes. Such an observation was also made by Engelbrecht (2013:463) who posed this question: "[A]lthough social work supervision policies and frameworks are apparently playing the required notes, why do we not hear the music?"

In light of the above analysis, some concluding remarks follow next to wrap up the chapter.

4.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to contextualise supervision practices within the child welfare sector, and explored how designated child protection organisations in South Africa are implementing the Supervision Framework. In light of the ensuing discussions, there is no question that supervision in child protection is essential, and that the work of child protection organisations is complex. There is no one existing protocol that can be applied to all situations confronting social workers in child protection organisations. Although there are best practices used to guide practice, it is important to note that the context and circumstances of each child and family vary. This means there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ strategy that can be adopted to promote effective supervision in the field of child protection. An analysis of the implementation of the Supervision Framework within a selected designated child protection organisation will follow in the empirical chapter.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this study was to gain an understanding of the stories of social workers in a designated child protection organisation regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). To attain this goal, specific research processes were followed to conduct this qualitative study. While Chapter 1 introduced the methodology to be employed, this chapter discusses the various research steps that were carried out to achieve the goal of this study. To understand the research methodology, this chapter provides the motivation for making certain decisions and following specific procedures throughout the duration of the research process. Neuman (2014) argues that the decisions and assumptions upon which the research is based needs to be questioned to understand the breadth and depth of the research process and the trustworthiness of the findings presented.

The steps for conducting qualitative research described by Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013) were followed in this study. The goal of the study was achieved through a series of objectives organised and discussed as chapters in this dissertation. To align with the deductive research approach adopted in this study, an exposition of contemporary research on supervision practices globally and in South Africa was analysed and discussed in Chapters 2–4. An empirical investigation on how the Supervision Framework is implemented within a designated child protection organisation is discussed in Chapter 6. The conclusions and recommendations of the study are presented in Chapter 7. The current chapter, however, presents the research paradigms, research approach, research process, and ethical considerations adhered to in this study. This part of the research provides insight into the research as a whole and ensures that the researcher followed ethically and scientifically sound methods of qualitative research.

5.2. RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Sefotho (2021) states that all scientific enquiries must be conducted within a specific paradigm. A research paradigm defines a researcher's philosophical orientation, informs the

way a researcher views the world, and influences the researcher's thinking about the research topic (Shah, Shah & Khaskhelly, 2018). Paradigms influence what should be studied, how it should be studied, and how the results of the study should be interpreted. Furthermore, the paradigm adopted in a study directs the researcher's investigation, which includes the data collection process, analysis procedures, and interpretation of the data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, Kamal, 2019).

Although paradigms have been conceptualised as a basic set of beliefs or the worldview of the researcher, they have different underlying assumptions regarding the nature of reality (ontology) and ways of knowing and understanding (epistemology) (Creswell, 2014; Sefotho, 2021). Sefotho (2021) cautions that researchers should be able to distinguish between the different hierarchical levels of decision making within the research process instead of being stuck on concepts which are used differently by various authors. In this study, the research paradigm encompasses the overarching principles that guided the research process and methodology selected based on the ontological and epistemological viewpoints of the researcher. This view is further observed by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:21, quoted by Kamal, 2019) who stated that, "ontological assumptions will give rise to epistemological assumptions which have methodological implications for the choice of particular data collection techniques". Thus, research dimensions influence the position of a researcher based on their underlying beliefs and interpretation of the world which affect how they perceive the research problem under study and has implications for every decision made in the research process.

The philosophical dimensions that guide social science research include *ontology*, *axiology*, *epistemology*, and *methodology* (Neuman, 2014; Raveneck & Rudman, 2013). These concepts are presented next based on the researcher's understanding and how they influenced the decisions made during the research process and cumulatively formulated an overall philosophical paradigm of the study depicted in the figure that follows.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the dimensions that informed the philosophical paradigm, research approach, and methodology adopted in this study.

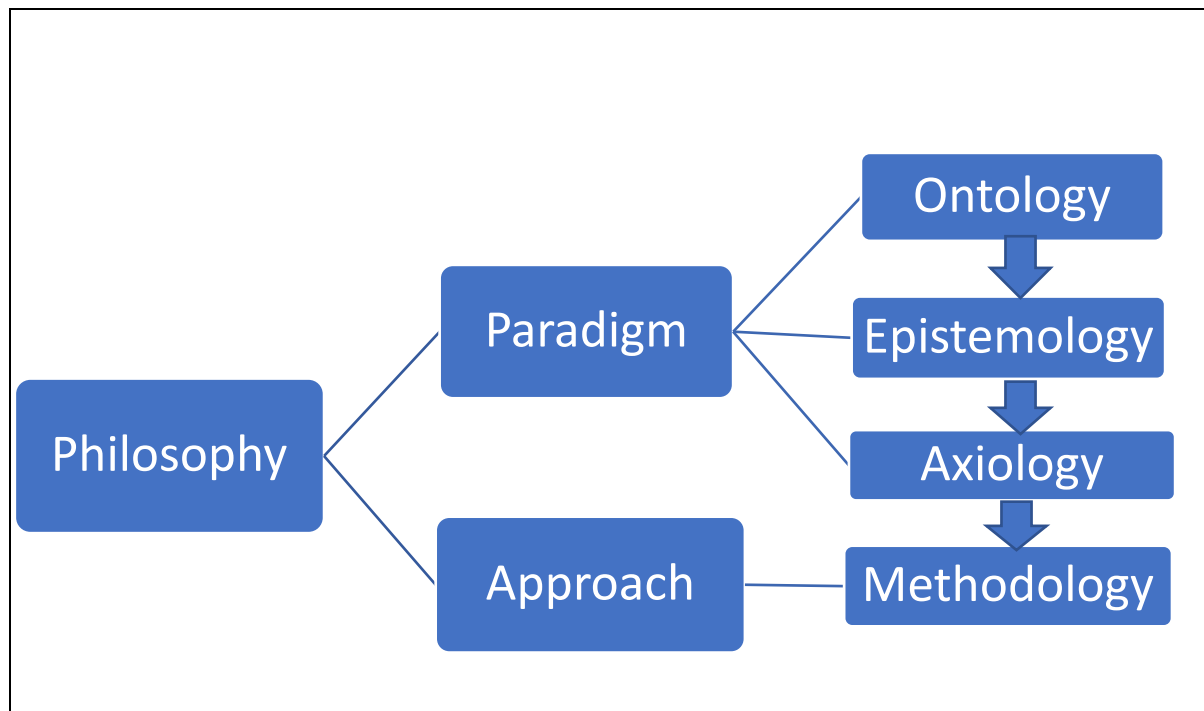


Figure 5.1: Dimensions that inform the philosophical paradigm
(adapted from Sefotho, 2021)

5.2.1. Ontology

Ontology refers to one's position on how reality is constructed (Neuman, 2011). Sefotho (2021) posits that a researcher must declare their professional ontological stance regarding how they see reality, whether it is through the lens of objectivism, interpretivism or pragmatism, as seen on the Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Positivism vs interpretivism research orientation

	Positivism-oriented		Interpretivism-oriented	
	Positivism	Post-positivism	Interpretivism	Constructivism
Ontology: What is reality?	Naïve realism. Objective reality.	Critical realism. Reality is imperfectly apprehendable.	Subject and object are dependent. The real essence of the object cannot be known. Reality is constructed.	
Epistemology: How do you know?	Dualism researcher- research. Replicable findings are “true”. Reality can be explained.	Dualism is not possible. Replicated findings are “probably” true. Impossible to fully explain reality.	Knowledge is interpreted. Reality can be understood.	Knowledge is constructed. Reality can be constructed.
Methodologies: How do you find it out?	Experimental, deductive. Mainly quantitative. Relationship cause-effect. Statistical analysis.	Experimental. Mainly quantitative methods, manipulative. Scientific Community plays an important role of validation. Statistical analysis. Probability sampling.	Interpretation. Mainly qualitative methods. Purposive and multipurpose sampling.	Mainly qualitative methods. Purposive and multipurpose sampling. Stakeholders involvement.

(Source: Iofrida, De Luca, Strano & Gulisano, 2014)

Table 5.1 shows examples of positivism vs interpretivism in terms of ontology, epistemology and methodology aligned to each research orientation. Proponents of positivism view reality as objective, and that it can be explained objectively. Whereas interpretivists view reality as subjective, and as constructed by the participants and researcher based on their lived realities. In this study, the interpretivism research orientation which views reality as subjective and socially constructed was adopted. Interpretivism is an ontological position which asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are constructed by the researcher and participants who are interdependent because reality is viewed as multifaceted with different interpretations (Bryman, 2012; Sefotho, 2021).

The ontological position adopted in this study is that of subjectivity because of the need to elicit stories of supervisees and supervisors when implementing the Supervision Framework in their organisation. The subjective stories of supervisees and supervisors were particularly important given that although the Supervision Framework outlines norms and standards of supervision in South Africa, organisations employing social workers are expected to customise the Supervision Framework to best suit their context. The context of a child protection organisation was another subjective dimension, as alluded to by Engelbrecht

(2013) who argued that it is essential to explore how organisations have implemented the Supervision Framework, because according to him, one size cannot fit all. Therefore, the data gathered from this study can be interpreted within a child protection sector in South Africa influenced by organisational policies, legislation, and the social construction of supervision shaped by language, culture, sociohistorical narratives, and shared meanings.

5.2.2. Epistemology

Epistemology is one's position on how knowledge is generated and understood based on their view of reality (ontology) (Sefotho, 2021). This study was constructed within an interpretivism paradigm which aligns with constructivism and the constructionist theoretical framework adopted in this study (Franklin, 1995; O'Donoghue, 2010). Some scholars refer to interpretivism synonymously with constructivism (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Kamal, 2019). However, in this study, constructivism was adopted as an epistemological stance that follows the assumption that individuals are part of the social system, so they influence and are influenced by the context in which they live and work. Constructivists see reality from the perspective of those who have experienced it. Thus, this study's epistemological position emphasises that individuals develop subjective meanings which are constructed socially and historically, by experiencing interaction with each other (Shah et al., 2018; Sefotho, 2021). The subjective views and data from the participants are viewed as acceptable knowledge contributing towards a deeper understanding of the research problem and sufficient to answer a research question (Ravenek & Rudman, 2013).

The interpretivist research paradigm and constructionism informed the study's constructionist theoretical framework that seeks to deconstruct social work supervision (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009) and offer an alternative for understanding supervision based on the social environment that shapes supervision processes and supervisory relationships. Hence, the human interpretive element is key because an interpretivist perspective, which has to do with the nature of reality that is socially constructed, may change (Neuman, 2014). Interpretivism is thus concerned with understanding reality from the participant's point of view based on personal experiences within a social context with the ideology that reality is subjective and context dependent. This aligns with a constructionist approach to supervision adopted in this study as it explores the external influences that shape supervision, as well as how supervision is constructed and practiced by supervisees and supervisors within a child protection organisation (O'Donoghue, 2003; Noble & Irwin, 2009).

5.2.3. Axiology

Axiology is the philosophical study of values that underpins a researcher's beliefs, perceptions, and decisions. Although positivism views science as value free, and values as having no place except for when choosing a topic, values are an integral part of social life and no group's values are wrong, but only different (Sefotho, 2021). Congruent with constructivism, the researcher's background, values, and personal qualities influenced the research process and actions during and after the completion of the research which is reflected on in the reflexivity report (Annexure 5). From an interpretivism lens, a value rich research perspective allows the researcher to pursue methods and procedures which allow the study to elicit an in-depth understanding of the data collected. This involves both deductive and inductive reasoning, as well as self-reflexivity to ensure that the data gathered by the researcher remains true to the participants' answers (Schurink et al., 2021a). This was achieved by using participants' direct narratives and extracts from the stories shared related to the subject matter under investigation. The place of values in the research process was solicited from one of the sub-themes that explored the values and ethical code that guide supervision.

In a nutshell, the researcher adopted an ontological stance that views reality as subjective instead of objective, which determined the epistemological dimension of constructivism, upon which an axiology role of incorporating values in the study was assumed. The paradigm ensures that the methods that are used will obtain data that suit the philosophical dimensions of the research and ultimately assist in answering the research question. An interpretivist position was taken under the premise that sufficient knowledge will be gained through participants' stories that are value rich, varied, and interpreted from the researcher's perspective. The research paradigm adopted in the study guided the researcher's decision-making process, the research approach, and the methodology chosen, as discussed next.

5.3. RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach chosen, whether it is a quantitative, qualitative or a mixed methods inquiry, is driven by one's research paradigm and the data one wishes to collect. The interpretivism philosophical paradigm is associated with the qualitative research approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Sefotho, 2021). This is the case because the paradigm seeks to

understand a phenomenon under study from the experiences of the participants using different data collection sources. A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study. Through qualitative inquiry, the researcher constructs meanings from the phenomena under study based on their own experiences and that of the participants in the study. Furthermore, within a qualitative study, the research problem is understood, defined, and discussed through interpretations of subjective meaning. Although reflexivity and bias are recognised and accounted for in the research process, influences from both social science and personal experience are accepted in this approach because findings cannot be widely generalised but are context bound (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Fouché (2021:42) regards qualitative research as an interpretative approach aimed at “understanding social life and the meaning people attach to it”. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) concur that qualitative research seeks to discover and describe narratively what people do in their daily lives and what their actions mean to them. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) further observe that the overall purpose of qualitative research is to obtain an understanding of how people make sense of their lives, delineate the process of meaning making, and describe how people interpret what they experience. This assertion guided the goal of this study which was to gain an understanding of the stories of social workers in a designated child protection organisation regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework.

Qualitative research captures participants’ experiences in their own words and elicits the meanings participants ascribe to their experiences (Fouché, 2021). As alluded to in Chapter 1, the qualitative approach was deemed relevant to answer the research question that explored the participants’ stories of the implementation of the Supervision Framework in a designated child protection organisation. This was done within the realm of a constructionist approach focused on the supervision of social workers. Moreover, qualitative research emphasises the importance of context in gaining an understanding of participants’ stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This influenced the researcher’s decision to select a designated child protection organisation as a case study to determine how the selected organisation conceptualised, contextualised and implemented the Supervision Framework within their work environment. The organisational context enhanced the rich descriptions of the social workers and supervisors’ experiences because no studies have been conducted on the implementation of the Supervision Framework within a child protection organisation.

Another important characteristic of qualitative research is the reasoning adopted during the research process (Maree, 2016). This study incorporates both inductive and deductive reasoning. *Inductive reasoning* refers to moving from the particular to the general after the data has been analysed to see whether any pattern that suggests a relationship between the variables emerges. While *deductive reasoning* moves from the general to the specific that might inform theory (Babbie, 2016; Fouché, 2021). In this study, deductive reasoning was adopted by conducting an in-depth literature review to identify a research gap and gain an understanding of contemporary issues in social work supervision globally.

Existing research was further incorporated in the discussion of findings to interpret the data collected and make deductions thereof. A deductive approach guided the formulation of the research question and the in-depth literature study, which led to the collection of empirical data and analysis thereof. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posit that the inductive process enables the researcher to gather data to build concepts and order data into larger themes from particular to the general. Additionally, quotes from data need to be cited to support the findings of the study contributing to the descriptive nature of qualitative research. Thus, through inductive reasoning, the empirical findings of the study contributed to new knowledge that was omitted from the literature review. The flexibility of movement between deductive and inductive reasoning throughout the research process is much needed within a qualitative research approach. The methodological dimension is further explored in the next section in terms of the research process followed that describes the research design, sampling procedures, data collection method, and analysis of data.

5.4. RESEARCH PROCESS

Research methodology is a framework that depicts a scientific way to solve a research problem systematically following a specific research process (Sefotho, 2021). A qualitative research process often progresses in a circular fashion instead of linear (Bless et al., 2013; Neuman, 2014). The spiral nature of qualitative research allows flexibility in all aspects of the research process because of the possibility of people's circumstances changing. So, the researcher should be able to adapt and change the process when necessary to suit emerging issues based on the participants' context. Given the lockdown regulations and deterrence of research that requires physical contact during the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the research procedures had to be amended, and the process did not flow as it was planned when

conceptualising the study. The research stages that characterise the qualitative research process described by Bless et al., (2013:21) were followed and are presented below:

- Selection and formulation of the research problem
- Reviewing literature
- Developing a research method
- Developing a data collection instrument
- Sampling
- Data collection and analysis
- Interpretation of results
- Conclusions and recommendations
- Dissemination of results

5.4.1. Selection and formulation of the research problem

When conceptualising a research study, the researcher needs to formulate a clear research focus by identifying a researchable problem which is relevant in the field of study. After identifying the research problem, the researcher formulates a research question that requires consideration of the purpose of the research through a preliminary review of relevant literature (Bless et al., 2013). The preliminary literature review which was done at this stage focused on establishing a justifiable rationale for the study while highlighting the relevant knowledge gaps in existing research and choosing a research approach. Research problems emanate from practice, theory, previous research, and personal interest or intellectual curiosity.

Against this backdrop, when I was a social worker within the DSD in the Mopani District of Limpopo Province, I observed with concern the lack of structured supervision even after the introduction of the Supervision Framework in the sector. Although the Supervision Framework was well accepted by social workers and supervisors in the district, the implementation thereof remained to be seen. Shokane (2016) investigated the implementation of the Supervision Framework in the Mopani District through an evaluative study after observing that social workers and supervisors in the Limpopo Province experience challenges in implementing the Supervision Framework. Shokane (2016) recommended that further research should be conducted in other districts in the Limpopo Province to ascertain whether similar findings can be drawn with a larger sample to enable the generalisation of the findings.

However, with my research interests in both supervision and social policy, I became keen to investigate how the Supervision Framework is implemented in other organisations besides the DSD. Thus, the selection of the research topic was stimulated by previous research in the field of social work supervision and my own field practice experience as a social worker. Despite the existence of extensive research on supervision globally and in South Africa as discussed in Chapters 2–4, there are no studies that investigated how the Supervision Framework is implemented using a qualitative approach. Hence, I selected a research topic that seeks to gain an understanding of the stories of social workers in a designated child protection organisation regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The framework requires organisations to contextualise the Supervision Framework to achieve their mandate and meet the needs of their client systems in various settings. Drawing again on my interest in social policy, I observed that organisational policies and legislations influence supervision, especially within child protection organisations. The Children’s Act, No. 38 of 2005, is one example of legislation that directs how social workers function, and ultimately, how supervision is implemented without clear guidelines stipulated in the framework. A designated child protection organisation is unique in that it is assigned with the responsibility to ensure the protection of children as stipulated in Chapter 7 of the Children’s Act 2005. Therefore, it was imperative to explore how a designated child protection organisation in South Africa with unique features, has contextualised the framework to meet its own needs and achieve its main objectives related to supervision.

5.4.2. Literature review

Researchers review literature to establish what has been studied on the research question, thereby increasing the researcher’s understanding of the concept under investigation (Bless et al., 2013). Mouton (2011) is of the view that all academic research is built on previous research and that the process of conducting research includes the review of existing literature to indicate where the current research fits into existing research. Fouché (2021) concur that the purpose of a literature review is threefold. Firstly, it demonstrates the assumptions underlying the research questions. Secondly, it demonstrates the knowledge that the researcher has about research and traditions in the research area. Lastly, it reveals identified knowledge gaps in the previous research and how the proposed study will fill these gaps. Consequently, researchers can determine whether their study agrees with or disputes the findings of previous research

or attempts to replicate an earlier study or introduce a new concept. According to Fouché (2021), a literature review done at the beginning of a study offers guiding principles that may assist in the structuring of the data collection process. While the literature review carried out towards the end of the study explains the data and provides evidence of the findings in relation to the existing body of knowledge. It is worth noting that having followed both deductive and inductive reasoning in this study, literature was reviewed throughout the process, and it was not exhausted at any point during the research process.

According to Mouton (2011), literature review in social science research should be topical rather than dated. However, there may be some seminal studies that are of value, although older. For this reason, the literature review included the seminal work of various international and local scholars such as Du Plessis (1965), Kadushin (1992), Munson (1993), Tsui (1997), Botha (2002), O'Donoghue (2003), as well as contemporary research (Engelbrecht, 2019; Mo et al., 2020; O'Donoghue & Engelbrecht, 2021). Moreover, Mouton (2011) points out that a good literature review must be well-organised with a variety of sources and that researchers should not only rely on the Internet. Although it was possible to access textbooks in the library prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Internet became the prominent and reliable source of information when the libraries were closed. Hence, the process used for finding literature included online searches for peer reviewed articles, library e-book searches, and university repositories that had relevant master's and doctoral studies conducted within a South African context and several South African databases.

In terms of organising the sources, a systematic approach towards reading, organising, and storing the literature was adopted. To easily retrieve the sources, the literature was organised using the authors' surnames and year of publication and filed in folders that each represented a theme relevant to the research topic using Mendeley Reference Manager with a backup on OneDrive. The literature search process and filing system encouraged the researcher to actively read, while looking for patterns and gaps in the literature. Three literature review chapters (Chapter 2–4) were presented in accordance with the research objectives. In-depth literature review led to the formulation of a theoretical framework, use of relevant methodology, and discussion of research findings that are interpreted in relation to existing theory.

In this study, the literature review was used in the contextualisation of the study to argue a case for the significance of understanding how the Supervision Framework is implemented.

This was achieved by identifying a knowledge gap from previous research and giving reasons on how the current study adds to research in the field of social work supervision explained under the rationale and problem statement in Chapter 1. The research reviewed, analysed, and discussed in Chapters 2–4 emanating from textbooks, peer reviewed articles, and dissertations reveal that although there is local literature available on social work supervision, especially on the functions, types, the process and challenges of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2019b; 2021; Wynne, 2020; Atkins, 2019; Ncube, 2018; Parker, 2017; Shokane, 2016), no study has been conducted on how the Supervision Framework is implemented in a child protection organisation in South Africa. As reflected upon in Chapter 4, existing research on supervision within the child protection sector was observed to be “recycled”, whereby one author refers to the other without building theory or adding to the body of knowledge. This has led to a mere linear description of what social work supervision should be, hence they focus solely on managerial dimensions that should be visible in supervision, and not necessarily on the unseen clinical dimensions of supervision. This is also evident from the conclusions discussed in Chapter 7.

Hence, this study was necessary to explore the views of social workers working in a child protection organisation on how the Supervision Framework has been implemented since its inception in 2012. Through deductive reasoning, the literature review guided the formulation of the semi-structured interview schedule and was useful to identify broader themes from the findings. The findings were either refuted or supported by existing literature which was reviewed following inductive reasoning applied in the empirical study to substantiate the narratives of participants. Broadly, the literature review is a prominent feature of this study’s framework and a strength of the interview schedule which elicited findings that contribute to the body of knowledge in South Africa on social work supervision. Furthermore, it significantly adds to understanding the role of social workers and supervisors in the supervision process aimed at strengthening supervision practices within child protection organisations.

5.4.3. Developing a research method

After clarifying the research question and reviewing preliminary literature, the researcher developed a research method that entails choosing a research design and sampling method (see section 5.4.5). At this point, the researcher determined the most appropriate way of gathering data to shed light on the research question (Bless et al., 2013). To answer the

research question, a case study research design was utilised. Case study involves the study of a case within a specific context or setting (Yin, 2014). The purpose of a case study is to obtain intimate familiarity with the social world and to look for patterns in the research participants' lives, words, and actions in the context of the case studied as a whole (Fouché, 2021). Drawing from the research paradigm underpinning this study, the subjective nature of a case study is important because it enables the researcher to analyse and interpret how participants think, feel, and act to gain an understanding of the supervisors and supervisees' experiences regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework within their organisation.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), an instrumental case study aims to explore, describe, and understand a specific issue, problem, or concern to gain new knowledge which may inform policy development and implementation. Yin (2014) argues that it is appropriate to use an instrumental case study design if the investigation seeks to answer "how" and "why" questions, and if the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions, because they are relevant to the phenomena. In a single instrumental case study, the researcher focuses on an issue and selects a case to illustrate the issue by drawing patterns, assertions, and conclusions from the findings based on the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An instrumental case study was thus used to gain a better understanding of supervision within a child protection organisation. Given that this is an instrumental case study, specific details of the organisation were not deemed essential to the research, but rather the case study provided a clear context for the field of practice in which data was collected (see section 5.4.5).

A research method is also based on the purpose of the research, whether it should be an exploratory, descriptive, correlational, or explanatory design. The purpose of the study can be to gain insight into a situation, to describe a phenomenon, or to test the relationship between variables (Fouché, 2021). Exploratory research determines the breadth and scope of a research topic and generates questions. While descriptive research is interested in describing the phenomenon using verbal narratives from interviews (Bless et al., 2013). A combination of an exploratory and descriptive research design was fitting for this study that investigated the implementation of the Supervision Framework in a child protection organisation given the limited research on this subject area. Essentially, a case study, with the purpose of exploring and describing the Supervision Framework, was suitable for this study because the researcher was interested in the supervisors and supervisees' stories, meaning, and supervision experiences within their work environment based on the constructionist approach.

5.4.4. Developing a data collection instrument

In qualitative research, interviews and focus groups discussions are the commonly used data collection methods. One-on-one interviews are the most common interviewing method used in qualitative studies, with the dominance of semi-structured interviews. The latter allows for the ordering of questions that are arranged according to the priority that is accorded to each topic by the interviewer (Bless et al., 2013; Babbie, 2016). In this study, one-on-one telephonic interviews were used as the data collection method with semi-structured interview schedules utilised as a research instrument. In line with the interpretive paradigm and exploratory research, interviews were used because the aim of the study was to explore and describe participants' unique perceptions and understanding of supervision in their organisation as they allowed the researcher to probe and ask clarifying questions.

Although qualitative interviews are usually conducted face-to-face, research has shown that both telephonic and face-to-face interviews provide data of comparable quantity and quality (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Jowett, 2020). In their studies, Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) and Vogl (2013) found no difference in the number, the nature, or the depth of responses when comparing telephonic and face-to-face interviews. With the COVID-19 pandemic causing havoc across the globe and continuing to ravage South Africa, telephonic interviews were an ideal mode of data collection to comply with social distancing regulations enforced by the government. Telephonic interviews enabled the researcher to establish rapport with the participants without any bias based on the appearance of the researcher or the participant, allowing the participants to express their personal opinions freely. Although telephonic interviews have been criticised for their inability to assess non-verbal responses and loss of the relational component often cultivated in a face-to-face interview (Farooq & de Villiers, 2017), telephonic interviews were convenient for both the researcher and the participants because they took place when the participants were available and, in an environment, where they felt most comfortable. An additional advantage of telephonic interviews was that they did not have any financial cost to the participants because the researcher is the one who called the participants.

When using interviews, an interview schedule should be designed (Bless et al., 2013). Social workers and supervisors, which included the national manager, were interviewed using two different sets of interview schedules. The social workers' interviews primarily focused on their experiences regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework as recipients

of supervision. Meanwhile, supervisors were interviewed from a supervision provider's point of view. Thus, different questions were asked based on the role of the participants within the organisation. The interview schedules were comprised of open-ended questions to obtain the views of participants on the implementation of the Supervision Framework in a child protection organisation. The semi-structured interviews were flexible and allowed the researcher to probe further and seek clarity on some of the interview questions. This means that the questions were not mandatory or fixed but were prepared in advance to guide the flow of the interview and to change the sequence when necessary (Marlow & Boone, 2005; Shah et al., 2018). The semi-structured interview schedules enabled the participants to speak more broadly and openly about supervision practices in their organisation and afforded them an opportunity to respond freely and extensively as they wish. The interview schedules were based on a set of predetermined questions, and it was used as an appropriate instrument to engage with the participants based on a broad range of themes identified from the literature study. The interview questions were arranged in a logical sequence, which made it easier for the participants to respond. During the interviews, not all questions were asked as participants would provide answers when responding to other questions and the questions allowed them to expand on their answers.

After formulating the interview schedules, a pilot study was conducted with one social worker and one supervisor from the organisation who met the inclusion criteria to be included in the study. Sampson (2004) observes that pre-testing is useful not only to refine the research instruments, but also to highlight significant issues such as research validity, ethics, and representation. A pilot study also reveals whether the interview questions need to be refined, modified, or rephrased for clarity. It helps the researcher foresee and eliminate possible challenges that might be encountered in the actual study (Dikko, 2016). It thus affords the researcher the opportunity to make modifications to conduct quality interviews during the main investigation. In this study, a semi-structured interview was conducted with one social worker and one supervisor to test the effectiveness of the interview schedule in collecting data. In the current study, a few minor tweaks were made to some of the interview questions following the pilot interview.

5.4.5. Sampling

In qualitative research, a sample of the population is selected to understand the phenomenon under investigation, so a representative sample is not a requirement. Rather, the researcher

needs to select participants that possess the most characteristics associated with the subject under investigation (Bless et al., 2013). Out of 88 social workers and 9 supervisors (regional managers) in the organisation under study, 20 supervisees and 7 supervisors were selected using non-probability purposive sampling. Social workers and supervisors were chosen as the unit of analysis for the research to gain in-depth insight into supervision practices within the organisation under study. Additionally, the national manager of the organisation served as a key informant in the study. The participants were chosen based on their different roles and experience in social work practice to gain diverse perspectives on the implementation of the Supervision Framework at different levels of responsibility within the organisation.

The total number of participants was decided on the basis that interviews with the selected participants would produce the required data for the researcher to do an in-depth description and analysis of findings (Ritchie et al., 2003; Green & Thorogood, 2014). Although the initial total number of participants proposed was 30, the process of data collection reached the saturation point whereby the narratives of the participants became repetitive. A total of 28 participants were interviewed in this study. Data saturation was reached after the 15th interview with the supervisees, and after the 7th interview with the supervisors. Purposive sampling was relevant for this study because it is based on the researcher's judgement and the sample is composed of the elements, which in the researcher's opinion, contains most of the characteristics and representative attributes of the population being studied (Marlow & Boone, 2005; Strydom, 2021).

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the organisation selected as a case study. As discussed in section 5.4.3, a designated child protection organisation served as an instrumental case study offering a clear context for the field of practice in which data was collected. The case study was purposively selected given that it is the oldest and largest child protection organisation in South Africa with unique features, such as having a supervision policy. Although specific details of the case study are omitted to maintain the confidentiality of the participating organisation, the following is a brief overview of the organisation.

The participating organisation functions as a non-profit organisation (NPO) guided by the NPO Act (RSA, 1997b). The organisation has a managerial board which consists of volunteers, the director, and national manager for child protection services. The organisation has branches in different provinces, including the Western Cape. The organisation offers various community projects, social programmes, and social work services at different regions

of the Western Cape with regional managers (social work supervisors) tasked with ensuring effective service delivery through management tasks and supervision. The organisation receives funding from the government with a portion of this funding dedicated to statutory work through a memorandum of agreement with the DSD. As a designated child protection organisation, it is assigned with the responsibility to ensure the protection of children as stipulated in Chapter 7 of the Children's Act 2005. Furthermore, due to the nature of services provided by the organisation, such as the investigation and assessment of child abuse cases as well as the removal of children where necessary, supervision is of paramount importance (RSA, 2005). Hence, it was imperative to explore how the Supervision Framework is implemented in such an organisation.

5.4.6. Data collection and analysis

The purpose of this section is to discuss and reflect on the steps followed in the collection of data and analysis. The method of data collection and analysis are aligned with the constructionist approach. O'Donoghue (2003) asserts that a constructionist approach to supervision gives voice to research participants and the stories they share about their own practice and on which they construct meaning based on their social and personal discourses, thus influencing the development and process of social work supervision. Hence, the data collected was not only on what the organisation is doing, but how they are implementing the Supervision Framework from the perspective of supervisors and social workers.

5.4.6.1. Data collection process

The collection of data began with gaining entry to the participants. Fouché and Schurink (2011) state that the successful execution of the study design and data gathering is usually determined by the accessibility of the research setting and the researcher's ability to build and maintain relationships and agreements with gatekeepers and participants. In this study, access was gained by seeking permission for the study through the national manager of the organisation. Seeing the necessity and importance of the study, the gatekeepers eagerly cooperated. After permission was granted by the participating organisation, a list of supervisors with their work contact details was provided to the researcher to recruit participants. The supervisors were then requested to send the official contact details of social workers who met the inclusion criteria within their region.

The data collection process was three-folded, though one phase was not dependent on the other: (1) social workers were first interviewed to obtain insights on their experiences of how the Supervision Framework has been implemented in the organisation from their perspective as frontline social workers, (2) followed by interviews with the supervisors. (3) Thereafter, the national manager of the organisation was interviewed as a key informant in the study. Using different semi-structured interview schedules for social workers and supervisors created an opportunity to explore the experiences of the different cohorts of participants without necessarily comparing their experiences but rather gaining various stories regarding the implementation of Supervision Framework in the organisation within a constructionist lens.

There was however a delay in recruiting the participants given the initial anxiety, confusion, and uncertainty surrounding the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential impact it would have on both the personal and professional lives of the participants. Jowett (2020) cautions that the health and well-being of participants and researchers should take priority over research dissertation deadlines and that unnecessary stress should not be exerted on participants. Taking cognisance of Jowett's views and after recognising that the pandemic will be with us for a while, researchers and practitioners alike were propelled to accept the new norm of social distancing, virtual meetings, and even unconventional methods of data collection for research projects. Thus, researchers were encouraged to consider alternative ways of collecting data that do not involve physical contact. For this reason, the researcher revised the data collection method of face-to-face interviews that was initially proposed at the outset of the study and submitted an urgent amendment to the Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE) at Stellenbosch University for review and approval.

After receiving the amended ethical clearance, this was sent to the organisation and a list of supervisors with their official contact details was requested to recruit participants. An invitation to participate in the study was sent via email to all the supervisors and a request was made for them to share the official contact details of the social workers who met the inclusion criteria to participate in the study, so that the researcher could recruit them. After receiving the contact details of the social workers, the researcher emailed them and provided her contact details so that they could let her know if they are interested in participating in the study. Where official telephone numbers were provided, the researcher invited those potential

participants via telephone. Participants were recruited from the beginning of October 2020. During the recruitment process, either via email or telephonic, the prospective participants were briefed about the purpose of the research and a consent form was sent via email for them to sign should they volunteer to participate. Appointments for the telephonic interviews were then arranged with the volunteering participants about the date and time convenient for both parties that would not interfere with participants' work schedule.

The telephonic interviews were conducted from the third week of October 2020 until the second week of December 2020. The duration of each interview was approximately 50 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English. Although most of the participants were Afrikaans-speaking, they understood the questions asked and were very responsive. In instances where some of the participants struggled to express themselves fully in English, the researcher would paraphrase their responses to make sure that she understood what they meant. This was part of member checking and contributed to the credibility of the findings. Thus, language differences did not pose as a barrier.

Moreover, qualitative data collection includes the use of audio recordings to retrieve spoken words (Bless et al., 2013). With the consent of the participants, an audio-recorder was used to record the interviews. To facilitate the process, the phone was switched to speaker, and the audio recorder placed next to the cell phone speaker. The audio recordings were later transcribed into word documents and the documents were uploaded onto ATLAS-ti to enable coding and data analysis. The interviews were transcribed through means of denaturalised transcriptions. This removed unique elements of speech such as pauses and non-verbal factors, incorrect grammar, and unnecessary stutters for the purpose of obtaining purely informational narratives whilst being cautious not to influence the understanding of what the participants shared and the conclusions that are drawn from the data (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005).

5.4.6.2. Data analysis

In qualitative studies, data analysis involves the process of breaking large volumes of data into smaller units and making connection among the various elements, thereby providing the basis for new descriptions (Bless et al., 2013; Gray, 2018). Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data. Marshall and Rossman (2011) state that, thematic data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among the categories of the collected data. The ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software was used for coding and management of the

data. Several scholars observed that the use of Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) such as ATLAS.ti increases research credibility and transparency of the data analysis process because it can be better described than manual data analysis (Bryman, 2012; Schurink et al., 2021b).

Although CAQDAS arguably enhances the quality of data analysis by offering researchers to reflect explicitly on the process of analysis, they do not do the work for the researcher. Rather, they assist researchers with other tasks related to data analysis such as storing, organising, and categorising data creatively. ATLAS.ti offers a systematic approach to analysing unstructured data, while maintaining focus on the analysed materials. This software assisted the researcher in organising data from the interviews by offering accessible tools to manage, extract, compare, explore, and reassemble meaningful pieces from large amounts of data in a creative, flexible, yet systematic way (Friese, 2020). In some instances, the researcher used images and tables to creatively demonstrate how data was captured, organised and analysed through ATLAS.ti. While using ATLAS.ti for coding and organising data, she followed the six steps of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). These are described in more detail below.

a. Familiarising yourself with your data

This phase entails reading and rereading the text to become familiar with the content while making observations and generating ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, before commencing with data immersion (Schurink et al., 2021b), the transcripts of all 28 interviews conducted with the participants were uploaded and clearly labelled on ATLAS.ti. The transcripts were further grouped into supervisees and supervisors' folders to easily retrieve them for coding (see Image 5.1). **Image 5.1** reveals a total of 28 documents (transcripts) uploaded into ATLAS.ti with the document number (e.g. D 1) and participants' pseudonyms (e.g. Supervisee Dora) used to label each document. Of the 28 documents, one was a transcript with the National Manager interview, 20 transcripts from social workers' interviews (Supervisees), and 7 transcripts for supervisors shown under Document Groups (highlighted in blue in Image 5.1). After uploading the transcripts on ATLAS.ti, the researcher familiarised herself with the data by reading the transcripts repeatedly, while searching for meanings and patterns from the data with an analytical gaze.



Image 5.1: Document manager

b. Generating initial codes

After developing an initial understanding of the data, the first formal steps of data analysis begin through coding by identifying categories from the transcripts also referred to as ‘codes’ – that help index data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). To generate the initial codes, the researcher categorised the data in terms of significance and what appears interesting in the data. Each transcript was coded as demonstrated with the number in brackets next to each document seen on Image 5.1. Remarks were also written in the comments section of the transcripts analysed based on the researcher’s impressions of the data (yellow marks on Image 5.1 above signifies notes on the transcript). The codes developed at this stage were either broad or narrow. **Image 5.2** shows a total of 55 initial codes generated and how many times (number in brackets) the codes have been used in all transcripts.

Codes (55)	
- Effects of the current pandemic (21-0) ~	DOS_Theories (16-0) ~
+ Effects of the current pandemic (19-0) ~	DOS_Values and ethics (20-0) ~
Anti-discriminatory policy (11-0) ~	Duration_Supervisory Role (7-0) ~
Anti-discriminatory practices - SS Relationship (10-0) ~	Formal vs Informal Supervision (13-0) ~
Custodians of the Supervision Framework (8-0) ~	Goal of supervision (20-1) ~
DOS_Adult education principles (12-0) ~	Labelling supervision document (10-0) ~
DOS_Functions of supervision - educational (18-0) ~	Legislation (9-0) ~
DOS_Functions of supervision - supportive (28-0) ~	PDP - (4-0) ~
DOS_Functions of supervision - administrative (22-0) ~	PDP + (16-0) ~
DOS_Supervision activities: Coaching (3-0) ~	Performance evaluation (22-0) ~
DOS_Supervision activities: Consultation (19-0) ~	Personal Competency (13-0) ~
DOS_Supervision activities: Mentoring (7-0) ~	Ratio_Supervisor vs Supervisee (8-0) ~
SS Duration - Group (14-0) ~	Recommendations (19-0) ~
SS Duration - Individual (18-0) ~	Roles of the supervisor (25-1) ~
SS Frequency - Group (16-0) ~	
SS Frequency - Individual (22-0) ~	
SS implementation - Group (16-0) ~	
SS implementation- Individual (27-0) ~	
SS Planning (10-0) ~	
SSP_Supervision Framework Development_No (6-0) ~	
SSP_Supervision Framework Development_YES (9-0) ~	
Supervision contract (24-0) ~	
Supervision policy - implementation (4-0) ~	
Supervision policy - mandatory (22-0) ~	
Supervision policy implementation_Challenges (10-0) ~	
Supervision policy implementation_M&E (6-0) ~	
Supervision policy_Advantages (7-0) ~	
Supervision policy Content (5-0) ~	

Image 5.2: Codes

All of the data was coded using short phrases and words that are relevant to the study emanating from the transcripts, literature, and the Supervision Framework, such as the goal of supervision, supervision functions and activities as determinants of supervision (DOS_Supervision activities; DOS_Functions of supervision – educational), group supervision session implementation (SS Implementation – Group), supervision contract, roles of the supervisor, and so on.

c. Searching for themes

Theme development is a phase of pattern identification and formation of codes into themes (Schurink et al., 2021b). Although boundaries between coding and theme development can be blurred sometimes, Braun and Clarke (2013) explain the difference between codes and themes using an analogy that themes are the wall of a house and codes are individual bricks making up the wall. A code captures one idea whereas the theme has a central organising concept with lots of different aspects relating to that concept (Schurink et al., 2021b:408). The stage of searching for themes is a process referred to as *axial coding* that takes place when the researcher combines some parts of the data identified in open coding by making connections between categories (Gray, 2018; Schurink et al., 2021b).

This phase involves analysing the codes and merging each code with an identified theme (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Schurink et al., 2021b). Bless et al., (2013) suggest that each code should be clearly defined and that a code definition should include at least a title and a description of what kind of data is categorised under the code. Table 5.1 below lists the code names and the code definitions that were derived from the interview questions. The Table further reveals the themes generated from the transcripts, literature, and the Supervision Framework under code groups.

After generating the initial codes (categories), the different codes were then grouped into potential themes (code groups) for in-depth analysis. The data segments were compared and grouped together based on the codes assigned using different colours for coordination of related codes that fall within a particular theme as reflected on Image 5.2 and in Table 5.2. **Table 5.2** shows examples of different codes that were grouped into one theme using colours. For instance, red represents the theme “COVID-19 influence on supervision”, which is formed by to codes (+positive and -negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic).

Table 5.2: Code framework

Code (Categories)	Code Definition (Interview Questions)	Code Groups (Themes)	Supervision Framework
• - Effects of the current pandemic	How COVID-19 negatively affected supervision practices within the organisation	COVID-19 Influence on Supervision	
• + Effects of the current pandemic	How COVID-19 positively affected supervision practices within the organisation	COVID-19 Influence on Supervision	
• Anti-discriminatory policy	Does the organisation have an anti-discriminatory policy	Anti Discriminatory Practices	Supervision Policy
• Anti-discriminatory practices - SS Relationship	Do supervisees experience any discrimination in the supervisory relationship	Anti Discriminatory Practices	Supervision Policy
• Custodians of the Supervision Framework	Persons/Organisations responsible for ensuring that the supervision framework is implemented	Supervision Policy - Implementation	Supervision Policy
• DOS_Adult education principles	Determinant of supervision (DOS)_ How adult education principles is implemented in the supervisory relationship		Supervision Policy
• DOS_Functions of supervision – educational	How the educational function of supervision is implemented	Functions of Supervision	Functions of Supervision (Supervision Policy)
• DOS_Functions of supervision – supportive	How the supportive function of supervision is implemented	Functions of Supervision	Functions of Supervision
• DOS_Functions of supervision - administrative	How the administrative function of supervision is implemented	Functions of Supervision	Functions of Supervision
• DOS_Supervision activities: Coaching	How coaching is implemented	Supervision Activities	Supervision Activities
• DOS_Supervision activities: Consultation	How consultation is implemented	Supervision Activities	Supervision Activities
• DOS_Supervision activities: Mentoring	How mentoring is implemented	Supervision Activities	Supervision Activities
• DOS_Theories	Theories, models and perspectives guiding supervision practices	Theories and Legislation	Supervision Policy

d. Reviewing themes

Reviewing the themes entails choosing the core category systematically by relating it to other categories, validating relationships between codes through selective coding (Schurink et al., 2021b). Although ATLAS.ti was helpful in enabling the researcher to select and reuse existing codes with similar text when reviewing the data, broader themes were eventually adopted from the literature to present the findings systematically in Chapter 6. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that each theme should have enough data to support them and validate the meanings reflected in the data as a whole.

For example, **Image 5.3** shows extracts from different transcripts in which the quotations were coded based on the determinants of supervision with the code DOS-Theories. Moreover, at this phase, the themes generated initially (code groups) were refined to fit into the categories that were identified from the participants' stories and linked with the broader themes. From the grouped categories, the code groups were classified as sub-themes after revisiting each theme to check logical patterns from the data. The sub-themes were further reviewed, refined, and ultimately defined in accordance with the determinants of supervision emerging from the literature and the Supervision Framework (see Table 6.3 on themes, sub-themes, and categories in Chapter 6).

1:27 p 6 in <i>Supervisee Dara</i> he loves to work from s strength based	↗	1 Coding	
3:23 p 4 in <i>Supervisee Lebo</i> they will come and remind us of the skills we have and the knowledge we have to have to handle a case and also they will also just take us back to a previous case we handled so that we can chat and then see that we can do it you see or we can handle a difficult case so we focus more on the strength-base theory and the person-centred theory	↗	1 Coding	
4:6 p 2 in <i>Supervisee Mandy</i> every child is unique so she will focus on that and she focus more on strengths, and not really admin that I'd nog one of my strengths and then she will encourage to be better in my admin but we talking to her about new techniques that I have got so she will focus on those kind of things and researc	↗	1 Coding	
4:24 p 7 in <i>Supervisee Mandy</i> person centred approach, we also do the systems theory because we are looking at from every file the whole place, the sergeants involved, the community, this is now the files of the clients	↗	1 Coding	
6:15 ¶ 44 in <i>Supervisee Michelle</i> trauma focus of effective behavioural therapy trainin	↗	1 Coding	
6:30 ¶ 83 in <i>Supervisee Michelle</i> developmental theory	↗	1 Coding	

Image 5.3: Quotations

e. Defining and naming themes

After developing a thematic table (refer to Table 6.3), each theme was given a name, defined and analysed. The themes were further divided into sub-themes and categories. This stage determined the essence of each theme and what aspect of the data each theme captured (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each individual theme was analysed, telling a story based on the interview questions asked. Verbatim quotes were used to support each theme, as presented in Chapter 6.

f. Producing the report

The write-up of the themes in Chapter 6 provides a coherent and logical account of the story the data tells. Sufficient evidence of the themes is provided with literature cited to support or contend the data, making an argument in relation to the research question. Friese (2020) asserts that visualisation can be a key element in discovering connections between concepts, interpreting findings, and effectively communicating research results. ATLAS.ti uses networks and word clouds to help explore and present codes by adding a "right brain" approach to qualitative data analysis. Networks in ATLAS.ti represent complex information by intuitively making it accessible through graphic means using nodes and links. While word clouds are a method for visually presenting text data with the most frequent concepts used enlarged and bold (Friese, 2020). The visual presentation of ATLAS.ti networks and word

clouds was helpful in data analysis because it created a quick way to retrieve the themes and easily identify connections and the relationship between themes (see examples of Figures 6.2 and 6.3). After presenting and analysing data through identifying patterns and themes, data interpretation followed, which is the next step of the research process.

5.4.7. Interpretation of results

Qualitative research processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation are interconnected. Qualitative data analysis incorporates the interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships in the data. The interpretation of results involves bringing order and meaning to the data collected (Bless et al., 2013; Babbie, 2016). Data was interpreted by rigorously moving from specifics to general assertions based on the findings of the study. In qualitative data interpretation, the researcher distinguishes between conceptual terms, either to arrive at new theoretical considerations or to revise existing theory. Through data interpretation, categories that emerged from data analysis are subjected to interrogation to highlight exceptions, contradictions, or disconfirmations, leading to new knowledge (Schurink et al., 2021b). Having done a thorough literature study and rigorous analysis of the data as reflected in the previous section, this enabled the researcher to interpret the data based on the participants' stories and existing research. The combination of the literature review and the empirical study formed the basis of the data analysis and interpretation in accordance with descriptive and explorative research.

Congruent to the interpretive research paradigm and constructionist theoretical framework employed in this study, the researcher interpreted data by finding out how the participants viewed supervision in their organisation, how it has been implemented in line with the Supervision Framework, and what it meant to them (Schurink et al., 2021b). Through this process, data was interpreted by making data understandable from the point of view of the participants. Therefore, the narratives that provided meaning to the identified themes regardless of how less or often they surfaced in the data were selected as part of the data analysis and interpretation. The empirical findings are presented under three key themes, sub-themes, and categories under some of the sub-themes in Chapter 6. The researcher gained an overview of the findings through the interpretation of data which determined to what extent the research question has been answered and the trustworthiness of the results discussed in the next section.

5.4.7.1. *Trustworthiness of the study*

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher applied the four elements of trustworthiness for qualitative research proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1994), namely: *credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability*.

a. Credibility

Credibility illustrates consistency between the views of the participants and the way the researcher interpreted and described the data (Padgett, 2008; Bless et al., 2013). As discussed in the previous section, participants' voices were the foundational basis for interpreting and making meaning from the data. Direct quotes about how the participants viewed the implementation of the Supervision Framework in their organisation are cited as evidence in Chapter 6. Padgett (2008) states that using different data sources as a way of triangulating also enables the researcher to verify individual experiences and viewpoints to construct rich explanations of the data. To attain credibility of the findings, data triangulation was achieved by gathering data from social workers, supervisors, and the national manager who served as a key informant from the participating organisation. Member checking is used in a qualitative study to control processes by which the researcher seeks to improve the accuracy and credibility of the study (Schurink et al., 2021b). Through member checking, participants were provided with an opportunity to state whether they agree or disagree with the information summarised by the researcher, and whether it reflected their views, feelings, and experiences of supervision. Member checking was done during the interview process wherein the researcher would paraphrase some of the narratives to seek confirmation of what is expressed by the participants.

b. Dependability

Dependability means reliability, which suggests that the same thing reoccurs under similar circumstances (Padgett, 2008; Bless et al., 2013). Krefting (1991) refers to dependability as the consistency of the data, which means that the findings must be consistent even if the study was replicated with the same participants. Schurink et al., (2021b) contend that the concept of *replication* is problematic in qualitative research because the social world is continuously constructed, therefore dependability should seek to establish whether the research process is logical, well documented, and audited. Bless et al., (2013) assert that when a researcher describes exactly how the data was collected, coded, and analysed, and can present good

examples to illustrate the process, the results can be dependable. Dependability of the study was ensured by comprehensively discussing the phases of the research process followed from problem formulation to finalising the research report presented in this chapter.

c. Confirmability

Confirmability addresses the question of whether the research findings can be confirmed by another. Confirmability aims to safeguard that the research findings are based on the true data and the process of data analysis was properly applied (Padgett, 2008). To maintain confirmability in the study, the researcher's doctoral supervisor functioned as a reviewer to ensure that the research process was transparent and relevant to achieve the research goal. Moreover, her supervisor, as an expert in the field of supervision in South Africa, served as a research auditor by reviewing the findings and assessing the conclusions and recommendations of the study. Schurink et al. (2021b) observe that the researcher should provide evidence for each claim or interpretation from at least two sources to support the data and the researcher's analysis of the findings. Direct quotes from the collected data were used when presenting the findings, with conclusions drawn from the empirical study and the existing body of knowledge on supervision globally presented in Chapter 6.

d. Transferability

Transferability is about establishing whether the findings of the research can be transferred from one specific situation or case to another (Schurink et al., 2021b). Transferability requires the researcher to provide a detailed description of the context in which the data was collected, using quotations and a contextual description that links the findings to the context (Bless et al., 2013). To address transferability, the researcher provided sufficient description and contextual information about the case study and data collected to allow comparison should there be a need to transfer the findings to a similar context. Krefting (1991:216) refers to transferability as "the ability to generalise from the findings to larger populations". However, offering a detailed contextual description of the study does not assume that the findings are applicable to all child protection organisations in South Africa. In fact, it is against the very nature of contextualised qualitative research to generalise findings (Schurink et al., 2021b). Instead, the study may be applicable to similar contexts that may exist in South Africa. It can be concluded that trustworthiness of the data and research process were established and maintained in the study.

5.4.8. Conclusions and recommendations

Data analysis was done inductively from the data collected and deductively from the literature study. Conclusions are thus drawn from the collected data while applying logical data analysis strategies reflected upon in this chapter. The activities of the research process allowed the researcher to validate the interpretations that were presented and confidently draw conclusions extracted from the participants' stories. Based on the interpretation of the findings, the researcher drew conclusions and made recommendations related to social policy, supervision practice, and for further research. These are presented in Chapter 7.

5.4.9. Dissemination of results

The final step in the research process is disseminating the results of the study by writing the research report. Schurink et al., (2021b) indicate that a qualitative research report is longer with more detailed descriptions that can be combined with visual images when using CAQDAS such as ATLAS.ti. When writing this research report, the researcher intended to put forth a coherent, logical, clear and persuasive argument demonstrating the findings of the study aimed at answering the research question. Schurink et al., (2021b) are of view that researchers have a responsibility to disseminate their findings as widely as possible. Strydom and Roestenberg (2021) concur that publishing research is in the best interest of the scientific community and society. Thus, a research study will only be published for academic or professional purposes. In addition to this research report, part of the work emanating from the study will be disseminated via conference presentations, book chapters, or peer reviewed journal articles. As part of science awareness and stipulated in the permission letter received from the organisation, the final research report with recommendations will be sent to the participating organisation.

5.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics entail conducting research in a responsible and ethical manner (Gray, 2018). The goal of research ethics is mainly to minimise risks for the participants (Bless et al., 2013). It is therefore significant to be cognisant of the key ethical considerations in social research, namely, *informed consent*, *confidentiality*, *anonymity*, and *protection from harm*. These are described in more detail below.

5.5.1. Voluntary participation and informed consent

Potential participants have the right to decide to participate in a study after being fully informed of what will be required of them and the possible risks involved during the research process (Padgett, 2008; Strydom & Roestenberg, 2021). Gray (2018) states that *informed consent* applies to individuals and organisations that are invited to participate in a research study, hence the gaining of consent occurs in two stages. Permission from the organisation and consent from participants was sought before any interviews were conducted as described under the data collection process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, procedures to be followed in relation to data collection, and the nature of the interviews before they agreed to participate. An informed consent form was emailed to all participants to sign if they agreed to participate in the study (Annexure 1). Some of the participants provided verbal and not written consent before proceeding with the interviews. Participants were allowed to ask questions related to the study before agreeing to form part of the study. The study was thus *voluntary*, and participants were allowed to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

5.5.2. Prevention of harm

This study did not pose any harmful risks to the participants. The data collection method was changed from face-to-face to telephonic interviews to avoid any potential physical harm to the participants. Researchers at Stellenbosch University were called upon by REC: SBE to exercise caution when conducting empirical research that requires physical contact to adhere to the principle of ‘*do no harm*’ during the COVID-19 pandemic (Stellenbosch University Communication, 20 March 2020). This study was categorised as low risk due to the low probability of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research because all participants were professional social workers. The study did not seek to explore any emotional content, instead participants’ experiences and perspectives on the implementation of the Supervision framework in their work environment was sought. Ethical clearance from the REC: SBE at Stellenbosch University was obtained prior to the commencement of the empirical study.

5.5.3. Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality

Participants have the right to *privacy* and their information needs to be kept confidential. *Confidentiality* entails agreement between persons that limit other people’s access to private information. Participants need to be reassured that their information will be kept confidential

and not disclosed in any way that could publicly identify them (Strydom & Roestenberg, 2021). The privacy of the participants was ensured by conducting the telephonic interviews alone in a private space. Participants also had an option to decide where and when it was conducive and private for them to conduct the interview. Minimal identifying particulars were present in this study. The only identifying information that was deemed significant to provide context to the participants was their number of years practicing as social workers and number of years under the employ of the participating organisation. According to Padgett (2008), the researcher must ensure that the identity of participants is never revealed or linked to the information they provide without their permission. To ensure *anonymity*, pseudonyms rather than the participants' real names were used when transcribing the interviews and presenting the data to safeguard their identity. Moreover, the details of the organisation under study remains anonymous. To ensure confidentiality, the audio recordings of the interviews and collected data were stored on a password-protected computer and backed up on the OneDrive platform – these were accessible only to the researcher.

5.6. REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity is a key feature in qualitative research and essential for ensuring rigour (Koopman, Watling & LaDonna, 2020:1). Reflexivity captures the involvement of the researcher in a study as an active part of the research process, rather than a neutral data collector (Ruokonen-Engler & Siouti, 2016). As a key instrument in collecting data through interviews, the circumstances of the researcher can influence the data collection procedures and the research process (Fouché, 2021). Creswell (2014) advises that researchers must keep track of their own influence, biases, and emotional responses, as they construct meanings that clearly paint the true state of the phenomenon studied. After having done a thorough literature study and rigorous analysis of the data, as reflected in the previous sections, the researcher was able to interpret the data based on the participants' stories and existing research, while still recognising that she was the primary tool in the data collection process.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) concur that the subjectivity of the researcher will shape the data collected and interpretation of the data. There is therefore value behind reflection on the impact that bias could play in the construction of a research project. The researcher's thoughts and perspectives are described in a reflective report (Annexure 5) that offered her an opportunity to freely explore her own experience of the research process through free writing. Koopman et al., (2020) suggest that reflexive activities such as free writing of an

autobiographical narrative promote reflexivity and make visible perspectives that may impact knowledge production. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on both her personal life and the research process were uncovered with this reflexive strategy. Reflexivity is further described as the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researchers' positionality wherein the researcher is "having an ongoing conversation about the experience while simultaneously living in the moment" (Hertz, 1997:v111, cited by Koopman et al., 2020). During the research process, the researcher reflected on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on both her personal and professional life, which was an unforeseen variable that became part of the research study (Annexure 5).

5.7. LIMITATIONS

Fouché (2021) observes that no study is without limitations. This is so even for the most carefully planned research study, so acknowledging the limitations of one's study is part of the research process. The researcher acknowledges the following limitations of the current study:

Firstly, the choice of a case study design can be critiqued for its subjective nature. The lack of rigour is often raised as a weakness of a case study. As a result, measures to improve trustworthiness were implemented to ensure that data is presented and verified accurately (see section 5.4.7.1).

Secondly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, telephonic interviews were conducted instead of face-to-face interviews. As discussed in section 5.4.4, this created a shortcoming in establishing rapport with the participants and the inability to assess their non-verbal responses. Having said that, telephonic interviews were ideal to safeguard the physical health of the researcher and the participants. This method of data collection also led to some administrative challenges. Given that the interviews were conducted telephonically, all of the consent forms were not physically signed; instead, some of the participants verbally acknowledge receipt of the consent form and volunteered to partake in the study.

Thirdly, when conceptualising the study, it was envisaged that data collected from the pilot study will not form part of the actual study. However, to gain different voices in the study, data from the pilot interviews were analysed and included in the final write-up of the findings.

Lastly, generalisation of the findings is not possible with a case study due to the small sample size and the specific study context (Yin, 2014). Thus, to maintain credibility and transferability of the study, a detailed contextual description of the case study was discussed in this chapter to allow comparison should there be a need to transfer the findings to a similar context in South Africa.

5.8. CONCLUSION

The researcher critically examined and reflected on both the theoretical and practical aspects of the research process, thereby promoting critical appraisal of rigour in qualitative research. This chapter presented the research paradigm and methodology employed in this study, from identifying the research problem, the planned research approach and design, sampling and ethical considerations, to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the research process. Although the study was meticulously planned, the data collection process had to be revised due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 required the researcher to adapt and adjust the research process. This is congruent to the constructivism epistemological stance adopted in this study, which follows the assumption that individuals are part of the social system, so they are influenced by the context in which they live and work. The interpretive research paradigm which asserts that the research data and their meanings are constructed by the researcher and participants interdependently formed the basis for the methodology followed in the execution of the research project. The findings of the empirical investigation are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIAL WORKERS' STORIES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUPERVISION FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the investigation into how a designated child protection organisation is implementing the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa. The literature chapters provided an overview of contemporary research in social work supervision, analysed the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), and explored the nature of supervision practices within the child protection sector in South Africa. The literature chapters formed a foundation of knowledge from which to understand the importance of supervision within designated child protection organisations. This chapter intends to achieve the fourth objective of the study, as described in Chapter 1. This research followed a case study research design to explore the voices of social workers and supervisors on the implementation of the Supervision Framework in a designated child protection organisation.

In this chapter, a brief description of the participants' number of years practicing as social workers and their pre-existing supervision training and experience will be discussed first. This will be followed by a discussion of the participants' experiences of how the Supervision Framework is implemented in their organisation. To interpret and make meaning from the data, the findings will be presented according to themes, sub-themes, and categories, and supported by the participants' stories and the relevant literature control. Having followed a deductive reasoning approach, the themes were identified in the literature and served as the basis for the semi-structured interview schedule used for data collection.

6.2. PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Given that the aim of the study was to gain an understanding of the stories of social workers in a designated child protection organisation regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), the information that was deemed significant to provide

context to the participants was their number of years practicing as social workers and their pre-existing supervision training and experience. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 social workers (SW), 7 social work supervisors (SWS), and the organisation's national manager who served as a key informant. Following is the tabulated presentation of the participants' profiles.

Table 6.1: Social workers' identifying details

Participants' pseudonyms	Number of years practicing as a social worker	Number of years employed in a child protection organisation	Training in supervision
SW Dora	13	5	YES
SW Jolie	27	13	NO
SW Mandy	5	5	YES
SW Melissa	12	5	YES
SW Michelle	2	7 months	YES
SW Priscilla	30	6	YES
SW Salome	2	2	YES
SW Vienna	13	5	NO
SW Wilma	8	3	YES
SW Cathy	6	2	YES
SW Diane	2	13 months	YES
SW Donald	7	4	YES
SW Linda	4	4	YES
SW Rea	12	3	YES
SW Suzan	15	4	YES
SW Thola	12	5	NO
SW Lebo	3	3	YES
SW Portia	3	3	YES
SW Tonet	43	5 months	YES
SW Zoleka	8	1	YES

The social workers interviewed in this study have between two to thirty years practicing as social workers. The different years of experience that social workers possessed strengthened

the study in terms of gaining a wide range of perspectives on the supervision process depending on the participants' supervision needs and professional development. The inclusion criteria of the study were that the social workers must at least be employed for two years in their positions in the child protection organisation and should be accessible to the researcher. Given that the interviews were conducted during a pandemic it was difficult to recruit social workers with two years' experience in the organisation. As a result, social workers who volunteered to participate in the study with less than two years were considered. Hence, four of the social workers who participated have been employed in the organisation for less than two years. However, their supervision training and experience were also considered. The participants had at least two years practicing as social workers and they have received supervision since their employment; they could therefore share their experiences of how supervision is implemented in their organisation.

The social workers were asked to indicate if they had ever received any training in supervision and whether they might have attended any courses in supervision. Most of the social workers reported that they have primarily received training in supervision as part of their undergraduate courses at university. Some indicated that they have received training about the supervision policy of the organisation which encompassed a discussion on how supervision should be conducted in the organisation and the roles of both supervisors and supervisees. It is however worth noting that three of the social workers reported not to have received any form of training in supervision, either as students or while employed by the current organisation. This is concerning and would require attention from the organisation, especially because the social workers have more than 5 years employed in their organisation. Having said that, the social workers did state that they have been receiving individual and group supervision since their employment in their current organisation. Thus, in terms of practical experience, all the social workers interviewed have gotten some form of experience in supervision within their organisation. Moreover, some of the participants added that they are also supervising social auxiliary workers and community development practitioners within the organisation. The social workers with this added responsibility are mainly under consultation and do not receive regular structured supervision because of their level of experience, acquired knowledge, and skills in social work practice.

Table 6.2: Supervisors' identifying details

Participants' pseudonyms	Number of years practicing as a social worker	Number of years employed in a child protection organisation	Number of years practicing as a supervisor	Training in supervision
SWS Emma	20	4	2	YES
SWS Mickey	17	1	6	YES
SWS Amy	24	11	15	YES
SWS Emily	11	2	2	NO
SWS Noma	21	18	14	YES
SWS Zama	11	11	7	YES
SWS Jane	13	13	3	NO
Key Informant	35	35	11	YES

Table 6.2 reveals that the supervisors have a wide range of experience in the social work field, with all of them having more than 11 years as registered social workers. Their years of experience as supervisors ranging from two to fifteen years provided a holistic view in terms of knowledge and perspectives regarding supervision practices in their organisation. The table shows that all the participants except for one supervisor practiced for nine years as social workers before they were appointed at a supervisory role. In terms of supervision training and experience, only two supervisors said they did not receive any supervision training in the organisation. The participants noted that even though they have not received any formal training on supervision, they are certain that the organisation will provide training at some point. Supervision training is important, as research by Manthosi (2016) discovered that inadequate supervision training and insufficient leadership skills led to the lack of supervision because supervisors were hired based on their years of experience and not necessarily merit. Scholars such as Engelbrecht (2019b), Kadushin and Harkness (2014) have called for

organisations employing social workers to continuously provide education and to capacitate supervisors with relevant skills to enable them to provide supervision. Patterson and Whincup (2018) postulate that structured and accredited training on professional supervision contribute to the professional development of supervisors, enhancing their confidence and capability in supervising social workers. It is therefore imperative for supervisors to be capacitated through formal training, to augment their knowledge and skills about the supervision process before they carry out their supervisory duties.

One of the supervisors said that she has so far attended the Children's Act training, Safety Assessment training, and training on the trauma informed model, but not supervision. The supervisor further indicated that the training she has received has equipped her to confidently facilitate supervision sessions and guide social workers on the legislations and policies that are relevant when rendering social services within a child protection organisation. This study's findings confirm Parker's (2017) observation that in addition to having experience of receiving supervision, the foundations of social work and an understanding of the legal system, including legislation are all important when a social worker is appointed as a supervisor within a child protection organisation.

For the participants who have attended supervision training, their training included an induction course, the organisation's supervision policy training, and a course on supervision and management offered by Stellenbosch University. The key informant has been employed in the organisation for 35 years, which means she possesses knowledge on the history of the organisation and where it is currently at in terms of supervision practices. With her years of experience and her current role in the organisation, the key informant was the relevant person to ascertain some of the experiences shared by social workers and supervisors, thereby gaining a holistic view regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework within the organisation.

In summary, the findings of this study contradict the existing literature that suggests that most social workers do not receive training in supervision and consequently most of the supervisors have not received any training before their appointment as a supervisor (Bradley et al., 2010; Cloete, 2012; Parker, 2017). The study shows that 23 out of 28 participants have received some training in supervision which is applaudable and essential for the organisation to prosper in terms of implementing effective supervision practices. Although Parker (2017) raised concerns that supervisors with less than 10 years of experience as a social worker being

appointed to supervisors might not have sufficient experience and knowledge, this study revealed that what is important is the knowledge of the supervision process and training offered by the organisation. Therefore, the training in supervision has strengthened the participants' understating of supervision and its importance which may contribute positively to the supervision of social workers in their organisation.

The next section focuses on data presentation and analysis derived from the three cohorts of participants (supervisees, supervisors, and the national manager). The data are presented by means of themes, sub-themes, and categories that were identified from the semi-structured interviews. The data has been grouped together according to common patterns and associations emerging from the literature review and the empirical study. The empirical findings from all the participants are presented together to provide a logical flow of data and to show how social workers and supervisors at different levels in the organisation view the implementation of the Supervision Framework.

6.3. PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS

This study has adopted the definition of supervision by Engelbrecht (2019a) that outlines specific determinants of authentic supervision within the South African context. Engelbrecht's definition frames supervision within three key dimensions, namely: **brief, operationalisation, and scope**. Using a deductive approach and based on the literature review, these dimensions will form the basis of the broad themes identified in this empirical chapter. The brief, operationalisation, and scope (Themes) will be integrated in such a way that they illustrate the determinants of supervision (Sub-themes) and how the identified organisation as a case study implemented the Supervision Framework that informed the organisation's supervision policy. However, categories were identified through an inductive approach. The inductive process involved working back and forth between data and the themes to establish meaning that participants hold about supervision practices in their organisation and not what is predominately evident from the literature. The findings are analysed in accordance with the constructionist approach which advocates for supervision stories from the social workers and supervisors; these are then interpreted by the researcher. Therefore, the supervision story within the participating organisation will be constructed and interpreted from the perspectives of social workers, supervisors, and the researcher, thereby capturing the subjective meanings through the interaction of all these parties, as seen in the figure below.

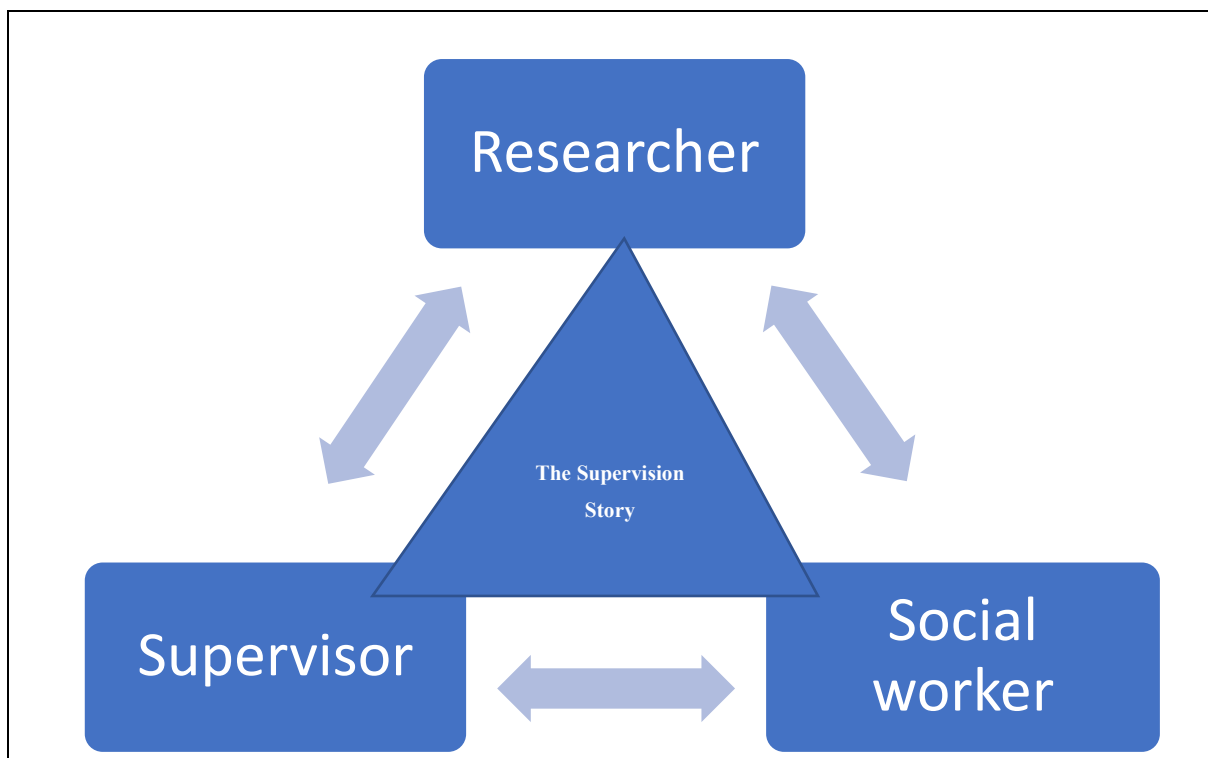


Figure 6.1: Construction of the supervision story

The themes, sub-themes, and categories are displayed in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3: Presentation of themes, sub-themes, and categories

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories	
1. Brief	1.1. Mandate of supervision		
	1.2. Goal of supervision		
	1.3. Agency supervision policy		a. Labelling of supervision document
			b. Development of agency supervision policy
			c. Statement on non-discriminatory practices
			d. Ratio of supervisor to supervisees
	1.4. Supervision functions		a. Administrative function
			b. Education function
			c. Supportive function

2. Operationalisation	2.1. Adult education principles	
	2.2. Supervision process	a. Assessment of personal competencies
		b. Personal development plan
		c. Supervision contract
		d. Performance evaluation
	2.3. Methods of supervision	a. Individual supervision
		b. Group supervision
	2.4. Supervision activities	
2.5. Theories, perspectives, and practice models		
2.6. Values and ethical conduct		
3. Scope	3.1. Supervisory relationship	
	3.2. Roles of the supervisor	
	3.3. Context of the work environment	

Table 6.3 provides an overview of the themes, sub-themes and categories that emerged from the data analysis. The themes, sub-themes and categories are discussed next using extracts from the participants' stories and illustrations from the Supervision Framework, substantiated with existing research. In some instances, tables and graphics are used to present categories with excerpts wherein key concepts are underlined to demonstrate participants' perspectives based on their experiences.

6.3.1. Theme 1: Brief

The *brief of social work supervision* encapsulates the mandate of supervision, the goal of supervision, an agency supervision policy, and the execution of supportive, educational, and administrative functions by a designated authoritative and trained supervisor.

6.3.1.1. Sub-theme 1.1: Mandate of supervision

Social work supervision in South Africa is mandated by the Social Service Professions Act, No. 110 of 1978 and the Policy Guidelines for the Course of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and

the Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2007). Given the mandatory nature of supervision, the DSD as the custodian of social services in South Africa collaborated with the SACSSP to develop the Supervision Framework that set out norms and standards for supervision in South Africa. Participants in the study were asked if they are familiar with the Supervision Framework and whether they think the framework should be mandatory in every organisation rendering social work services. Although all the participants believed that the Supervision Framework should be mandatory given the mandatory nature of supervision, it was observed that most social work supervisors (SWS) are familiar with the Supervision Framework when compared to social workers (SW) based on the following participants' responses:

"I know that it is part of the requirements that is in place for all social workers. There are very specific guidelines when we do supervision with a social worker".
(SWS Emma)

"Well, it is actually a very vast and heavy guidelines. Everything pertains to the orientation of the staff, the orientation of the support to supervision, monthly statistics, right through to their development and needs". (SWS Zama)

"I am not familiar with 2012 (Supervision) Framework". (SW Portia)

"No, I am not familiar with the Supervision Framework. We did discuss it in a training session, but I do not recall it". (SW Linda)

"Yes. It must be mandatory, because at the end of the day the workers are working with the lives of people and children. You are actually deciding in which direction a child's life is going. Supervision is mandatory for the emotional well-being and guidance and educational purposes. Through supervision that is mandatory you ensure quality services". (SWS Emily)

The observation made from varying responses between supervisors and social workers is not surprising because one of the supervisors' tasks as middle managers is to implement policies within organisations (Beddoe, 2016; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). It therefore becomes vital for supervisors to know policies such as the Supervision Framework and ensure that it is implemented. Related to the participants' responses, Shokane (2016) also found no common understanding of the Supervision Framework amongst social workers and supervisors. Even though most supervisees reported that they were not familiar with the Supervision

Framework, the majority were familiar with the organisation's supervision policy which is aligned with the Supervision Framework and felt that it should be mandatory, as illustrated by the following narratives:

"I only know about the (organisation's) framework. I do think it should be mandatory. It is protection for both the social worker and the organisation in terms of legal services and also for the professional services". (SW Suzan)

"I am familiar with the organisation policy on supervision. I think a policy should be mandatory, as it is important to have a firm structure. It is important to know that there is something you can fall back on. It is clear guidelines so that we know what is expected of us and what is expected of the organisation or from the supervisor". (SW Zoleka)

"A framework should be mandatory to ensure that the workers comply with the Children's Act and to ensure that the workers learn and grow at their organisations". (SW Linda)

Although some of the participants were not familiar with the Supervision Framework, this did not negate their experiences of how the organisation's supervision policy which is informed by the Supervision Framework is implemented. This was confirmed by the key informant who said:

"... Even before making ours, we looked at that one [Supervision Framework]. It was clear through consultation sessions, that our supervision policy should be based on that. It should adhere to the government supervision framework. It is in the Social Service Professions Act that supervision should be mandatory. We have always regarded it as mandatory, especially in the child protection field. It is a legislative requirement". (Key informant)

Consistent with the key informant's sentiments, Beddoe (2017) noted that supervision is mandated and prescribed in the policies of professional bodies of social work in many countries. Davys and Beddoe (2016) have further observed that supervision as an important component of professional learning, growth, and development in the helping professions, is at the heart of professional practice and should therefore be mandatory. In line with the existing literature, what can be deduced from this sub-theme is that supervision within the

organisation under study is mandatory because it safeguards the effective provision of social work services to service users. For this reason, even policies guiding supervision practices within organisations should be mandatory so that the supervision process is structured, informed by theory and legislation, and guided by the organisation's vision and mission.

6.3.1.2. Sub-theme 1.2: The goal of supervision

Several scholars have proclaimed that the primary goal of supervision is to enhance supervisees' professional knowledge, practice skills, and social functioning, and to develop the quality of professional service that is provided to clients (Bell, Hagedorn & Robinson, 2016; Bogo & Sewell, 2018; Budeli, 2018). In this study, the participants were asked what they think is the goal of supervision and how the goal of supervision is implemented within their organisation.

"The goal is to empower the supervisee, to give knowledge, to uplift and to encourage. It motivates you to do your work again". (SW Donald)

"The first one is emotional support; you need that person that talks about cases with you. Especially in child protection we need someone to help us". (SW Diane)

Below are participants' stories on how the goal of supervision is implemented:

"Sometimes we must remove a child at 16h30 and then we do not know where to go with the child because in our areas there is not a lot of safety parents and people do not want to act as safety parents ... sometimes it is very difficult, then we can contact the supervisor she will assist us". (SW Vienna)

"Practically I can make use of what I got through the supervision session ... helping me gaining experience about what to do next time if I got a similar situation". (SW Michelle)

Participants' responses demonstrate both the goal and benefit of supervision. Through supervision, social workers receive guidance and support from supervisors. This is particularly essential within child protection organisations wherein social workers encounter difficult cases related to the safety and well-being of children. Thus, a supervisor needs to be able to give advice to social workers and safeguard the best interest of the child. Research has shown that child protection services are complex given the legal mandate to protect children

who often are in families affected by substance abuse, mental illness, mental retardation, violence, adolescent parenthood, incarceration, homelessness, and poverty (McPherson & Macnamara, 2017; Rankine et al., 2018). Consequently, supervision within child protection organisations is unique and demanding due to the nature of the work context.

From the findings, parallels between the goal of supervision and roles of the supervisor were drawn, as depicted in the below. **Figure 6.2** illustrates that the goal of supervision is intertwined with the roles of the supervisor. Some of the associations between the roles of the supervisor and the goal of supervision observed from the participants' responses include the fact that the supervisor's role is to guide and support social workers while the goal of supervision is to strengthen social workers' abilities that contribute towards competent professional practices to benefit service users. Therefore, the goal of supervision within the organisation under study is implemented in such a way that it links with how the supervisors play their roles in the supervision process.

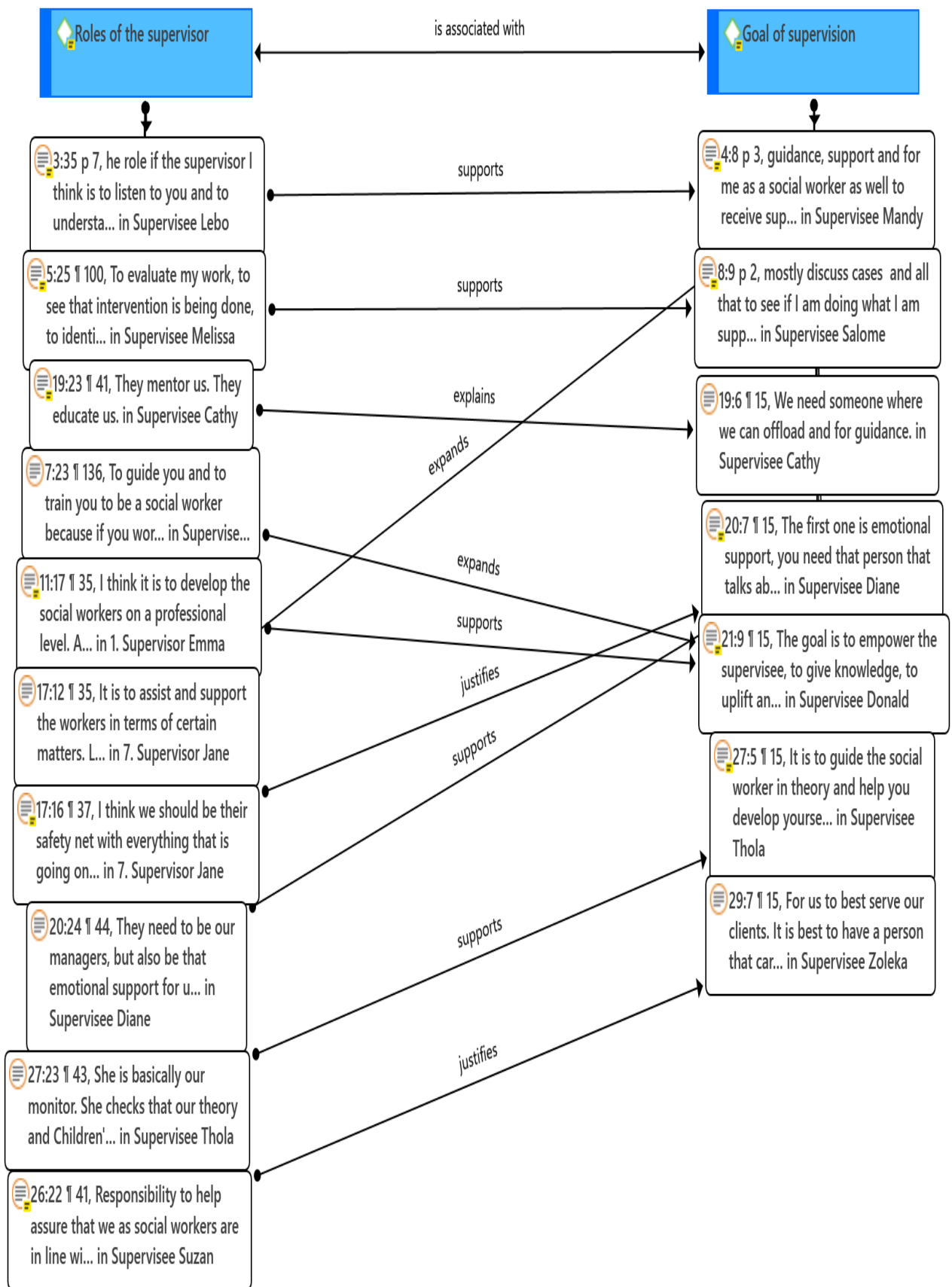


Figure 6.2: Relationship between goal of supervision and roles of the supervisor

Based on Figure 6.2, some of the correlations observed between the goal of supervision and roles of the supervisor are as follows:

According to Supervisee Melissa, the role of the supervisor is:

“To evaluate my work, to see that intervention is being done, to identify my developmental needs”.

This corresponds with how the goal of supervision is implemented, according to Salome:

“Mostly discuss cases ... to see if I am doing what I am supposed to be doing, am I struggling ... what are my weaknesses and all that so that we can obviously know what I am working on ... and be able to render a quality service to the community”. (SW Salome)

One supervisor said her role is to:

“... develop the social workers on a professional level. Also, to ensure their emotional well-being and prevent burnout. I feel like a lot of social workers, because of their own problems are finding a lot of things challenging. It should be up to us to identify these areas and assist the social workers to get help if they need it”. (SWS Emma)

In playing these roles, supervisors are ultimately implementing the goal of supervision, which is expressed by one social worker as to *“empower the supervisee, to give knowledge, to uplift and to encourage. It motivates you to do your work again”* (SW Donald).

The association between the goal of supervision and roles of supervisors within the organisation under study is further espoused by the following narratives:

Goal: *“For us to best serve our clients. It is best to have a person that cares about you as an individual to make sure that you are a healthy human being. This is to make sure that you are able to serve a community in the first place. Our overall goal is to serve the community and we cannot do that if you yourself need counselling or debriefing or that kind of assistance. So yes, it goes hand in hand with supporting you individually but also guiding you to serve the community.”*
(SW Zoleka)

Role: “Responsibility to help assure that we as social workers are in line with the organisation's goals and way of working. Also, to keep in line with certain legislation. She also has a supportive and educative role. She needs to be part of our professional development. The supervisor helps to motivate us”. (SW Suzan)

Research has shown that the goal of supervision is to promote good practice among social workers, which contributes to competent professional social services that benefit service users (Beddoe et al., 2015; Carpenter et al., 2012). Moreover, there is a strong correlation between the goal of supervision and outcomes for service users, with evidence suggesting that supervision may promote empowerment, fewer complaints, and more positive feedback (Akesson & Canavera, 2017). In a nutshell, supervisors play a role that either supports, explains or justifies the goal of supervision, and it is implemented within an organisation with the main purpose of safeguarding effective provision of social services to service users.

6.3.1.3. Sub-theme 1.3: Agency supervision policy

The Supervision Framework stipulates that, organisations employing social workers in South Africa must have supervision policies that are guided by the Supervision Framework in terms of norms and standards for the supervision of social workers. The Supervision Framework outlines key areas that need to be covered by an agency’s supervision policy. The key parameters pertaining to the practice of supervision that will be focused on under this sub-theme is how the organisation under study developed the agency’s supervision policy, the ratio of supervisor to supervisees, and statements on non-discriminatory practices within an agency supervision policy.

a. Labelling of supervision document

It is important to establish how the organisation implemented the development of the agency supervision policy outlined in the Supervision Framework. However, before dwelling on the policy development process, participants were asked how they think supervision policy documents should be labelled. It was important to get participants’ views on this because, as noted in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, there are various ways in which documents guiding supervision in different parts of the world are referred to. In some instances, the documents are referred to as “frameworks” or “guidelines” (Bartoli & Kennedy, 2015; Unguru & Sandu, 2018).

“It should be a policy, because if I hear the words policy, it sounds much more mandatory. It carries more weight. With guidelines or minimum standards, it sounds much more flexible. It sounds like people could move away from it, but with policy it is like the law”. (SWS Emily)

“I think a policy with norms and standards. To me that is the only way. A policy just gives a better group structure. It is time consuming. But if there is a national policy with norms and standards, that would guide every supervisor in the field”.
(SWS Amy)

Based on the word cloud and participants’ different views regarding the labelling of the supervision documents, “policy” was the common denominator. This finding corresponds with the requirements stipulated in the Supervision Framework that organisations should develop context-specific supervision policies and not guidelines (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The different viewpoints on the labelling of supervision documents were also observed when analysing the supervision documents discussed in Chapter 3. For the purposes of this study, the concepts of “policy” and “standards” were used to refer to documents guiding supervision, with an understanding that ultimately the supervision policy documents are aimed at providing a set of standards for social work supervision. The same principle was adopted by the organisation under study which labelled the document guiding supervision “a supervision policy”. Next is an analysis of how the organisation developed their supervision policy.

b. Development of agency supervision policy

According to the Supervision Framework, organisations should contextualise the Framework to suit their varied work environments. The organisation under study developed a supervision policy that align with the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Supervisors were asked how the organisation implemented the process of developing a supervision policy. Here is what some of the supervisors said:

“They worked with someone from Stellenbosch University who has done a lot of research on supervision to help them with the process as well. I think it should be research based and people who is in the field who can say what they need in such a policy”. (SWS Emma)

“We believe that supervision is one of our strengths in our organisation, so that was what was necessary to develop it and make it even better ... It was discussed with us as regional managers [supervisors]. We had sessions with her [national manager] and Prof. Engelbrecht, giving our opinions and discussing formats”. (SWS Noma)

“We were always informed. We have supervision quarterly meetings where all this information sort of gets explored. Then it gets sent to a few regional officers, and then with a little bit of help it gets compiled. I think everybody gets a say-so. When it was compiled, it got sent to us to look through. It was a collective effort. I could give feedback”. (SWS Zama).

Based on the supervisors’ responses, the organisation implemented the policy development process in a consultative manner. Frontline social workers and supervisors in the organisation were informed and invited to provide input on the policy. Consistent with the participants’ stories, Teater (2010) and O’Donoghue (2010) state that the constructionist approach views individuals as active participants in the creation of their own knowledge based on personal experiences within their social context and their environment. It is therefore important to involve different stakeholders during the supervision policy development process. This will ensure that the needs of everyone involved in the supervision process is acknowledged.

What was also clear is that the supervision policy was not thumb sucked, research was done prior to policy formulation. An expert in the field of supervision in South Africa was consulted during the process. The policy development process followed by the organisation under study aligns with some of the processes followed by associations of social workers in Hong Kong, Singapore, and the USA when developing their supervision policies. The process is also congruent with the suggestions by Hawkins and Shohet (2006). According to Hawkins and Shohet (2006), when social workers are involved in the process of policy development, they can identify the problem themselves, and recognise the need and benefits of developing supervision policies so that they can be part of the change required.

Supervisors were further asked about the content of the supervision policy to ascertain whether it aligns with the requirements stipulated in the Supervision Framework.

“This policy also includes the council’s [SACSSP] ethical code and the CPD points”. (SWS Amy)

“What is expected of the supervisors and the social workers should be included. The professional development of each worker should be included”. (SWS Noma)

“Supervisor management, individual caseloads, groupwork, maintenance of equipment of the staff, community work, even finances ... Supervision, or group supervision for that matter, has to do with all these aspects. It must have a structured agenda to each supervision or group supervision”. (SWS Mickey)

These views are indicative of the stipulated minimum standards of the content of a supervision policy in the Supervision Framework. The content of the organisation’s supervision policy includes *inter alia* the frequency and duration of sessions, supervision session agenda, how to manage caseloads, the supervision contract, the Strengths Based Competency assessment, the ethical code, as well as supervisor and supervisee expectations. Moreover, the content of the organisation’s supervision policy aligns with suggestions by Hawkins and Shohet (2006) on the development of the supervision policy document discussed in Chapter 3.

c. Statement on non-discriminatory practices

One of the key elements that need to be addressed within an agency supervision policy is the statement on non-discriminatory practices. It is important to consider how organisations foster anti-discriminatory supervisory practices by ensuring that supervisors are mindful of differences that could shape the supervisory relationships. Factors such as race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs can shape how supervisors and supervisees interact. Social workers were asked how their organisation implements anti-discriminatory practices in supervision. Most participants expressed that they have not experienced any form of discrimination within their supervisory relationships.

“There has not been any discrimination between my supervisor and I”. (SW Cathy)

“We have a very professional relationship; the supervisor treats each and everyone the same”. (SW Vienna)

The participants did not only share their views based on their personal experiences, but also what they have observed within their organisation as seen from the extracts below:

“Within our organisation we do not experience any discrimination”. (SW Portia)

“Within our organisation we get protected against the gender-based and racial discrimination”. (SW Michelle)

The participants further outlined that there are specific procedures that can be followed in case one experiences or feels discriminated against.

“If you feel that the supervisor is discriminating you or victimising you, anything like that, you can just then arrange with the board that you want to speak with them privately on something that happened with the supervisor, and they will then discuss how they will handle the case so that you do not feel victimised by the supervisor or the supervisor feels like you are victimising the supervisees”. (SW Lebo)

“I must say, there is also a challenge sometimes with race. I am a Coloured young lady coming in here. Even the clients judge me by my colour and in the office. We have a wonderful manager that helps with discrimination in the office. There is a grievance process you can follow. So, if I have issues with it, she [national manager] comes in and deals with the issues”. (SWS Jane)

What is often a hindrance within organisations in South Africa is gender and racial discrimination. Although only one supervisor expressed feeling judged in terms of her race, it is worth noting that race and cultural differences are particularly relevant within the South African society, given our history wherein people of colour were marginalised and disenfranchised based on race. Thus, these diversity factors can be most challenging within supervisory relationships, and therefore require attention from organisation management. Engelbrecht et al., (2014) are of the view that race is an area in which anti-discriminatory supervisory competencies are essential, and that supervisors should focus on cultivating respect and appreciation for cultural differences. The key informant as part of the organisation’s management stated the following regarding anti-discriminatory supervisory practices:

“That is one thing that I manage. We are very strict on that. No form of discrimination is allowed. I am not just even speaking about race. I am not always there to see what happens, but I can tell you that none of my supervisors show any inclination towards discrimination based on race, religion, language”. (Key informant)

Based on the participants' responses, the organisation safeguards against any form of discrimination by having a grievance procedure within their agency supervision policy. As part of implementing the Supervision Framework, the organisation requires the statement of anti-discriminatory practice to form part of the supervision contract between the supervisor and the supervisee. It is essential to implement anti-discriminatory practices within organisation policies because supervision is one form of ensuring the safety of social workers and service users given the racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity that exists in South Africa. Caras (2013) concurs that supervision practice may guarantee ethical compliance of social work practice because the supervisor as a gatekeeper of ethical compliance will consider the anti-discrimination policies in the organisation and create a conducive work environment that follows the highest professional standards and ethical intervention. Parker (2017) observed that supervisors need to be competent when dealing with diversity within organisations and be cognisant of how the environmental demands and differences may influence the unique way in which supervisees experience issues and cope with challenges. This was also alluded to in Chapter 3 where various associations of social workers worldwide called for organisations to have anti-discriminatory statements in their supervision policies to promote fairness within supervisory relationships.

In a nutshell, the implementation of the organisation's supervision policy thus coincides with other policies mandated by social work bodies, such as the NASW (2013) and ANZASW (2015), which requires employers to develop clear methods for resolving disagreements and the grievance process that needs to be followed. In addition, such processes need to be aligned with ethical principles and form part of supervision contracts that correspond with the set standards within the Supervision Framework. Thus, it remains the key responsibility of employers of social workers to create an enabling environment for positive supervision practices to thrive.

d. Ratio of supervisor to supervisees

One of the aspects that an agency supervision policy should address is the ratio of supervisor to supervisees. Supervisors who participated in the study were asked about the implementation of supervisor vs supervisee ratio within the organisation under study. The following statements capture some of the participants' responses:

“I have 13 social workers and 6 auxiliary workers that I supervise”. (SWS Emma)

“I supervise 7 social workers and 2 social auxiliary workers”. (SWS Emily)

“I have 11 social workers, 5 auxiliary workers, and 3 community development officers”. (SWS Zama)

“I have 10 social workers, 4 social auxiliary workers, and then four child and youth care workers. Sometimes it is not really manageable for one person running two offices, two crèches, and a Child and Youth Care Facility [CYCF]. I would like my main focus to be social work, that is what I am focused on and what I studied. I wish I could just be a supervisor for social workers”. (SWS Jane)

The ratio of supervisor to supervisees varies within the organisation. From the responses, the highest is 13 social workers and lowest 7 social workers. This is contrary to what the Supervision Framework recommends regarding the ratio of supervisors to supervisees. The Supervision Framework stipulates that the ratio of social workers on structured supervision should be 1:10 provided it is the only key performance area, and 1:6 if the supervisor has other duties, while the ratio for social workers on consultations is 1:15 (DSD & SACCS, 2012). According to the key informant, the organisation strives to meet the requirements stipulated in the Supervision Framework wherein a supervisor is expected to supervise no more than 10 supervisees, which includes social workers, student social workers, social auxiliary workers, and learners, if that is their primary and only key performance area.

“A supervisor may not supervise more than 10 supervisees. This is from the framework. ... That is how it supposed to be, so we do strive to adhere to that. But due to the nature of the NGO, it is not possible. Sometimes they sit with a lot more than 10. That is a huge concern”. (Key informant)

The concerns raised by the key informant were observed by Shokane (2016) who found that the majority of the participants indicated that the supervisor-supervisee ratio in the DSD (Mopani District) does not comply with the ratio set by the Supervision Framework. The findings of this study reveal that supervisors within the organisation under study have other duties, in addition to the supervision of social workers. Hence, they are referred to as regional managers and the supervisee ratio allocated to supervisors vary. Although the organisation

strives to equate the ratio of supervisors per supervisees as expressed by the key informant, it is not feasible due to the organisation's financial and human resource constraints. This challenge is not unique to this child protection organisation as NGOs in recent years have experienced high state budget cuts which has seen some of the organisations shutting down. Although there is a clear demand for social work services, including child protection services, it appears that social services are not the priority for government due to limited fiscal investment (Strydom, Schiller & Orme, 2020).

6.3.1.4. Sub-theme 1.4: Supervision functions

Noble and Irwin (2009) argue that the constructionist approach can also be used to analyse and review the implementation of social work supervision as a professional practice to deviate from an approach that falls only within the paradigm of supervision functions. Hence, participants were asked not only the nature of supervision, but also how the administrative, educational, and supportive functions of supervision are implemented within their organisation. The three main functions of supervision formed categories under this sub-theme discussed next.

a. Administrative function

The administrative function focuses on monitoring the social workers' performance and ensuring that they comply with the agency's standards and meet the objectives of the organisation (Tsui, 2005; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). This is what the social workers said about the implementation of the administrative function.

“When we are writing reports, the reports go through to the supervisor, and she go through them, and she checks if everything is right according to the Children's Act ...” (SW Jolie)

“... She must canalise everything; she has to sign everything ... She will go through our files and our diary, see if our diary correlates with our file. She checks on the paper trail to see that everything is in line, and she does the evaluation of the process note ... she will check if all the court reports are in there ... that is especially when we have audits, she will check that”. (SW Mandy)

As noted from the participants' stories, social workers are expected to keep detailed records of progress notes of all client sessions, Children's Court reports, and compile monthly

statistics, which may be evaluated during file reviews by the supervisor. The participants' views corroborate the findings by Silence (2016) and Mokoka (2016) that the administrative function of supervision ensures that social workers keep record of their administrative tasks because they are aware that their work will be monitored to safeguard the mission of the employer. Thus, in implementing the administrative function, supervisors are expected to monitor, review, and evaluate the work assigned to their supervisees to determine the quality of social services and practice. Within the organisation under study, evaluation of work is implemented through the audits of social workers' files, as expressed by the following participants:

"The supervisor will take your files once every three months and oversee if all your admin is in the files. As they always say, 'if it was not recorded it was not done'. We need to write everything down. Court reports always gets signed off by the supervisor before it gets sent in". (SW Donald)

"I have had good experiences of being audited. They go through your files and comment on the file. She would say, you can continue, or ask you to make changes. Everything must be on the file. If you do not have admin, you do not know what is going on". (SW Tonet)

The purpose of these file audits is to assess compliance with statutory regulations. This is especially important within child protection organisations given the need to provide services in line with the Children's Act. Moreover, the core value of the administrative function is to establish accountability between the organisation management and social workers to ensure that services are rendered in line with the organisation's mandate and policies (Jacques, 2014; Engelbrecht, 2010; Silence, 2016). Thus, implementing this function of supervision within an organisation enables social workers to deliver social services effectively and sufficiently.

Participants further expressed that with supervisors expected to check all the process reports, process notes, and Children's Court reports, this might sometimes create a barrier in terms of foster care screening and safety assessments that need to be completed within 48 hours.

"If we receive the Form 22, we must assess the child within 48 hours, write the safety assessment and the safety plan, and it must be sent to the supervisor within that 48 hours because if you get 4 or 5 Form 22, it is very difficult to investigate; but when we phone her and say we received this Form 22, we will not be able to

send the form for the safety assessment before 48 hours is finished". (SW Priscilla)

"Administrative function is where you make sure certain legislation is adhered to by the workers and auxiliary workers. Here you also need to read through reports and sign things off. When you co-sign something, you are also responsible for the decisions that was made". (SWS Emily)

From the participants' stories, it can be inferred that the administrative function of supervision within the organisation primarily involves the canalisation and approval of assessment reports and psycho-social reports to be presented to the Children's Courts. Supervisors are expected to co-sign reports because they are ultimately co-responsible for services rendered to service users (SACSSP, 2007; Engelbrecht, 2013). One of the challenges shared by one of the participants is time constraints when supervisors need to approve all the assessment reports given the high workload they already have.

"I feel like it takes a bit long, especially with everything that need[s] to be corrected in your report, and the back and forth that might sometimes be a delay in that and that part of administration regarding supervision to make sure that your reports is ready to go to court is taking a bit long for me sometimes, but I know everyone has got a lot of workload and the supervisor as well". (SW Michelle)

The stories shared by the participants from the organisation under study are not unique. A study by Dlamini and Sewpaul (2015) also found that social workers were overburdened with high unmanageable caseloads and supervision that was hierarchal, and therefore compromised the quality of supervision. Moreover, research has shown that the administrative function is critical to the supervisors' role, hence a considerable amount of time is spent on the administrative work and is prioritised over the educational and supportive functions within child protection organisations in South Africa (Parker, 2017; Atkins, 2019; Vetfuti et al., 2019). Although the studies by Ornellas (2018), Chibaya (2018), and Vetfuti et al., (2019) have found that supervision has become managerial orientated due to neoliberal tendencies within the NGO sector because of limited funding in South Africa, this study has shown that priority invested in the administrative function within child protection organisations is inevitable given the statutory requirements and legislative mandates such as

the Children's Act. In agreement with this finding, Wilkins (2021:154) posits that “rebalancing supervision within child and family services so that it can include accountability alongside rather than instead of other more supportive functions is not a straightforward task because supervision reflects as much as it informs the nature of the wider service”.

b. Educational function

The educational function of supervision affords social workers an opportunity to harness their skills and competencies through the guidance and support of a supervisor. This function is important given the everchanging work environment and context-specific complex cases within the child protection sector. Participating social workers in the study were asked to share their experiences of how the educational function is implemented in their organisation. Based on the participants' experiences, the educational function is implemented in both individual and group supervision. In individual supervision, it took a form of information sharing and feedback sessions on the work performance of social workers individually. Meanwhile, in group supervision it encompassed staff development training and workshops as reflected in the stories shared below:

“The educational part is that during supervision, like group supervision, for instance, the supervisor will ask someone to come and ... educate us, say for instance, [on] adoption, or foster care, or whatever, or mediation, or something like that”. (SW Vienna)

“During our last group supervision session, a person from our head office came to explain everything regarding adoption because most of our offices in this region, we see lately a lot of adoption applications ... so she organised that the person that is in charge of adoption in our ... head office comes and give training”. (SW Wilma)

“In terms of educational, I would send them a link of an article they need to read and then give feedback on that. So, they could not work in a group, so I could see who was doing the work and who was not”. (SWS Mickey)

The latter extract from the supervisor reveals that even though social workers can learn within a group setting, individual workers still need to do their part to meet their individual learning needs based on their various learning styles. Engelbrecht (2014) and Kadushin and Harkness

(2014) concur that the educational function should maintain an individualised focus that addresses the specific learning needs of the supervisee in the context of their workload and organisation.

Participants further expressed that their supervisory relationships fostered an opportunity for them to take initiatives and seek further development and learning opportunities on their own that rely only on the supervisor. This assertion aligns with Jacques' (2014) argument that the educational function of supervision requires both the supervisor and supervisee to take responsibility for identifying and working on supervisees learning and developmental needs. Below are stories shared by the participants:

“She always encourages us to do research on a subject and to bring it also in your report”. (SW Mandy)

“She makes sure that we get our CPD [Continuous Professional Development] points. She helps develop our skills and knowledge to be competent”. (SW Portia)

“If I have any questions or concerns or new things that I need to discuss, I can ask for help telephonically or via email. They are then very prompt in responding to any questions that we may have. If our supervisors go for a specific training, they will come and report back to us about what is changing or what is happening. So, they always try and keep us updated about the changes that are happening”. (SW Zoleka)

From the participants' stories and existing literature (Tsui, 2005; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Shokane, 2016; Wilkins, 2017), the educational function focuses on promoting learning, professional development, and the functioning of supervisees. Social workers in the study valued how the educational supervision is implemented in their organisation through collaboration and information sharing gained during group supervision. Through the educational function, social workers receive information on their own work and the skills to evaluate their own work, and utilise their knowledge and skills attained when performing their daily activities (Budeli, 2018). Therefore, if the function is implemented effectively, social workers can develop their competencies to render quality and professional social services.

c. Supportive function

The supportive function of supervision seeks to promote the psychological well-being of social workers and enhance their coping mechanisms with their work. The supportive function of supervision is concerned with supervisees' job satisfaction, morale, and personal development of knowledge and skills necessary to render effective services, while at the same time minimising job-related stress (Hawkins & Shohet, 2011; DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Shokane, 2016). When asked about the implementation of the supportive function of supervision in their organisation, the participants shared that in the beginning of the supervision sessions, they are asked reflective questions to ascertain how they are coping with their work demands and assess whether they may need emotional support from supervisors. This correlates with the findings by Truter and Fouché (2015), who observed that when asking reflective questions during supervision, supervisors can heighten the awareness of social workers about the available social support within their environment. Similarly, Silence (2016) found that reflective supervision that is supportive enables social workers to reflect on their work and seek guidance regarding interventions, which reduces the risk of burnout and allows social workers to emotionally regain strengths to deal with traumatic work experiences. One social worker said that when discussing cases with her supervisor, her supervisor would ask the following questions to ascertain her well-being:

“Ok, how did that affect you, what feelings did you have?” (SW Dora)

Other social workers said:

“... first one on the agenda is to see how you as a person are, that is one of the agenda point[s]; the other thing is that she ... sometime[s] phone[s] you to ask ... because sometimes we submit cases that are difficult or something like that, or she does not hear from you, [so] she phones you and ask[s] if you are ok ...” (SW Jolie)

“We work with parents and kids, that can obviously trigger our emotions from our own past traumas and all that, so in terms of that, she is good assistance ... [the supervisor would ask] ‘so are you coping with that matter? How is it going you see? Do you want to talk about it?’” (SW Salome)

Asking reflective questions during supervision provides reflective spaces for social workers to share their experiences when working with service users, which can promote the quality of practice and ensure the safety and well-being of children. Furthermore, supportive supervision is invaluable within child protection organisations wherein social workers deal with high caseloads and a lot of administrative work (Juby & Scannapieco, 2007; Chanyandura, 2016; Vetfuti, 2017). This was evident from some of the stories shared by the participants:

“Sometimes the emotional strains us physically; we are tired, so it is always good to discuss with the supervisor and then your supervisor can motivate you, because supervision motivates you really well. If I have a difficult case, I am always comfortable talking to my supervisor”. (SW Lebo)

“If she knows it’s a heavy case, you have to go to court, and she is also worried, she will ask you, and say, listen, call me after court and give me feedback. So, I feel that she is very supportive”. (SW Mandy)

The participants also expressed that what they value more is the supervisors’ availability and ability to listen to them through difficulties. It is evident that supervisors provide education and moral support to social workers during difficult cases and times of uncertainties.

“Well, if you can call her, she will listen to you, she will give empathy; the fact that she is willing to listen to you and give you guidelines, I think that for me is very important”. (SW Priscilla)

“... We also have an open-door policy where you can call them if there is anything you are uncomfortable about, or stress levels. If you have a very difficult case, you can rely on them as a strong pillar”. (SW Diane)

The participants’ stories echo the findings from existing research by various scholars internationally. For instance, Juby and Scannapieco (2007) found that frontline social workers believe that supportive supervision contributes towards making their jobs bearable and manageable. While Calitz et al., (2014) argue that supportive supervision was reported to have made the job of child welfare social workers feasible and tolerable. However, South African research has revealed that supportive supervision is lacking in child protection organisations due to priority directed at administrative supervision (Chibaya, 2018; Parker, 2017). Beddoe et al. (2015) suggest that there is an alternative approach that seeks to understand one’s own

agency and professional autonomy to cope with the changing professional structures based on reflective supervision that recognises and manages the balance between supportive and managerial supervision. Given the nature of child protection issues and emotionally draining cases, it is applaudable that participating social workers in this study feel supported by their supervisors to deal with complicated cases, high caseloads, and function optimally regardless of their emotions.

6.3.2. Theme 2: Operationalisation

This theme focuses on how social work supervision is operationalised within organisations and how the supervision process unfolds in supervisory relationships. The following sub-themes were identified under Theme 2: *adult education principles, supervision process, supervision activities, supervision methods, theoretical models, as well as values and ethics in supervision.*

6.3.2.1. Sub-theme 2.1: Adult education principles

Adult education principles help supervisors to understand how supervisees learn and what their learning styles and needs are (Engelbrecht, 2014; Knowles, 1971). In her study, Parker (2017) found that social workers and supervisors did not demonstrate an understanding or use of adult education principles during supervision. Similarly, in this study, the participants did not have a full grasp of what adult education principles entail until the researcher provided a practical example. Thereafter, the participants were able to respond about how adult education principles are implemented during supervision sessions.

“I think it is our responsibility to know things. If you are working with children, you need to know the Children's Act. If you are working with probations, you need to know the Justice Acts. You need to be informed about the field where you are working. You need to know your policies and Acts, as your work is guided by these policies and Acts. It is your responsibility to read and do research. You need to attend courses or trainings to stay on top of everything in the field. There are always changes made and you need to be open to learning these new things”.

(SW Donald)

“You need to know when you need help. Ask questions, tell her you need a session with her. You need to develop yourself; you need to have a PDP. You need to ask to go for trainings”. (SW Diane)

Some of the supervisors agreed:

“The responsibility lies with the social worker and the supervisor. The social worker brings to the session what they want to discuss, and you use that as part of areas that they need to develop”. (SW Emma)

“They want us to tell them what to do, but that is not my function as the supervisor to just tell you what to do. I am there to support and guide. They expect you to spoon-feed them”. (SW Jane)

From the participants voices, the responsibility to carry out the supervision process lies with both the supervisor and supervisee. According to Kadushin and Harkness (2014), supervisees should be regarded as partners in the supervisory relationship by encouraging them to set their own goals and to participate in agenda planning for the supervision sessions instead of “spoon-feeding” them. The adult education principles promote the social workers’ ability to identify their learning and be self-directed, while the supervisor’s role is to create a conducive environment for learning so that they are motivated and enthusiastic (Engelbrecht, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).

6.3.2.2. Sub-theme 2.2: Supervision process

A *supervision process* is cyclical and involves engagement, assessment, planning, contracting, implementation, and evaluation (Engelbrecht, 2019b). During the supervision process, specific tasks need to be completed. The supervision tasks include identifying competencies for the supervisee, assessment of the supervisee’s personal development, compiling a personal development plan, and agreeing on the supervision format, outcomes, responsibilities for each party, and frequency of supervision sessions through contracting. These supervision tasks as stipulated in the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP) were identified as categories under this sub-theme. Although research by Wynne (2020) and Manthosi (2016) has found that some of the supervision tasks such as assessment and evaluation are rarely implemented as part of the supervision process, there was evidence of concerted effort to implement all the supervision tasks by the participants in this study.

a. *Assessment of personal competencies*

The Supervision Framework intended to improve supervision practices within organisations in order to motivate employees, retain social workers in the country while simultaneously increasing social work competencies (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Therefore, assessing the competencies of social workers is an integral part of the supervision process aimed at capacitating social workers to render quality social services. The assessment of personal competencies is directly linked with the compilation of a PDP. The relationship between the development of a PDP and assessment of competencies which is strengths focused and informed by the performance, administration, development and integration (PADI) logic framework (Chorn, 2004) was shared by some of the participants.

“In each supervision session we discuss the growing areas and the development areas. The supervisor is well known that she acknowledges your strengths. She will tell you that you did something well. We need acknowledgement or a 'well done'. She will show you where you did something wrong”. (SW Suzan)

“She also looks at your strengths and where you need to develop. They also did a personal leadership programme with me. She really wants to see where you are at as a social worker. We discuss our competencies and where we need to improve”. (SW Thola)

“I have now spoken about the PADI logic – performance administration, development and integration – that is what it stands for, and that is to see your growth, did you reach what you wanted to reach?” (SW Michelle)

The participants were of the view that an assessment of competencies takes place before a PDP is compiled.

“Normally we do discuss about that [personal competencies] and then we put it in writing after [the] discussion, that what were the areas we identified that still need attention”. (Supervisee Dora)

“I am not good at admin, I hate it; I do not like writing process notes, and she will work out like a plan for me, and say, this is a developmental plan, you must develop in that you are not good in that writing process note, maybe you must

schedule your appointment for an hour and then maybe you will see the client for 40 minutes, and then there is 20 minutes to write your process note". (SW Wilma)

"You get CPD points throughout the course of the year if you go to courses. So that is a form of assessment. During supervision we can assess, did I learn something or not at these trainings or courses? Also, if I am maybe studying something, I can say at the end of the year, I am now finished studying and I can put it in my file". (SW Donald)

From the participants stories, it can be deduced that within the organisation assessment of personal competencies of social workers is implemented in a consultative manner and collaboratively with social workers who are able to identify their strengths and learning opportunities. This finding supports the constructionist view that learning happens when ideas are reconstructed through dialogue and exchanges of thoughts, opinions, and feelings between supervisees and supervisors (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009; Mo et al., 2020). Contrary to this finding, existing research has found that supervision within child protection sector has become a routine, with no learning opportunities created to meet the needs of supervisees (Chibaya, 2018; Wynne, 2020). This often happens if supervision is not structured or based on a personal development plan of the supervisee. The implementation of a PDP is further discussed in the next section.

b. Personal development plan (PDP)

A *personal development plan* is a tool that clearly indicates identified developmental areas and strengths of the supervisee based on the personal development assessment. Participating social workers were asked how the process of compiling a PDP is implemented within their organisation. Social workers shared both positive and negative experiences of the process. On a positive note, social workers expressed that when developing their PDP, the process was collaborative, and they discussed their strengths and areas of development in consultation with their supervisors.

"I have got it – SPDP – the strength-based personal development plan for social workers – they used that in our organisation. And then you have got your performance part, that is how responsive you are; and your administration part, how consistent you are; and your developmental part". (SW Michelle)

“You must write your strength and weaknesses and your development ... the stuff where you must develop and that must also be on your file”. (SW Wilma)

“During individual supervision she ask[s] us if we want to go for trainings and what are our needs, and then we will inform her what our needs is; when there is training for that, she will inform us there is training and if you want it”. (SW Vienna)

Participants also reported that the PDPs are evaluated annually:

“I know last year I did one and our last supervision I will be updating it, like on how I have grown and what other aspects do I still need obviously to grow on, so like my strength and my current challenges, and how I am planning to obviously to deal with them”. (SW Salome)

“When I started here at the [organisation] my supervisor did a PDP with me, and they will evaluate it every year or draw up a new one.” (SW Vienna)

Participants’ stories are indicative of the fact that the organisation follows a strengths-based approach when implementing the supervision process through the development of a PDP that is strengths orientated. The findings echo the views of Lietz (2013) and Engelbrecht (2019b; 2021b) who believe that SBS advances the skills needed to implement effective supervision practices while addressing any existing challenges. Furthermore, Lietz and Julien-Chinn (2017) found that SBS is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction amongst social workers. This current study revealed that through a compilation of PDPs, social workers can identify their training needs and be afforded an opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge based on their needs and strengths. To assess social workers strengths, the PDPs are reviewed annually to check how the set development goals were achieved and update where necessary, thereby fostering both supportive and educational functions of supervision. Social workers value processes that allow them to continually develop skills and competencies that enrich their PDPs.

Although most of the participants developed their PDP with their supervisors, some had not yet developed their PDPs, as revealed by the following narratives:

“We do not have PDPs yet. We just touch on what is positive and what is negative aspects that need to be developed”. (SW Thola)

“We did not formulate a PDP when we were doing the supervision contract”.

(SW Zoleka)

“We have a whole document on that and supposed to fill it on our supervision agenda every month, but we do not actually go through that. It is done once, and it is there and the reason for that is ... all these admin, we have a lot of admin, and it is there ... I know we are supposed to go through that, I know she has got the intention of doing that, but it is just so time-consuming, and we do not have enough time, it is just time, we do not have it”. (SW Mandy)

These narratives show inconsistencies in how the supervision task of developing a PDP is implemented by supervisors within their organisation. As noted by Mandy, time constraints and administrative work demands could be contributing factors to non-compliance of this requirement of the Supervision Framework. Although only a handful of social workers said they have not yet developed their PDPs, Parker (2017) found that none of the social workers in her study had the opportunity to draw up a PDP, and neither did they have any specific goals set for their work, nor even task specific outcomes. Lack of PDP can contribute to lack of direction and purpose in one’s work for both the supervisor and supervisee. Literature has also shown that supervisors’ workload and lack of structured supervision can lead to minimal implementation of the supervision process as stipulated in the Supervision Framework (Maupye, 2016; Wynne, 2020).

c. Supervision contract

Contracting is another key task during the supervision process. Supervisors and supervisees need to develop a supervision contract together that needs to be signed as a written agreement and identify the terms of the supervisory relationship. The contract needs to contain the planned duration and frequency of supervision, as well as the supervisors and supervisees roles and responsibilities (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The supervision contract should define the professional relationship, clarify expectations beforehand, and introduce clear boundaries between the supervisor and supervisee (Engelbrecht, 2014; Tsui, 2004). The contracting phase of the supervision process is important because it allows the supervisor and supervisee to negotiate terms of their supervisory relationship and set clear goals in the supervision contract (Shokane, 2016; Parker, 2017). When developing a supervision contract, participants shared the following experiences:

“The contract was done at the beginning when I started my employment; it is not something that we do in a monthly basis when we do the supervision. It was something that I did once-off then it is on file”. (SW Salome)

“In the supervision contract the roles and responsibility of both parties is there, so we know exactly what to expect from the supervisor and what the supervisor expects from [the] supervisee and the function of supervision”. (SW Priscilla)

Some of the social workers felt that developing and signing a supervision contract is merely for administrative and auditing purposes.

“She [Supervisor] will discuss in group supervision and then we will have to sign it; we will go through it and if you have got any questions and then we sign it, and it is on our – we have got a supervision file”. (SW Mandy)

“We must sign it because it is like paperwork that must be in order. If [the] DSD have an audit, it must be in your file; it must be completed”. (SW Wilma)

The participants further expressed that the contracts are hardly revised, which supports the assertion that it is probably done for administrative purposes and never followed through in terms of implementation.

“The contract is supposed to be reviewed every year, but at this time it is not happening”. (SW Portia)

“The contract is usually made in the beginning when you start working at the organisation. You and your supervisor will talk about your responsibilities and their responsibilities. You talk about what to expect in the supervision session, and what the function is of supervision. Afterwards you sign the contract together. I think it needs to be revised once a year, but we do not do that. We never look back on that”. (SW Diane)

“We have a contract with our supervisor in which we determine when supervision will take place, you determine your years of experience, and how much supervision is needed. We set dates monthly. We do not re-evaluate the contract that much, but I think once a year. The expectations of both parties are included”. (SW Suzan)

One social worker said the revision happens when there is a new supervisor.

“Every time when a new supervisor come[s] to our office, then we review the supervision contract”. (SW Vienna)

The Supervision Framework does not stipulate how often the supervision contract needs to be revised, but rather states that the frequency and format of supervision after three years needs to be determined by both the supervisor and supervisee. The revision must consider the experience and competency of the supervisee, and the nature and complexity of the work being supervised (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

What is paramount is seeing that the supervision contract is implemented as agreed upon by both the supervisor and supervisee. Noble and Irwin (2009) observed that failure to develop a supervision contract led to ‘on the run’ supervision. Such non-structured supervision may prohibit the execution of associated supervision tasks, creating a barrier for developing learning goals and objectives in the supervisory relationship. Consequently, this led to harmful supervision due to the lack of a specific supervision process being followed (Wynne, 2020). However, in this current study, the participants did not indicate any deviation in terms of meeting the agreed stipulations in their contract, but rather the mode of supervision was changed to online in the beginning of the national lockdown in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Having said that, what can be deduced from the findings is that even though supervisors may wish to implement the supervision contract, due to the crisis intervention in the organisation, the supervision process hardly goes beyond establishing supervisees’ PDP. This is because supervision within child protection organisations has become a response to crisis intervention. The consequence is that the supervision format is not necessarily according to the needs of supervisees as set out in their PDPs, which negatively impacts the ecology of supervision and contributes dismally to the failure of clinical supervision within the child welfare sector in South Africa.

d. Performance evaluation

The Supervision Framework stipulates that organisations need to develop supervision policies that specify the requirements for performance evaluation (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Performance evaluation is an opportunity for the supervisor and supervisee to appraise the supervisee’s learning needs, growth, PDP, and the outcomes of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2021a; Ncube, 2018). The participating social workers were asked how the evaluation of their

performance is implemented in their organisation. The social workers shared varying stories about their performance evaluation, with the majority expressing that their performance evaluation is implemented through file audits. The general understanding was that the audits are done annually so that social workers can account for the services they render, and the organisation can account to the DSD regarding funding allocated.

“Every year the supervisor will audit our files and then she will evaluate us looking at the service that we rendered on the file”. (SW Vienna)

“She does the performance evaluation when she does the audit. She goes through every single file you have and gives you necessary feedback. This takes between one to three days”. (SW Linda)

“In our performance evaluation, they check your case files. She checks everything on the files. We need to submit quarterly reports also. In the office, you have daily statistics that goes hand in hand with the diary. At the end of the month, you just put that all together for your statistics. I think [the] DSD evaluates every six months, but now with COVID it might be longer”. (SW Donald)

Some participants reported that they are not evaluated, while others felt it is not ideal to evaluate social workers’ performance fairly because they all work in different areas, and some did not regard audits as performance evaluation.

“I have no idea how my performance is evaluated. I have not been evaluated”. (SW Cathy)

“We do not have something like that here but when I am doing report all my statutory reports, I must send to my supervisor and she must obviously check it and sign it off, so she keeps record of all the stuff that we are doing, so at the end, she is doing like a report for our head office in terms of every plan she has.” (SW Wilma)

“We have audits and then she assesses with you. But it really does differ from person to person. I do not have a formal performance evaluation”. (SW Thola)

According to Ncube (2018) and Mokoka (2016), performance appraisals should be for developmental purposes wherein supervisees are afforded space to determine the course of

action regarding their PDP. However, in this study, some of the social workers did not see the value of performance evaluation, given that they do not receive performance bonuses, or the fact that the audits are mainly for administrative purposes and not the personal development of social workers. It can be inferred that some of the participants did not grasp the interrelatedness of the supervision process and the link between the PDP, the supervision contract, and performance evaluation. Hence, they viewed performance evaluation merely as auditing, and not part of the supervision process. This was a common thread in Parker's (2017) study which found that most of the participants were not optimistic about annual audits of their case files due to the administrative control and lack of understanding about the rationale and benefit of a performance appraisal. Consequently, this makes social workers resistant to the process and lacks motivation for participation in performance evaluation.

“... we do not get any salary increases or a bonus or salary according to our work, but I think that is the thing you must maybe look into because some of the SW really do their work and much more than they have to”. (SW Jolie)

“My audit is what is the current state of the file, what is needed on the file, was I able to reach the deadline. It is all about the updating of the files, not about personal development”. (SW Zoleka)

Although performance evaluation is necessary not just for financial rewards but for the assessment of both quantitative and qualitative social work service delivery, when performance evaluation focuses primarily on the administrative component of supervision, this may result in the educational and supportive functions of supervision being neglected. Davys (2017) concurs that although regulatory and other policy requirements ensure that supervision happens, the authors found that the quality of supervision and the needs of supervisees were believed to be irrelevant by social workers. In this current study, the participants viewed supervision as a controlling process where compliance with management priorities and work targets shaped supervision agendas and the supervisory relationship. This is because supervisors and supervisees do not see the link between the phases of the supervision process, rather performance evaluation is associated with remuneration and auditing, thus a managerial imposed activity instead of a professional development activity. This mindset has contributed to the resistance of social workers to performance evaluation and lack of ownership of the supervision process. Therefore, performance evaluation should not only be a target-oriented process but should enable both the supervisor and the supervisee

to reflect on the achievement of set outcomes in the supervisee's PDP and to identify future development needs.

According to the Supervision Framework, an assessment of performance expected must be done twice a year in line with the PDP of supervisees. What is evident from the participants' stories is that performance evaluation in the organisation is implemented in one way or another, even though there is no common understanding of how it is done. Considering the varying perspectives, the organisation might need to investigate how performance is evaluated and how the message of performance evaluation is communicated to social workers. The purpose is so that it aligns with the Supervision Framework's requirement, so that social workers can view performance evaluation as part of the supervision process and not as a compliance checklist – which denotes managerialism.

6.3.2.3. Sub-theme 2.3: Methods of supervision

The main methods of supervision are individual and group supervision, which were identified as categories in this sub-theme.

a. Individual supervision

Individual supervision happens between the supervisor and supervisee with the purpose of promoting the personal growth of the supervisee. Due to the intensity of individual supervision, the supervisor can provide sufficient emotional support and guidance to address the supervisees' needs and areas of development (Coulshed et al., 2006). In this study, participating social workers were asked how individual supervision is implemented within their organisation. When describing the implementation of an individual session, the participants said:

“We work through the agenda. It starts with the workers emotional well-being, and then we discuss new intakes of child abuse. We discuss if a safety assessment was done ... Then we talk about statutory intervention and children that you removed. We talk about court reports and court dates. We talk about alternative placements for older children that is perhaps 18 but still in school. We talk about business plan objectives. She also evaluates us in supervision. We also plan for the next supervision”. (SW Linda)

“Usually, we start out with personal well-being. We talk about how we are. We talk about the area we are working in at the moment. We recap on the previous

session. ... We talk about early intervention and prevention. We will have a look at children you removed or are planning to remove. We talk about foster care, group work, community work, and termination is also discussed. We have a supervision template you need to prepare beforehand". (SW Cathy)

"So how it works is after the emotional check-in, we go through the document where we go through each type of case that is listed like statutory, early intervention, group work and community work. The supervisor then knows exactly what happened in that month and what you are working on ... There is also a part that focuses on termination, where we talk about cases that is closed or being closed. We also evaluate at the end where she tells me what I need to focus on like I need to work more on my admin, or I need to be more balanced. This all is placed on the documentation, which we sign off at the end". (SW Diane)

From the participants' stories, it can be deduced that the individual supervision sessions in the organisation are implemented in a structured way with a beginning, middle, and end. Shulman (2010) and O'Donoghue (2021b) concur that the structure of supervision sessions involves the engagement, planning, working, and concluding stage, whereby the beginning focuses on preparing the work to be done in the middle stage and ending with a review and evaluation of the session. The structure is particularly important because supervision that is not structured or planned can be crisis orientated (Engelbrecht, 2013; Wynne, 2020), instead of following a cyclic process of supervision as suggested by Engelbrecht (2014). It can also be argued that the sessions are structured in such a way that the administrative, supportive, and educational functions of supervision can be implemented during individual supervision as stipulated in the Supervision Framework. For example, in planning for the session, supervisees are expected to draft an agenda and send that through to their supervisor in advance so that they can both prepare for the session.

In addition, the supervisee's administrative work can also be assessed during individual sessions. In terms of the supportive function, supervisors enquire about the personal well-being of supervisees and how they are coping with workload so that they can provide the necessary emotional support and advise accordingly depending on the supervisees' needs. However, the gap that was identified in implementing individual supervision based on the participants' stories is an unclear link between the agenda of a supervision session with the supervisees' PDP. Although the organisation has a template to set an agenda for sessions, the

translation of the PDP into agendas for each supervision session was not evident. Hence, supervision sessions remain impromptu, without set goals and objectives attached to a timeframe within the supervision contract based on the agreed PDP.

The educational function forms an integral part of individual sessions and requires a collaborative effort between the supervisor and supervisee to seek new knowledge and developments in the field, as explained by the following supervisors:

“It is a joint attempt or partnership between the supervisor and the worker. We must also have staff development with our staff we are supervising. We must address challenges they [social workers] experience in the workplace or in cases. They have intense cases”. (SWS Emily)

“You need to focus on areas of development with your workers. We reflect on the previous supervision agenda to see if there is any tasks that must still be completed from the previous time. I can make sure the worker does not fall behind. You also have cases for discussion. They bounce ideas off me to see if they are on the right track. There is also group work, community work, our TPA [Transfer Payment Agreement] needs to be checked up on regularly. There is also place for termination of files, they cannot close a file without my go ahead or say so. I need to sign off on that”. (SWS Zama)

When discussing the implementation of individual supervision, the participants also explained the duration as well as frequency of supervision sessions. Table 6.4 below depicts what the participants said about the frequency of individual sessions:

Table 6.4: Frequency of individual supervision sessions

Frequency of supervision session	Participant
<i>“The individual supervision is <u>once a month</u>”</i>	SW Lebo
<i>“Individual supervision is <u>monthly</u>”</i>	SW Melissa
<i>“Individual supervision is usually once a month. If not at least <u>once every two months</u>”</i>	SW Suzan
<i>“You must have <u>once a month</u> the formal structured supervision with a social service practitioner”</i>	SWS Emily
<i>“Formal supervision is <u>once a month</u>”</i>	SWS Noma

Regarding the duration of individual sessions, social workers said the following:

“Individual sessions it is kind of usually half a day”. (SW Dora)

“Individual supervision is about two to three hours”. (SW Suzan)

“Individual supervision usually takes a day or a half day. It depends on what is discussed”. (SW Thola)

The findings show that individual sessions occur primarily once a month and sometimes bi-monthly. The length of the sessions vary depending on what needs to be discussed and what both the supervisor and supervisee put on the agenda. In this regard, one social worker said the agenda needs to be set beforehand:

“The length depends on how many files you want to discuss. You need to send your agenda three days ahead of time. It could be an hour or two”. (SW Tonet)

Existing research (Atkins, 2019; Baloyi, 2017; Parker, 2017) within the child protection sector in South Africa found that the duration of structured individual supervision is usually monthly or bi-monthly. Thus, the current organisation’s implementation of individual supervision aligns with the guidelines from the Supervision Framework of conducting supervision at least once a month after the first year of practice (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Although structured individual supervision is conducted monthly, supervisors in the organisation are available for support and guidance when necessary and this was particularly significant in the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, as shared by one supervisor:

“In the first month when it was the hard lockdown, the social workers did not go out. Then we just did informal check-ins to see that they are okay”. (SWS Emma)

The supervisors further revealed the following regarding informal consultations:

“I only see her once every two months. She still completes an agenda for supervision. She can approach me for informal supervision as well”. (SWS Emily)

“We have informal consultations as well where they can come and get our guidance and advice in an informal way”. (SWS Jane)

“We do formal supervision once a month, otherwise it is just informal consultations”. (SWS Noma)

When asked to clarify the difference between formal and informal supervision, Noma said the following:

“The difference is that formal supervision is once a month with an agenda, which is used as a guideline for the supervision session. In informal supervision we just have a telephone call or email about a specific case that they are struggling with”.

Noma’s sentiments were confirmed by some of the social workers who said their supervisors can be contacted telephonically should a need arise in between formal supervision sessions:

“You can also telephonically contact her if you need help”. (SW Cathy)

“We can pick up the phone and ask. It is not formal supervision, but I can ask her when I need her”. (SW Donald)

“When I feel like I need to talk to her then I phone her for advice or guidance to make a decision. She is always available on email or the phone”. (SW Linda)

The availability of supervisors beyond the structured monthly individual sessions is important, especially within a child protection organisation wherein the well-being of children is a priority. Therefore, social workers constantly need to consult and seek immediate guidance from their supervisors if they need to remove a child or conduct a risk assessment about the safety of a child in need of care and protection (Vetfuti, 2017). Some recent research refers to this as an “open door policy” adopted within the child protection sector in South Africa. However, the informal consultations become an issue if it is the only form of supervision conducted within an organisation without taking cognisance of a supervision contract because it can lead to unstructured and harmful supervision (Chibaya, 2018). Thus, supervision should not be constituted by case discussion only, wherein the supervisor just tells the supervisee what to do and gives advice in cases. Rather, there must be a clear link between the goals and objectives of a PDP to the myriad of cases discussed during informal supervision (which could be via a check-in session or a phone call). This approach to supervision can mirror the supervision activities of mentoring, coaching, and consultation, depending on the identified competencies of a social worker during the assessment phase. It can also determine the frequency of supervision sessions instead of relying on a one-size-fits-

all frequency of supervision sessions by consulting once a month or fortnightly for newly qualified social workers as stipulated in the Supervision Framework and observed by international scholars such as Manthorpe et al., (2015) and Wilkins and Antonopoulou (2018).

In terms of the determinants of supervision and the Supervision Framework, supervision sessions should be structured and conducted as agreed upon by the supervisor and supervisee and determined by the supervision contract. What was observed from the findings is that within child protection organisations, “open door” discussions and advise on cases is inevitable given the crisis nature of the sector. Hence, context specific supervision policies are necessary to delimitate the goal and format of supervision based on the nature of the organisation to assess the feasibility of clinical supervision that will shape effective supervision practices within an organisation. O’Donoghue (2021b) also suggests that supervision sessions can be improved by focusing deliberately on the set agenda and prioritising in-depth discussions and reflective practice. O’Donoghue (2008) avers that for reflective supervision to be a success, the supervisor requires clinical skills in order to offer emotional support to supervisees by being available and attentive to their needs.

What is unique about the organisation under study is that the informal consultation and open-door policy does not substitute the formal and structured monthly individual supervision. Moreover, Engelbrecht (2019a) and Silence (2016) found that many supervisors in South Africa utilise individual supervision, however the content analysis in Chapter 4 revealed that the favourable mode of supervision within child protection is group supervision which is discussed next.

b. Group supervision

Group supervision takes place between the supervisor and a small group of supervisees, thereby creating a space for social workers to share their experiences, knowledge, and challenges when providing social services (Coulshed et al., 2006; Sheafor & Horejsi, 2010). A community of practice is often created in group supervision through reviewing different case files as a team, training on policy and legislative changes, and learning different intervention strategies from each other. Below are participants’ experiences on the implementation of group supervision in their organisation:

“Group supervision is whereby everyone, every social worker will bring in cases challenging cases and then amongst each other we discuss them we give advice to that social worker”. (SW Salome)

“I gain a lot of knowledge you know just having a panel of social workers where you can tell them about a certain case that you are struggling with that you can get an input from all the other social workers and come to a conclusion, what will be the best decision in the interest of the child”. (SW Michelle)

“We receive the agenda maybe a week prior to the group supervision. They will always give us the topic beforehand, e.g., Children’s Act Section 50. So, we will have the documents ready to discuss this. The supervisor will then identify a case that a worker is struggling with, and this will then be discussed. Other social workers are also able to give their input in terms of how they will handle the situation. It is very active learning in group supervision”. (SW Zoleka)

The participants further shared that group supervision in their organisation is implemented in such a way that learning opportunities, role playing, and staff development are facilitated to aid social workers to enhance their skills and competencies. Carpenter et al., (2012) argue that group supervision promotes critical thinking amongst social workers. In group supervision, social workers have an opportunity to expose their views, expertise, and strengths in their work amongst colleagues. Hence, the participants appreciated the learning opportunities and trainings established through group supervision. Even those who did not necessarily enjoy some of the activities, such as role playing, they still valued group supervision because of the opportunity to learn from one another in different settings of their organisation. This was evident from the following narratives:

“One thing that works really well is when we have group supervision, we share our experiences of training that we went to. If there is new information or a new toolkit, we can use with our clients we then share it with each other in supervision”. (SW Rea)

“We go through all our files in group supervision, we do role play so ...we learn a lot that is why I like group supervision a lot because we learn from each other”. (SW Mandy)

What was not clear from the participants' stories is how group supervision links with the social workers' PDP. It was observed that social workers attend group supervision sessions together on the basis that they share a supervisor and not based on their PDPs, years of experience, or challenges that they encounter in their workplace. This contradicts with social group work wherein members might be grouped together based on their common problem or challenges. When comparing group therapy and group supervision, Alschuler (2021) posits that, unlike group therapy, group supervision is about holding social workers accountable.

Within the organisation under study, group supervision has taken more of a staff development and workshop nature. Although this approach to group supervision might not necessarily align with the supervisees' PDP, it still fosters peer learning and growth among social workers through information sharing and case study discussions. This advantage of group supervision was also identified by Alschuler (2021) who argues that the provision of peer feedback widens social workers' scope regarding client issues and can improve social work intervention.

When asked about the duration and frequency of group supervision, the participants shared the following about the duration of the sessions:

“Group supervision starts 9:00 and then we will finish at 13:00”. (SW Lebo)

“Group supervision is the whole day. We have a lunch break”. (SW Linda)

Responses regarding the frequency of group sessions are tabulated below:

Table 6.5: Frequency of group supervision session

Frequency of group supervision	Participant
<i>“Group supervision is usually <u>once per quarter</u>, and we also have it for about two to three hours”</i>	SW Suzan
<i>“Group supervision is <u>every second month</u>”</i>	SW Melissa
<i>“Group supervision is <u>once every two months</u>”</i>	SW Donald
<i>“We have group supervision <u>every month</u>”</i>	SW Thola
<i>“Group supervision must <u>happen once a quarter with teams</u>. This is a discussion of complicated cases. We will help that team member together with a difficult case”</i>	SWS Emily

Congruent with existing research (Wilkins & Antonopoulou, 2018; O' Donoghue, 2021b), the participants' responses reveal that the frequency and duration of group supervision varies depending on the practice context. Group supervision can occur monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly, with most participants reporting that their group sessions happen once per quarter. Parker (2017) also found that many group sessions take place on a monthly, tri-monthly, or quarterly basis. The duration of group supervision ranges between three hours to a full working day which is about 8 hours. Studies by Wilkins and Antonopoulou (2018) and O'Donoghue (2019) have shown that the duration of supervision sessions within the child welfare sector is between 60–120 minutes with the increased length of sessions viewed as less beneficial to the overall supervision process. Moreover, the duration is determined by the nature of the session and what need to be discussed during the session as stipulated by one participant:

“Group supervision depends on what it is about. If it is more training, then it is one to three hours. If it is just discussion about cases, it is one or two hours, then we have lunch and the everybody goes home. So ja, it depends on the theme of the day. Group supervision is almost like individual, it starts with how it is going with everyone. Then we go to the more admin kind of stuff. We discuss any new things in the organisation that we need to be aware of perhaps. We check up on certain challenges perhaps that is in the office. We discuss reports and debrief together in a group atmosphere”. (SW Diane)

Diane's sentiments are congruent with the research conducted by O' Donoghue (2019) and Manthorpe et al., (2015) which found that group supervision primarily revolves around discussions of difficult cases, administrative matters, and professional development, which then determine the length of group sessions. What was also observed is that group supervision affords supervisors an opportunity to guide, support, and educate supervisees in a group setting, thereby implementing the administrative, supportive, and educational functions as reflected under the sub-theme of “supervision functions” (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; O' Donoghue, 2019). Therefore, the implementation of group supervision fosters peer learning and growth through staff training, information sharing, case study discussions, and team building.

6.3.2.4. *Sub-theme 2.4: Supervision activities*

Supervision activities encompasses consultation, coaching, and mentoring. Of these activities, the participants had a better understanding of consultation compared to mentoring and coaching. According to the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), consultation may be applied to experienced social workers, as determined by the supervision contract between the supervisee and the supervisor. Given that social workers should have acquired a specific set of skills and be experienced before they are on a consultation basis with their supervisors, the participants were asked about the requirements for one to be on consultation and how consultation as an activity of supervision is implemented in the organisation under study.

“The guideline is three years’ experience in child protection to be on consultation basis. But you get social workers who could be consulted from 2 years already, and others who are still not ready 5 years into the job”. (SWS Emma)

“I have one that has worked for more than 10 at her branch, so I only see her once every two months. She stills completes an agenda for supervision. She can approach me for informal supervision as well. It all depends on years working for the organisation whether it will be consultation or supervision”. (SWS Emily)

“I think it depends on how your supervisor evaluates you as a social worker, and how you have grown through the years. It is also about that confidence you must make the right decisions in your cases, instead of just calling the supervisor the whole time. It should be a discussion between you and the supervisor before you go into consultation. I think it also needs to be a type of contract when you go into consultation”. (SW Diane)

When asked the difference between consultation and regular supervision, the participants said:

“I am a senior social worker now I am on consultation. The difference between consultation and supervision is that it is once a month and consultation is once in every second or third month, but my supervisor is anytime available if I need advice or anything then I can call her anytime and she is available”. (SW Wilma)

“Consultation is a less structured agenda and session. In normal supervision the supervisor can pull a file and say what she wants to discuss, but in consultation they only discuss what the social worker needs to discuss. I think it depends on how long you have been there and your performance”. (SW Linda)

“I am on consultation basis. I can ask for guidance, where a young social worker will have supervision once or twice a month”. (SW Tonet)

“I am for a long time in practice my supervision is not always every month because I am on consultation ... I have experience, I can go on and do things, but she always checks on me you to see if everything is in place”. (SW Jolie)

The participants' views reveal that it depends on the level of experience for social workers to be on a consultation basis with their supervisor. Botha (2002) argues that consultation follows an initial period of intense supervision and takes place at the request of the social worker. Although consultation is often voluntary and always advisory in nature, it should be guided by the supervision contract and stipulate educational and professional developmental components of the supervisee (Engelbrecht, 2012). Therefore, the move to consultation should not only be based on the years of experience, but also on the knowledge the social worker has acquired during their years in practice. The Supervision Framework is not prescriptive regarding the number of years social workers should have before they move to consultation, but rather emphasises the terms of a supervision contract and the supervisees' performance appraisal. The ability of social workers to work independently is important because regular supervision is more in-depth, meanwhile consultation is more advisory in nature and conducted in most instances on the request of the social worker (Botha, 2002; DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

Mentoring is regarded as the formal or informal transmission of knowledge, skills, attitudes, psychosocial support, and professional development that enhances the overarching goal of supervision (Engelbrecht, 2012; Connor & Pokora, 2007). The participants had the following to say about mentoring in supervision:

“Your supervisor is a mentor for you, especially if you are open for that. I think it is implemented through having an open-door policy where we can call her or ask her about things we struggle with. If you do something wrong, she must be

able to talk to you about it. It helps to get that constant positive energy the whole time to remind you that you are fine ...” (SW Diane)

“Our supervisor does mentor us; she is always available to talk to and support us. We can consult with her when needed. The senior social workers get consultation rather than supervision. It is just a discussion of the files when they are uncertain”. (SW Linda)

One social worker said this about coaching in supervision:

“Our supervisor is very good at coaching us. She keeps us on the right track and helps us to focus on the therapy that the child needs”. (SW Rea)

There appears to be limited understanding regarding the implementation of mentoring and coaching in the organisation. One of the contributing factors could be because mentoring and coaching are an integral part of the educational function of supervision. If the function is not adequately implemented due to priority being given to the administrative function, evidence of the implementation of mentoring and coaching will also be scarce. Although both mentoring and coaching have been identified as some of the key supervision activities (Engelbrecht, 2019a), the Supervision Framework lacks clarity on these activities, and therefore priority is placed on consultation. What can be deduced from the participants’ stories is that social workers must have at least a minimum of two years’ experience within child protection. The social workers must be competent and be able to work independently because consultation is work-related, goal-directed, and is executed according to a process between the supervisor and supervisee after a period of structured supervision, performance appraisals, and revision of the supervision contract. Thus, the duration and frequency of the supervision is determined by the supervisor in consultation with the supervisee after considering the level of experience of the supervisee and the complexity of the work being supervised. This aligns with the stipulations in the Supervision Framework of encouraging social workers in consultation to take full responsibility for their workload, as well as to stay motivated and grow professionally, which in turn will enable them to work independently and autonomously in terms of the total scope of their work. The supervisee should be confident, responsible, and must have acquired the prerequisite knowledge and skills to undertake the assigned responsibilities (DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

Mentoring and coaching is more concerned with providing guidance and support during supervision sessions. It includes orientating social workers to different policies in the organisation and ensuring that the organisation's mandate is carried out in accordance with the vision and mission of the organisation (Connor & Pokora, 2007). Although all the supervision activities discussed are similar in terms of processes and techniques, they vary in terms of scope and how they are implemented, depending on the professional development stages of the social workers (Engelbrecht, 2012). This means that all these supervision activities are integrated in one way or another during individual and group supervision through the educational function of supervision.

6.3.2.5. Sub-theme 2.5: Theories, perspectives, and practice models

Theories, perspectives, and practice models in this study refers to the lens from which an organisation structures, adapts, explains, and practices supervision (Tsui & Ho, 1997). In social work supervision, theories, perspectives and practice models can be made up of interrelated techniques and principles to guide supervision practices. According to the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), supervision within organisations should be informed by the theories that promote the effective supervision of social workers to ensure competent professional social work practice and the improvement of quality social welfare services. The Supervision Framework does not delineate what theories and perspectives can be utilised in supervision; rather, organisations are left to define the theories, perspectives, and practice models that will guide the supervision practices in their setting and can thus apply models of intervention or extrapolate models from other fields. In this study, the participants were asked to share their experiences of what theoretical underpinning guides supervision within their organisation and how the models are implemented. Although existing research suggests that supervisors were not able to identify or apply different theories and models to guide supervision practices (Chibaya, 2018; Ncube, 2018; Mokoka, 2016), this study found that the strengths-based approach was viewed as the key theory guiding supervision within the organisation. This was evident as shown on the word cloud below:

They check where our strengths are, where is our challenges, how can we use our strengths to conquer our challenges". (SW Diane)

"Within the guidance that is given, you can see that the ideas and opinions are focusing on strengths". (SW Cathy)

The implementation of a strengths-based supervision within an organisation creates an empowering environment that focuses on strengths, assets, capacities, abilities, resilience, and the resources that supervisees have, and moves away from a deficit-based mindset (Saleeby, 2008). The strength perspective fortifies the supervisory relationship by promoting empowerment, partnership, collaboration, and participation between the supervisor and the supervisee. Research by Engelbrecht (2021b) has revealed that strengths-based supervision focuses on competencies and capabilities instead of problems and pathology. Lusk et al., (2017) assert that when conducting supervision informed by the strengths approach, supervisors get an opportunity to be culturally competent since the culture and identity of social workers are among a person's best assets. This will possibly eradicate the notion of privilege and power in supervision practices. In addition to the strengths-based perspective, person-centred theory, and a trauma informed approach were highlighted as important.

"We focus more on the strength-based theory and the person-centred theory".
(SW Lebo)

"I think trauma informed and strengths-based approach". (SWS Emily)

"Strengths perspective also plays a big role, as well as the developmental model. Just as we use it in our field of work with clients, they also use it with us as well. They check where our strengths are, where is our challenges, how can we use our strengths to conquer our challenges". (SW Diane)

The sentiments of the latter participant coincide with Tsui and Ho's (1997) views on the practice theory model that focuses on how supervisors can adopt theories from therapy to provide concrete guidance on practice skills during supervision. The advantage of this model for supervision is that the supervisor can build on theories that are already in existence in the field. For example, by adopting a strengths-based perspective, the supervisor has a framework from which to work to achieve specific goals in accordance with the supervisees and organisation's needs. Engelbrecht (2021b) argues that SBS can be implemented through

Image 6.3: Values and ethics

The values and ethics identified in the data as depicted in the word cloud above, aligns with those specified in the SACSSP's (2007) code of conduct which social workers are expected to adhere to in social work practice. The Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) stipulates that all social workers must make ethically accountable professional decisions based on the SACSSP code of ethics. Moreover, supervision creates a learning environment where professional development should be valued and encouraged by promoting accountability within a safe supervisory relationship wherein mutual respect and the inherent dignity of both the supervisor and supervisee are valued. The following excerpts capture what some of the participants said about the implementation of values and ethics that guide supervision practices in their organisation:

"We have confidentiality ... I can trust my supervisor here. I can be honest and trusting". (SW Zoleka)

"So, you must respect each other as colleagues, also integrity, professional responsibility, competence, social justice and show care and concern for others' well-being. I think that is some of the ethical values and principles that you must use as a social worker in supervision". (SW Priscilla)

"The supervisor must assess me as a person, he must not be judgemental. We must be always professional. It must be done in a confidential manner while being supportive towards me". (SW Donald)

Moreover, one participant explained in detail several values that she regards as significant in facilitating mutual respect within a supervisory relationship.

"Integrity, compassion, excellence, dignity, and especially accountability guide our supervision. The integrity is that the workers are honest with the supervisor about what is going on in the caseload. Compassion is having a heart. Excellence we must always be our best. With dignity, the supervisor needs to trust our dignity that we treat our clients with. Accountability is that you do not miss your court dates, you need to spend time with all parties involved in a file. You need to be accountable and have evidence". (SW Linda)

The participants felt that it is important to implement these cited values in supervision because as practitioners they need to comply with these values when rendering services to communities. Furthermore, the participants noted that the very same standards and values they need to adhere to in social work practice, should be held by supervisors when providing supervision. Ncube (2019) refers to this as a parallel process whereby the supervisor is expected to model appropriate behaviour, which the supervisee can exhibit with service users. Reamer (2021) concurs that one of the goals of supervision is to promote supervisees' awareness of ethical dilemmas in practice which requires supervisors to serve as ethical role models. Therefore, the supervisor can be a role model in terms of professional conduct and create an enabling environment that encourages honest sharing of feelings and shortcomings in the supervisory relationship.

Furthermore, supervisors are tasked with promoting and protecting the interest of service users and therefore compliance to a code ethics is a significant part of supervision. This is more so within a child protection organisation wherein social workers are given statutory authority and work within the realm of the Children's Act (RSA, 2005). Therefore, both social workers and supervisors have a legal and ethical responsibility to ensure that all their work is done according to the correct legal procedures. The Supervision Framework also emphasises the supervisor's co-responsibility for the professional conduct of supervisees because they are responsible for overseeing the social workers' work and can be held liable for possible unprofessional conduct by the social worker (SACSSP, 2007). Some of the core values highlighted by the participants, which included respect, social justice, and integrity, are deemed significant within supervision by various social work associations globally. Thus, the data has revealed that values and ethics guided by international standards and the SACSSP are upheld when conducting supervision within the organisation. Similarly, Shokane (2016) showed that supervision is conducted in compliance with the Supervision Framework and the code of ethics for the social work profession within the DSD (Mopani District). Although values and ethics were at the forefront of supervision and integrated into the supervision process within the organisation under study, this is contrary to what the analysis of research within the child protection sector discussed in Chapter 4 showed, as there was no evidence on the implementation of values and ethics in the studies reviewed. Moreover, of the values highlighted by the participants, there is no mention of African principles such as *ubuntu* that has been discussed by Mamaleka (2018) and advocated for by Khosa (Forthcoming), who suggests *ubuntu* can serve as a foundational principle for supervision to strengthen the

supervisory relationships and enhance the delivery of social work services. This is against the backdrop that *ubuntu* has also been adopted as a guiding principle within the draft Supervision Framework for Social Service Professions (DSD, Forthcoming).

6.3.3. Theme 3: Scope

This theme focuses primarily on the context in which supervision is implemented. The theme discusses the context of a supervisory relationship, the role of a supervisor within the relationship, and the context of the work environment which needs to be conducive to enable supervisors to perform their roles effectively.

6.3.3.1. Sub-theme 3.1: Supervisory relationship

The SACSSP (2007) and the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012) emphasises the importance of maintaining professional, respectful, and positive anti-discriminatory relationships in social work supervision. O'Donoghue (2008) argues that a supervisor should ensure a conducive environment in which progressive, effective, interactive, and safe practice occurs within a supportive, trusting, honest, and open supervisory relationship. Carpenter et al., (2012) posit that supervision should strive to increase job satisfaction, reduce work stress and burnout, provide social and emotional support to retain social workers within organisations, and be based on a positive relationship between workers and supervisors. However, when scrutinising this from a constructionist lens, the variances between supervisees and supervisors' understanding of supervision based on their theoretical orientation and practice experiences can affect their supervisory relationship (O'Donoghue, 2003; Mo et al., 2020). For this reason, social workers were asked how they perceive their supervisory relationships. Most of the social workers maintained that they have good and professional relationships with their supervisors. These sentiments are captured in the following excerpts:

"We have a professional relationship, as much as we would talk about other things that are outside ... but then our relationship is always based on being professional whereby we understand where to draw boundaries". (SW Salome)

"There are boundaries in the relationship, if I have a personal problem and I cannot get to work on one morning and then I will give her a call and ... I will discuss with her the reason if it is a personal reason, she will not discuss with the

other social workers. She will only be perhaps calling the office and say that xxx will not be in today because of a personal matter. But she will not discuss the matters with others". (SW Vienna)

"I have a very positive relationship with my supervisor, in the sense that I feel comfortable talking about my work. I know I can rely on the supervisor, even though we know that they are also overworked. We never cross the line of too much of a friendship relationship. I always call when we have difficult cases, and I am not sure if I am on the right track. I never feel uncomfortable when I need to call him. Up until now my supervisor has always been positive and uplifting". (SW Diane)

"She can maintain the balance between strict and empathy. I think she has empathy for us, but the focus is on the well-being of the client. I think she knows she needs to give us time to vent about our frustrations and joy. There is a good balance between giving time for us to vent and time for working time". (SW Suzan)

From the participants' stories, it can be inferred that the supervisory relationships observed in the organisation provided opportunities for collaboration, critical reflection, and support. Related to this finding, Hair and O'Donoghue (2009) posit that when supervision is informed by a constructionist framework, supervisors can reduce hierarchical differences and stimulate co-constructive conversations which are supportive about the knowledge of social workers, thereby fostering positive supervisory relationships. Existing research has also shown that a professional relationship between supervisor and supervisee requires mutual responsibility and accountability to foster the development of competence, demeanour, and ethical practice with the goal of improving social work practice and outcome for service users (Sewell, 2018; O'Donoghue et al., 2018; Wonnacott, 2012). Hawkins and Shohet (2012) concur that mutual learning and shared responsibility within the supervisory relationship cultivates an enabling working environment. As such, supervisees should be regarded as partners in the supervisory relationship by encouraging supervisees to set their own goals, to agree on their learning pace, and to participate in agenda planning for the supervision sessions (Wong, 2014; Bartoli & Kennedy, 2015). Despite most social workers having had positive experiences in their supervisory relationships, one social worker shared her unpleasant experience:

“I do not feel comfortable to tell my supervisor when I have got problems ... I do not always feel the emotional support is there”. (SW Michelle)

When probed to clarify what could be the contributing factor to the lack of emotional support, Michelle said:

“I think maybe is because the focus is so much on having social workers writing perfect reports that although they expect you to show that emotional side towards your clients, they do not implement it towards their social workers; in that sense, it is missing the point a bit ... you almost feel like they are checking you to see where you did wrong to sort of get on your case. I do not know if it comes out clearly; yeah, you feel abused emotionally because you are just trying what you can within the time frame because we all have children at home, lives at home, and at one stage my colleague said, stop doing it. Just to get on top of things, I worked every night till about 23h00/23h30, and I started [experiencing the] burnout process very quickly”. (SW Michelle)

The administrative pressure and lack of emotional support negatively influenced the supervisory relationship between Michelle and her supervisor. The administrative tasks of social workers in the child protection sector have been cited as one of the major contributing factors to burnout and the negligence of the supportive and educational function of supervision (Chanyandura, 2016; VETFUTI, 2017; Mamaleka, 2018). It is not surprising that the participant felt the immense pressure of having to keep all her work up to date. However, the pressure can be reduced if the supervisor and the supervisee have the same professional goals, and a dual perspective on personal and professional building, which is maintained through reciprocity and consensus (Tsui, 2004). In relation to power dynamics, focusing on power relations, reflective practice, and advocacy may help strengthen the supervisory relationship (Asakura & Maurer, 2018; Mamaleka, 2018). Therefore, a supervisory relationship needs to be collaborative, based on partnership, and is participatory in nature, with mutual respect from both the supervisor and the supervisee (Magnussen, 2018; Mamaleka, 2018).

6.3.3.2. Sub-theme 3.2: Roles of the supervisor

Supervisors play a wide range of roles including being a teacher, enabler, facilitator, adviser and advocate (Baloyi, 2016; Engelbrecht, 2019a; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Supervisors as middle managers within an organisation are responsible for assessing the performance of

social workers and ensuring service delivery alignment with the organisation's goals (Beddoe, 2016; Engelbrecht, 2013; Wonnacott, 2012). In this study, the participants were asked how the roles of supervisors are implemented in their organisation. They remarked as follows:

"She must sign off all my reports, when the client or community member have a complain[t] ... she follows it up and give[s] feedback ... she must sign off the report, she must handle complaints, she must give supervision and support". (SW Wilma)

"She is basically our monitor. She checks that our theory and Children's Act incorporation is correct. She is really focused on our reports. She says what is lacking and what is incorrect, and what needs to be changed. She brings in all the new documentation and policies. She regulates our board. She is like a mediator between us and other organisations. She monitors us in theory and in the workplace". (SW Thola)

"They need to be our managers, but also be that emotional support for us at work ... They also have other things they need to do in the sense of the ECD programmes. They need to also do monthly talk to those individuals. They need to check our reports. They also focus on the finances of [the] organisation. They also have the responsibility to give us feedback and evaluations if we need it. They need to be our voices in the head office. They have so many responsibilities". (SW Diane)

The participants' stories reveal that the roles of supervisors in the organisation include overseeing supervisees' work, listening and giving advice on difficult cases, evaluating supervisees' work, identifying their developmental needs, providing emotional support, and being a link between social workers and the organisation's management. The participants' sentiments confirm the findings by Dlamini and Sewpaul (2015) who indicated that the roles of the supervisor are to motivate, inspire, and facilitate the development of social workers to augment their knowledge and skills aimed at improving service provision. The participants' narratives also demonstrate an alignment between how the roles of supervisors are implemented in the organisation and the stipulations from the Supervision Framework. According to the Supervision Framework (DSD & SACSSP, 2012), supervisors should be accountable when a complaint is lodged against their supervisee and ensure that the correct

interpretation of policies and legislation, particularly the Children’s Act, is implemented. Administratively, supervisors need to ensure that records of social work interventions, processes, and outcomes are produced and maintained. Moreover, supervisors are expected to take reasonable steps to provide continuing education and support to social workers, while similarly striving to meet the emotional well-being of supervisees.

In addition to the administrative function, the importance of education and emotional support was noted by some of the supervisors:

“I think it is to develop the social workers on a professional level. Also, to ensure their emotional well-being and prevent burnout. I feel like a lot of social workers, because of their own problems are finding a lot of things challenging. It should be up to us to identify these areas and assist the social workers to get help if they need it”. (SWS Emma)

“It is our responsibility to make sure that the social workers do their jobs. I also do two audits every year, one every six months, so that I know what is going on in their files. I am partly responsible to train them and then there after they are responsible for the flow of the supervision agenda. I also need to give feedback to our head office. We are pretty much compelled by the department. We must adhere to our consultation sessions also with the older social workers. When there are mistakes made, I address them via the personnel rules of the organisation. I give a verbal or a written warning if necessary. If there are mistakes, I also just give guidance”. (SWS Zama)

“In our organisation our supervisors are not just social work supervisors. That is why we call them managers, as they have branches, they must do organisational development, some of them also have old age homes or crèches. It is not just social work ... First and foremost, they must give supervision”. (Key informant)

Based on the key informant’s sentiments, within their organisation, the supervisor is appointed into a middle management position. The supervisor engages with the managerial board as a middle manager, where he/she is the advocate for the social workers and the voice of the board back to the social workers. Given that the core services rendered by the organisation are child and family services, the supervisors also oversee the running of early childhood development (ECDs) and child youth care centres (CYCCs) in several branches in

their region, depending on the financial resources available to the organisation. In addition to these managerial tasks, the supervisors are responsible for overseeing a specific number of social workers, social auxiliary workers and, for some, community development practitioners. Hence, several participants shared that it would be ideal for supervisors to only focus on the supervision of social workers than manage other social service programmes.

“We need to attend meetings two times a year for the management part. There is constantly training that needs to be done. We also need to do Children’s Act training at early childhood development centres. It is manageable, but it would be wonderful if I only had to do the supervision for the social workers. We also need to look at the finances. I need to check the statements once per month and once a year I do an audit”. (SWS Amy)

“Look I have been in the field for 10 years; I help them with difficult cases and difficult clients that had complaints. My role is definitely majority support to the social workers where needed ... I have a CYCF [child and youth care facility] in my area which I am also responsible for in terms of supervision. I have two crèches which is where I work as well. That is why we are called regional managers. We deal here with HR [human resource] matters as well, in terms of stuff happening at the crèche. We are not just doing supervision for social workers, but we are managers of whatever falls into your area in the region. At the ECD we deal with staff such as disciplinary hearings. Say there are complaints with parents, I need to deal with it. It means I represent Head Office at these ECDs. I have to be at all the meetings. The amount of people you have under you is a lot”. (SWS Jane)

“The role of our supervisor is to maintain an equilibrium between what the department expects from the organisation and what the board of volunteers expects from the worker. I think this is quite a tricky position to be in. You need to keep all the volunteers, and the workers happy. You need to keep peace between the different parties. She needs to make sure they comply with statutory processes and that they are professional, and that communication happens with everybody. To make sure we communicate with other stakeholders”. (SW Linda)

Challenges pertaining to the dual roles of supervisors have also been identified in the existing literature (Maupye, 2016; McPherson & Macnamara, 2017). Wong (2014) observed that the supervisory relationship tends to suffer because of the prioritisation of managerial and administrative tasks, instead of professional and structured supervision. However, despite the challenges highlighted regarding the dual roles played by supervisors in the organisation, the implementation of the supervisors' roles aligns with the prerequisites of the Supervision Framework. Supervisors are expected to plan and prepare for the supervision sessions, ensure that intervention techniques and approaches used by the supervisee are appropriately applied, and facilitate competence in the supervisee's work to protect beneficiaries from harm (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2013; Parker, 2017). As alluded to by some of the participants, supervisors within the organisation are tasked with identifying the training needs of supervisees and assist supervisees to perform functions that are challenging. Supervisors also conduct quality assurance of the work delivered by the supervisees through case file audits. The gap identified in the implementation of the roles of the supervisor in the organisation is for supervisors to acknowledge their limitations and take responsibility for their own development and training needs, as well as seek feedback and evaluation from their supervisee for the enhancement of supervision.

6.3.3.3. Sub-theme 3.3: Context of the work environment

Based on the constructionist lens, the influence of the environment on the practice of social work, including the organisational context, affects how supervision is executed. Therefore, a constructionist approach to supervision is unique because its foundation is the situation and context within which supervision is practiced (O'Donoghue, 2003). This study was conducted within the context of a designated child protection organisation, within its own set of external influences and challenges that inform the supervision processes and how the Supervision Framework is implemented within the organisation. Given the uniqueness of the child protection sector in relation to the impact of child protection legislation and policies on supervision, the role of the supervisor is often more managerial and administrative orientated (Rankine et al., 2018; Wilkins, 2021). In their study, Beddoe et al., (2021) found that supervisors and social workers within the child protection sector recognised that the pressure of audit and targets made it very challenging to improve supervision. Similarly, in South Africa, the adherence to the Children's Act is of paramount importance because failure to adhere to the requirements of the Act has implications for supervisors as well (Vetfuti et al., 2019; Schiller & Strydom, 2018). Therefore, child protection organisations are different from

other contexts where supervisors may solely focus on clinical supervision, without having to supervise specific execution of statutory legislation. This observation was highlighted by participants when asked how the unique context of their work environment influences implementation of supervision in the organisation.

“Our supervisor is very focused on supervision, and I think in child protection is more intense ... in child protection we are focusing more on the process ... and that is according to the law, the Act, so the Children’s Act is what makes it unique’. (SW Mandy)

“We are following the Children’s Act; we are following more the rules and the ethics and the theoretical stuff”. (SW Wilma)

“Supervision is done differently here because we are working with children. We do other things like safety assessments, Form 22s and Form 23s. A safety or Form 22 need[s] to be done within 48 hours in the case of child neglect or abuse. We are working against time. This all is checked by the supervisor”. (SW Tonet)

The South African legislation has delimited designated child protection organisations to provide statutory services for children in need of care and protection, validating the participants’ stories regarding the influence of legislation on supervision (RSA, 2005). Owing to the inherent vulnerabilities of children, child protection social workers primarily work with vulnerable children and their families and are often engaged in cases involving statutory work delineated by designated child protection organisations (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015; Vetfuti et al., 2019). In addition to the emphasis on the Children’s Act, the participants highlighted the importance of the structure in supervision and how the organisation’s supervision policy guides the implementation of supervision.

“Ours is very structured in the sense that it is very clear about exactly what should be covered in supervision. Previously in supervision, social workers would just bring cases that they are struggling with. With this policy it makes more room for giving attention to, let us say, the diaries, stats, IDPs [Individual Development Plans], planning. I think it is so specific so that you do not forget certain areas that need to be covered in supervision. It is not just case discussions”. (SWS Emma)

“It is completely different in child protection versus the diversion. I would say, the child protection is more intense. It is based on the Children’s Act; you really need to know your regulations properly. And that is the biggest difference, if you do not know your regulations properly, it is a lot more difficult than adult diversion programmes. The work is a lot more intense than diversion. Your client system is also a lot more difficult working in child services than in diversions”.
(SWS Mickey)

“We believe that supervision is one of our strengths in our organisation. What makes [the organisation’s] policy good is that we have specific ways and methods to focus on the development of the social workers and to use their strengths to better our services ... We focus on the things that the workers can contribute to the job, or the area that they are in. Also, the fact that it is all about their development. It is about making them the best social workers that they are meant to be”. (SWS Noma)

“We have a solid structure. With every form there is a procedure. So, the structure in terms of paperwork is a very good thing. There are clear guidelines for everything related to supervision ... ” (SWS Jane)

What has also influenced how supervision is implemented within the existing challenging work context of the participants is the COVID-19 pandemic. This confirms Noble and Irwin’s (2009) proposition that the social environment shapes supervision processes and supervisory relationships. From a constructionist approach, the external influences that shape supervision within the organisation were explored because they characterised how supervision was practiced by supervisees and supervisors during lockdown (O’Donoghue, 2003). From the beginning of 2020, the world witnessed one of the most contagious and deadly pandemics, which led to many governments across the globe shutting down to curb the spread of the coronavirus. South Africa was no exception. A nationwide lockdown was announced on the 23rd of March in accordance with the Disaster Management Act, 2002 and commenced on 27 March 2020. While the country was on alert level 5, people could leave their homes if they were essential workers or needed to obtain essential goods and services, collect social grants, or seek emergency medical treatment. Thus, the nationwide lockdown affected everyone’s life in some way or another.

The pandemic also had an impact on the social work sector, including child protection organisations. While it was unclear in the beginning of the lockdown whether social work is an essential service, social workers were instrumental in providing psychosocial support, engaging with relevant stakeholders in the provision of social relief of distress and promoting social cohesion. The latter was acknowledged by the Minister of Finance, Tito Mboweni, during his medium-term 2021 budget speech, when he said:

... social workers have been very important through this period, in counselling people, helping people through a process, and very rarely do we say anything positive about social workers, but they play an important role in social cohesion in our communities (Mboweni, 2021).

Having said that, social workers in child protection organisations have a critical role to play in safeguarding the well-being of children. This is particularly important during a pandemic where there has been an increase in number of reported child abuse and domestic violence cases. Thus, the supervision of social workers is much needed during these difficult times. Hence, it was necessary to explore social workers and supervisors' experiences of supervision during the lockdown period. Based on the study's findings, the pandemic had both negative and positive effects, as shown in Figure 6.3 and supported by the participants' narratives.

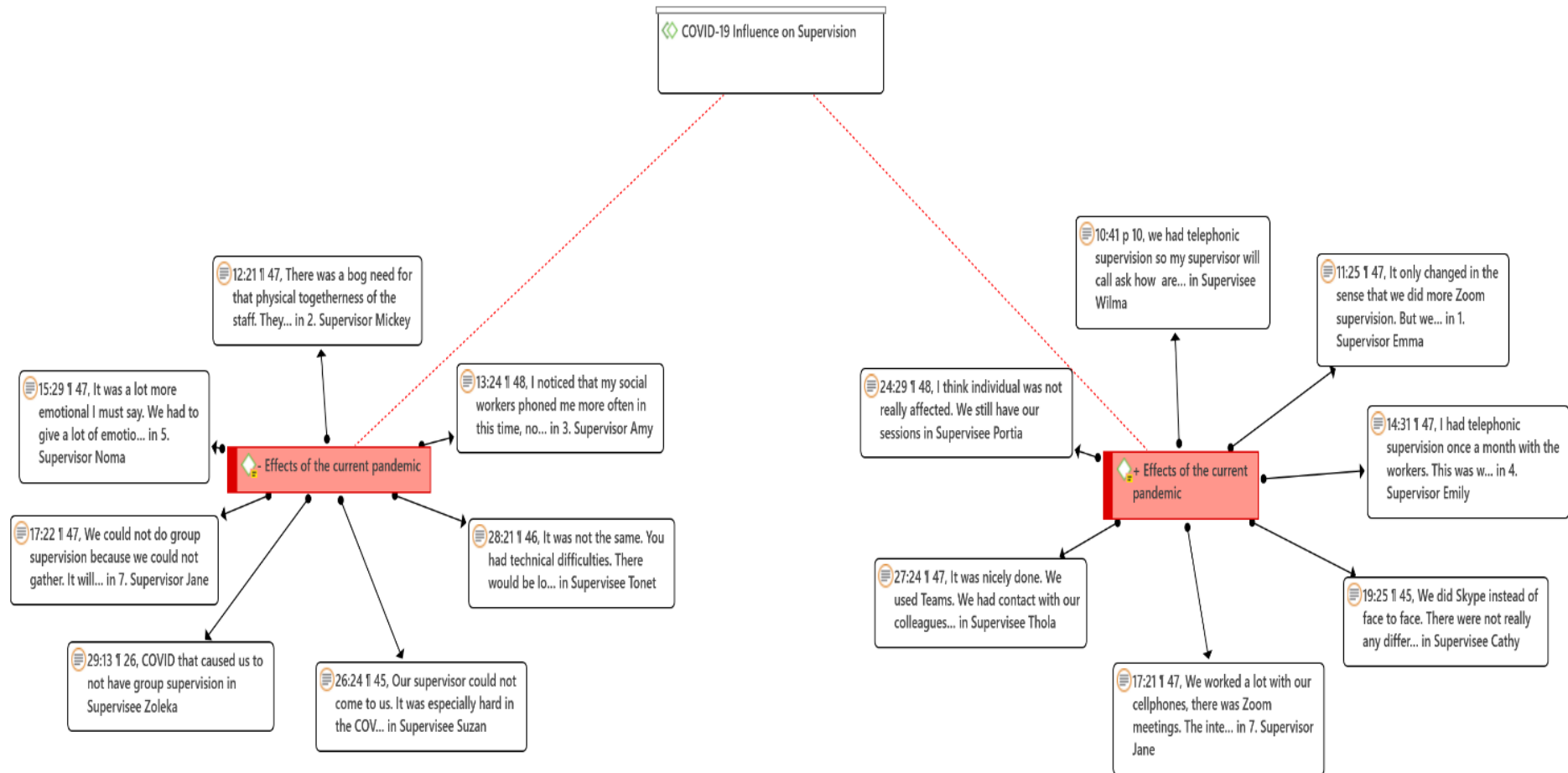
The diagram below illustrates both the negative and positive experiences of the participants on how supervision within the organisation was influenced by COVID-19. On a positive note, some of the participants felt that supervision practices did not change at all amidst the pandemic since supervision was still conducted via online platforms such as Skype and Zoom. Some even went further to say that they preferred online supervision because it saved them a lot of time, as expressed in the excerpts further below:

"... we gained more time through group supervision because you did not have travelling time that you lost or where you take break, you know how women are they will start chatting then it takes longer than necessary, so ja, in a sense, you got more out ... more hours if I can say, like that, more productive hours out of online group supervision". (SW Michelle)

"...we Skype, that is actually very nice for me, I'd prefer it to be like that". (SW Mandy)

“It only changed in the sense that we did more Zoom supervision. But we still followed the same everything. In the first month when it was the hard lockdown, the social workers did not go out. Then we just did informal check-ins to see that they are okay”. (SWS Emma)

“They took their laptops and they worked from home. We still did admin, process reports, anything that could be done. We still went out for emergency kind of things. A child may be in direct harm. We still did essential services during the lockdown. We phoned and kept in touch via emails”. (SWS Zama)



On the contrary, some of the participants shared their negative experiences which included lack of emotional support, even though it was much needed in the beginning of the lockdown. This could also be attributed to the fact that there was limited physical contact between colleagues. Some of the challenges expressed included technical difficulties associated with online supervision as well as scheduled cutbacks of electricity (loadshedding) in some instances, as seen in the narratives below:

“It had [an] effect on supervision because from March lockdown until July we did not have supervision; we were not able to have supervision because of the lockdown, so in July we had our first group supervision”. (SW Lebo)

“I noticed that my social workers phoned me more often this time, now suddenly, they needed me more”. (SWS Amy)

“It was not the same. We had technical difficulties. There would be loadshedding without Internet was well”. (SW Tonet)

“During this lockdown time I do not feel like we had enough emotional support. I think everyone was uncertain and unsure about how we are going to do this. We sit here with 90 children that is also 'freaking out'. So, the emotional support was not good. The fact that we cannot see each other physically made it difficult ... I do not like the online supervision; you do not have that individual time. It is weird to do it on Zoom”. (SW Rea)

Existing research has also identified challenges associated with online supervision, such as poor Internet connection and limited knowledge about technology (Mo, 2021). However, the advantage of information communication technology (ICT) is that remote supervision can be feasible in instances where the supervisor and supervisee do not work in the same location, which is the case in the organisation under study. Moreover, the use of telephone, email and video conferencing in supervision was necessary during the initial nationwide lockdown due to COVID-19 regulations. The use of ICT in supervision is an emerging field. Mo (2021) suggests that further research is needed on technology assisted supervision to investigate quality issues in using ICT and the limitations of online supervision.

The participants’ stories further confirmed the interconnectedness of the supervisee, supervisor, service user, and the organisation within the supervision process (Kadushin &

Harkness, 2014; O'Donoghue, 2015). The findings are indicative of how the disruption in one system of the ecology of supervision can influence supervision practices given the context of the organisation. Furthermore, the participants' stories further reveal how integrated the social story, supervision story, and the organisation's story influence supervision practices within organisations (O'Donoghue, 2003). For example, the nationwide lockdown that took place during the beginning of 2020 due to COVID-19 was one disrupter that affected how supervision is implemented in the organisation. The pandemic left all systems of the ecology affected in one way or another. Thus, the organisation had to adapt how social services are provided and how social workers are supervised during lockdown to accommodate the everchanging context of the work environment.

6.4. CONCLUSION

The objective of this chapter was to present findings from an empirical study on the stories of social workers and supervisors in a designated child protection organisation regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework. Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the definition of supervision adopted in this study were used to discuss emerging patterns from the data. Through the analysis of the identified themes, sub-themes, and categories, which was corroborated by the existing literature, this chapter successfully explored how the organisation under study implemented the Supervision Framework. This chapter has shown that the organisation under study has thrived in developing a supervision policy and implementing the policy in line with the stipulations of the Supervision Framework. However, the implementation has not been without challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the administrative dominance within the organisation and, in some instances, the lack of emotional support. The next chapter provides recommendations based on the conclusions drawn from this study's findings.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study based on critical observations and a synthesis of the findings from the empirical study, literature study, and personal perspectives. The in-depth literature study presented in Chapters 2–4 revealed that South African research on social work supervision has predominantly focused on the functions, types, the process and challenges of supervision, and that no study has been conducted on how the Supervision Framework is implemented within a child protection organisation in South Africa. Hence, this study was necessary to explore the views of social workers working in a child protection organisation on how the Supervision Framework has been implemented since its inception in 2012. However, clear guidelines on the “how” are not stipulated in the Supervision Framework. It was therefore imperative to investigate how a designated child protection organisation with unique features has contextualised the Supervision Framework to meet its own needs.

The objectives of the study outlined in Chapter 1 were achieved by discussing international and local literature on contemporary research in social work supervision in Chapter 2; by providing an analysis of the Supervision Framework in South Africa in Chapter 3; and by presenting a secondary analysis of several empirical studies conducted within the field of child protection in South Africa regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework in Chapter 4. The methodology that was used in the empirical study, and the procedures that were followed in this study, were described in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 discussed the empirical findings of the implementation of the Supervision Framework within a designated child protection organisation. The aim of the current chapter is to make conclusions and recommendations to a designated child protection organisation and other role players regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework for Social Work Profession in South Africa (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The chapter begins with a summary of the participants’ profiles, followed by conclusions from each sub-theme identified in Chapter 6. Thereafter, recommendations related to each sub-theme will be presented, along with recommendations for future research.

7.2. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that the three main themes identified in the empirical chapter are broad, conclusions will be presented under the sub-themes, which are the key determinants of supervision in line with the definition of supervision adopted in this study. The conclusions are related to how the organisation under study implemented the Supervision Framework by developing an agency supervision policy that informed its supervision processes and practices. The conclusions are presented in a synthesised manner by integrating categories within the sub-themes and recommendations to provide contextually relevant findings to better understand the implementation of the Supervision Framework in a designated child protection organisation and recommendations thereof. This integrated approach to presenting conclusions and recommendations was informed by the constructionist theoretical framework adopted in this study which fosters presenting the supervision story and answering the research question in an integrated manner, as reflected on in the discussion that follows.

7.2.1. Biographical information

The participants' number of years practicing as social workers, years of experience in the organisation under study, and training in supervision were the key biographical information looked at during the empirical study. All of the participants in the study had practiced for more than two years as social workers, and most of the participants had been employed for at least a year within the child protection organisation used as a case study. All of the supervisors had at least two years of experience in their supervisory role to provide a holistic view in terms of knowledge and perspectives regarding supervision practices in their organisation. The diversity in the participants' years of experience helped capture the different voices which contributed to the richness of the findings of the study.

Regarding supervision training, the findings revealed that most of the supervisees who participated in the study had primarily received training in supervision as part of the undergraduate courses in university, whereas most supervisors received supervision training during their employment in the organisation. In a nutshell, the study shows that 23 out of 28 participants have received some form of training in supervision, which is applaudable and essential for the organisation to prosper in terms of implementing effective supervision practices. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that despite foundational knowledge gained through university undergraduate courses on supervision, supervision training is

important to equip supervisees and supervisors with knowledge and expectations regarding supervision within a specific organisation based on the organisational goals, needs, and context.

The study further revealed that in addition to supervision training, training on the Children's Act and safety assessment of children in need of care and protection is also important within child protection organisations. It was found that these kinds of training equipped supervisors to confidently facilitate supervision sessions and guide social workers on the legislations and policies that are relevant when rendering social services within a child protection organisation. Congruent with existing literature, this study confirms that the foundations of social work and an understanding of the legal system, including legislation, are all important when a social worker is appointed as a supervisor within a child protection organisation.

In terms of practical experience, all the social workers interviewed in the study have gained experience in supervision within their organisation and have received structured supervision or offered supervision to social auxiliary workers. The study found that social workers with the added responsibility of supervising social auxiliary workers are mainly under consultation and do not receive regular structured supervision when they are on a consultation basis because of their level of experience, acquired knowledge, and skills in social work. Although existing research claims that supervisors within most organisations are appointed based on their years of experience and not supervision knowledge, this study revealed that what is important is the knowledge of the supervision process and training offered by the organisation. It is therefore imperative for supervisors to be capacitated through formal training, to augment their knowledge and skills about the supervision process before they carry out their supervisory duties. It is also evident from the study that supervision training can strengthen supervisors' understanding of supervision and its importance, which may contribute positively to the supervision of social workers in their organisation. Therefore, structured and accredited training on professional supervision and related subjects contribute to the professional development of supervisors, enhancing their confidence and capability in supervising social workers.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that when organisations develop supervision policies, supervisors and supervisees need to be trained on the supervision policies to better understand the implications of the policy on the supervision process and supervision practices adopted in the organisation. Moreover, organisations employing social workers should

continuously provide education and training to capacitate supervisors with relevant skills to enable them to provide supervision, and to assist supervisees to understand their role and the role of supervisors in supervision. Supervision training and education can be done in collaboration with HEI's offering social work degrees and/or a supervision diploma.

7.2.2. Mandate of supervision

Supervision is an important component of professional learning, growth, and development in social work. For this reason, it is fitting for supervision to be mandatory and at the heart of professional practice in social work to safeguard effective provision of social work services. Based on the review of supervision policies and standards in this study, it was found that supervision is mandated and prescribed in the policies of professional bodies of social work in many countries. In South Africa, the Social Services Professions Act (SSP Act) and the SACSSP deem the supervision of social workers mandatory. Given the mandatory nature of supervision in South Africa, supervision policies guiding supervision practices within organisations should be mandatory so that the supervision process is structured and informed by legislation. Based on this conclusion, it is recommended that the Supervision Framework be used as a guiding tool for organisations to develop their context specific supervision policies that are mandatory and accommodative of their organisational setting.

7.2.3. Goal of supervision

The literature review and empirical study revealed that the goal of supervision is to serve the best interests of service users by enabling social workers to provide effective and efficient services. The study showed that through supervision, social workers receive guidance and support from supervisors, which is another goal of supervision. The literature study revealed that supervision does not only benefit social workers and service users, but welfare organisations employing social workers and the profession in its entirety are also enriched. For instance, social work as a profession can maintain its standards of practice and enhance professional ethics amongst practitioners through supervision. Within organisations such as the child protection organisation under study, supervision ensures accountability in compliance with the supervision policy and legislations that guide service provision within the organisation.

The study further revealed that supervision is essential within child protection organisations wherein social workers encounter difficult cases related to the safety and well-being of children. Thus, a supervisor needs to be able to give advice to social workers and safeguard the best interest of the child given the complex and legal mandate to protect vulnerable children who might be affected by social issues, such as child abuse and domestic violence. Considering the challenges facing children in need of care and protection in South Africa, this study confirms that supervision within child protection organisations is unique and demanding due to the nature of the work context.

The study further demonstrates that when implementing the goal of supervision, supervisors play various roles that either support, explain, or justify the importance of supervision within an organisation, with the main purpose of safeguarding the effective provision of social services to service users. Moreover, the literature study found a strong correlation between the goal of supervision and outcomes for service users with evidence suggesting that supervision may promote empowerment, fewer complaints, and more positive feedback. Therefore, the goal of supervision is primarily to deliver the best possible service to service users – and not to develop the supervisee within the shortest period to independence from the supervisor, as suggested by the Supervision Framework. The nature of child protection work demands constant debriefing, and trauma informed supervision and support from a supervisor is always important. Supervision in child protection organisations may thus be seen as interminable – and not within a neoliberal context to save money and resources, which is counterproductive in supervision and results in a tick-box exercise, without an understanding and provision of clinical and reflective supervision for ongoing professional development.

A recommendation based on the need for ongoing supervision is that coaching, mentoring, and consultation should be integrated and executed as a developmental model in supervision, ranging from direct coaching, to mentoring, to consultation. It is also recommended that welfare organisations should formulate the goal of supervision in their supervision policies and align it with the SACSSP's code of conduct for social workers. Moreover, the expectations from supervision for the organisation's management, supervisees, supervisors, and the SACSSP should be clarified.

7.2.4. Agency supervision policy

The study has shown that supervision of social workers is essential in social work practice and requires the execution of supervision policies based on the Supervision Framework which can be customised by organisations in line with their organisational setting. The Supervision Framework outlines norms and standards for supervision practices that all organisations employing social workers in South Africa can adopt in their individual organisations to suit their own needs and context. As a result, the organisation under study developed a supervision policy that aligns with the Supervision Framework. The views of participants on the agency's supervision policy were thus analysed in accordance with stipulations in the Supervision Framework to assess how the organisation under study has implemented the Framework.

Given the significance of agency supervision policies, it was necessary to determine what the participants deem as a suitable label for documents that guide supervision within an organisation because of the different concepts used in the literature study. The participants provided different views regarding the labelling of supervision documents which, *inter alia*, include “framework”, “minimum standards”, “guidelines”, and “policy”. Although “policy” was a concept adopted in this study, it can be concluded that, based on the literature and empirical study, it does not matter how the documents are labelled, the focus should be on minimum standards in supervision to follow in the organisation. What is important is the purpose of the documents guiding supervision and the actual execution of professional supervision within an organisation.

Regarding the process of developing the agency's supervision policy, the study revealed that the organisation implemented the policy development process in a consultative manner because frontline social workers and supervisors in the organisation were informed and invited to provide input on the policy development. This consultative strategy aligns with a constructionist approach to supervision that views individuals as active participants in the creation of their own knowledge and supervision processes, based on personal experiences within their organisational context and their social environment. Moreover, the involvement of different stakeholders during the development process of a supervision policy ensures that the needs of everyone involved in the supervision process are acknowledged.

The Supervision Framework stipulates that organisations should indicate the ratios of supervisor vs supervisees in their supervision policies, which is approximately 1:10 without

additional tasks, and 1:6 if the supervisor has other duties. According to the Supervision Framework, the ratio for supervisor vs social workers on consultation is 1:15. This study revealed that supervisors within the organisation under study have other duties, which makes it difficult to only focus on the supervision of social workers. However, their number of supervisees is not less even though they have additional responsibilities, making it challenging to maintain structural supervision with all social workers. Although the organisation strives to equate the ratio of supervisors per supervisees, it is not feasible due to the organisation's financial and human resource constraints because of limited fiscal investment from government.

Another important factor which organisations are required to consider in their supervision policies according to the Supervision Framework is how to safeguard discrimination in a supervisory relationship. This is especially important in South Africa given that racial and gender discrimination continue to be a hindrance in society, and thus have implications in social work practice and supervision. The study found that the organisation under study has a statement on non-discriminatory practices in their agency supervision policy. The findings indicate that non-discriminatory practices are ensured when supervisors are mindful of the differences that shape the supervisory relationship and are cognisant of the influence of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs on the supervisory relationship. Moreover, the participants in the study expressed that their organisation safeguards against any form of discrimination by having a grievance procedure within their agency supervision policy which aligns with the requirements stipulated in the Supervision Framework. It can be concluded that having a statement on non-discriminatory practices in an agency supervision policy and implementing anti-discriminatory practices within a supervisory relationship are equally important because supervision is one form of ensuring safety of social workers and service users within the ecology of supervision.

In conclusion, the study proves that supervision policies in social work are relatively uniform throughout the world, reflecting the evolution of the social work profession. What also stemmed from the study is that the supervision policies set standards for supervision practices within organisations. In essence, an agency supervision policy does not only provide a context for supervision practices within an organisation, but it also reveals how serious an organisation is about supervision.

Therefore, this study reiterates and recommends that the process of developing agency supervision policies should include: 1) creating an inquiry into how supervision is already happening in an organisation; 2) awakening existing interest in developing supervision practice and policy; 3) dealing with resistance to change from different stakeholders; 4) developing ongoing learning and development opportunities for supervisors and supervisees; and 5) having an ongoing supervision audit and policy review process. A noteworthy point is that when developing supervision policies, welfare organisations should steer away from the ‘tick-box approach’ to supervision. Instead, they should rather move towards humanising supervision and working from a developmental model in supervision that promotes supervision activities such as coaching, mentoring, and consultation.

It is further recommended that all stakeholders essential in the supervision process, including supervisees and board members of the organisation, should form part of the supervision policy development process from the onset so that they can take ownership of the agency supervision policy and strive to ensure its effective execution. The involvement of board members is important because board members of the organisation determine the vision, mission, and strategic planning of the organisation and sometimes are uninformed about what supervision entails. Therefore, board members who govern the organisation and are often volunteers should be acquainted with the functions of supervision and the demands of supervision in a child protection organisation. Regarding the ratios, the ratios of supervisor vs supervisees stipulated in the Supervision Framework are unrealistic and need to be revised given the demand for supervision and shortage of supervisor capacity within organisations.

7.2.5. Supervision functions

This study explored how the administrative, educational, and supportive functions of supervision are implemented within the organisation under study. The findings show that administratively social workers are expected to keep detailed records of progress notes of all client sessions, Children’s Court reports, and compile monthly statistics which may be evaluated during file reviews by the supervisor. Within designated child protection organisations, supervisors must sign off the reports before they are presented in the Children’s Court either for placement or removal of children in need of care and protection.

The study revealed that when implementing the **administrative function**, supervisors are expected to monitor, review, and evaluate the work assigned to their supervisees to determine

the quality of social services and practice within the organisation. Within the organisation under study, file audits were conducted quarterly to assess compliance with statutory regulations. This is especially important within child protection organisations given the need to provide services in line with the Children's Act. Thus, implementing this function of supervision within an organisation enables social workers to deliver social services effectively. Although the administrative function is critical to the supervisors' role, this study's finding correlates with existing literature that a considerable amount of time is spent on the administrative function within child protection organisations in South Africa. This is because supervisors are under immense pressure to sign off statutory reports depending on the number of social workers they supervise. This contributes to supervisors' inability to provide educational or supportive functions of supervision as their duties merely become administrative with the emphasis on controlling. In conclusion, supervisors cannot escape their administrative responsibilities because of the legislative mandate that binds them as co-responsible for supervisees' work. Moreover, the core value of the administrative function is to establish accountability between the organisation management and social workers to ensure that services are rendered in line with the organisation's mandate and objectives.

The literature study has also revealed that supervision within child protection organisations is unstructured, on the run, and lacks reflection, resulting in expressions of harmful supervision. The main factors contributing to unstructured supervision are: (i) lack of resources within child protection organisations; (ii) limited supervision time due to supervisors' heavy caseloads, especially those who still attend to clients in addition to their supervisory role; and (iii) the ludicrous ratio of supervisors versus supervisees due to the shortage of supervisors as reflected under the agency supervision policy section. Contrary to existing literature, the empirical study found that monthly structured supervision sessions are conducted within the organisation under study. However, the unreasonable supervisor-supervisee ratios in the organisation requires supervisors to exercise an open-door policy. This study emphasises that such open-door policies lead to rushed conversations which may not be deemed adequate since no supervision process is followed. Supervision has thus become a response to the crisis in child protection, whether it be to intervene because of the Children's Act requirements or to canalise supervisees' reports. The consequence is that even though supervisors may wish to implement the supervision contract, due to the crisis intervention approach, the supervision process hardly goes beyond establishing the supervisees' PDPs.

The implementation of the **educational function of supervision** affords social workers an opportunity to harness their skills and competencies through the guidance and support of a supervisor. This function is important given the everchanging work environment and context-specific complex cases within the child protection sector. The study found that the educational function focuses on promoting learning, and the professional development and performance of supervisees. Through the educational function, social workers receive information on their own work and the skills to evaluate their own work, and then utilise their knowledge and skills attained when performing their daily activities. Therefore, if the function is implemented effectively, social workers can develop their competencies to render quality and professional social services. Social workers in the study valued how the educational supervision is implemented in their organisation through collaboration and information sharing gained during group supervision. However, it is evident from the study that the education provided during group supervision was more information sharing in a workshop format and was not necessarily according to the specific learning needs of supervisees as set out in their PDPs. Therefore, supervisors within the organisation should be encouraged to conduct group sessions based on the specific individualised learning needs of supervisees in accordance with their PDPs.

The supportive function of supervision seeks to promote the psychological well-being of social workers and enhance social worker's coping mechanisms with their work. The literature has shown that reflective supervision that is supportive enables social workers to reflect on their work and seek guidance regarding interventions, which reduces the risk of burnout and allows the social workers to emotionally regain their strength to deal with traumatic work experiences. One way the supportive function was implemented in the organisation under study was through asking reflective questions and responses during supervision sessions to provide a safe, reflective space for the social workers to share their experiences when working with service users, with the aim being to promote the quality of practice and ensure the safety and well-being of children. However, there was no evidence presented regarding the use of reflective tools during supervision sessions, which minimises the value of reflective supervision. Thus, there is a gap in the supervision policy because it does not offer references to tools for reflection to promote clinical supervision as opposed to managerial supervision.

Given the nature of child protection issues and emotionally draining cases, it is applaudable that participating social workers in this study felt supported by their supervisors to deal with complicated cases, high caseloads, and function optimally regardless of their emotions. Thus, supportive supervision is invaluable within child protection organisations wherein social workers deal with high caseloads resulting in administrative work. Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that the format of supervision within the organisation should change to equally consider all functions of supervision. Although supervision of social workers needs to be context specific, it should encompass all the key functions of supervision equally to be effective and yield positive results for supervisees and service users. To accomplish this, the organisation's supervision policy must prescribe clearly how the administrative, educational, and supportive functions may be implemented within the organisation. The organisation's supervision policy should also include clinical aspects such as tools for reflective supervision.

In addition, the organisation under investigation and every child protection organisation should assess strategically whether it is possible for supervisors to integrate all the functions of supervision. Considering all the additional functions expected of supervisors in child protection organisations, where supervisors also must liaise with the board members of the organisation, must fulfil other management tasks, and are often consumed by human resource related functions, organisations should determine the feasibility of one supervisor being able to implement all the supervision functions. Thus, the organisation under investigation and all child protection organisations should consider delineating the functions expected of the supervisor to execute and distinguish between clinical supervision and other middle management tasks in the organisation. This can be achieved by employing supervisors who just supervise social workers, and managers who focus primarily on the management tasks in the organisation. This model has been adopted by countries such as Sweden, who practice external supervision, which involves focusing on supporting and enhancing the professional development of social workers instead of exerting managerial control. This model can potentially be effective within child protection organisations in South Africa wherein supervisors are overloaded with administrative responsibilities that compromise the clinical dimensions of supervision, which is needed for frontline social workers to flourish.

7.2.6. Adult education principles

It was found that adult education principles help supervisors to understand supervisees' learning styles and needs. Although there was limited evidence of social workers' understanding of the applicability and importance of adult education principles in supervision, the study shows that the responsibility to carry out the supervision process lies with both the supervisor and supervisee. Consequently, supervisees should be regarded as partners in the supervisory relationship, and by encouraging them to set their own goals and to participate in the planning of the agenda for the supervision sessions. Most importantly, given that both the supervisors and supervisees were not well-acquainted with adult education principles, which resulted in a lack of determining the supervisees' learning styles and the supervisors' teaching strategies, clinical supervision was lost. This could also be attributed to the limited clinical knowledgebase regarding specific theories, models, and perspectives on supervision, which are just mentioned in the Supervision Framework, without clarifying the practical implications of the different models and perspectives in supervision. Consequently, supervisors are chiefly trained to use the Supervision Framework, and not on how to execute clinical supervision.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that adult education principles promote the social workers' ability to identify their learning styles and be self-directed, while the supervisor creates a conducive learning environment to motivate supervisees so that they can remain enthusiastic and motivated. Therefore, child protection organisations should devise ways to involve newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) in their own learning, administration, and support, so that they can also take ownership of their own supervision. Hence, during the induction of NQSWs, one of the main features of the supervision contract should be to agree on how the supervisee will take ownership of the supervision process as it is expected of a supervisee to be a "good supervisee". It is further recommended that supervisees within the organisation should be encouraged to play an active role in the supervision process and take initiatives to seek learning and development opportunities to enhance their professional growth and skills. It is strongly suggested that supervision training within child protection organisations should focus on the clinical elements of supervision, and not just on how to manage the supervision process to avoid the supervision process becoming merely a tick-box exercise with no significant professional development for both supervisors and supervisees.

7.2.7. Supervision process

The study emphasises that a supervision process is cyclical and involves engagement, assessment, planning, contracting, implementation, and evaluation. As part of the supervision process, there are specific tasks that should be completed as stated in the Supervision Framework. The supervision tasks include identifying supervisees' competencies, assessment of the supervisee's personal development, compiling a PDP, and agreeing on the supervision format, outcomes, responsibilities for each party, and frequency of supervision sessions through contracting.

The first supervision task of **assessing supervisee's competencies** is directly linked with the compilation of a PDP and formulation of a supervision contract. Competencies focus on work-based evidence that provide an independent set of criteria against which performance and personal growth can be measured. Assessment of supervisee's competencies allow the organisation to define organisation-specific supervision practices based on the organisation's vision, mission, and supervision policy. The findings show that assessment of personal competencies of social workers within the organisation under study was implemented in a consultative manner and collaboratively with supervisees who could identify their strengths and learning opportunities. This finding supports the constructionist view that learning happens when ideas are reconstructed through dialogue and exchanges of thoughts, opinions, and feelings between supervisees and supervisors.

However, based on the participants' stories, the connection between assessment of competencies and the formulation of PDPs was not evident, resulting in supervision sessions that are merely a routine with minimal learning opportunities created to meet the development needs of supervisees in line with their PDPs. This finding is concerning because **a PDP** is a tool that clearly indicates identified developmental areas and strengths of the supervisee based on the personal development assessment. However, some participants noted that the organisation follows a strengths-based approach when developing PDPs. The study revealed that through compilation of strengths-based PDPs, social workers can identify their training needs and be afforded an opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge based on their needs and strengths. In conclusion, lack of clear developmental goals identified in the PDP can contribute to lack of direction and purpose in the work of both the supervisor and supervisee. Furthermore, a PDP that is not formulated according to the supervisee's competencies and needs is futile.

As part of the supervision process, supervisors and supervisees need to develop a **supervision contract** together to identify the terms of the supervisory relationship. According to the Supervision Framework, the contract needs to contain the planned duration and frequency of supervision as well as supervisors' and supervisees' roles and responsibilities. The supervision contract should be determined by the supervisor in consultation with the supervisee and take cognisance of the level of experience of the supervisee and the complexity of the work supervised. Supervisors and supervisees both have a task to ensure that the supervision contract is implemented according to the supervisee's needs as set out in their PDP. Safeguarding the implementation of a supervision contract can eliminate what is deemed as 'on the run', non-structured supervision, and may prohibit the execution of associated supervision tasks resulting in barriers for developing learning goals in the supervisory relationship. However, participants in the study could not readily identify the link between the supervision contract and the PDP. Hence, it is accepted that the nature of supervision and role of the supervisor and supervisee remains static, leading to many NQSWs and experienced social workers left frustrated with supervision and no progression in how they are being supervised, which impacts their performance evaluation negatively.

Performance evaluations should be for developmental purposes wherein supervisees are afforded space to determine the course of action regarding their PDP. Through performance evaluation, the supervisor evaluates the total work of a supervisee over a given period and assesses how the administrative, educational, and supportive functions of supervision are beneficial to the supervisee and overall service delivery within the organisation. Furthermore, it is a process that enables both the supervisor and the supervisee to reflect on the achievement of set outcomes in the supervisee's PDP and identify future development needs. Thus, performance evaluation gives management and supervisees a means by which achievements are recognised, and a sense of progress and movement within an occupation are observed. The study found that some of the supervisees did not see the value of performance evaluation given that they do not receive performance bonuses or the fact that the audits are mainly for administrative purposes and not the personal development of social workers. This contributed to supervisees not being optimistic about annual audits of their case files due to the administrative control and lack of understanding about the rationale and benefit of a performance evaluation. Consequently, this makes supervisees resistant to the process, and as a result, they lack the motivation to participate in performance evaluations. This is a demonstration of the participants' lack of understanding of the interrelatedness of various

supervision tasks, hence they see performance evaluations merely as auditing, and not as part of the supervision process, to revisit the PDP, and to contract accordingly.

Therefore, what remains a gap is that supervisors and supervisees are not able to translate the PDP into supervision agendas for each supervision session, hence supervision sessions are impromptu, without set goals and outcomes, within a specific timeframe set out in the supervision contract. To conclude, there is a need for emphasis on the reciprocal link between assessment of competencies, a PDP and performance evaluation to be included in the supervision policy as part of the supervision process. To make this a reality, supervision sessions must be structured to include all the functions of supervision and be properly planned and linked with the supervisee's PDP; and the supervision agenda for supervision sessions should be aligned with the set goals and areas of development.

Given the importance of assessing the supervisee's competencies aimed at capacitating the social workers to render quality social services, it is recommended that supervisors within the organisation should ensure that supervisees' strengths, and their PDPs are reviewed annually to check how the set development goals were achieved. Such a process will foster both the supportive and educational functions of supervision since it will be based on the assessment of supervisees' competencies. This will also create an opportunity for supervisees to value the supervision process and to take ownership of the process that allows them to continually develop skills and competencies that enrich their personal development and professional growth. In line with the ecology of supervision, organisations should also promote the involvement of supervisees on the performance evaluation of their supervisors by providing feedback to the organisation's management on their supervision experiences and how supervision might be impacting service delivery and the client systems.

7.2.8. Methods of supervision

The implementation of the main methods of supervision, namely, *individual and group supervision*, were explored in this study. **Individual supervision** happens between the supervisor and supervisee with the purpose of promoting the personal growth of the supervisee. From the participants' stories, it can be deduced that the individual supervision sessions in the organisation are implemented in a structured way with a beginning, middle, and end phase. It can be concluded that the sessions are structured in such a way that the administrative, supportive, and educational functions of supervision can be implemented

during individual supervision as stipulated in the Supervision Framework. For example, the supervisee's administrative work is assessed during individual sessions. In addition, through individual supervision, emotional support and guidance is provided to supervisees according to their needs for personal well-being and ability to cope with their workload. The findings show that within the organisation under study, informal consultation and an open-door policy do not substitute the formal and structured monthly individual supervision. Thus, the availability of supervisors beyond the structured monthly individual sessions is necessary, especially in a child protection organisation where the well-being of children is a priority. Furthermore, social workers constantly need to consult and seek immediate guidance from their supervisors if they need to remove a child or conduct a risk assessment about the safety of a child in need of care and protection.

Group supervision takes place between the supervisor and a small group of supervisees, thereby creating a space for social workers to share their experiences, knowledge, and challenges when providing social services. Participants shared that group supervision in their organisation is implemented in such a way that learning opportunities, role playing, and staff development are facilitated to aid social workers to enhance their skills and competencies. In group supervision, social workers have an opportunity to share their views, expertise, and strengths in their work amongst colleagues. Hence, participants appreciated the learning opportunities and trainings established through group supervision. The implementation of group supervision fosters peer learning and growth through staff training, information sharing, case study discussions, and team building. It can be concluded that group supervision is also linked with development and training activities which may not necessarily constitute group supervision with specific determinants of the definition of supervision but are necessary for supervisees' professional growth. Often information sharing sessions are feasible within a group setting and are scheduled for the convenience of the supervisors, given the uneven supervisor-supervisees ratio within the organisation.

It is recommended that within the organisation's supervision policy, activities that constitute group supervision should be clarified and distinguished from information sharing sessions or workshops. Moreover, group sessions should be arranged according to the supervisees' learning and development needs, based on their PDPs. To create a community of supervision practice within the organisation, it is suggested that the organisation should assess the feasibility of "peer supervision" which could be organised in a structured way and encompass

mentoring and coaching activities to execute the supportive and educational functions of supervision among peer supervisees.

7.2.9. Supervision activities

Supervision activities encompasses consultation, coaching, and mentoring. Of these activities, participants had a better understanding of consultation compared to mentoring and coaching. There appears to be a limited understanding of the implementation of mentoring and coaching in the organisation. One of the contributing factors could be because mentoring and coaching are an integral part of the educational function. If the function is not adequately implemented due to priority given to the administrative function, evidence on the implementation of mentoring and coaching will also be limited. Although both mentoring and coaching have been identified as some of the key supervision activities, the Supervision Framework lacks clarity on these activities. Supervisors within the organisation implement **mentoring and coaching** by providing guidance and support during supervision sessions. This includes orientating social workers to different policies in the organisation and ensure that the organisation's mandate is carried out in accordance with the vision and mission of the organisation.

It was found that priority is placed on consultation since there are guidelines provided in the Supervision Framework related to this activity. What **consultation** means is that social workers will not have regular structured supervision sessions like beginner social workers. The findings revealed that social workers must have at least a minimum of two years' experience within the child protection organisation to be on a consultation basis. However, the social workers must be competent and be able to work independently because consultation is goal-directed and executed according to the needs of the supervisee after a period of performance appraisals and revision of the supervision contract. This aligns with the stipulations in the Supervision Framework of encouraging social workers in consultation to take full responsibility for their workload and stay motivated to work independently and autonomously regarding the total scope of their work. In conclusion, the supervision activities discussed are similar in terms of processes and techniques, they vary in terms of scope and how they are implemented depending on the professional development stages of the social workers. This means all the supervision activities are integrated in one way or another during individual and group supervision through the educational function of supervision. It is therefore recommended that the Supervision Framework should be revised to clarify norms

and standards related mentoring and coaching so that organisations can determine within their agency supervision policies how the supervision activities will be implemented. It is also recommended that within child protection organisations, mentoring, coaching and consultation should be incorporated in a formal system of peer supervision which is developmental in nature, and involves both NQSWs and experienced social workers. This may potentially strengthen the supervision process at large and benefit the organisation by drawing on the strengths of social workers within the organisation even if they do not have the title of “supervisor”. This approach will create a community of knowledge and support in the organisation beneficial to all stakeholders.

7.2.10. Theories, perspectives and practice models

Theories, perspectives, and practice models in this study entail the lens from which an organisation structures, explains, and practices supervision. The Supervision Framework does not delineate what theories and perspectives can be utilised in supervision; rather, organisations are left to define the theories, perspectives, and practice models that will guide their supervision practices in their setting. They can thus apply models of intervention or extrapolate models from other fields. This study reiterates that there is still a lack of clear theoretical models about the nature, influence, and clinical elements of effective supervision, though there are several attempts to develop specific models tailor-made for social work, instead of borrowing from other helping professions. The findings show that a person-centred approach and a trauma informed approach were highlighted as important approaches utilised in supervision. Meanwhile the strengths-based perspective was viewed as the key in guiding supervision within the organisation. The implementation of SBS within an organisation creates an empowering environment that focuses on strengths, assets, capacities, abilities, resilience, and the resources that supervisees have, and it moves away from a deficit-based mindset. Thus, the strength perspective complements the supervisory relationship by promoting empowerment, partnership, collaboration, and participation between the supervisor and supervisee.

To conclude, SBS focuses on competencies and capabilities instead of problems and pathology. When conducting supervision informed by the strengths approach, supervisors get an opportunity to be culturally competent since the culture and identity of social workers are among a person’s best assets. This will possibly eradicate the notion of privilege and power in supervision practices. To promote SBS that is collaborative and participatory in nature, it

is recommended that both the supervisor and supervisee should take the lead in their supervisory relationship and regard themselves as key actors in supervision with a mutual responsibility to create structure, learning, and development in the relationship. Within supervision contracts, the roles of both parties should be mutually agreed upon in accordance with the principles of adult education, strengths-oriented techniques, and mutual feedback guided by respective learning and supervision styles. It is further recommended that welfare organisations should incorporate within their supervision policies, the theoretical perspectives and practice models that guide intervention within the organisation and provide tools and techniques to both supervisors and supervisees on how these models and perspectives can be incorporated into the structure and process of supervision.

7.2.11. Values and ethical conduct

Values and ethics are fundamental to social work practice, which makes them critical in supervision. Organisations have a responsibility to ensure social work values and ethical conduct are practiced by supervisors and supervisees. All registered social workers are expected to make ethically accountable professional decisions based on the SACSSP's code of ethics. This is especially important within child protection organisations given the legislative requirements and professional code of ethics that guide social work practice in South Africa. Compliance to ethical conduct can be safeguarded through supervision that promotes safe and accountable practice. The priority of supervision should thus be to protect the interest of service users and to promote ethical conduct and the professional development of social workers.

The study indicates that social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of every person. The results showed that respect, confidentiality, professionalism, honesty, and integrity are the key values identified by supervisees as essential in a supervisory relationship. The participants felt that it is important to implement these social work values in supervision, because as practitioners, they need to comply with these values when rendering services to communities. It was noted that the very same values they need to adhere to in social work practice, should be held by supervisors when providing supervision. Therefore, supervisees and supervisors have a legal and ethical responsibility to ensure that all their work is done according to the correct legal procedures. The Supervision Framework also emphasises the supervisor's co-responsibility for the professional conduct of supervisees because they are

responsible for overseeing the social workers' work and can be held liable for possible unprofessional conduct by the social worker.

The study revealed that values and ethics guided by international standards and the SACSSP are upheld when conducting supervision within the organisation. Although values and ethics were at the forefront of supervision and integrated into the supervision process within the organisation under study, this is contrary to what the analysis of research within the child protection sector discussed in Chapter 4 has shown. Moreover, of the values highlighted by the participants, there is no mentioning of African values such as *ubuntu*. With *ubuntu* being the first theme for the social work Global Agenda 2020-2030, it is recommended that this value be incorporated into the revised Supervision Framework and organisations adopt *ubuntu* within their supervision policies as a principle for enhancing social solidarity and recognising that the connectedness of people is central to the sustainability of positive supervisory relationships. This can be achieved by promoting mutual feedback that involves ongoing, open, and two-way critical and honest conversations between the supervisor and supervisee. To promote ethical supervision and not harmful supervision, the question of the helpfulness of supervision should be upfront in performance appraisals – to assess whether all supervision practices are appraised as helpful and ethically grounded.

7.2.12. Supervisory relationship

A professional relationship between supervisor and supervisee requires mutual responsibility and accountability to foster the development of competence and ethical practice with the goal of improving social work practice and outcomes for service users. As such, supervisees should be regarded as partners in the supervisory relationship by encouraging supervisees to set their own goals, to agree on their learning pace, and to participate in agenda planning for the supervision sessions. From the participants' stories, the supervisory relationships observed in the organisation under study promoted opportunities for collaboration, critical reflection, and support. A collaborative supervisory relationship aligns with a constructionist approach to supervision wherein hierarchical differences are limited and co-constructive conversations are stimulated to foster a positive relationship between the supervisor and supervisee.

Despite most social workers having had positive experiences in their supervisory relationships, some experience the supervisory relationship as uncomfortable and authoritative. This was mainly due to the administrative pressure and lack of emotional

support which negatively influenced the supervisory relationship. The study has shown that the administrative tasks of supervisors within child protection organisations is one of the major contributing factors to burnout amongst social workers and the negligence of the supportive and educational function of supervision. Priority on the administrative supervision function gives rise to power dynamics if supervision focuses on tasks completed and not the supervisees completing the tasks. Although challenges arising from the global and local neoliberal discourse affects the supervision of social workers with its managerial focus on control and accountability, the power to make changes and positive influence still lies within the supervisory relationship. This means that both the supervisor and supervisee have a role to play to promote trust, integrity, justice, equity, and fairness within their supervisory relationship. Therefore, it is recommended that to strengthen supervisory relationships within the organisation, the professional relationship needs to be collaborative, based on a partnership between the supervisor and the supervisee to promote reflective practice. However, the basis and boundaries of a supervisory relationship cannot merely be generalised by the Supervision Framework or a supervision policy, given the uniqueness of each supervisory relationship. It is further recommended that supervisors and the supervisees within the organisation must develop common professional goals related to the supervisory relationship, based on a dual perspective which is maintained through reciprocity and consensus, agreed upon during the contracting phase.

7.2.13. Roles of the supervisor

The findings revealed that the relationship between management and supervision functions within the organisation are acknowledged. Supervision is regarded as a management function, hence supervisors in the organisation under study are referred to as middle level managers. Supervisors within the organisation recognise their co-responsibility for the professional conduct and development of supervisees in line with the SACSSP rules of social workers. This study confirms that supervisors play a wide range of roles including being a teacher, enabler, facilitator, adviser, and advocate. The participants' stories reveal that the roles of supervisors in the organisation include overseeing the supervisees' work, providing guidance on difficult cases, identifying supervisees' developmental needs, and providing emotional support to supervisees. As the link between the supervisees and top management, supervisors also conduct quality assurance of the work delivered by the supervisees through case file audits. The implementation of the roles of supervisors in the organisation were aligned with

the requirements indicated in the Supervision Framework. For instance, administratively supervisors ensured that records of social work interventions, processes, and outcomes are produced and maintained. Regarding the educational and supportive functions, supervisors provided continuing education and support to social workers, while similarly striving to meet the emotional well-being of supervisees.

However, the findings showed that the supervisors' ability to create a balance between the three functions of supervision has proven to be a challenge given their dual roles as a supervisor and manager within the organisation. Often the supervisory relationship tends to suffer because of the prioritisation of managerial and administrative tasks, instead of professional and structured supervision. Therefore, to close the gap identified in the implementation of the roles of the supervisor in the organisation, supervisors need to acknowledge their limitations and take responsibility of their own development and training needs. Furthermore, supervisors should seek feedback and evaluation from their supervisees for the enhancement of supervision practices within the organisation. One way of enhancing the supervision process is for supervisors to model professional behaviours and good social work practice in a child protection organisation.

7.2.14. Context of the work environment

Based on the constructionist lens adopted in this study, the influence of the environment on the practice of social work, including the organisational context, affects how supervision is executed. This study was conducted within the context of a designated child protection organisation, with its own set of external influences and challenges that inform the supervision processes and how the Supervision Framework is implemented. Owing to the inherent vulnerabilities of children, child protection social workers primarily work with vulnerable children and their families and are often engaged in cases involving statutory work delineated to designated child protection organisations and directs the implementation of supervision. This makes child protection organisations different from other practice contexts where supervisors may solely focus on structured supervision, without having to supervise the appropriate execution of statutory legislation. In a South African child protection organisation, the Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005, is one example of legislation that directs how social workers function and ultimately how supervision is implemented. A designated child protection organisation is unique in that it is assigned with the responsibility to ensure the protection of children as stipulated in Chapter 7 of the Children's Act 2005. This study

highlights the interplay between the role of child protection supervisors and supervisees, child protection legislation and the organisational culture, and then reciprocally between these role players which constitute the ecology of supervision.

What also influenced how supervision is implemented within the organisation under study was the COVID-19 pandemic. The national lockdown at the beginning of 2020 due to the pandemic had an impact on the social work sector in general, including child protection organisations. Given the critical role of safeguarding the well-being of children played by social workers within child protection organisations, supervision was much needed during these difficult times. It was also important due to an increased number of reported child abuse and domestic violence cases exacerbated by the pandemic. The study's findings reflected both the negative and positive effects of the pandemic on supervision. The study highlights the interconnectedness between the supervisee, supervisor, client, the organisation, and the social environment in which the supervision process occurs. The findings are indicative of how the disruption in one system of the ecology of supervision can influence supervision practices within the context of the organisation.

It can be concluded that the social context story, supervision story, and the organisation's story influence supervision practices within organisations. Thus, organisations had to adapt how social services are provided and how social workers are supervised during lockdown. Such changes included introducing virtual and online supervision sessions. This required supervisors and supervisees to familiarise themselves with different online platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Skype to participate in supervision. Although online supervision was a challenge for some of the participants, it was the only viable supervision format to safeguard the physical and mental well-being of social workers. To accommodate the everchanging context of the work environment and the rise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, it is recommended that the organisation should assess the feasibility of continuing with online supervision sessions post the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to save on travelling costs and time which will make the supervision sessions more accessible and convenient for supervisors and supervisees. In addition, the organisation should take the responsibility of training its employees on the different online platforms if supervision is to proceed online.

7.3. KEY CONCLUSIONS AND MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on a constructionist approach, this research specifically generated the stories of social workers and their supervisors regarding their implementation of the Supervision Framework of the DSD and SACSSP in their supervision. These **linear stories** reflect that the case study of the child protection organisation may be regarded as a best practice example of the implementation of the Supervision Framework. The organisation and supervisors are doing the right things at the right time and in the right way in their supervision of frontline social workers.

However, a **subtext of the stories of the participants** came to the fore from the analysed stories, in an extended analysis of the conclusions and recommendations according to the thematic analyses of this research. The analysed stories form the basis of the unique contribution of this research to the body of knowledge of social work supervision within a child protection organisation in South Africa.

These analysed “**subtext stories**” may be framed with the following synthesised key conclusions and recommendations:

- The goal of supervision in child protection organisations should be interminable, and supervision activities should be executed in a developmental way, ranging from coaching, to mentoring and to consultation.
- Child protection organisations should incorporate the whole ecology of supervision in the supervision process, hence not just the supervisor and the supervisee, but also the organisation and service users. With respect to the organisation, clarification of the clinical dimensions of supervision to board members who govern the organisation is of utmost importance, otherwise supervision may remain a managerial function of accountability playing into the hands of a neoliberal discourse enforced by the DSD.
- Specialised supervision posts for clinical supervision should be advocated for, and this should not be combined with other middle management organisational tasks.
- More training into the use of adult education principles, tools, and techniques, and the incorporation thereof in supervision is needed to focus specifically on clinical supervision knowledge and skills, based on specific theories, models, and perspectives.

- A sophisticated peer supervision system should be considered to purposefully use the strengths in the total staff of the organisation, which may be more cost and time effective. This may be operationalised in creative ways in terms of peer groups or individual pairs of peers to create a community of supervision. Hence, supervision in child protection organisations could be seen as broader than just between a mandated middle manager with the title of supervisor and a frontline supervisee.
- The linkages between the phases in the supervision process is important to understand in a child protection organisation. For instance, the link between the personal development assessment, the PDP, the supervision contract, the actual supervision sessions, and the performance appraisals. Clinical supervision does not surface, as these steps are executed without linking it in terms of goals and objectives in supervision sessions based on the PDP identified during assessment of competencies. If these linkages are not made, then supervision remains on the run and crisis driven, which is the antithesis of clinical supervision.
- The question of ethical informed supervision should specifically be addressed when consistently evaluating the helpfulness of supervision within the realm of all systems of the ecology of supervision. Hence, if a particular system of supervision results in supervision that is harmful, it should be addressed, with the goal to create a clinical dimension in supervision, and not just a linear implementation of the Supervision Framework and the organisation's supervision policy.
- The boundaries of the supervisory relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee should be determined right at the start with a well-established supervision contract, which defines the supervision relationship and boundaries thereof in the organisation – as supervision may include other systems and actors, such as peers, other mentors, and even board members – all who are part of the ecology of supervision and the organisation's community of supervision practice. Hence, the “supervision relationship” within a child protection organisation may be regarded as broader and not just a relationship between the officially appointed supervisor and supervisee. It may thus include the involvement of other systems in the organisation as well, which may be organised by the formal supervisor to the benefit of the supervisee and service users.

- The role of the mentor of a supervisor should particularly be emphasised in a child protection organisation, as this type of work does not only require knowledge of social work *per se*, but also additional knowledge about statutory processes and facilitation and advocating of these processes in communities at large, and within the organisation itself, which is being governed by board members who do not necessarily have the knowledge of the work of a frontline child protection social worker. Thus, the supervisor's ability to support supervisees and to transfer knowledge to supervisees should pertinently be required in the appointment of new supervisors within child protection organisations to supervise effectively and create a community of supervision practice within the organisation.
- New developments in supervision, such as online supervision, should be thoroughly investigated, and best practices should be shared. This may inform specific training opportunities for the community of supervision practice in child protection organisations, together with specific training in clinical supervision tools and techniques, since the structural elements of supervision, according to the Supervision Framework and organisation's supervision policy are already in place.

7.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Considering the results of this study with regards to the implementation of the Supervision Framework within a child protection organisation, it is recommended that future studies should focus on the following areas:

- A comparative study on the implementation of the Supervision Framework within different fields of practice.
- A study on how supervisors utilise reflective tools during supervision sessions to facilitate supportive clinical supervision is necessary considering the limited evidence observed in this study on this function.
- A study could be undertaken on how the educational function of supervision is implemented in group supervision.
- The potential of "peer supervision" in implementing the educational and supportive functions of supervision within organisations can be explored.
- The notion of creating a community of supervision practice can be investigated further to assess its feasibility within child protection organisations.

- An additional research focus could be an investigation on the development of a supervision policy from inception to execution, to describe and understand the process in detail.
- Further exploration on the advantages and disadvantages of online supervision given the rise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

7.5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The research question that guided this study was: “What are the ‘stories’ of social workers in a designated child protection organisation, regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012)? This question was answered through the employment of a qualitative research methodology, using an exploratory and descriptive design. The findings of this study echoes in part and is corroborated by existing national and international literature on supervision. What is novel about this study is that it brings together previous findings, theory, policy, and legislation about the implementation of the Supervision Framework in a child protection organisation by further analysing the subtext stories of participants in line with the constructionist approach. It is hoped that the findings of this study and its recommendations will improve supervision practices within child protection organisations in South Africa if considered.

The study contributes to the body of knowledge on social work supervision in South Africa, especially within the child protection sector. The study gives voice to supervisees and supervisors who shared their stories on their experiences of the implementation of the Supervision Framework within their organisation. The supervisees and supervisors’ stories have highlighted the supervision process within a child protection organisation, and how supervision policies within organisations can be developed and implemented with the potential to strengthen supervision practices. One way of upholding high-quality standards in social work practice is through supervision policies that guide supervision practices within organisations that are context specific and suited to various organisational settings.

What remains a hindrance in social work supervision is the influence of the neoliberal discourse within the welfare sector, which does not only affect the quality of supervision, but also the services rendered to service users due to the emphasis on quantity instead of quality. The organisation under study has thus thrived in developing a supervision policy and

implementing the policy in line with the stipulations of the Supervision Framework. However, the implementation has not been without challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the administrative dominance within the organisation and, in some instances, the lack of emotional support. Hence, clinical supervision can be salvaged by introducing innovative ways of conducting supervision such as peer supervision to develop a community of supervision practice; by adopting an external supervision model to place primary focus of supervision on clinical dimensions instead of administrative tasks; and by investigating the potential of online supervision in promoting the accessibility of the supervisor.

It is absolutely evident that supervision in child protection is essential, and that the work of child protection organisations is complex. There is no one existing protocol that can be applied to all situations confronting social workers in child protection organisations. Although there are best practices used to guide supervision processes, when implementing the Supervision Framework, it is important to note that the context and circumstances of each organisation varies. Therefore, in conclusion, the ecology of supervision, which encompasses the supervisee, supervisor, service users, and the organisation as a community of supervision practice should be considered during the supervision process to give effect to the principle of *ubuntu* in supervision, and to indigenise social work supervision within a designated child protection organisation in South Africa.

I now leave you with these few words by Lindy Alexander:

It's a privilege to be able to bear witness to someone's story when they may not have had the chance to tell it before.¹

¹ Cited by the University of Southern California Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. (2017). *Top 25 Inspirational quotes for social work month* [Online]. Available: <https://dworakpeck.usc.edu/blog/top-25-inspirational-quotes-for-social-work-month> [2021, 28 September].

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ANNEXES



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ANNEXURE 1: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH TITLED: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUPERVISION FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN SOUTH AFRICA BY A DESIGNATED CHILD PROTECTION ORGANISATION

Dear participant

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Priscalia Khosa, a doctoral student in the Department of Social Work at Stellenbosch University. The results of this study will become part of a thesis. You are invited to partake in this study as a registered social worker with the SACSSP employed in a designated child protection organisation and your contribution to this study will be highly valuable.

1. Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to gain an understanding of the stories of social workers in a designated child protection organisation regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). If you agree to take part, a telephone individual interview will be arranged with you at a mutually agreed time. The duration of the interview will be approximately 60 minutes.

2. Potential Risks

This study is classified as low risk as outlined by the Stellenbosch University Departmental Ethical Screening Committee (DESC). This means that no harm is foreseen during or after

the research because all the interviews will be confidential, and no personal identification of the participants will be included in the thesis.

3. Potential Benefits

The study will contribute to the body of knowledge in the area of social work supervision in South Africa by giving voices to the social workers and supervisors to tell their story on their experiences of the implementation of the supervision framework. It is envisaged that the study will contribute significantly to understanding the role of social workers and supervisors in the supervision process, which will have the potential to strengthen supervision practices within child protection organisations.

4. Payment for Participation

Please be advised that there are no direct benefits or rewards for participation and that there will be no remuneration for participating in this study.

5. Confidentiality

The study will be qualitative in nature, thus direct quotes will be used when reporting the results. However, be assured that the quotes will not in any way be linked to you because your identity will be protected. Please note that your name and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final thesis. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. No one other than my supervisor and me will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts. All data and records of the interview will be kept in a password-protected computer. A copy of your interview transcript without any identifying will be stored in a locked cupboard and may be used for future research.

7. Participation and withdrawal

Your participation is voluntary and refusal to participate will not be held against you in anyway. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time and you may refuse to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with.

8. Identification of Researcher

Please contact the researcher on 073 657 9395 or via email priscalia@sun.ac.za if you need further information regarding the research study. If you have any questions or concerns about

the research study, feel free to contact the supervisor, Prof L. Engelbrecht, Department of Social Work, Stellenbosch University via email at Ike@sun.ac.za or by telephone 0210802073.

9. Rights of research participants

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT

As the participant I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide, have been explained.

By signing below, I the participant of this study agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by Priscalia Khosa.

Signature of Participant

Date

DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

As the **principal investigator**, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant

has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition, I would like to select the following option:

x	The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.
	The conversation with the participant was conducted with the assistance of a translator (who has signed a non-disclosure agreement), and this “Consent Form” is available to the participant in a language in which the participant is fluent.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

ANNEXURE 2: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH SOCIAL WORKERS

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH SOCIAL WORKERS

1. Biographical Information

- 1.1. What is your highest qualification?
- 1.2. How long have you been practicing as a social worker?
- 1.3. How long have you been employed by the organisation?
- 1.4. What is your theoretical and practical experience of supervision?

2. Participants' experience of the Supervision Framework implementation in the organisation

2.1 . In your view, do you think the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa has to be **mandatory**? Motivate your answer.

*2.1.1. Tell me about your experience of how supervision is being implemented as a **mandatory** action in your organisation.*

2.2. Tell me about your experience of how the **supervision policy** of your organisation is being implemented.

2.3. In your view, what do you think is the **goal of supervision**?

*2.3.1. Tell me about your experience of how the **goal of supervision** is implemented in your organisation.*

2.4. Tell me about your experience of how the **functions of supervision** are implemented in your organisation in terms of:

2.4.1. Administrative function

2.4.2. Educational function

2.4.3. Supportive function

2.5. According to your experience, what kind of **training, authority, qualifications** do supervisors have in your organisation?

2.6. In your experience, how do you think the **principles of adult education** in supervision are implemented within the organisation?

2.7. Tell me about your experience of how the **methods of supervision** are implemented in your organisation in terms of:

2.7.1. Individual supervision

2.7.2. Group supervision

2.8. Tell me about your experience of what **theoretical underpinning** and **legislation** guides supervision within your organisation?

2.9. Can you describe for me, based on your experience, what happens in a typical **supervision session**?

2.9.1. Can you share with me your experiences regarding planning for supervision sessions in your organisation?

2.9.2. Tell me, in your experience more about the frequency and duration of supervision sessions in your organisation?

2.10. Tell me about your experience of how the **supervision process** is implemented in your organisation in terms of:

2.10.1. The formulation of a supervision contract

2.10.2. Assessment of your personal development competencies

2.10.3. Formulation of your personal development plan

2.10.4. The process of performance evaluation

2. 11. Tell me about your experience of how **supervision activities** are implemented in your organisation in terms of:

2.11.1. Coaching

2.11.2. Mentoring

2.11.3. Consultation

2.12. Tell me about your experience of what **values and ethics** guide supervision in your organisation?

- 2.13. In your experience, how does the organisation implement **anti-discriminatory practices** in supervision?
- 2.14. Tell me about your experience of the **supervisory relationship** with your supervisor in your organisation?
- 2.15. According to your experience, what are **the roles of a supervisor** within supervision in your organisation?
- 2.16. In your experience, what do you consider as **unique in terms of the implementation of supervision** in comparison with other social service organisations?
- 2.17. Tell me, how has the **current pandemic** affected the way supervision is provided in your organisation?
- 2.18. What **changes, trends and recommendations** would you like to introduce pertaining supervision practices in the organisation?

ANNEXURE 3: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH SUPERVISORS

1. Biographical Information

- 1.1. What is your highest qualification?
- 1.2. How long have you been practicing as a social worker?
- 1.3. How long have you been employed by the organisation?
- 1.4. How long have you been employed in the supervisory role?
- 1.5. What is your theoretical and practical experience of supervision?
- 1.6. In the time you have been in the supervisory role, what supervision courses/workshops have you attended?

2. Participants' experience of the Supervision Framework implementation in the organisation

- 2.1. Can you share with me what you know about Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa?
- 2.2. In your view, do you think the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa has to be **mandatory**? Motivate your answer.
- 2.3. Who do you think should be the **custodians** of the Supervision Framework? Motivate your answer.
- 2.4. There is an ongoing process to formulate a **Supervision Framework for the Social Service Professions** in South Africa,
 - 2.4.1. Do you think such a framework is feasible?
 - 2.4.2. Do you think it is necessary to implement a framework for just the social work profession or a framework cutting across all social service professions? Motivate your answer.
- 2.5. In your experience, do you think the document guiding supervision in South Africa should be referred to as a **framework, a policy, minimum standards, or guidelines**? Motivate your answer.

- 2.6. Do you think it is necessary for your organisation to have a **supervision policy**?
Motivate your answer.
- 2.7. What should be the **content** of a **supervision policy**, based on your experience in your organisation?
- 2.8. What **process** should be followed to compile a **supervision policy**?
 - 2.8.1. Can you share with me what you know about the process that was followed in developing the supervision policy within your organisation?
 - 2.8.2. Tell me about the role you played in the process of developing the supervision policy within your organisation?
 - 2.8.3. Do you think the process of developing an organisation's supervision policy and the Supervision Framework should be similar or different? Motivate your answer.
- 2.9. In your view, how should **child protection organisations align themselves** with the implementation of the Supervision Framework? Motivate your answer.
 - 2.9.1. What do you think is the alignment between your organisation's supervision policy and the Supervision Framework?
- 2.10. Can you share with me what **role** you play in the implementation of the **Supervision Framework**?
- 2.11. Tell me about the **advantages** you have identified in your organisation regarding the **implementation of the Supervision Framework**.
- 2.12. Tell me about the **challenges** you have identified in your organisation regarding the implementation of the Supervision Framework.
- 2.13. In your experience, what do you consider as **unique in terms of the implementation of the Supervision Framework in your organisation** in comparison with other social service organisations?
- 2.14. What is the process of **monitoring and evaluating** the implementation of the **Supervision Framework in your organisation**?
- 2.15. Can you tell me about the **ratio of supervisor/supervisee** in your organisation?
- 2.16. Tell me, how has the **current COVID-19 pandemic** affected the way the **Supervision Framework** is implemented in your organisation?

ANNEXURE 4: SUPERVISION RESEARCH CONDUCTED BETWEEN 2016-2020 IN SOUTH AFRICA

Author	Year of Publication	Title of Research	URL
Chanyandura, R.	2016	Exploring the experiences of the child protection social workers in Johannesburg regarding supervision	http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/jspui/bitstream/10539/21838/1/RESEARCH%20FINAL%20DOCUMENT%201.pdf
Hunter, K.	2016	Supervision – the power to save? An exploration of the role supervision can play in a social worker’s decision to resign in the child protection field	http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/jspui/bitstream/10539/22591/2/Masters%20Research%20K%20Hunter%202016%200717588F%20no%20abstract.pdf
Manthosi, F.L.	2016	Evaluation of social work supervision on job performance in the Department of Social Development, Polokwane Sub-District: Implications for practice	http://hdl.handle.net/10386/1762
Maupye, M.P.	2016	Perceptions of newly qualified social workers regarding supervision within the Department of Social Development in the Limpopo province, South Africa	http://hdl.handle.net/10539/20741
Mokoka, L.	2016	The experiences of social work supervisees in relation to supervision within the Department of Social Development in the Johannesburg region	http://hdl.handle.net/10500/20818
Shokane, F.F.	2016	An evaluation of the implementation of the supervision framework for social work profession in Mopani District, Limpopo Province	http://hdl.handle.net/10386/1718
Baloyi, T.	2017	Experiences of social work supervisors on supervising inexperienced social workers in the Department of Social Development Malamulele Area Office	http://hdl.handle.net/10386/2383
Joseph, D.	2016	Perceived contributing factors impeding job satisfaction of social workers in Nongovernment Organisations	http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/101103
Parker, L.	2017	Essential professional competencies of social work supervisors in a Non-Profit welfare Organisation	http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/101062

Silence, E.	2017	The significance of social work supervision in the Department of Health, Western Cape: Social workers' experiences	http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/101285
Vetfuti, N.O.	2017	Supportive supervision: The experiences of social workers in the field of child protection	http://hdl.handle.net/10948/14433
Chibaya, N.H.	2018	The execution of individual reflective supervision sessions: experiences of intermediate frontline social workers	http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/103336
Goliath, J.	2018	Management functions of frontline social workers supervising social auxiliary workers	http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/103357
Ncube, M.E.	2018	A model of social work supervision in a social development approach	
Ornellas, A.	2018	Social workers' reflections on implications of neoliberal tenets for social work in South African Non-Governmental Organisations	http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/103320
Atkins, G.	2019	An exploration into statutory social workers' perceptions and experiences of their child protection work	http://hdl.handle.net/11427/31312
Engelbrecht, L.K.	2019	Towards authentic supervision of social workers in South Africa	https://doi.org/10.1080/07325223.2019.1587728
Ncube, M.	2019	A model of social work supervision in a social development approach	https://doi.org/10.25159/2415-5829/4960
Vetfuti, N., Goliath, V.M. & Perumal, N.	2019	Supervisory experiences of social workers in child protection services	https://doi.org/10.25159/2415-5829/4962
Wynne, T.T	2020	Potential factors contributing to harmful supervision of social workers	http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/107900

ANNEXURE 5: REFLEXIVITY REPORT

MY PHD JOURNEY

First thing first, my reflections do not only demonstrate my PhD research journey, but who I am as a person because who I am influenced my unique journey when conducting this study. Scholars such as Ruokonen-Engler & Siouti (2016) and Finlay (2016) argue that life experiences and personal characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class and professional status draw us to our research questions, inform what we ask in interviews, and shape what we do not consider during the research process. In other words, as a qualitative researcher, I am subject of my research and bring who I am as an individual in my research, hence the necessity to reflect authentically and holistically. I am therefore using free writing to narrate my PhD journey as recommended by Koopman et al., (2020) and congruent to the constructionist theoretical framework that guided this study (O'Donoghue, 2003).

The reader should understand that I am a daughter, wife, mother, niece, residence head, and an academic before I am a PhD candidate. All these roles influenced my PhD journey and lessons learnt along the way. What this means is that I needed to juggle all these balls without dropping any of them. I was often asked, how do you do it? How do you manage to do your PhD with all these added responsibilities? The simple answer has always been, although it is not easy, I do it because I have no choice but to do. The longest answer is, this is the reality for most women who often need to balance work and home responsibilities of which the line was particularly blurred during the national lockdown due to COVID-19 when people had to work from home. I personally had to home school three children who are below the age of 10 years at the beginning of the lockdown. With my children not going to school daily, I had limited quiet time for academic work. As a caregiver, I needed to prepare meals for my children, do laundry, go shopping for necessities and manage the household. All these tasks needed to be done while working on my PhD research and juggling other responsibilities. Given that majority of participants in this study were women, I could relate with some of their challenges and struggles they expressed during the interviews.

In an unprecedented year like 2020, as life happens, my PhD journey did not stop. It could not stop because there are set goals that needed to be accomplished. The goals were unfortunately not achieved within the set timelines because the timelines did not live room for eventualities such as a devastating pandemic. My initial plan was to commence with data collection in April 2020. This was not feasible due to COVID-19 pandemic. I could not

conduct face-to-face interviews as planned because of the nation lockdown imposed by the South African government in March 2020. Stellenbosch University suspended face-to-face research to comply with the health and safety regulations. Consequently, I had to amend my research proposal in order to receive ethical clearance for telephone interviews. This was a setback as I only started conducting interviews in October 2020. Even though I had received permission from the organisation, potential participants were difficult to reach because I had to recruit them via email and telephonically. The changes to society due to COVID-19 created an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear, resulting in me questioning the importance of the study during a pandemic wherein people are dealing with issues of livelihoods and survival. Jowett (2020) cautions that the health and wellbeing of participants and researchers should take priority over research dissertation deadlines and that unnecessary stress should not be exerted on participants. After thorough introspection, I recognised that with social workers, particularly in a child protection organisation being in the forefront of providing social services to vulnerable populations such as children, supervision is essential to support social workers during a pandemic. I observed that supervision processes implemented in accordance with the Supervision Framework could potentially strengthen supervision practices within child protection organisations by building on social workers' capabilities and provide emotional and moral support to minimise the psychological impact of COVID-19 on both the personal and professional lives of social workers. This observation motivated me to soldier on and proceed with data collection. The study gave voice to the social workers and supervisors to tell their story on the implementation of the Supervision Framework amidst a pandemic.

The data collection process and transcription of interviews happened between October 2020 to February 2021. Data analysis happened from March to April and the write up of the empirical chapter was completed in June 2021. The data analysis and write up of the findings was not without challenges. When I started coding data it was both exciting and challenging. Challenging in that I was using a qualitative data analysis software for the first time, exciting because I was engaging with participants' stories and making sense of their experiences in line with my research goal. When I started data analysis and interpretation, I went in and out of zone because of my pre-existing knowledge of supervision. At times it felt like, I did not have a clear-thinking pattern and because of that I could not make sense of the findings nor draw conclusions from what I thought the data meant. It felt like nothing new was coming out of the data until I identified themes that emerged from the literature chapters. When I went

through participants' stories again it begun to make sense, I was able to identify patterns and eventually complete the puzzle and tell a story based on how participants experienced the implementation the Supervision Framework in their organisation. During this entire process of back and forth, zoning in and out of my research, I grew on a personal and academic level. Although I was filled with anxiety and fear of failure at times, I realised that sometimes it takes longer for everything to come together.

With the effects COVID-19 ravaging my close family members, friends and colleagues, I had so much heaviness in my heart every time I thought of my research. I often felt like I had a mountain to climb, and it was up to me whether I continue feeling sorry for myself which is not going to change anything, or I soldier on and face the mountain. Metaphorically and literally, I went to Table Mountain climbing for the first time one of the days. I remember wanting to give up after 15minutes into the climb. I experienced difficulties breathing, my legs felt like they cannot take me any further. However, I persisted and make it halfway then I really wanted to give up. Along the way people would say 'you are almost there', I ended up not believing them anymore because the end seemed further and further the higher, I climbed. It really got tougher and tougher the higher I climbed. So, it was up to me whether I am going to give up and allow myself to fail or going to persevere through the pain, sweat, heat and shortness of breath to make it to the top of the mountain. I realised I have no choice, going back it is not option, I can only climb the mountain higher which ultimately led me to the top. Oh wow, the feeling of relief, the feeling of satisfaction and pride filled me with joy. I made it to the top of Table Mountain 4 hours later. The fact is, it does not matter how long it took, I made it eventually. I am sharing this because we all have unique and differentiated PhD journeys. It does not matter how long it might take to climb the mountain, or to complete a PhD study, the feeling of pride and joy makes all the pain, tears, sweat and sleepless nights worth it! The words of Maya Angelou (1978) in her poem "Still I Rise" succinctly summarises my PhD journey.

*"...Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise..."*

ANNEXURE 6: ETHICS APPROVAL



NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC: SBER - Amendment Form

17 June 2020

Project number: 7638

Project Title: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUPERVISION FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN SOUTH AFRICA BY A DESIGNATED CHILD PROTECTION ORGANISATION

Dear Mrs. Priscalia Khosa

Your REC: SBER - Amendment Form submitted on 10 June 2020 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE).

Please note below expiration date of this approved submission:

Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
15 October 2018	14 October 2021

SUSPENSION OF PHYSICAL CONTACT RESEARCH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown measures, all research activities requiring physical contact or being in undue physical proximity to human participants has been suspended by Stellenbosch University. Please refer to a [formal statement](#) issued by the REC: SBE on 20 March for more information on this.

This suspension will remain in force until such time as the social distancing requirements are relaxed by the national authorities to such an extent that in-person data collection from participants will be allowed. This will be confirmed by a new statement from the REC: SBE on the university's dedicated [Covid-19 webpage](#).

Until such time online or virtual data collection activities, individual or group interviews conducted via online meeting or web conferencing tools, such as Skype or Microsoft Teams are strongly encouraged in all SU research environments.

If you are required to amend your research methods due to this suspension, please submit an amendment to the REC: SBE as soon as possible. The instructions on how to submit an amendment to the REC can be found on this webpage: [\[instructions\]](#), or you can contact the REC Helpdesk for instructions on how to submit an amendment: applyethics@sun.ac.za.

GENERAL REC COMMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS PROJECT:

INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: SBE, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (7638) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.


Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

You are required to submit a progress report to the REC: SBE before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

Once you have completed your research, you are required to submit a final report to the REC: SBE for review.

ANNEXURE 7: EDITOR'S LETTER



PROOF-READING

PROFESSIONAL EDITING SERVICES

PHD PRACTICAL THEOLOGY (SU) • MTH PRACTICAL THEOLOGY (SU) • BA (HONS) PSYCHOLOGY (UNISA)
BTH (HONS) PRACTICAL THEOLOGY (UNISA) • BTH PASTORAL COUNSELLING (UNISA)

DR LEE-ANNE ROUX
EDITOR | PROOFREADER

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leanne@proof-reading.co.za
www.proof-reading.co.za

25 September 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: LANGUAGE EDITING

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the thesis titled:

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUPERVISION FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN
SOUTH AFRICA BY A DESIGNATED CHILD PROTECTION ORGANISATION**

BY
PRISCALIA KHOSA

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Lee-Anne Roux