

**WORK RELATED STRESS AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS IN GREATER GIYANI
MUNICIPALITY, SOUTH AFRICA**

By

Maluleke Shonisani Forster

Student Number: 11610489

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Department of Public Health

School of Health Sciences

University of Venda.

Supervisor : Prof A.K Tugli

Co-supervisor: Dr. S.A Mulondo

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DECLARATION

I, Shonisani Forster Maluleke, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation titled '**Work related stress among social workers in Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa**' for the Master of Public Health degree at the University of Venda, hereby submitted by me, has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other university; and that it is my own work in design and execution and that all reference material contained therein have been duly acknowledged.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this mini-dissertation to my forever supportive mother Miss Maringa T.M. I have become a better person because of your sincere love, guidance and support, may the good Lord bless you with life in abundance. Lastly, to my beautiful daughter, Vuxa, may you grow and continue to be a blessing in my life.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATION

APA	- American Psychological Association
CCOHS	- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
DSD	- Department of Social Development
EAP	- Employee Assistance Programs
NGO	- Non-Governmental Organization
NQF	- National Qualifications Framework
SACSSP	- South African Council for Social Service Professions

ABSTRACT

This study was about work related stress among social workers in the Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa. Work related stress among social workers globally can be attributed to a number of factors that are either internal or external to the workers. When not addressed, work related stress may have tremendous impact on the workers, their productivity and even health. The aim of this study was to explore the sources of work related stress among social workers in selected offices in Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa.

This study adopted a qualitative research design making use of exploratory approach. The study was conducted at Unigaz social work offices, Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa. The study sample was chosen from the target population of social workers using non-probability purposive sampling. Data were collected using an interview guide and analyzed using thematic analytical approach.

To ensure trustworthiness, credibility and dependability of the study findings, the researcher pre-tested the interview guide to ascertain if it will enable the researcher to get the desired information. The researcher adhered to the following ethical principles: Informed consent, deception of respondents, confidentiality and anonymity, voluntary participation and avoidance of harm to respondents

The study revealed that work related stress among social workers results from a variety of factors. These factors are either organisational such as poor remuneration, workload etc. or extra-organisational factors such as lack of support from family members.

The study recommends that the Department of Social Development should put in place Employee Wellness Offices in all districts as a measure to curb and deal with work related stress among social workers.

Keywords: Factors, Social worker, Stress, Work-related stress.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the study

This study was about work related stress among social workers in the Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa. The aim of this study was to explore the sources of work related stress among social workers in selected offices in the Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa. This chapter is aimed at giving the introduction and background of the study. The chapter also serves the purpose of giving the general aim and objectives of the study, as well as giving the definition of concepts that are central in the study.

Social work as a profession is aimed at enhancing and restoring social functioning in communities. Social workers therefore, render a variety of comprehensive services and play an important role in enhancing and promoting the lives of the members of society. However, the dire need and demand for social work services as well as the rapidly diminishing resources results in significant challenges for social workers; work related stress being the number one challenge (Van Rensburg, 2009). According to a study conducted by Kim and Kao (2011) in California, social workers are faced with high levels of paper work as well as unsupportive and inadequate support and supervision. Looking at the high demands placed on social workers, it is not surprising that social workers often experience work-related stress otherwise known as occupational stress.

Work related stress among social workers worldwide can be attributed to a number of factors that are either internal or external to the workers (Coetzee & de Villiers, 2010). Subha (2012) indicates that work related stress is a growing problem facing the current state of economy globally. Workers are faced with increasing conditions of overwork, lack of resources, job insecurity, job dissatisfaction, and lack of independence. Work related stress is believed and has been proven to be having a tremendous negative impact on the employees' health and well-being, as well as on the organizational productivity (Kim & Kao, 2011).

The shocking incidences of all recorded and reported work related stress among employees and its impact on job productivity and the health of the employees has resulted in so many agencies taking stress as a matter of urgency globally, the rising figures are hard to ignore (Van Rensburg, 2009). It has been reported that about 40–60% of lost working days globally are related to occupational stress (Kord, Damani & Parvaresh, 2015). According to The American Psychological Association (APA) about three-quarters of employees in America confirmed to have experienced

the physical symptoms of stress due to their work. APA (2010) also found that two-thirds of the employees in America deem work as their main source of stress and 30 % of the employees who participated in the survey reported “extreme” stress levels.

Work related stress has been studied widely in the social sciences. It has then been suggested that social workers are at risk of stress directly linked to the caring nature of their work. Different publications related to work related stress were reviewed and it was found that social workers share risk factors with other healthcare professionals. Issues such as professional status, staffing issues and the nature of the profession have been identified as risk factors for the on job stress for social workers (Kim & Kao, 2011).

According to The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety ‘CCOHS’ (2013) the epidemic of workplace stress is as a result of the changing workplace and economic conditions over the past 20 to 30 years. Recently employees find themselves in smaller organizations, with very few people doing more and feeling less secure (Kim, 2011). Gilbreath (2012), argues that technology also add the burden of information overload and accelerates the pace of work resulting in massive stress for the employees.

Ncube and Tshabalala (2012) conducted a study on factors contributing towards work related stress with 2000 employees in Zimbabwe, Nyathi District. The study was aimed at exploring how the employees ranked the factors they deem contribute to work related stress. Remuneration as a potential work stressor was ranked the highest at 98% followed by task load sitting at 95%. Unsupportive supervision and inappropriate management was ranked at 94% while lack of autonomy and career development is ranked at 33%. In a study conducted by Kabunga (2014) in Nairobi, Uganda about 71% in a sample of 176 social workers mentioned the imbalance between work and family as a major source of occupational stress.

Naidoo (2011) argues that every occupation appears to have a stress “footprint” and the education and social welfare sectors are no exception. According to a study conducted by Mere’ (2012) in the Ekurhuleni Region; South Africa, stress amongst social workers has a huge negative impact on their functioning, motivation, performance, colleagues and even clients. Mere’ study reveals that social workers are overworked and stressed out; evidence to this is the sick leave that is regularly taken for stress-related problems.

In dealing with work related problems and stress, the Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) is put to practice by almost all departmental sectors in South Africa (Mere', 2012). EAP are employment services directed towards the reduction of work related problems and stress; these services are aimed at enhancing a good relationship between co-workers, and workers and the management. EAP counselors provide help for work productivity issues such as marital and family problems, stress and dealing with workplace violence or trauma. The goal is to encourage employees to seek guidance if they have difficulties as a result of these major company events (Charles, 2014).

1.2 Problem statement

Work related stress within the social work profession is an issue of great concern globally (Mere, 2012). Work related stress among social workers worldwide can be attributed to a number of factors that are either internal or external to the workers' working environment (Van Rensburg, 2009). Social workers are faced with high levels of paper work and unsupportive and inadequate supervision and with the demand for social work services rising, it is not a surprise that social workers often experience work-related stress (Kim & Kao, 2011). The researcher as an intern social worker attended social work supervision meetings where different issues affecting social workers were discussed. The issues covered included among others poor job performance, high rate of absenteeism and the on job stressors for social workers. During the researcher's term as an intern social worker about two social workers based in Unigaz resigned and in year 2017 one social worker has resigned while about two other social workers took transfers from Unigaz to other offices. And through observation during his term as an intern social worker, the researcher learnt that a significant number of social workers would be absent from work or leave work early. This then prompted the researcher into conducting the study. This is informed by the fact most studies indicate that absenteeism, leaving work early and resigning are indicators of work related stress.

1.3 Rationale of the study

Recently, a variety of studies (Naidoo, 2011; Mere', 2012) have been conducted around the concept of work related stress for public servants such as nurses and educators, with an attempt to identify and examine the nature and extent of stress they encounter. However, not much has been said about the factors that contribute towards work related stress for social workers, as well as the nature and extent of stress that social workers are exposed to here in South Africa. A

similar study was conducted by Van Rensburg (2009), however, the study only focused on newly qualified social workers placed in Non-Governmental Organizations. The researcher's aim is to use social workers employed by government as participants. The study therefore, seeks to address a gap in knowledge.

1.4 Significance of the study

The findings of this study will provide recommendations that may benefit the Department of Social Development (DSD) in understanding the potential work stressors affecting social workers so that appropriate interventions to deal with work stress can be made. The study findings may also assist social workers in identifying and dealing with potential work related stressors before they impact negatively on their job productivity and wellbeing. It must be well understood that when the social workers' wellbeing and job productivity is improved, the community that they serve may benefit. Public Health as a discipline may also benefit from the study findings in that Public Health Practitioners may come to know and understand the factors that contribute towards work related stress and thereby make informed decisions when coming up with policies to address the problem of work related stress in Public Health.

1.5 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to explore the sources of stress among social workers in selected offices in Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa.

1.6 Objectives of the study

- To identify the sources of work related stress among social workers.
- To assess the social workers' knowledge on the signs and symptoms of stress.
- To describe the coping strategies used by social workers in dealing with stress.

1.7 Definition of key terms

1.7.1 Stress

Stress can be defined as an emotional and physical way in which we respond to pressure (Kabunga, 2014). Swartz, De le Rey, Duncan and Townsend (2008) on the other hand define stress as a variety of negative feelings and reactions that accompany threatening or challenging situations. For the purposes of this study, stress is any condition that is deemed by the social worker at Unigaz as unpleasant and causes discomfort.

1.7.2 Work-related stress

In the words of Coetzee and de Villiers, (2010) work related stress is characterized by the conditions arising from the interaction of people and their jobs, which are characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning. Bashir and Rama (2010) on the other hand argue that occupational stress occurs when there is an inconsistency between the demands of the environment or workplace and the employee's ability to carry out and complete these demands. For the purposes of this study, work related stress is when the working environment is not supportive and conducive enough for the employees to perform their duties to the fullest.

1.7.3 Social worker

According to the Supervision Framework for Social Work Profession in South Africa (2012), a social worker is a person registered with the South African Council for Social Service Profession (SACSSP) in terms of Chapter 2 Section 17 of the Social Service Profession Act, 1978 (Act no: 110 of 1978) as amended. For the purposes of this study, a social worker is a person working as a social worker at Unigaz social work offices.

1.7.4 Sources/ Factors

A source otherwise known as a factor refers to something that contributes to or has an influence on the outcome of something (Coetzee & de Villiers, 2010). A factor can be defined as a condition, circumstance, or influence that contributes to a result or outcome (Kabunga, 2014). Please note that for the purposes of this study the words sources and factors are used interchangeably and they both refers to those conditions that have the potential to result in social workers experiencing a situation at their workplace as stressful.

1.8 Summary

This chapter introduced the title of this study, the study aim and objectives as well as the background on work related stress among social workers. The chapter ends by outlining the structure of this study. The chapter also provides a lay out structure of the study, see below:

- Chapter 2 discusses the literature review assumed for the study.
- Chapter 3 describe the research methodology.
- Chapter 4 presents data analysis, presentation, and interpretation of the results.
- Chapter 5 present overall of the study, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Literature review is the selection of documents, published and unpublished on a topic that contains information, ideas and evidence and the evaluation of these documents in relation to a particular piece of research (Gray, 2009). This chapter aims to give a theoretical overview on factors contributing towards work related stress for social workers. The chapter will analyze, scrutinize and review the works done by other researchers in different parts of the world pertaining to the factors contributing towards work related stress for social workers. Lastly, the chapter presents the relevant model about work related stress.

2.2 The types of stress

In the words of Swartz et al. (2008), not all stress reactions are negative. It is said that a certain amount of stress is essential to our health and performance however; too much stress results in ill health, poor performance and dysfunctional behavior. This section is aimed at addressing three different types of stress as explained by Swartz et al. (2008) which includes acute, intermittent and chronic stress.

2.2.1 Acute stress

Acute stress otherwise known as the short-term stress is a reaction to an immediate threat, which usually results in the fight-or-flight response. This type of stress is believed to be characterized by a tangible threat that is readily identified as a stressor (Swartz et al., 2008). Swartz et al. (2008) further points out that the identified threat can be any situation including those we are unaware of or falsely experience as danger.

2.2.2 Intermittent stress

Swartz et al. (2008) refer to intermittent stress as responses to stressors that vary in duration, alternation between periods of stress and calm. If perceived as a challenge, intermittent stress improves our psychological resistance to stress by causing repeated and periodic increases in sympathetic arousal which condition the body to better withstand subsequent stressors resulting in psychological toughening.

2.2.3 Chronic stress

Chronic stress which is also known as the long-term stress is typical of modern life and it is characterized by on-going stressful situations that are not short-lived (Coetzee & de Villiers, 2010). Common chronic stressors according to Swartz et al. (2008) include: on-going highly pressured work, long-term relationship problems, loneliness, and persistent financial worries. All these stressors are relatively longer in duration and can result in a serious health risk owing to their prolonged activation of the body's stress response.

2.3 Social workers' knowledge regarding the signs and symptoms of stress

Recognizing the early signs and symptoms of stress can be one of the most effective measures to be considered when dealing with stress at the workplace. However, without the knowledge on these signs and symptoms it becomes difficult and impossible to recognize and deal with stress at an earlier stage (Calitz, Roux, & Strydom, 2014). In this section the researcher seeks to discuss the social workers' knowledge on the signs and symptoms of stress. This section explains in brief the phases, signs and symptoms of stress that most people including social workers do not have knowledge on (Coetzee & de Villiers, 2010).

Stress among social workers have received increased attention in most publications and literature, however little has been said on whether social workers do have knowledge on the signs and symptoms of stress (Najafi, 2011). Charles (2014) points out that regardless of the fact that social workers are able to recognize some of the stress factors, most are unable to recognize the early signs and symptoms of stress which then suggest that their knowledge about the signs and symptoms is little. This can be as a result of lack of employee wellness programs in governmental social work offices to give education on issues that affects employees, work related stress included (Charles, 2014).

Charles (2014) indicates that loss of concentration at work is amongst the early signs and symptoms of stress, however due to lack of knowledge most employees ignore this early warning signs which then results in work accidents and injuries. Najafi (2011) conducted a study about the employees' knowledge on stress and it was found that high levels of stress can result in stiff neck or lower back cramp. The study also revealed that without this knowledge most employees attribute this to the sitting position during their day at work which then clearly indicate that most people's knowledge of the signs and symptoms is very low.

Individuals normally display various signs and symptoms when faced with stressful situations and recognizing these signs and symptoms becomes integral in dealing with stress (Jitendar, Bhanu & Jitendra, 2016). The table below summarizes the signs and symptoms of stress that people need to be aware of in order to successfully deal with stress at an early stage.

Table 2.1: The Phases, and Signs and Symptoms of stress (Yoon & Kim, 2013).

Phases	Indicators (Signs and Symptoms) of stress
<p>1. <u>The warming phase</u> The signs in this phase are less physical and more emotional and usually take about a year or even more to be noticeable</p>	<p>The signs and symptoms in this phase include the following: anxiety, emotional exhaustion, tedium, as well as depression.</p>
<p>2. <u>Mild Symptoms Phase</u> This phase is characterized by the intensifying of the warning signs. Somewhere between the period of six to eighteen months, one may have physical signs</p>	<p>The following signs form the bases of this phase: disturbances in sleeping patterns, aching muscles, severe emotional and physical fatigue, social withdrawals, and severe depression</p>
<p>3. <u>Entrenched and Cumulative Stress Phase.</u> When phase one and two are ignored the entrenched cumulative stress phase manifest. The impact of stress in this phase goes an extra mile of impacting one's career, personal life, and health.</p>	<p>This phase is characterized by an increase in alcohol and drug intake to a majority of people. Physical and emotional fatigue, loss of sex drive, severe and intensive anxiety, marital problems, severe depression, insomnia and ulcers are said to be more prominent in this phase.</p>
<p>4. <u>Debilitating cumulative Stress Reaction</u> This is the last phase and it is deemed and believed to be self-destructive and usually occur after five to ten years of continued stress.</p>	<p>Most of the people in this phase have severe physical conditions including, asthma, heart diseases, and muscle turners. Other signs include, loss of self-confidence, problems managing one's personal life, burnout, feelings and thoughts of quitting a job, anger management problem, suicidal behaviors, paranoid behavior and frequent job accidents at work.</p>

2.4 Stress and the social work profession

In explaining the link between stress and the nature of the social work profession, Yoon and Kim (2013) refer to the social work profession as the “emotional labor” because in executing their duties social workers have to tap into their own feelings, understanding and perceptions in order to use them as tools in their work. According to Van Rensburg (2009), emotional issues within the social work profession are the order of the day. The emotional dimensions in social work practice are said to have an impact in increasing the possibilities of occupational stress to occur (Thompson, 2009).

2.5 Sources of work related stress among social workers

Work related stress among social workers can be attributed to a number of factors that are either internal or external to the workers’ working environment. In this section the researcher discusses both the organizational (internal) and personal (extra-organizational) factors contributing towards work related stress for social workers.

2.5.1 Organizational stress factors among social workers

An organization is a source of stress when it threatens the freedom, autonomy and identity of its employees (Golubic, Milosevic, Knezevic & Mustajbegovic, 2009). Golubic et al. (2009) further explain that organizational stress factors are factors internal to the individual’s working environment. Organizational or work stressors may include relationships with co-workers and supervisors, high level of work load, role conflict and ambiguity, lack of resources as well as poor remuneration (Burton, Jenny & Scheuer, 2012). This section discussed the sources of stress at work.

2.5.1.1 Inadequate and unsupportive supervision

According to the Supervision Frame Work for Social Work Profession in South Africa (2012) ‘social work supervision is an interactional process within the context of a positive anti-discriminatory relationship, based on distinct theories, models and perspectives on supervision whereby a supervisor with the required experience and qualification to whom authority is delegated to supervise social workers, social auxiliary workers, student social workers, and social auxiliary learners by performing educational, supportive and administrative functions in order to promote efficient and professional rendering of social work services.’

A study conducted by Van Rensburg (2009) in the Ekurhuleni region in South Africa, revealed that inadequate and unsupportive supervision is a potential source of stress for most social workers. The study also added that unsupportive supervisors are less likely to appreciate the efforts made by their supervisees for the benefit of the organization. Ideally, supervision in social work was aimed at allowing time and place for the supervisor to show appreciation and give emotional support to their supervisee. It has been found that the lack of considerate behavior of supervisors contributes significantly to feelings of job pressure and other negative feelings among workers and this then results in work related stress (Burton et al., 2012).

2.5.1.2 Poor relationships with co-workers

Several studies revealed that good supportive relationships among coworkers and supervisors promote the employees and organization's health. Burton et al. (2012) indicate that poor relations are characterized by low trust, low supportiveness and low interest in listening to and trying to deal with problems that confront a fellow employee. Golubic, et al. (2009) point out that role ambiguity is prominent when colleagues distrust one another. This then leads to inadequate communications, low job satisfaction and feelings of job-related threat to one's well-being which will eventually result to work related stress (Golubic et al., 2009).

According to Burton et al. (2012) a sound and healthy relationship with coworkers reduces the likelihood of work related stress. Burton et al. (2012) further indicate that poor relationship and lack of social support from coworkers lead to stress and ill health. According to Kim (2011), a supportive work environment and a good working relationship is key in alleviating the effects of stress at the workplace. The nature of work for social workers demands regular contact and consultation with coworkers, as a result poor and an unsupportive relationships with coworkers may lead to occupational stress (Thompson, 2009).

2.5.1.3 High or low levels of work load

Kabunga (2014), argued that work-load is one of the most evident and discernible causes of stress at the workplace. Work-load as a job stressor refers to the amount of stress experienced by individuals due to the perception that they are unable to cope or be productive with the amount of work allocated to them (Subha, 2012). Subha (2012) further explains that when people are expected to do more than the time and resources available permit them to do, they are likely to experience stress. Work-load is an important facet of emotional exhaustion at the workplace (Thompson, 2009). According to Kord, Damani & Parvaresh (2015), work-load as a potential work stressor include both overload and under load. Kord et al. (2015) indicate that there are two

distinctions in explaining work-load as a work stressor namely; the quantitative overload or under load and the qualitative overload.

Quantitative overload is said to be as a results of an individual being assigned too many tasks to do and this kind of setup is referred to as the heavy workload (Gilbreath, 2012). According to Coetzee and de Villiers (2010) when an employee is assigned too little work to complete quantitative under load will occur, which will then result in boredom. Stress therefore, could be as a result of having too little or too much to do (Kim, 2011). Qualitative overload as a source of stress on the other hand is linked to low levels of self-esteem. This manifests itself in a person feeling that he is not valued, because little recognition is given to the effort that he puts in his work (Coetzee & de Villiers, 2010).

2.5.1.4 Role conflict and ambiguity

Ncube and Tshabalala (2012) indicated that role conflict and ambiguity is when an employee does not have adequate information that enables him/her to carry out his/her tasks more effectively. They further indicate that role conflict and ambiguity relate to the amount of stress experienced by an individual due to unclear specifications regarding the performance expectations, duties, responsibility and constraints that define the individual's job. Kim and Kao (2011) add that role ambiguity leads to dissatisfaction, lack of self-esteem, feelings of uselessness, depression, increased blood pressure, stress and intention to leave the organization.

In order to deal with role conflict and ambiguity, Joubert (2012) alludes that employees need to know what is expected of them and whether they are meeting those expectations. This is because uncertainty about the job expectations can lead to a tremendous feeling of helplessness and vulnerability. Yoon and Kim (2013) on the other hand point out that employees need a constant feedback from supervisors directed on whether they are meeting their job expectations or not. Yoon and Kim (2013) further indicate that when supervisors do not communicate their thoughts on the employees' performance, employees become stressed due to the uncertainties.

Calitz et al. (2014), point out that role ambiguity as an organizational stressor has been reported to have a significant impact on the job engagement for many social workers. Kim and Kao (2011) add that the difficulties in clearly and carefully defining the duties of social workers can be very stressful and can thus lead to lack of personal achievement which then diminishes the social workers' sense of accomplishment when rendering their services.

2.5.1.5 Lack of resources

Lack of resources has been identified as another source of stress for social workers, particularly in South Africa. A study conducted by Van Rensburg (2009) shows that there is a consistent lack of resources within the social work agencies in South Africa. These resources which are unavailable are said to be fundamental and very crucial in the practice of social work; such resources include stationary, office space, office furniture, computer equipment, and vehicles. Mere' (2012) adds that the lack of such resources easily creates an atmosphere of frustration for social workers, which then results in an increase in the anxiety, job dissatisfaction and the on job stress.

2.5.1.6 Poor remuneration

According to Mere' (2012), the issue of salaries remains an issue of great concern for social workers in South Africa especially when compared to the kind of work they do. A study conducted by Calitz, Roux and Strydom (2014) revealed that factors leading towards job dissatisfaction and stress among social workers includes dissatisfaction with salary. Most of the participants in Calitz, et al. (2014) study reported to be 60% less satisfied with their salary levels, benefits or the connection between salary and performance.

The South African Government is aimed at increasing the monetary benefits accruing to the social work profession with a primary goal of creating better job security and job satisfaction for social workers (Mere', 2012). The Recruitment and Retention Strategy for social workers found that there have been compensation-related insufficiencies within the field of social work, these insufficiencies are said to be having a major impact on causing work related stress for most social workers (Van Rensburg, 2009).

2.5.2 Extra-organizational stress factors among social workers

Work related stress factors can not only be limited to the individual's working environment, these factors can also be external or personal. Factors that are external to the working environment are referred to as the external or extra-organizational factors. The external factors may include lack of support from family and friends; individual's coping strategies as well as one's failure to balance work and family (Temple & Gillespie, 2009).

2.5.2.1 Family-work conflict

Work and family are closely related and dependent upon each other to such an extent that what transpires at work will eventually affect the quality of life at home and vice versa (Coetzee & de Villiers, 2010). Coetzee and de Villiers, (2010) further indicate that family is as an essential part of the economic process, and as such the discrepancies between the family and work demands may result in stress and when left unattended may quicken the existence of work related stress. One's family status is said and believed to be having a vital role in the development and management of stress. The individual's inability to balance the demands placed on them by both work and family may result in stress (Joubert, 2012).

Joubert (2012) further revealed that stress and burnout are challenges rated higher among single employees who do not have any children than married employees with children. This is because married employees have got all the support they need when confronted with work related problems. According to Temple and Gillespie (2009), lack of support from family members, marital problems and having uncontrollable children may also result in stress which will eventually graduate to work stress.

2.5.2.2 Lack of social support

Social support is said and has been proven to have an important role in an individual's ability to handle or deal with stressful situations. An individual is said to have a strong social support when he or she is able to access the people he or she can depend on when needed (Joubert, 2012). According to Yoon and Kim (2013) the support and presence of friends and family members when one is faced with stressful situations have a positive emotional outcome on individuals. In stressful situations some people may experience an increased level of blood pressure and heart rates. The presence of support from family and friends however, has been proven to play an important role in the reduction of these rates.

2.5.2.3 Copying style and individual characteristics

According to Ncube and Tshabalala (2012), the manner in which different individuals cope with stressful situations have a crucial impact on the outcomes primarily because it is these styles that enable the individual to assume control over the demands placed to them. Calitz et al. (2014) identified two strategies used by individuals in coping with stress namely, the emotional focused copying strategy and the problem focused strategy. The main goal of the problem focused-

copying strategy is confronting the incident with an aim of changing the situation or getting assistance. Emotional-focused strategies on the other hand are aimed at eliminating all negative emotional reactions when confronted with a stressful event. Joubert (2012) found that people falling under type 'A' behavioural pattern are usually tense, impatient and aggressive which at often times results in stress related symptoms such as insomnia and indigestion.

2.6 The impact of stress at the work place

Work stress have a tremendous impact on the organization ranging from a reduced or low productivity, burnout and increased absenteeism which then hinders the organization's ability to accomplish its goals (Bashir & Ramay, 2010). This section seeks to discuss some of the impacts of work related stress.

2.6.1 Impact on coworkers' relationship

Naidoo (2011) indicates that work stress otherwise known as occupational stress has a tremendous negative impact on the relationships and interactions among employees. Naidoo (2011) further argues that when employees are not in good terms it is difficult to work together as a team, and this will then impact negatively on their job performance. According to Kabunga (2014) the nature and scope for social work practice requires constant interaction and a very good working relationship between the employees. Therefore a dysfunctional relationships have serious negative impact on social workers' job productivity.

2.6.2 Loss of concentration

Ahsan, Abdullah and Alam (2009) found that when employees are suffering from the effects of stress they lose concentration. Ahsan et al. (2009) further indicates that loss of concentration may affect employees in various ways including the employees' morale which then results in the employee feeling useless or unworthy of being given tasks or projects to work on. Lack of concentration is reported to be the leading factor of work related accidents and injuries (Naidoo, 2011).

2.6.3 Lateness and absenteeism

According to Hanebuth (2008) poor time management and lateness may also result from the effects of work related stress. A study conducted by Ahsan et al. (2009) revealed that most of the

employees who took sick leave for stress related illness would often report to work late. Yoon and Kim (2013) argue that stress may not only result in employees reporting late at work, but might also make them withdraw or absent from their duties and responsibilities.

By definition, absenteeism refers to a habitual pattern whereby one is absent from responsibility or obligation. Absenteeism at work therefore, refers to the employee's habitual unavailability for or at work (Hanebuth, 2008). This unavailability can be either authorized or unauthorized. Temple and Gillespie (2009) point out that when the working environment or a job is stressful employees incline to taking unauthorized casual days off in order to reduce their stress levels and get rid of tension. Understandably, when the work pressure and stress rises, absenteeism rate too will rise. At often times, employees in trying to avoid stressful situations e.g. difficult meetings would coincidentally report in "sick" or having "family commitments" on that day (Jitendar, et al., 2016).

2.6.4 Burnout

According to Kabunga (2014) burnout within the helping professions is an issue of great concern globally. Burnout is said to be as a result of continued unattended stress (Kim, 2011). Furthermore Mere' (2012) points out that burnout in the social work profession occurs when the social service practitioner is psychologically disengaged from their duties as a result of work related stress. Burnout on its own has a tremendous impact on service delivery to the clients and the organization as a whole (Yoon & Kim 2013).

Burnout is characterized by three main components, namely: work related, client related and personal or individual burnout (Calitz et al., 2014). Kim (2011) argued that personal burnout is associated with the extent to which an individual experiences psychological and physical exhaustion. The on job and client related burnout on the other hand entail the extent to which an individual's work environment is perceived to be linked to the individual's psychological and physical fatigue.

2.7 The coping strategies used by social workers in dealing with stress

This section of the study seeks to discuss the strategies used by social workers in dealing with stress as suggested Kabunga (2014). Please note that there are variety of strategies used in dealing with stress but for the purposes of this study the following will be discussed:

2.7.1 Recognize warning signs of excessive stress at work

According to Temple and Gillespie (2009) when an employee feels overwhelmed at work, they lose confidence and may become withdrawn, which then results in the employee being less productive at work. Bashir and Ramay (2010) pointed out that ignoring or not recognizing the early warning signs of work stress may lead to bigger problems such as burnout. It is then suggested that the employers must be cautioned and mindful about the following signs of job related stress as a preventative measure; loss of interest in work, difficulties in falling sleeping, fatigue, trouble in concentrating, social withdrawal and the use of alcohol or drugs at work (Kabunga, 2014).

2.7.2 Reduce job stress by prioritizing and organizing

Najafi (2011) denotes that whenever workplace stress seems to threaten an employee, specific steps need to be undertaken by the employee to regain control over themselves and the situation. The proposed steps according to Najafi (2011) may include the creation of a well-balanced schedule, prioritizing and avoiding lateness. The employee should also avoid trying to fit too much into one day in other words a clear to do list with priorities must be drawn.

2.7.3 Get enough sleep and rest

In a study conducted by Kord et al. (2015) it was found that lack of sleep can also result in stress. It is said that when one gets enough sleep and is well-rested, it is much easier for them to keep their emotional balance (Naidoo, 2011). Getting enough rest and sleep according to Naidoo, (2011) is a key factor in dealing with any stressful situation, job stress included.

2.7.4 Employee assistance program

EAP are reported to be very effective in dealing with challenges faced by employees in different organizations (Najafi, 2011). EAP are services directed towards the reduction of work related problems and stress and these services are aimed at enhancing good relationships between co-workers, and workers and the management (Kord et al., 2015). According to Naidoo (2011) EAP counselors also assist in enhancing work productivity. The goal is to encourage employees to seek guidance if they have difficulties as a result of these major company events (Bashir & Ramay, 2010).

2.8 Conceptual framework

Stress is a well-known and most researched topic presently; this is due to the fact that it is experienced by almost all individuals, especially in their work-environment. More research attention has been directed towards the issue of work related stress, leading to the emergence of so many theories and models in an attempt to explain the relationship between stress and the work environment.

There are a variety of theories/models which explain occupational stress including the Person Environment (P-E) Fit Theory, The Framework of Occupational Stress, the Transactional Model of Stress and the Demand Control Support Model. However, for the purposes of this study, the researcher adopted the Transitional Model of Stress as suggested by Lazarus (1966) as cited in Calitz et al. (2014).

2.8.1 Transitional Model of Stress

Stress as defined by Lazarus's transactional model is an imbalance between the individual's resources and the demands. Stress factors according to the transactional model of stress are the demands put on an individual either by their internal or external environment. These factors create an imbalance, which will later on affect the psychological and physical wellbeing of the individual resulting in a need to acquire action to cope with the imbalance or restore the balance (Calitz et al., 2014).

The transactional model of stress holds that stress results from the interaction between the individual and their environment. The model also looks into the individual's psychological and physiological capability to handle the pressure and demands put on them by their environment. Central to this model is that stress results when the perceived demands outweigh the employee's perceived capabilities (Naidoo, 2011).

In the words of Joubert (2012), what an individual deems stressful may differ within individuals. In this regard, any aspect of one's work environment can be seen as a possible stressor. The manner in which an employee look at the perceived demand and capabilities may be influenced by a number of factors such as personality traits, individual's coping style and skills, as well as a previous experience of stress.

In conclusion, the transactional model of stress denote that stress may affect people in a physiological, psychological, behavioural and social way with tremendous negative impact on

both the employee and the organisation. The transactional model of stress (Figure 2.1) relates very well with what is actually happening in the social work profession. It has been found that the demand for social work services is climbing and that social workers are faced with high levels of work load that then results in work related stress (Van Rensburg, 2009). Mere' (2012) study has also revealed that social workers are subjected to inadequate supervision which makes it difficult for them to deal or cope with the heavy demands placed on them. Personal factors such as failure to balance between work and family were also found to be a factor contributing to work related stress for social workers.

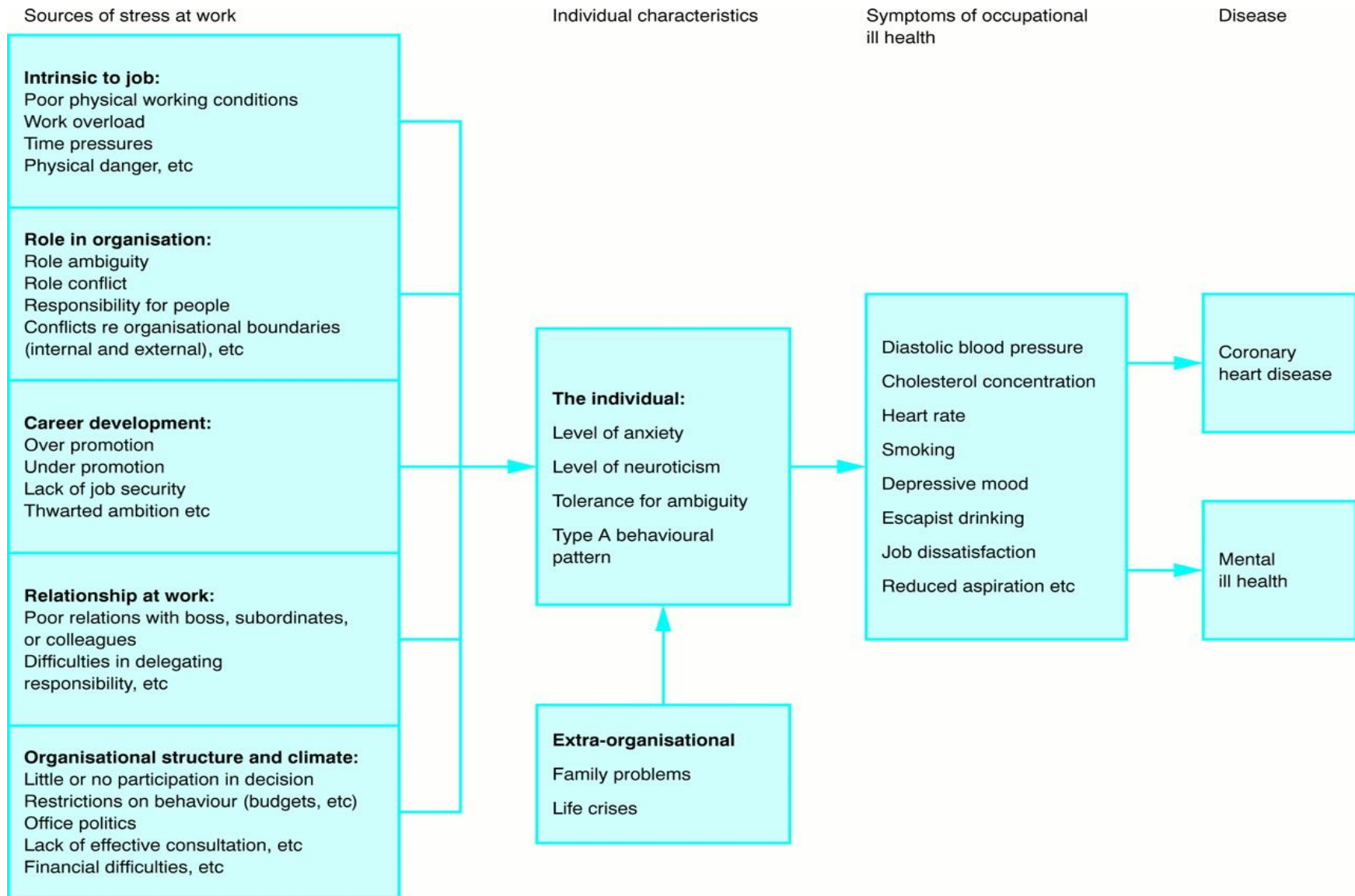


Figure 2.1: The Transactional Model of Stress (Calitz et al, 2014)

2.9 Summary

The chapter presented an overview of work related stress among social workers. The chapter highlighted on literature on the sources of stress (organizational and extra-organizational), the social workers' knowledge on the sources of stress as well as the scoping strategies used by social workers in dealing with stress.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology and discusses the nature of the study as well as the study design. The chapter gives highlights on the study population and setting as well as the sampling method, data collection procedures and data collection instrument that were adopted in the study. The chapter also discusses the ethical consideration, trustworthiness and data analysis.

3.2 Research design

A qualitative exploratory design was employed for this study, according to Charles (2014) this design is used when the researcher seeks to get a greater understanding of the participants' lived experiences. Qualitative research methods obtain data in the form of descriptive narratives in order to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of the research participant, it is thus about understanding of the meanings people give to their experiences (Terre-Blanche, Durkheim & Painter, 2006). Exploratory research design was used to enable the researcher to gain a greater understanding of the phenomena and the social workers' lived experiences. The researcher was interested in finding out what social workers regard as job stressors.

3.3 Study setting

The study was conducted at selected offices in the Greater Giyani Municipality (Unigaz Social Work Offices). The offices are located in the old University of the North, Gazankulu Campus Buildings in Giyani Section A opposite to Giyani One Stop Center and Department of Labour offices. The offices are approximately 2 km away from Giyani Town. Giyani Town is found within Greater Giyani Municipality in Mopani District. Mopani District is situated on the north-eastern quadrant in Limpopo and consists of five local municipalities, namely Greater Letaba, Greater Tzaneen, Maruleng, Ba-Phalaborwa as well as the Greater Giyani Municipality (Figure 3.1).

The welfare organization was founded in year 1969 by the former Gazankulu homeland government with very few social workers. At the present moment there are about 361 registered social workers in Mopani district and 90 social workers in Greater Giyani Sub-District with about

24 social workers operating in Giyani local area. The offices are surrounded by an urban area dominated by Tsonga speaking people.

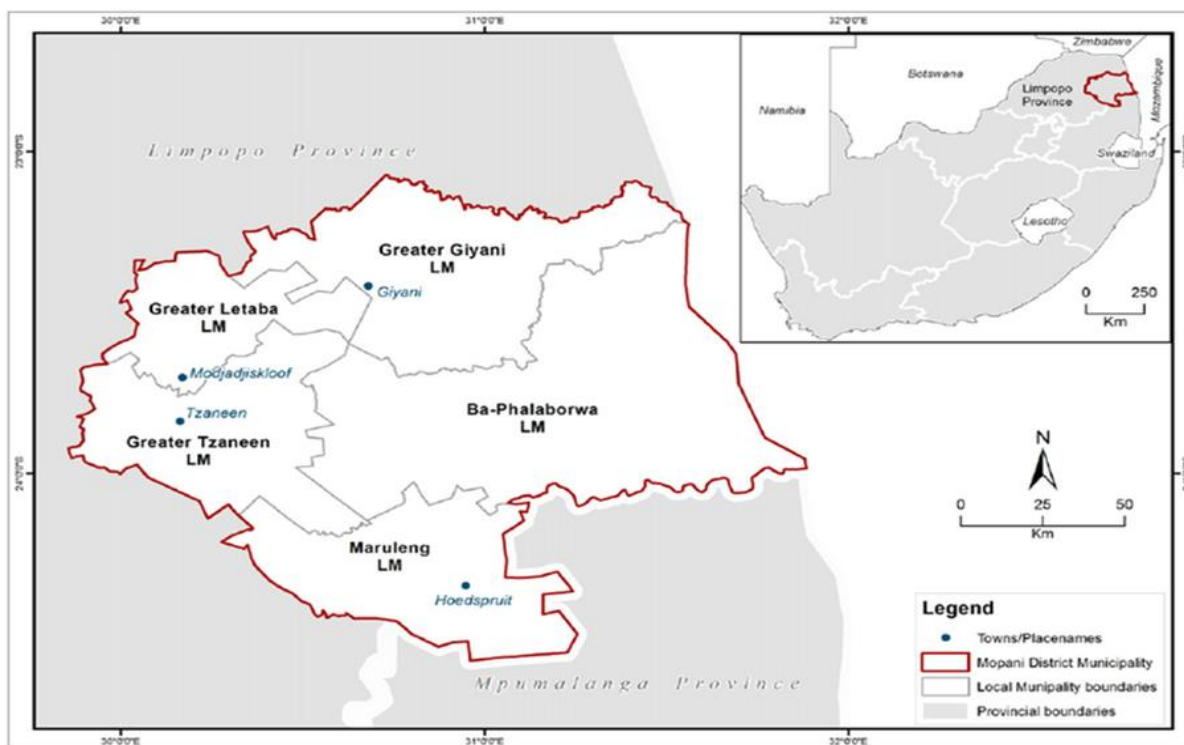


Figure 3.1: Map showing the five local municipalities in Mopani District
(<http://www.mopani.gov.za>)

3.4 Study population and sampling

3.4.1 Population

Monette, Sullivan, De Jong and Hilton (2008) refer to population as all possible cases of what we are interested in studying. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005) on the other hand argue that study population refers to all potential subjects who possess the attributes which interests the researcher. For the purposes of this study, the population was all registered social workers, both males and females based in Unigaz social work offices.

3.4.2 Sampling

Sampling is defined as a process employed by researchers, whereby individuals or objects are selected to participate in a research study (Swartz et al., 2008). Sampling is also referred to as taking any portion of a population or universe as a representative of that population or universe

(De Vos et al., 2005). For the purposes of this study the researcher used non-probability purposive sampling method. This was informed by the fact that the researcher's used his own discretion in selecting the study sample that met the study inclusion criteria. Mogorosi (2013) defines non-probability sampling as a sampling technique where the probability of each element in the population being selected into sample is not known.

Purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which ones will be most useful or representative in the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Registered social workers regardless of age, sex and work experience were relevant for the study since they are all vulnerable to stress. The researcher intended to interview 15 social workers and data saturation was observed at the 12th participant. This was informed by the fact that no new information was coming up. The study population comprised of 25 social workers including social auxiliary workers, students as well as social work supervisors.

Inclusion criteria

- ✓ Both male and female social workers
- ✓ Social workers registered with the SACSSP
- ✓ Socials workers operating at Unigaz offices

Exclusion criteria

- ✓ Social work supervisors
- ✓ Social auxiliary workers
- ✓ Student social workers

3.5 Data collection method and instrument

For the purposes of this study the researcher used semi structured interview as a method of data collection. This process involved the research participant reporting on his or her own experiences. This was also informed by the researcher's interest of finding first-hand information directly from the participants.

The researcher visited participants at their work place to make appointments for the interviews. Participants also signed consent forms prior the interview, this was done after the researcher had requested to make use of an audio recorder and take field notes during the course of the

interviews. Participants were also made aware that interviews are based on volunteerism and that they can feel free to withdraw from the study at any given point.

There are a variety of research instrument in place for collecting data in research. For the purposes of this study, the researcher used an interview guide as a tool for collecting data. The interview guide was developed taking into consideration the study objectives and literature review. The researcher used an interview guide based on its ability to give guidance on what questions to ask. The interview guide allowed for probing which then enabled the researcher to make follow up questions and gain an in-depth understanding of the matter under consideration.

The researcher spent approximately 30-45 minutes with each participant to enable the participants to provide all valuable information. The interviews were conducted in English in a private room in Unigaz social work offices to ensure the participants' privacy.

3.6 Pre-test

As advised by Gillham (2009), the researcher conducted a pre-test in order to check whether the proposed instrument and the questions therein are clear and not ambiguous, and were able to produce the desired results. The pre-test didn't lead to any amendments in the instrument as it produced the data desired by the researcher. The researcher conducted a pre-test with 2 individuals who had similar characteristics with the study participants, the information collected did not form part of the study findings.

3.7 Data analysis method

Data analysis is defined as the researcher's goal to summarize what he/she has seen or heard in terms of common words, phrases, themes or patterns that would help his/her understanding and interpretation of that which emerged (Maree, 2007). For the purposes of this study, the researcher used the thematic analytical approach of analyzing data as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) as follows:

3.7.1 Becoming familiar with the data

The researcher familiarised himself with the depth and breadth of the content. This involved reading through the entire data set at least once before coding, as the ideas, and the identification of possible patterns were shaped in the process of reading through. This also involved the

researcher listening to tape recorder and checking field notes several times until the data is familiar.

3.7.2 Transcription of verbal data

Transcription of verbal data is said to be playing a major part in informing the early stages of data analysis. The researcher developed an even deeper understanding of the data by virtue of having thoroughly gone through the data during the transcription process.

3.7.3 Generating initial codes

The data were initially coded and collated, and there was a long list of the different codes that the researcher identified across the data set. In this phase the researcher re-read the data and made notes of the most important things such as words and statements thereby generating codes.

3.7.4 Reviewing themes

The researcher devised a set of themes, and these were refined. During this phase, some themes collapsed into each other, while others were broken down into separate themes.

3.7.5 Defining and naming themes

It is in this stage whereby the researcher must have a satisfactory thematic map of the data. The researcher defined and further refined the themes. This then means the researcher identified and understood in depth what each theme was about, and also determined what aspect of the data each theme captures.

3.7.6 Producing the report

This is the final stage of the data analysis process and it is characterised by producing of the final report.

3.8 Measures to ensure Trustworthiness

Maree (2007) asserts that one need to keep the procedures that can be used for assessing the trustworthiness of data analysis constantly in mind. The procedures include consistency checks and reliability. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) on the other hand stated that research findings must be evaluated with regard to the procedures adopted to generate the findings; this is done in

order to ensure trustworthiness. According to Lincoln and Guba (2002) trustworthiness is a central issue in qualitative research, it is also known as credibility and/or dependability. The following aspects were considered to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

3.8.1 Credibility and dependability

In ensuring the credibility of the findings the researcher had an active participation in the data collection process. The researcher also prolonged engagements with the study participants and was in the process taking field notes and making observations. All this was done to avoid misrepresentation of data.

3.8.2 Dependability

According to (Maree, 2007), dependability has to do with the provision of evidence. To show an element of dependability the evidence provided must be in a way that if the study is to be done again with the same or similar participants in a corresponding context, the finding will be similar. The researcher conducted a pre-test to ensure that the instrument will measure what it intends to measure. Lastly, an accurate transcription of the audio recording was done.

3.8.3 Conformability

In ensuring conformability, the researcher used an independent coder. In order to identify the similarities and differences and verification of whether the literature supports the findings, the researcher did a substantial review of literature.

3.8.4 Transferability

The description of data gathering must be inclusive enough to enable findings to be transferred to other situations; also the descriptive interpretation resulting from the data analysis should apply to other areas (Maree, 2007). To ensure transferability, a complete and detailed description of the research methodology, findings and verbatim quotes from individual interviews were provided so as to ensure the applicability of the study in another context.

3.9. Ethical consideration and permission

Ethics are set of guidelines agreed upon by a group of people and offer rules regarding the most acceptable behaviour towards research subjects and participants, students, sponsors and other researchers (Welman, Kruger & Mitchel, 2005). Monette et al. (2008) on the other hand indicate

that ethics entails the researcher's responsibilities towards the study participants, sponsors and potential beneficiaries from the intended study. In this study, the following ethics were taken into consideration:

3.9.1 Ethical clearance

The proposal was first presented at the Department of Public Health thereafter presented at the School Higher Degrees Committee for quality assurance and approval. The proposal was then submitted to the University Higher Degree Committee and to University of Venda Research Ethics Committee for ethical clearance (Appendix A: SHS/17/PH/23/1901).

3.9.2 Permission to conduct the study

Permission to conduct the study was requested from the Provincial Department of Social Development, and then from the district manager where the study was conducted.

3.9.3 Informed consent

This ethical consideration means informing the prospective participants regarding all elements of the intended study which might reasonably influence the direction of participation (Monette et al., 2008). To honour this ethical guideline, the researcher shared all adequate and necessary information with the participants about the study which include; the goal, objectives, and the purpose of the study, the procedures and processes to be followed, the advantages and disadvantages of the participants' involvement in the study, as well as the participants' right to withdraw from the study without any fear of being judged or victimised before participants could form part of the study. Participants were also given an information sheet and a consent form to sign before forming part of the study.

3.9.4 Deception of respondents

According to De Vos et al. (2005), the deception of participants involves the withdrawal or offering of incorrect information to ensure participation of study subjects when they would have refused. To honour this ethical consideration, the researcher did not withdraw any information nor offer misinformation such as telling respondents that they will receive incentives for participating in the study. The researcher also explained to the participants the academic purposes of the study.

3.9.5 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality means ensuring that the information collected from the study participants is not made known to the public in any way that can be related or linked to the participant. Anonymity involves avoiding the use of real names (Monette et al., 2008). The information collected from respondents was not attached to any of the respondents' personal details and participants were referred to by pseudo names to ensure anonymity. The information discussed during the interviews remained confidential. Participants were also assured that the transcripts and the audio recordings would be kept in a lockable cupboard and they would only be assessed by the researcher and the supervisor.

3.9.6 Voluntary participation

This ethical consideration entails that the study participants are not forced to be part of the study. They should freely agree to participate (Gray, 2009). Voluntary participation was taken into consideration in that the researcher did not force any participant to be part of the study. The researcher only interviewed those who were willing and ready to volunteer to be part of the study and they signed a consent form.

3.9.7 Avoidance of harm to respondents

De Vos et al. (2005) assert that subjects can be harmed physically or emotionally during the study. The researcher therefore, must assume a responsibility to ensure that participants are protected from any form of harm. In honoring this ethical consideration, the researcher avoided asking questions that could have emotionally harmed the participants. The researcher also informed the study participants about the possible impact of their participation, which included the participants' time.

3.10 Plan for dissemination and implementation of results

The findings and recommendations of the study will be disseminated as follows: A copy will be submitted to the following institution and departments; University of Venda Library, the Department of Social Development Limpopo Province and the Department of Social Development Mopani district. The study findings will be published in peer-reviewed and accredited national and international journals. The findings will also be presented at national and international conferences.

3.12 Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology that was used, which includes research design, study setting, the target population and sampling method, data collection tool and plans for collecting data, measures to ensure trustworthiness and ethical consideration and data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter presents findings and discussion on work related stress among social workers in Greater Giyani Municipality, Limpopo Province in South Africa. Data were collected using an interview schedule and a thematic analytical approach of analyzing data was used. This chapter also aims to illustrate the findings from the in-depth interviews that were conducted with 12 registered social workers. Table 4.2 below summarises the main themes, sub-themes and categories developed.

The aim of this study was to explore the sources of work related stress among social workers in selected offices in Greater Giyani Municipality with specific focus on the following objectives:

- To identify the sources of work related stress among social workers
- To assess the social workers' knowledge on the signs and symptoms of stress
- To describe the coping strategies used by social workers in dealing with stress

4.2 Presentation of findings

Twelve registered social workers based at Unigaz Social Work Offices participated in the in-depth interviews. Demographic profile of participants is presented in tables showing frequencies and percentages. The findings of the interview conducted came out with themes, sub-themes and categories, see summary in Table 4.2.

4.2.1 Biographical information of participants

Table 4.1 presents a summary of the participants' demographic information. A total of 12 registered social workers participated in the study. The majority of the participants were female (n=9). Two (n=2) of participants work experience is between 6-8 years. As presented, the majority of the participants (n=8) are married.

Table 4.1: Biographical information of participants (n=12)

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Gender</i>	Female	9	75%
	Male	3	25%
<i>Age</i>	25-35	8	67%
	36 and above	4	33%
<i>Marital status</i>	Married	8	67%
	Single	1	8%
	Divorced	2	17%
	Widowed	1	8%
<i>Years of Experience</i>	0-2 years	4	33%
	3-5 years	6	50 %
	6-8 years	2	17%
<i>Registration status</i>	Registered	12	100 %
	Not registered	0	0

4.3 Work related stress among social workers

This section of the chapter discusses work related stress that may likely affect social workers on their daily life. Social workers as participants, expressed variety of stress related to work. The study findings yielded three themes as follows: Sources of Stress for Social workers, knowledge on the signs and symptoms of stress and coping strategies used by participants in dealing with work stress. Table 4.2 gives a synopsis of the three themes, four sub-themes and twelve categories that resulted from the study.

Table 4.2 Work related stress among social workers

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	CATEGORIES
1. Sources of Stress for Social workers	<i>Organizational Stressors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor remuneration • Work load • Lack of resources/tools of trade • Role ambiguity • Lack of support from supervisors
	<i>Extra-organizational stressors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of family support
2. Knowledge of social workers on the signs and symptoms of stress	<i>Stress indicators at work</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absenteeism
3. Coping strategies	<i>Coping strategies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizing and organizing • Getting some rest • Team work • Work home • Knowing when you are stressed

4.3.1. Theme 1: Sources of Stress for Social workers

This theme discusses the sources of stress among social workers. The participants responded to the question which was asked as follows: “What do you think are the sources of stress among social workers?” Two sub-themes were identified under this theme namely; are organizational stressors and extra-organizational stressors.

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Organizational Stressors

The following categories have been identified by the study participants as organizational stressors for social workers: poor remuneration, work load, lack of resources/tools of trade, role ambiguity

and lack of support from supervisors /inadequate supervision. These categories are discussed below:

4.3.1.1.1. *Category 1: Poor remuneration*

When asked about the sources of stress, the majority of the participants pointed poor remuneration as one of the major sources of stress work among social workers. The discussion above is supported by the extracts that were recorded during the interviews below:

“Look, of all the things that makes me unhappy about my profession remuneration comes first. I mean I have a four year degree but I am paid a salary below just an ordinary bus driver” (P10).

Participant eight said:

“Social work is an honours equivalent degree, meaning it is a level 7 National Qualifications Framework (NQF), but we paid salaries in a scale of an NQF 6. How different are we from Registered Councillors who studied psychology for four years just like us and yet are getting paid way above what we are getting? To be honest, my salary doesn't motivate me, in fact it's so depressing (P8).

The study findings reveals that majority of participants are not happy with their salaries which then stresses and demotivates them from doing their job. The findings correlate with the findings of the study conducted by Calitz et al. (2014) which indicated that the factors leading towards job dissatisfaction and stress among social workers includes dissatisfaction with salary. This is also supported by a study conducted by Joseph (2017) where the majority of the study respondents highlighted poor remuneration as one of the leading factor of job alienation and stress.

4.3.1.1.2. *Category 2: Work load*

Fifty percent (n=6) of the study participants pointed work load as one of the work/organizational stressors for social workers. To support this the following excerpts were recorded.

“Seeing more than 15 clients a day while you have write reports and conduct home visits is just a nightmare, one never gets to finish the work they have to do” (P3).

Another participant further indicated that:

“As you can see here, I have more than 30 section 186 foster care files I need to prepare and present at court, the work load is just too much, our office has been having back log since last year ” (P8).

Participant one said:

“I can’t keep up with the work I do, it’s too much administration and one is also expected to be out there conducting campaigns and monitoring Non-Governmental Organizations NGOs” (P1).

The findings of the study revealed that there is a huge amount of workload as one of the contributing factors of work stress for social workers. Kabunga (2014) in his study found similar findings where most of the study participants indicated that high levels of workload is amongst the most significant causes of job stress and burnout syndrome. The study findings also correlate with findings of the study conducted by Khan (2018) where it was found that 60 % of a sample of 150 employees (n=90) mentioned high levels of workload as one of the on job stressors.

4.3.1.1.3. Category 3: Lack of resources/tools of trade

Most participants indicated that limited tools of trade otherwise known as lack of resources is an issue of great concern amongst social workers and can result in stress and depression. The following excerpt was recorded:

Participant nine said:

“There is nothing as frustrating and stressing than having to attend a case that requires you to conduct a home visit, you will note that the policy says one cannot go into a visit making use of their own car (resources). The issue is that one car is being shared by more than 8 social workers and this can be stressful at an event where one has an urgent case

Another participant further said that;

“It is funny how one is expected to be typing reports while we do not have a computer or a printer. We have to share a mere thing like a laptop, this is not on” (P8).

The findings of the study shows that lack of resources is an alarming concern for most of the participants. The study findings correlates with the study that was conducted by Ntsoane (2017) on occupational stress, burnout and work engagement of social workers in the Limpopo Province. Ntsoane (2017) study further indicated that lack of resources creates a feeling of dissatisfaction and frustration for social workers thereby leading to job stress and burnout. Niks, Jonge, Gevers and Houtman (2018) also found lack of resources to be amongst the major contributor of work related stress in Health Care Professions including social work.

4.3.1.1.4 Category 4: Role ambiguity

According to the study participants, unclear role descriptions or role ambiguity is amongst other work stressors for social workers. This is supported by the following recorded excerpt:

“For most of us who are newly employed not knowing how to handle a certain case is a major problem. In most instances you find yourself making a lot of mistakes simple because nobody clearly articulated to you how certain things are to be done” (P11).

“My biggest concern and frustration is that when you get employed, the only thing people get to show you is how to type reports forgetting the other key aspects of social work like how to handle a rape case. Such things are not clearly explained and it’s not stuff you can read in books” (P4).

Participant ten said:

“You know it’s depressing and stressful how we are constantly told to use intuit and our own discretion when handling certain cases. I feel social work profession should have best practices, so we may refer on how certain cases were best dealt with before”. (P10).

The study findings revealed that role ambiguity is amongst the sources of work related stress for social workers. A study conducted by Ncube and Tshabalala (2012) found role conflict and ambiguity to be amongst the job stress factors. Role ambiguity entails unclear job descriptions which then makes an employee feels like they have been set out for failure which then causes them to loose morale which may also results in stress, this according to a study conducted by Joseph (2017).

4.3.1.1.5 Category 5: Lack of support from supervisors

Just like in any other work place, most of the participants indicated that inadequate supervision and lack of support from supervisors is one of the factor contributing towards work related stress. The above statement is supported by the data in the extract below:

“My supervisor is a very good person, but not really supportive when it comes to my everyday job. Theory says we should have individual and group supervision at least once a week. I have never had a case where I have a sit down with my supervisor to discuss the work I do and some of the challenges I face, this on its own is derailing and stressful because there are certain cases I really need my supervisor’s guidance” (P7).

“I have realized that asking questions on how certain policies and Acts are applied and implemented is deemed as if I am picking up on my supervisor. As a results I do not ask questions anymore even when I am stuck I rather make mistakes than to be seen as annoying” (P8).

The study findings correlate and confirms the study conducted by Ntsoane, (2017) which suggests that inappropriate supervision contributes significantly towards feelings of job pressure and other negative feelings among workers including work related stress. This is also supported by a study conducted by Khan, (2018) which indicated unsupportive supervision is amongst the leading factors of low morale and stress at work.

4.3.1.2. Sub-theme 2: Extra-Organizational Stressors

Under this sub-theme, one category which is lack of support from family has been identified as a factor that may contribute toward work related stress. The category is discussed below:

4.3.1.2.1. Category 1: Lack of family support

Majority of the study participants who are married indicated that failure to balance one’s work and family as well as lack of support from family may also contribute towards work stress. The excerpt below supports the sentiments above:

Participants eleven said:

“Taking work home has been one of the strategies I use to deal with the level of workload, however since I got married I am unable to do so primarily because my husband doesn’t

understand the nature of work I do. As a results I feel like he is not being supportive as a husband and that stresses me even more” (P11).

“Coming back home tired from work and still have to do most of the house chores such as cocking, bathing the children and having to prepare them for school the following day is so derailing. I still can’t get it why my husband can’t assist me with some of the things. Well I understand the culture and all that, but i really don’t get it why he doesn’t want us to hire a nanny” (P1).

“My wife complains all the time when I have to come back home late, and this is mostly when I am dealing with more sensitive cases. You know you can’t just ask the client to leave just because its knock off time” (P3).

The study findings shows that the inability to maintain balance between work and family as well as lack of support from family may contribute towards work stress. These findings correlate to the findings of the study conducted by Joseph, (2017) which revealed that discrepancies between family and work demands may result in stress and when left unattended may quicken the existence of work related stress. Joseph (2017) further indicated that these demands includes balancing work and family.

4.3.2. Theme 2: Knowledge of social workers on the signs and symptoms of stress

The participants responded to the question which was asked as follows: ‘*how would you describe someone who has work related stress?*’ This was to assess the social workers’ knowledge in recognizing if someone is stressed at work. One sub-theme with only one category was developed and it is s discussed below.

4.3.2.1 Sub Theme 1: Stress indicators at work

Three categories came out when the participants were asked about the signs and symptoms of tress at work. The three categories are discussed below:

4.3.2.1.1. Category 1: Absenteeism

Unreported absenteeism has been pointed out by most of the study participant as one of the signs and symptoms or indicators of work related stress. This is supported below:

“Well there was a time I was so stressed about work to an extent that some days I would just decide to stay home and to go to work without even reporting to anyone” (P4).

“Through my 4 years of experience the high level of absenteeism has been when an employee has difficult cases to handle, usually we do this when we know that there is no support from above. So to avoid the headache we just stay home” (P7).

The study participants only pointed unreported absenteeism as the only indicator of work stress, this then suggests that social workers are not fully aware of the indicators of stress at work. The study findings then correlate with a study conducted by Charles (2014) which found that most social workers are unable to recognize the early signs and symptoms of work related stress which then suggest that their knowledge about the signs and symptoms is limited.

4.3.3. Coping strategies used by social workers in dealing with stress

Participants were asked how they deal with stressful situations at work. The participants expressed a variety coping strategies they use in dealing with stress. The coping strategies are presented under the sub-themes below:

4.3.3.1. Sub theme 1: Coping Strategies

The findings of the study revealed that social workers have strategies in place to deal and cope with work stress. Such strategies includes, prioritizing and organizing and getting enough rest. Below is the discussion of the coping strategies:

4.3.3.1.1 Category 1: Prioritizing and organizing

The study participants expressed that organizing and prioritizing which entails knowing what to do first is one of the key strategies of managing work stress and pressures. The statement above is supported by the below recordings:

“Well, one thing I do is to figure out which case needs my immediate attention, I will usually do this by looking at the sensitivity of case. For an example to reduce the amount of pressure and stress regarding Foster Care files, I will normally postpone conducting campaigns and focus on foster care files since they have specific deadlines” (P3).

“Look, to me it’s about understanding what task is more urgent and important. In most instances, there are no specific deadlines for conducting awareness campaigns, so

instead of me going out in the community I rather do my report that has a specific deadline as a way of reducing the stress and pressure” (P4).

Participant seven said:

“So when I started I wanted to do everything at the same time, only to realize later that was one thing that is putting me under a lot of pressure and stress during the time certain reports are needed from me. All I am saying is that doing the first thing first can help in dealing with work stress” (P7).

The findings of the study revealed that prioritizing and organizing one’s work plays a key role in the management of stress amongst social workers. Similar findings were reported in a study conducted by Niks, et al. (2018) which indicated that amongst the things that most employees do to effectively deal and manage stress is the creation of a well-balanced schedule, prioritizing and organizing. By doing all mentioned, an employee avoids doing everything at the same time.

4.3.3.1.2 Category 2: Getting some rest

Getting enough rest has been pointed out as one of the effective way of dealing with work stress by most of the study participants. The below recordings supports the sentiments above:

“When I started I would work the whole day flat out, and even when I got home I would still type reports and reflect on some cases. This all stopped when I started having backaches and my doctor said it was stress and fatigue. He then recommended that I make sure that have enough resting time. Since then, I have never had backaches as a results of stress and fatigue” (P11).

Participant twelve said:

“One mistake we make as newly employed social workers is thinking that we can do everything, as a results we find ourselves working everyday including weekends. I tried doing this as well, only to find out that this makes me fatigue and drained. As a results I took a decision to give myself some rest and I have not been feeling drained, stressed or fatigued” (P12).

Another participant said:

“So after my 3 years of service in DSD, I’ve come to realize that fatigue and stress was as a result of working myself too hard. There were times I dint even take my lunch break, you

know. But ever since I started giving myself time to rest during lunch break and not working during weekends, my stress and fatigue level has reduced” (P2).

The findings of the study shows that getting some rest can be one of the ways to with stress at work. These findings confirms findings of the study that was conducted by Kord et al. (2015). In their Kord et al. (2015) found that when one gets enough sleep and is well-rested, it is much easier for them to keep their emotional balance which then reduces their stress levels.

It is also important to note that all the participants indicated that there is no formal way such as EAP in place to deal with work related stress among social workers.

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented the analysis and discussions of the data collected from the study participants. The sources of work related stress among social workers such as poor remuneration, work load and lack of resources; the social workers’ knowledge on the signs and symptoms of stress as well as the strategies used by social workers in dealing with stress were discussed.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the study findings on work related stress among social workers. The chapter also presents the study limitations as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the study based on the data analysed in the previous chapter.

5.2. Summary of the study

The aim of this study was to explore the sources of work related stress among social workers in selected offices in Greater Giyani Municipality with specific focus on the following objectives:

- To identify the sources of work related stress among social workers
- To assess the social workers' knowledge on the signs and symptoms of stress
- To describe the coping strategies used by social workers in dealing with stress

The study was qualitative in nature and purposive sampling method was used to select the study participants. The population of the study comprised of 12 registered social workers based in Unigaz Social Work Offices. An interview was used as a method of data collection using an interview guide. The researcher adopted a thematic analytical approach for data analysis.

The study revealed that work related stress among social workers results from a variety of factors. These factors are either organisational such as poor remuneration, workload etc or extra-organisational factors such as lack of support from family members.

5.3. Limitation of the study

The study was only limited to social workers based Greater Giyani Municipality, Unigaz Office, hence the findings cannot be generalised to other settings and populations in Limpopo province.

5.4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following can be concluded: work related stress is common among social workers in Greater Giyani Municipality and this may results from a variety of factors that are either internal or external to their work place. Poor remuneration and unsupportive supervision are the major sources of work stress among social workers. Due to the amount of work load, most social workers resort to taking work home as a way of managing work pressure and work stress. Unreported absenteeism is among the impacts and indicators of work related stress among social workers. There is no formal support like EAP to deal with work related stress among social workers in Greater Giyani Municipality.

5.5. Recommendations

Based on the research findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made.

5.5.1. Recommendations for social workers

- Social workers should ask for help from their management when confronted with both work and personal problems.
- Social workers should have debriefing sessions where they can share experiences on how to handle certain cases at work.
- Social workers should learn how to prioritise their work to avoid unnecessary work pressures and stress, this can be done by attending the most urgent case over cases that are not too urgent.

5.5.2 Recommendations for the Department of Social Development

- The Department should put measures such as EAP in place to deal with work related stress among social workers.
- The Department should develop programmes such as support and educational groups that will educate social workers on identifying the early signs of work related stress.
- The Department should consider reviewing the salary entry level for social workers.
- The Department should look into developing a tool to conduct risk and stress assessment among social workers in order to reduce level of stress.

- Social work supervisors should be trained on how to identify work related stress among social workers so that they may provide adequate support to their supervisees.
- The Department should allow policy makers to develop policies that makes special provisions on how to handle stress within the social work profession.

5.5.5. Recommendations for future researchers

- Further research on work related stress among social workers should be done in South Africa to get a more comprehensive picture on the problem and its solution.
- Further research should be done on the implementation of possible strategies to be used in dealing with work related stress among social workers.
- Future researchers should consider investigating the impacts of work related stress on both the individual and work place.

5.6. Summary

This chapter presented the summary, limitations, conclusion and recommendations of the study. The chapter also calls for future research to be conducted.

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APPENDIX A
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA ETHICAL CLARENCE CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
Mr SF Maluleke

Student No:
11610489

PROJECT TITLE: **Work related stress among
social workers in greater Giyani municipality,
South Africa.**

PROJECT NO: SHS/17/PH/23/1901

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Prof AK Tugli	University of Venda	Supervisor
Dr SA Mulondo	University of Venda	Co - Supervisor
Mr SF Maluleke	University of Venda	Investigator - Student

ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date Considered: January 2018

Decision by Ethical Clearance Committee Granted

Signature of Chairperson of the Committee:

Name of the Chairperson of the Committee: Senior Prof. G.E. Ekosse



UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
DIRECTOR
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
2018 -01- 24
Private Bag X5050
Thohoyandou 0950

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
DIRECTOR
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
2018 -01- 24
Private Bag X5050
Thohoyandou 0950



University of Venda
PRIVATE BAG X5050, THOHOYANDOU, 0950, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA
TELEPHONE (015) 962 8504/8313 FAX (015) 962 9060
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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

WORK RELATED STRESS AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS IN GREATER GIYANI MUNICIPALITY, SOUTH AFRICA

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Gender	Male	
	Female	

Age	25-35	
	36 and above	

Marital status	Married	
	Single	
	Divorced	
	Widowed	

Years of Experience	0-2 years	
	3-5 years	
	6-8 years	

Registration status	Registered	
	Not registered	

SECTION B: SOURCES OF STRESS AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS

- What do you think are the sources of stress among social workers?
- May you explain how inadequate and unsupportive supervision can be a source of stress amongst social workers?
- Please explain how the nature of support from family can contribute towards work stress?

SECTION D: SOCIAL WORKERS' KNOWLEDGE ON THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- Tell me everything you know about the signs and symptoms of stress?
- How would you describe someone who has work related stress?

SECTION E: STRATEGIES USED BY SOCIAL WORKERS TO DEAL WITH STRESS

- How do you deal with stress at work?

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION LETTER

I am Shonisani Forster Maluleke, a Masters student at the University of Venda, currently registered for a Master in Public Health (MPH) in the School of Health Sciences. I am doing a study on the **Work related stress among social workers in Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa**, the study serves as fulfillment of the requirements for Masters of Public Health Degree. This study is aimed at investigating the factors that contribute towards work related stress for social workers.

This study seeks to make a significant contribution in helping the management at Department of Social Development understand the factors that result in work related stress for social workers. The study may also assist social workers in identifying and dealing with potential work related stressors before they impact negatively on their job productivity and wellbeing. When social workers wellbeing and job productivity can be improved, the communities they are serving will also benefit.

For this study to be a success, I humbly request you to participate in this study. Your participation will be through an interview which will take about 30-45 minutes of your time. Please note that any information you will share will be treated confidentially and as such will not be divulged to anyone without your consent. The information will solely be used for academic purposes and high level of anonymity shall be maintained. Note that your participation is voluntary and that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any given time should you feel uncomfortable during the course of the interview.

Researcher's signature..... Date

Contact details for clarity purposes: shonisani35@gmail.com or call 076 8964 301

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

I herein referred to as the participant have read and understood the contents and terms of this request to participate in this study. I hereby declare that I am voluntarily participating in this study.

Participant's signature Date

Contact details for clarity purposes: shonisani35@gmail.com or call 076 8964 301

APPENDIX E

REQUEST TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

University of Venda
Private Bag x5050
Thohoyandou 0950
12/08/2016

The Manager
Social Development
Limpopo Provincial Government
Giyani

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A STUDY ON WORK RELATED STRESS AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS IN GREATER GIYANI MUNICIPALITY, SOUTH AFRICA

I Shonisani Forster Maluleke, a student at the Department of Public Health at University of Venda, hereby request for a permission to conduct a study titled: **Work related stress among social workers in Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa**. The study serves as fulfillment of the requirements for Masters of Public Health Degree.

The study findings will provide recommendations that may benefit the Department of Social Development (DSD) in understanding the potential work stressors for social workers so that appropriate interventions to deal with work stress can be made. The study findings may also assist social workers in identifying and dealing with potential work related stressors before they impact negatively on their job productivity and wellbeing. It must be well understood that when the social workers' wellbeing and job productivity is improved, the community that they serve will benefit.

In conducting this study, the researcher will take into consideration the following ethical principles: Informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, voluntary participation, deception of respondents, and avoidance of harm to respondents.

I trust and have faith that my request will meet with your approval. Your assistance in facilitating the research will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely

Maluleke Shonisani Forster

Student number : 11610489

Contact details : shonisani35@mail.com

Cellphone number : 076 8964 301

APPENDIX F

REQUEST TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

MOPANI DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

University of Venda
Private Bag x5050
Thohoyandou 0950
12/08/2016

The Manager
Social Development
Mopani District
Giyani

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A STUDY ON WORK RELATED STRESS AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS IN GREATER GIYANI MUNICIPALITY, SOUTH AFRICA

I am Shonisani Forster Maluleke, a Masters student at the University of Venda, currently registered for a Master in Public Health (MPH) in the School of Health Sciences. I am doing a study on the factors contributing towards work related stress among social workers, the study serves as fulfillment of the requirements for Masters of Public Health Degree. This study is aimed at investigating the factors that contribute towards work related stress for social workers.

I Shonisani Forster Maluleke, a student at the Department of Public Health at University of Venda, hereby request for a permission to conduct a study titled: **Work related stress among social workers in Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa**. The study serves as fulfillment of the requirements for Masters of Public Health Degree.

The study findings will provide recommendations that may benefit the Department of Social Development (DSD) in understanding the potential work stressors for social workers so that appropriate interventions to deal with work stress can be made. The study findings may also assist social workers in identifying and dealing with potential work related stressors before they impact negatively on their job productivity and wellbeing. It must be well understood that when the social workers' wellbeing and job productivity is improved, the community that they serve will benefit.

In conducting this study, the researcher will take into consideration the following ethical principles: Informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, voluntary participation, deception of respondents, and avoidance of harm to respondents.

I trust and have faith that my request will meet with your approval. Your assistance in facilitating the research will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely

Maluleke Shonisani Forster

Student number : 11610489

Contact details : shonisani35@mail.com

Cellphone number : 076 8964 301

APPENDIX G

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ETHICAL CLARENCE CERTIFICATE

CONFIDENTIAL



OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

Office of the Premier

Research and Development Directorate

Private Bag X9483, Polokwane, 0700, South Africa

Tel: (015) 287 6564, Email: mokobj@premier.limpopo.gov.za

LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Meeting: 06th August 2018


Project Number: LPREC/21/2018: PG

Title: Work Related Stress among Social Workers In Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa

Researcher: S.F Maluleke

Department: Department of Social Development

Dr Theminkosi Mabli


Chairperson: Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee

The Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC) is registered with National Health Research Council (NHREC) Registration Number REC-111513-038.

Note:

- I. This study is categorized as a Low Risk Level in accordance with risk level descriptors as enshrined in LPREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- II. Should there be any amendment to the approved research proposal; the researcher(s) must re-submit the proposal to the ethics committee for review prior data collection.
- III. The researcher(s) must provide annual reporting to the committee as well as the relevant department.
- IV. The ethical clearance certificate is valid for 12 months. Should the need to extend the period for data collection arise then the researcher should renew the certificate through LPREC secretariat.

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROJECT NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX H
PERMISSION LETTER

CONFIDENTIAL



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

TO: R MOKOBANE

FROM: DR T MABILA

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON: LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (LPREC)

DATE: 06th AUGUST 2018

SUBJECT: WORK RELATED STRESS AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS IN GREATER GIYANI MUNICIPALITY, SOUTH AFRICA

RESEARCHER: S.F MALULEKE

Dear Colleague

The above researcher's research proposal served at the Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC) meeting on the 06th August 2018.

The committee has noted that the candidate has displayed the understanding and application of scientific research. The committee is satisfied with the research proposal.

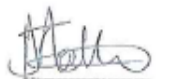
Decision: The research proposal is granted full approval and ethical clearance.

Regards

Deputy Chairperson: Dr T Mabila



Secretariat: Ms J Mokobi



Date: 07/09/2018

APPENDIX I

APPROVAL LETTER TO USE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT FACILITIES



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

TO: RESEARCH COMMITTEE

APPROVAL TO USE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT'S FACILITIES

This certifies that Mr. Maluleke SF has presented the significance of his research study titled: **'Work related stress among social workers in Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa'**

Mr. Maluleke SF research study

1. The findings of the study


The findings of this study will provide recommendations that may benefit the Department of Social Development (DSD) in understanding the potential work stressors affecting social workers so that appropriate interventions to deal with work stress can be made.

The study findings may also assist social workers in identifying and dealing with potential work related stressors before they impact negatively on their job productivity and wellbeing. It must be well understood that when the social workers' wellbeing and job productivity is improved, the community that they serve may benefit. Public Health as a discipline may also benefit from the study findings in that Public Health Practitioners may come to know and

understand the factors that contribute towards work related stress and thereby make informed decisions.

2. **Population and area of study**

In view of the above, this letter grants Mr. Maluleke permission to use the Department of Social Development facilities and allows him to interview 16 Social workers at Unigaz Social Work Offices, Greater Giyani Municipality.


Deputy Director: Population Development Unit
Mokobane R

05/06/2018
Date

APPENDIX J PROOF READING LETTER

04 February 2019

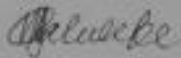
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS (ECS)

To whom it may concern

This serves to certify that I have been requested by Mr Maluleke Shonisani Forster (Student Number: 11610489) to proof-read his final dissertation for Master of Public Health. He is a student attached to the Department of Public Health in the School of Health Sciences

The title of his study is: *Work related stress among social workers in the Greater Giyani Municipality, South Africa*. I have read the dissertation and made appropriate suggestions.

Yours Sincerely



Dr Mzamani Maluleke (0723069536)



University of Venda

PRIVATE BAG X5050, THOHOPANDOU, 0950, SOUTH AFRICA
TEL: +27 15 962 8291