

**THE FACTORS PREDISPOSING SOCIAL WORKERS TO BURNOUT
IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS
OF THE EASTERN CAPE**

**THESIS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
(LEGAL SOCIAL WORK),**

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I, **Thamaga Zacharia Ramphele**, hereby declare that, this study of burnout among the Social Workers working in Social Services Organizations in the Eastern Cape Province is my own work, and that all the sources used or quoted here have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNED BY 

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DATE: 04 NOVEMBER 2004.

ABSTRACT

This work was based on an investigation of the subject of burnout, as observed by the researcher among social workers that worked for various social services organizations – both Government Departments and Non-Governmental Organizations – based in the Eastern Cape Province. The study of burnout was conducted with the aim to obtain information from the respondents about their conditions at work, and how those conditions contributed, as alleged, to burnout experienced by them.

A qualitative research method was used as an approach that the researcher found best in that it allowed for an in-depth probe into the circumstances of the respondents (including the attitudes and emotions of the respondents), to give a broad picture of the situation as experienced by the respondents at work. A qualitative method was handled through the exploratory research principle of sampling and gathering of data, as the researcher felt it a sufficiently appropriate route to help yield the required outcomes of the study.

The researcher's motivation to pursue the research was prompted by several indicators which included an article in the Daily Dispatch of 26 August 2003 that wrote 'Social workers quit in droves' and some personal contact with graduated students of social work, recently employed as social workers in various settings. Interesting dynamics about social work practice and its frustrations surfaced, and out of that premise, the researcher felt that it was an opportune moment to carry out an investigation to discover the facts about burnout as experienced by social workers.

The findings on the research would be published, and the researcher intended to inform the social work community about the outcomes of research, hoping that the information would become useful to them in curtailing or preventing future encounters of burnout as experienced by them at the work place. In other words, recommendations for solutions would be provided based on the findings as an outcome of that investigation.

To allow for the success of the research process, the researcher planned to draw from several resource centers and other researchers' data, any valuable piece of information, record, or existing data that could assist in evaluating information that became available during data collection. Such information was seen as very important since it helped in making the data analysis process easier and more than enough information could thus be obtained.

Finally the researcher had found the study quite fascinating in that it addressed human concerns in the form of social work issues at work, which the researcher personally considered important and shared as one of the issues affecting social work professionals.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION.

The researcher was interested in the study of burnout, which was observed to be one of the problems faced by social workers in social services centers in the Eastern Cape Province. Such centers included Government organizations such as the Social Development Department, and the Correctional Services Department, including prisons, and the courts. Other social workers were placed in Non-Governmental Organizations like the National Institution of Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders (NICRO).

Burnout was assumed by the researcher to be one of the contemporary problems affecting the social workers. It was also observed that professionals in other disciplines also experienced the same problem in their work environments, although the nature of professional work could be different. The researcher believed that social work professionals suffered burnout as a result of work related stress. It was further reasoned that once a social worker was confronted by burnout, his/her productivity at work would be lowered, rendering the social work professional helpless and work time would be lost.

It was assumed by the researcher that social workers experienced stress-related problems while in the execution of their duties in various social services centers where they helped their clients on a day-to-day basis. Such stress was understood to emanate from the work environment and, if accumulated over time, to cause a great deal of strain among social workers, ultimately leading to burnout. The phenomenon was thought to have a crippling effect on the economy of the country and required attention so that professional work such as social work could be sustained, and the clients served by social workers could continue to benefit from the process.

The researcher would thus like to concentrate on the work areas of the social workers; i.e. the social services organizations in which social workers performed their duties, in

establishing the conditions at work and the dynamics involved, whether they had a direct influence in causing stress to the professionals, and its resultant burnout. The idea, therefore, would be to investigate social workers in their work settings with the aim of understanding the impact of burnout on them and productivity in the work place. If possible, the researcher would make suggestions or recommendations, when proper investigation had been completed to assist in minimizing the negative effects of such burnout on professionals.

1.2. THE RATIONALE OF THE STUDY.

It was reasoned that burnout was a problem in many production fields where the social workers experienced stress and accounted for the loss in production of an organization or institution, as well as the lowered morale among the social workers as the staff in those settings. When that happened, the organization, the social work professionals and the clients suffered as a result of lowered morale and production. The investigation into the phenomenon had an outlook of reducing the impact of burnout among the social workers and, if possible, contributing toward maximizing productivity at work. Again, there was a need to examine the feelings of the social workers about their work in their various workstations, so that the nature of things affecting them could be established. When established, that could help the researcher in understanding the conditions and impact of such burnout as experienced by social work professionals.

Furthermore, the researcher was keen to understand the role played by the personalities of social workers in burnout. The researcher assumed that not all social workers might be burned out at work, given the social workers who differed in the way people resisted, withstood or overcame personal difficulties and/or challenges in life, including at work. That implied there were significant personality factors at play in determining who was stressed or experienced burnout and why, in a situation at work. For instance, there might be factors that predisposed a social worker toward burnout, and in the same situation, another social worker might not be a victim to such burnout. All factors of personality

that made an individual social worker susceptible to burnout needed to be established, as they might be significant for the study.

In addition, the researcher was concerned about burnout among social workers as it was assumed it caused staff turnover among social workers, who left the profession to work in other settings. The researcher here was interested in, establishing first, the motives of the social workers and second, the factors in the work environment which predisposed them to finally arrive at such radical decisions.

1.3. AIMS AND GOALS OF THE RESEARCH.

- To investigate burnout among social work professionals.
- To research the causes of stress as assumed to be related to or being the major cause for burnout among professional social workers.
- To understand such stress and its impact on individual social workers.
- To establish the impact of burnout on production in the work place.
- To contribute the findings of research toward general knowledge in the academic field.
- To assist in burnout prevention at tertiary level where social work students were trained.
- To assist in educating social workers on the possible means to overcome burnout at work.
- To recommend means to minimize burnout in the work place.

1.4. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS.

The concepts used in the research were defined as follows:

BURNOUT: Burnout was seen by the researcher as a condition, emotional or physical, in an individual, caused by prolonged stress – a condition that made an individual to withdraw from life's major activities, including work. Burnout was perceived as a condition or a circumstance experienced by social workers while in the execution of their duties. It indicated stress that overpowered them, causing them to lapse into inactivity, and accounted for the loss of interest in their work and led to negative behaviors displayed while on duty.

STRESS:

Zastrow (1992:316) defined stress as “the emotional and physiological reactions to stressors. A stressor is a demand, condition or circumstance that disrupts the person's equilibrium and initiates the stress response in an individual”.

Cooper (1993:19) asserted that; “High stress, combined with a sense of loss of control over one's life business, certainly contributes to burnout”.

Stress was defined as a psychological condition often manifested in the physiological and emotional feelings, primarily associated with the internal and external environments of an individual.

Fineman, (1985:626), defined stress as; “ A psychological state of high anxiety, reflected in self-descriptions such as ‘very unhappy’, ‘fearful’, ‘overwhelmed’, and ‘all screwed-up’ inside”.

SOCIAL WORKER: The term “social worker” referred to a person trained in the social services profession to assist people with their social needs

PROFESSIONAL: A professional was described as a person who underwent specific training dealing with a specific area of work in which he/she specialized and served as an

expert in the execution of his/her duties. In this instance the professional social worker was referred to as an expert in social services aimed to assist the clients with their needs. The Oxford Dictionary, (1976:885), defined a profession as a practice by someone, a vocation or calling, especially that involved some branch of advanced learning or science.

EASTERN CAPE: It is one of the nine provinces of the Republic of South Africa. It refers to the eastern part of the Cape Peninsula, comprising a Province in which social workers were employed in various social services departments that service the clients. Social workers were employed as social service agents to assist the clients with their needs in government departments such as the courts, prisons and the provincial Department of Social Development.

SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENTS: Social Services Departments refer to the agencies, both Non-Governmental Organizations and Provincial Departments, employing social workers in the execution of duties to assist the clients with their needs. Such work was performed professionally in various aspects of needed expertise, to contribute toward the needs of clients.

1.5. ANTICIPATED VALUE OF THE RESEARCH.

The researcher hoped that the study on burnout among the social workers in the social services departments should, when findings were made available, help to ease pressure among social workers and the effect of burnout at work. The Daily Dispatch of 26 August 2003, which carried the headline; 'Social Workers quit in droves', reported that many social workers of the Eastern Cape Province were leaving the profession and this displayed a worrying future prospect for the Province. Poor social service delivery served as an indicator of the underlying problems in social service settings. It became necessary, therefore, to find means to deal with the burnout problems, in order that social workers could be content at work, and thus helped in improving productivity related to service rendering to the clients.

Another anticipated value of the research was to make findings around the study of burnout available, exposing burnout to social workers to help avoid its negative effects on them while they carried out their duties at work. It was observed that most social workers were not aware of or did not understand the effects of burnout emanating largely from stress. The need to cope with stress and avoid burnout was therefore paramount to help social workers to execute their duties freely and productively.

Moreover, it was reasoned by the researcher that the findings on burnout should assist tertiary students of social work so that they could learn to prevent the experience of burnout once they graduated. Prevention in that case would be better than cure, and achieving that would help improve conditions at work with reduced burnout influence.

1.6. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN.

The research should be carried out using qualitative research methods following an exploratory/descriptive design. Bias toward the choice on qualitative research design fulfills the expectation in conducting research for social work, based on social science methodology. The researcher basically wanted to elicit the feelings, attitudes and emotions of social workers on the subject of burnout as experienced by them in their work places. In this way the researcher would be able to deal with what the respondents personally felt, and attempt to explain the phenomenon in its natural context and form.

The researcher therefore chose that method to enable him to assemble a detailed description of social facts or reality from the perspective of the respondents as professional practitioners in the social services Departments of the Eastern Cape Province. Qualitative research was based on induction, holism and subjectivism. Its strategy was inductive in that the researcher attempted to understand a situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the setting. The qualitative design began with specific observation and built toward general patterns to allow the researcher a large scope to explore facts. Mouton and Marais, (1990:204)

In that case a purposive non-probability sampling would be necessary, according to Creswell, (1994:148), to select respondents randomly without classification or categorization, in order that representation could be made without bias. A purposive non-probability sampling was thus selected by the researcher to investigate the social workers from the population comprising the social workers working in Government Departments and Non-Governmental Organizations in the East London, King Williams Town and Fort Beaufort regions (Fort beau Fort included Middledrift, Alice and Adelaide districts) of social work services. All the social workers as potential respondents were selected randomly using the diary of all social workers in the population mentioned above.

A sample of thirty respondents was selected to represent the entire social worker population mentioned above. The sample from those centers was selected on the basis of accessibility of the locations, and on cost-effective objectives. The researcher therefore concentrated on Middledrift, Fort Beaufort, Mdantsane, Zwelitsha, King Williamstown and East London.

The researcher utilized research questionnaires, as an instrument to explore, identify and define all actions required of the respondents. In areas where questionnaires could not apply due to postal problems or other impediments, telephonic interviews would be considered, to reach the objective of the research. A questionnaire detailing questions targeted for the respondents was attached as an appendix hereto. In cases where the questionnaire were limited and where the researcher felt additional information was required, an arrangement could be made for respondents to furnish additional information by telephone, to help clarify texts, and elaborate on versions of their experiences as Baxter, Hughes and Tight (1996:182) describe.

The qualitative interviews assisted the researcher in exploring the feelings and attitudes of the respondents, which could add a dimension on the burnout problem, or might help the researcher to approach questions from a different angle or in greater depth. Burgess and Mason, (1998:42), called this; "a conversation with purpose". In this light, the conference of 20 September 2002, at Rhodes University, East London Campus, dealing

with the Training of Probation Officers and Criminal Justice Social Workers in South Africa would be taken as useful data to be considered in the research.

1.7. THE RESEARCH TOOL.

The research tool used was in a questionnaire format, which was based on a carefully selected, open-ended questions type, to ensure respondents had a fair chance of providing enough information to allow for a broad analysis of the responses. A carefully selected number of closed questions may be considered to allow the researcher knowledge of specific information such as the respondents' age, sex, marital status and rank, as those also might have significance for the research and qualification of data as well.

Tricky or irrelevant questions were avoided, and the researcher asked only those questions that were aimed to elicit needed responses from the respondents. Special care was thus taken to ensure that questions were unambiguous and concise to allow the respondents an opportunity to provide appropriate answers for the questions asked.

1.8. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.

Data received from the respondents was codified, categorized and summarized to allow the researcher to remain with relevant facts about the subject under investigation. This helped to simplify the research in that it allowed the researcher to concentrate and deal only with the factual responses from the general data collected as Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996:182) point out.

At times it was necessary to compare data so that similarities and differences of certain facts could be detected, and statements about them made, in order that the findings could make sense of the subject under investigation (Rubin and Rubin, 1995:226).

Data was organized into categories; common themes about burnout should be sorted to allow for a flow of thought on the subject being investigated. The information should

later be compared with other information available, and also the responses should be compared to available theoretical material on the subject of investigation, to see if it was valid. That implied that the researcher would manipulate the data, testing theory on the basis of available sampled facts from the respondents. The qualitative procedure in data analysis allowed for that practice to enable the researcher to have control over the process of research. (Mason, 1998:101).

1.9. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS.

The researcher expected few, if any limitations impeding the respondents in providing their responses. One instance concerned the respondents who stayed far from communication areas where access to telephone, fax, post offices and other communication channels would be hard to reach for them. The situation might have had a bearing on data collection, as it would be difficult to communicate. The researcher ensured therefore that the majority of the respondents would be reachable. Where a social worker could not be reached because of postal problems or any communication channel failure, the researcher delivered the questionnaires personally to ensure that the responses were retrieved.

Creswell (1994:150), noted that respondents might be fond of generalizing their responses, led by fear of not wanting to divulge incriminating information or of omitting information deliberately for any other reason/s. For this reason the researcher worked objectively to assure the respondents that confidentiality would prevail, and ensured that the respondents did not divulge their names on their questionnaire sheets, especially when sensitive information would be provided.

1.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Confidentiality guided the process of research, to ensure objectivity in the research outcomes. Permission to access records at the work place or any other such high profile sources of information to aid the research was requested, to honor the institutions and

protect the right to use privileged information. Every response from the respondents was accounted for, to ensure that the respondents did not overstate their facts, and the study produced results without prejudice or malice to any authority, institution or professional.

1.11. CONCLUSION.

The research dealt with the subject of burnout that was observed by the researcher to be a problem that affected social workers in various workstations within the Eastern Cape Province. Selected areas for conducting the study included East London district, King Williamstown and areas covering Adelaide, Fort Beaufort and Alice, as a population. Burnout was observed to be a problem causing dissatisfaction among the social workers and also affecting work in terms of professional social service delivery to clients.

The researcher in this chapter highlighted the rationale of the study, which comprised the reasons why the research was to be conducted. These included the report by the media of social workers leaving the profession in droves, due to disgruntlement in the work place. Aims of the study were also outlined in the chapter, targeting all those areas the researcher felt strongly about.

The researcher also defined the concepts used in research to allow for clarity of meaning and intention of the research undertaken. Anticipated problems in the process of research were also carefully highlighted to help alert the researcher to the things that might impact negatively on the research process. Those problems needed to be dealt with and the researcher suggested ways to tackle them, in order that the process of research could be positive in the end.

The chapter also covered the methodology and research design where the researcher explained the procedure of research, spelling out how to anticipate the outcome of research. The researcher used the qualitative method as a strategy to approach data collection, sampling and data interpretation. In the qualitative method of research chosen, the researcher was aiming to elicit the feelings of respondents in full to ensure that the

research explains conditions surrounding the social workers at work places completely. Qualitative research was important for the research because it allowed for the exploration of feelings, attitudes and behaviors of social workers in the work place.

Factors leading toward the limitations of the study were carefully dealt with to ensure success in carrying out the research. The researcher made sure such limitations were kept to the minimum, for the purpose of good research outcomes.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1. INTRODUCTION.

The researcher was motivated by noticing stress among the social workers that worked for various social services centers in the Eastern Cape. The researcher assumed such a stress was caused by burnout as experienced by those social workers while performing their duties. The research work was based on the study of burnout as it was assumed by the researcher to affect the social workers, especially those that worked as probation officers on their day-to-day execution of duties. The researcher targeted the social workers working at various social services organizations in the Eastern Cape, between East London and Adelaide, as a population of social workers (the respondents). The social workers were employed in both Government and Non-Governmental Organizations like the National Institute of Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders (NICRO), and the Courts.

Literature related to the problem under study would be explored, to validate all assumptions and test the knowledge on burnout, as the social workers experienced it at their workplaces. The attempt should be made also, of finding out from literature available any possible means to eliminate the assumption based on the study of burnout. Any information available on the subject, in the form of literature, magazines, documentaries or internet material should be used, if it was relevant stuff, to assist in understanding the problem of burnout as it affected social workers. A lot of work and ground on burnout and related stress condition had been recorded in literature by the previous researchers.

2.2 DEFINITIONS OF BURNOUT.

The researcher thought burnout referred to a mental and/or physical condition caused by excessive and prolonged stress – a condition that made an individual to withdraw from life's activities, including work. In other words burnout was a condition or a circumstance experienced by a social worker while in the execution of his/her duties, indicated by stress that over-powered a social worker, causing him/her to relapse into inactivity. Accompanied by the display of negative behavior from the social worker experiencing burnout, such a situation accounted in the social worker losing interest on the work, and the work environment.

Bason and Rothmann (2001:13), defined burnout as; “A syndrome developing over time in so-called ‘normal’ individuals, characterized by an array of physical, psychological and attitudinal symptoms, primarily exhaustion”.

According to Cooper, (1993:19); burnout referred to a condition where; “High stress, combined with a sense of loss of control over ones life business, certainly contributes to burnout”.

Maslach, (1977:3), defined burnout as; “ A state of mind accompanied by an array of symptoms that indicate malaise, emotional, physical and psychological fatigue; feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and lack of enthusiasm about work and even about life in general.”

Maslach and Leiter, (1997:17), asserted on burnout; “Burnout is the index of the dislocation between what people are and what they have to do. It represents an erosion of values, dignity, spirit and will – an erosion of the human soul.”

Zastrow, (1992:316), saw burnout as being caused by stress and commented that; “Stress (that) can be defined as the emotional and physiological reactions to stressors. A stressor

is a demand, condition or circumstance that disrupts the person's equilibrium and initiates the stress response in an individual".

The researcher recognized burnout as a condition that prevailed among social workers, affected by it while performing their duties, while their coping mechanism on stress was very low, or impossible.

2.3 BACKGROUND THEORIES ON BURNOUT.

2.3.1. BURNOUT AS A STRESS CONDITION.

Stress was seen as a condition or circumstance in the life of an individual that, when it came, it could incapacitate an individual, causing major upsets that might hinder an individual from coping with whatever he/she was doing. With repeated occurrences of several (similar) events, and leading to an individual losing control and interest on what he/she was doing, stress could lead toward burnout.

The nature of stress: Here stress was described as a psychological condition often manifested in the physiological and emotional feelings of individuals, primarily associated with the internal and external environments of an individual. At times the internal and external environments could share in contributing to one's stress. There were stressors in an individual that caused stress. Stressors might be events, perceptions, memories or incidents that an individual experienced while at work on a daily basis.

According to Zastrow, (1992:646); "A stressor is a demand, condition, or circumstance that disrupts a person's equilibrium and initiates the stress response."

Fineman, (1985:16), saw stress as; "A psychological state of high anxiety, reflected in self-descriptions such as 'very unhappy', 'fearful', 'overwhelmed', and 'all screwed-up inside' ".

Physiological conditions might bear symptoms of stress like gastric upsets, headaches, migraines and backaches – among the milder types. The gastric ulcers, high blood

pressure, and heart diseases were some of the most chronic forms of stress conditions that an individual might experience.

How stress developed in an individual: Stress was a state of tension in the life of a person made by reactions (of that person) to several conditions or circumstances, which were uncomfortable, difficult or negative to his/her well-being. For instance a social worker might become prone to stress while making contact with the clients and the supervisor, as well as other external agency's staff like police, magistrates and judges, on all job occasions. Positive interaction based on good working relationships in the workplace might result in progress and comfort for the social worker, the opposite of which might land the social worker in the condition of stress. Calculated on contacts and events at work the social worker experienced, and the number of such occurrences accumulating, such stress might begin to be unbearable, to an extent that the practitioner experienced burnout – which in that case could have been a heightened state of tension, accompanied by extreme condition of stress.

For a person to experience burnout, the amount of stress should be extreme. Based on the theory on stress, stress was a condition of high-anxiety, reflected in feelings of fearfulness, unhappiness and overwhelming in a person - representing a negative psychological state of affairs in a person. Such a state of affairs might be accompanied by a physiological condition like gastric upset or migraine headache, serving as a physical conditions of illness with symptoms originating from stress. Maslach, (1977:3)

Threat as a condition of burnout in a stressful situation: The theory stated that stress would follow a person's inability to cope when being threatened by problems or difficulties. Threat was pivotal in that instance where a feeling of a threat by an individual would emerge – when a sensitive or vulnerable aspect of oneself was perceived to be under attack. Feeling threatened was an uncomfortable state of affairs, characterized by rising level of anxiety in a person. For a person to cope in a situation, it required for that person to seek to reduce or end such anxiety, through the removal of the threatening condition or circumstance. Any encountered difficulty or hindrance or failure

to remove the stressful condition encountered, should end in the person experiencing exhaustion i.e. the depletion of one's energies used to counteract stress, finally leading toward burnout.

Stress in that instance served as a threat to a social work practitioner's well-being, threatening his/her coping mechanisms and rendering him/her helpless and/or hopeless at work. For burnout to occur, a threat (which was carried by a stressor) should attack a social worker, making him/her uncomfortable at the work place. A condition like a difficult supervisor served as a stressor in that instance, threatening the social worker at the work place. Such a threat was not necessarily stress, but it became stress when the social worker failed to reduce the threat; in that instance, when the practitioner failed to solve the problem between himself/herself and the supervisor, compounding anxiety of such an event to the extent that it made life difficult to cope. When life became unbearable for the social worker, anxiety started to change to a real situation where the practitioner would need assistance. That suggested that the threatening factor had now caused real tension that the practitioner needed to deal with in order to cope with work. Such a tension, manifested in stress might mount, resulting in the practitioner experiencing more threats, which ultimately might end up leading to burnout. Fineman (1985:16-17), summed that theory up by stating; " Stress, as conceptualized here, results from failing to remove the threat; a compounding of the anxiety from the threat with that from failure to cope."

Cilliers, (2002: March), in the 1st Annual Conference of Burnout in Potchestroom, however argued that what was threatening to one person may not be the same to another person. That situation may help to explain why a social worker for instance may lend in burnout over a situation where another social worker would cope. All should depend on the personality differences such as self-esteem, particular susceptibilities to anxieties, certain fears and social contexts of events. For an example, an inexperienced (novice) social worker might feel exceedingly threatened by how his/her competence was going to be judged when he/she represented the client in court for the first time, while another social worker might not be bothered by the same experience at all. Again a social worker

might seek desperately an affirmation of the worth his/her efforts on a client, because of over-sensitivity to criticism from clients or colleagues. Such a trivial thing in practice experience on the other hand, might not threaten a confident social worker because of his experience and a sense of independence at work.

Stress as a factor in job performance: According to Robbins, (1983: 82-83); stress was a causal factor and a determinant of performance in an organization. In that theory, an individual (social worker) had three backgrounds from which stress could show itself, namely; the physiological, psychological and behavioral backgrounds. Sometimes it was thought to be interplay of some or all of those factors that accompanied stress effect in an individual.

The theory proffered that stress was needed in order that a social worker could perform certain duties and meet objectives at work. It also brought to attention that stress, when too much, could have potential to stop or curtailed progress from what the social worker wanted to achieve. It was noted by the theory that a low to moderate amount of stress was needed for the body to be highly activated, and performance optimized. The effect of such low to moderate stress levels was enough to make an individual to react positively to work demands. That was so because the stress caused changes in the individual's life at work that accounted for the individual's improved energies or motivation at work.

Such changes might be reflected on, among other situations;

- **Physiologically** – where a social worker might develop, for instance, mental alertness due to stress-provoking incidence at work like a supervisor querying or reprimanding the social worker on the late submission of a report.
- **Psychologically** – Where the professional social worker might perceive him/herself not liable to promotion, and started to increase job performance, functionally based on the perception the social worker had about the situation.

- **Behaviorally** – Where the social worker would increase job performance and might lead to the improvement in attendance to the work matters and lessen absenteeism – a thing that might help to heighten productivity on the part of the social worker involved.

The inter-play of the three factors as reaction of an individual to a stress situation might result, given the nature of the problem and its immensity, and also given the nature and capacity of the social worker involved in a stress situation.

However when the stress level for the social worker was too high, the situation might block the social worker's potential – since it deactivated the body and limited the energies and motivation in an individual, and begun to cause problems to the individual's performance on tasks. When that happened, stress now could turn out to be a burdensome demand on the social worker, threatening and incapacitating him/her at work. Such a stress level might easily lend a social worker in burnout, because of its high levels and cumulative effect on the individual.

Robbins, (1983: 94) concluded that; “But too much stress places unattainable demands and constraints on a person, which results in lower performance.”

Stress as a developmental process: Another theory on stress was based on the belief that stress was developmental. That suggested that stress developed at certain stages to reach a point of no return where a person simply ‘exploded’ – and that condition resulted in burnout. Seyle (1956:19) calls the developmental stages; “General Adaptation Syndrome,” in that a person experiencing burnout tried to have stress reliever, each time he/she experienced a problem at work. When everything else was done, and the social worker's coping was no more, and adaptation difficult, the practitioner experienced ‘blackout’ – which was a condition of extreme stress that might be pronounced in burnout.

The stages of burnout begin with the alarm stage, when the body recognized the stressor, and reacted to it after it had been alerted. The reaction naturally was to fight the stress

condition. When it happened that stress persisted, that led to the second stage; that of resistance stage, where the body began to relax, and the social worker's immune systems began to function optimally. There the body attempted to repair the damage caused during the alarm stage when arousal to the immune systems occurred. Due to accumulation of stress, the third stage could occur - that of exhaustion stage - where a social worker began to accumulate stressors from the start. That accumulation might not allow a practitioner to cope, leaving him/her ultimately emotionally depleted, with possibilities that he/she might end in burnout.

In that situation there were two components of the stressor that accounted for burnout in a practitioner, namely;

- Experience or events encountered by a social worker.
- The social worker's thoughts and perceptions about these events.

Zastrow (1992:647), finally summed up the thought by saying; "Burnout primarily results from what people tell themselves about events or experiences they encounter."

However it was needless to mention that a normal human being lived with an amount of stress derived from social interactions made daily in the situation of work and everywhere in his/her environment. That stress was the manifestation of the activities of life from which no one could disengage, and activities about which success, fame, production at the work place and all other gains in life needed to be made to sustain life. That happened within a need to make changes in a work situation one was involved. In other words, human beings needed a particular manageable amount of stress to perform tasks and succeed or cope with situations, with stress serving as a motivational factor in such a process

On a positive note therefore, stress activated the body and caused the function to be heightened, and thus improved. When the function improved, it did so with the likelihood

of success possibilities in what one did. For example a strict supervisor at work might ensure improvement in service out-puts by the subordinate social worker – subjecting the social worker to a relative stress condition – a situation that would facilitate improvement on performance and/or service -rendering on the part of that social worker, in order to avoid a reprimand or demotion. A less strict supervisor on the other hand, might receive lesser results as compared to the strict supervisor in the situation.

Fineman, (1985:17) concluded by stating that; “This is certainly not to suggest that some tension in life is unproductive. Much research, and common wisdom, points to the need for certain levels of tension to help us to perform activities.”

2.3.2 BURNOUT AS A SYNDROME.

Cilliers, quoting Rothman and Bason; (2002:29); “A syndrome develops sometimes in the so-called ‘normal’ individuals, characterized by an array of physical, psychological and attitudinal symptoms, primarily exhaustion”.

Burnout is seen as self-perpetuated in some individuals because of inadequate coping strategies that were associated with the syndrome and might lead to an individual having an array of behavior misfit such as hopelessness, disillusionment, and negative self-concept.

Three factors that characterized burnout as a syndrome were;

- **Emotional Exhaustion:** Which was the reduction in the emotional resources of an individual, up to the level he/she felt drained and/or used up.
- **Depersonalization:** Which was described as a state of increased negative, cynical and insensitive attitude an individual had toward work (reduced work goals, idealism and heightened self-interest), colleagues, clients or staff generally. That was a form of emotional detachment due to wrong judgment about situations at work.

- **Low Personal Achievement:** Which described a feeling of being unable to meet others needs and to satisfy essential elements of job performance.

The syndrome as identified above was symptomized by an array of personal reactions in an individual. Among such reactions we had;

- **Indefinite Distress:** That was indicated by a sudden loss of weight, headaches, dizziness, restlessness, sexual problems and chronic fatigue at work.
- **Psychosomatic Disorders:** which were reflected in ulcers, gastric intestinal disorders, coronary heart disease and prolonged colds and flu.
- **Physiological Reactions:** That was indicated by an increase in heart rate, respiratory problems, hypertension, sugar diabetes and the rise in cholesterol levels.
- **Cognitive Symptoms:** That was indicated by poor concentration, forgetfulness, making mistakes in complex and multiple tasks, rigid thinking and difficulty in making decisions.
- **Affective Symptoms:** Which were powerlessness, helplessness, tearfulness, moodiness, loveless, anxiety, and irritability, anger-bursts, day-dreaming and fantasizing?
- **Behavioral Symptoms:** Which was compulsive/obsessive disorders, procrastinating, and doubtfulness, excessive consumption of barbiturates, stimulants like coffee, tobacco, alcohol, tranquilizers and drugs, as well as under-eating or over-eating habits? Proneness to accidents was yet another symptom.
- **Interpersonal Symptoms:** That served as isolation from others, withdrawal, hostility, suspiciousness, lessened interest, aggressiveness and general discomfort.

An individual reached burnout through a combination of a number of factors that denied him/her coping in an environment. Such characteristics were seen in every behavior pattern or reaction of an individual whether or not such an individual was aware of the factors.

2.3.3. AN IDENTITY CONTROL THEORY.

According to Kerpelman, Jennifer and Pittman, (1997:325); an identity of a person was important in explaining his/her behavior based on the environment in which he/she acted. For instance the development of an identity by a social worker at work depended largely on the ability of the professional to overcome the identity crisis of the adolescence stage. Inability of the professional to cope at work and his/her proneness to burnout explained the condition that the professional failed to fulfill during adolescence's identity crisis stage.

During an adolescence stage every individual should grapple with seeking his/her personal identity through interaction and interrelationships based on cooperative life-style. It was through that exposure where one identified with several people from whom he/she modeled his/her life, through planned socialization. Managing one's environment and winning a sense of identity in that situation should allow an individual to grow and contest events and situations as he/she developed into later adult life of work and other important things. Failure to manage an adolescence identity crisis at that stage predisposed an individual to failure in some of the things in later adulthood. Susceptibility to stress and the inability of an individual to manage or cope with stress at work as a professional might be explained in the theory, where one suffered identity crisis during childhood's adolescence period.

In summary the identity of a professional social worker as reflected by the developmental stages had a bearing in the social worker's record at work. Those professionals with a high sense of achievement represented the individuals who accomplished their role-identity during formative years of adolescence trials. On the other hand those individual

professionals who were prone to high stress levels and susceptible to burnout were among the less accomplished during adolescence trials of puberty years. They were more often than not apt to land in burnout.

2.3.4. SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING THEORY.

Schaufelli, (2002: March), in his presentation in the National Conference on burnout in Stellenbosch; “It seems safe to assume that subjective well-being constitutes an antithesis of burnout.”

His assertion was that all human beings generally thrived on the basis of subjective interpretation of realities around them in a work environment. Virtue or any achievement one made was subject to his/her interpretation of the world (be it at the workplace or in the community). Anything that became good to an individual was accepted, and anything that was interpreted negatively caused problems like stress or burnout to an individual. The theory suggested that the workplace represented a subjective environment within which an individual could make a success for living. That represented the expectation that an individual subjectively placed on all the events and actions, as well as interrelationships he/she entered into at the work place. Failure to meet with success or fulfillment as subjectively interpreted by an individual, more often than not landed the individual in stress, which, when cumulative, might result in burnout.

There were two philosophico-psychological tenets within which the subjective theory was explained, namely;

- **On enjoyment as a factor in subjective well-being theory:** The rationale of the view was that subjective well-being consisted of happiness. For example pleasure one expected at work; pain avoidance like in the case of the social worker avoiding a reprimand by a supervisor, or achievement like completing tasks, were all subjective in nature i.e. they depended on what the social worker viewed about the state of work. An individual was driven from inside by subjective expectations to receive enjoyment when at work. That expectation should translate into the

ability of the individual to accomplish tasks, relate positively, and receive well wishing and praise messages from all at work, including colleagues. Any time something negative or opposite confronted an individual, that would clash with the subjective well-being of that person, leading toward stress ultimately – a condition that might result in burnout experienced by that person when cumulative.

- **On morality as a factor in subjective well-being theory:** In that view subjective well-being consisted of moral activities and virtues which an individual conceptualized as derivatives from the work environment he/she operated in. moral virtues like justice practiced by an individual during a discourse at work; generosity as a gesture received during work as a reward of some kind, and temperance that was based on warm relationships and general treatment by colleagues. An individual had a subjective feeling of being good – and thus deserved good from others (especially at work), to harness his/her well-being. The feeling of being good and wanting good from others was a moral claim to find fulfillment within the work environment the individual belonged. Any disclaimer in terms of, for example, supervisor's unjust judgment of the subordinate's performance or conduct in the work place might unleash temperance and be seen as cold or hostile to the individual – thus causing an individual to have stress – and the resultant culmination into burnout later when things got worse.

2.3.5. THE PSYCHODYNAMIC THEORY.

Bion and other writers whose arguments were based on Freudian perspective had advanced the psychodynamic theory on burnout. The theory concerned itself with a group influence; that was; the way the organization (Social work agency that employed social workers) could affect individuals (employee social workers) in it, through the system's function. The theory attempted to differentiate between behaviors and activities of organizational staff geared toward rational task performance (the group's work in an

organization) and those geared toward emotional needs and anxieties of staff as they offered their services in the organization.

Bion explained his theory in terms of what he called the basic assumptions about the experiences in groups. These assumptions were seen as manifestations of experiences and unconscious fantasies originating in infancy. Bion's theory was seen here as a cornerstone of system's psychodynamic perspective. The following were the basic assumptions on how the group or the system operated;

- **Dependency:** According to Bion, (2001:19), group members in an organization unconsciously projected their dependency upon parental objects or systems, representing authority - where the organization was (imaginatively) taken as a parent figure. If the authority figure did not respond the way the group members wanted them to, frustration and anger developed, manifesting itself in counter dependency by a member of the group. Later such counter-move may result in members being independent – a thing that might serve positively to the credit of a member of the group, and represented a sense of maturity on his/her part. However frustration and aggressive behavior might occur due to unfulfilled expectations, accounting for stress that a member could experience due to pressure placed on him/her by unresponsive authorities in the organization. A member in that sense might suffer dependency, which he/she could try to counter when such a counter move failed, the process could lead to burnout experienced by the member in the organization.
- **Fight/flight:** The assumption described the defense mechanisms inherent in the group, unconsciously used by members trying to cope with discomfort. Fight reactions manifested themselves in aggression against self or colleagues in such reactions as boycotts, jealousy competition, envy or rivalry. On the other side, avoiding others, threatening feelings of insecurity and absenteeism from work or meetings, indicated flight reactions. It was basic assumption of the subjective theory that an individual would want to react either by fighting or fleeing from a

discomforting situation in the organization. When choosing to fight, an individual expected to win or be rewarded after the fight, in order to get personal gratification. When the negative was experienced, the individual got frustrated, sometimes with excessive impact on the frustration, leading in stress, and later burnout when things got worse. Likewise, in a threatening situation that caused an individual to flee and sort security, frustration would result in stress if such a situation did not offer enough security or reward for the individual. For instance facing an increase in the workload and sharp deadlines might render an individual insecure and highly threatened at work. When stress was too high and there was no remedy that might land an individual in burnout.

- **Pairing:** An assumption was made in the theory that an individual needed to associate with others, especially the powerful others or subgroups in an organization, in order to cope with anxiety, loneliness or alienation. That served as an unconscious need, which was to make an individual feel secure, motivated and being creative. Any perception of an individual being unwanted by colleagues or feeling of discrimination by authorities, being rebuffed, or sharply reprimanded by the supervisor, may defeat the need for security in an individual and that of being organizationally secure, rendering that individual an outcast from the group/organization. That predisposed an individual to stress that easily could translate into burnout when the situation worsened later on.
- **Me-ness:** The assumption here was that an individual was seeking to preserve him/herself with a sense of self-identity in the contemporary world of challenges and turbulent events in the work place and society. The individual in that regard was pressed more into his/her own inner reality in order to exclude and deny the perceived disturbing reality of the outer environment. The sense of inner reality indicated by a sense of identity often clashed with the group's identity (organization's identity), creating a perception of loss of self-identity in an individual. For instance the inability of an individual to meet with the dead-lines at work, based on the organization's expectations, could result in a lack of

fulfillment in an individual, losing organizational touch and experiencing a lessened sense of achievement, and that of self-identity. The situation might represent the hostile work environment that was perceived to be unsupportive to the individual's need for self-preservation. Ultimately the situation might lead toward stress, which in some cases, when in extreme form, might land an individual in burnout.

- **We-ness:** The situation called for a collective of organization members seeking to join into a powerful force (like joining a union), surrendering themselves into passive participation in the group, with the intentions and expectations to satisfy themselves from such membership. That was done with the perception to protect themselves from the organization perceived to be too powerful and omnipotent force. According to Cilliers, March 2002; "In this regard an individual is lost within the economic feelings of unity". Here an individual had invested in the group like a union or a social club at work, feeling that such a group would answer for his/her needs, and also believing that such a group would solve his/her personal problems and contribute solutions for his/her well-being at work, while accruing from the membership status of being a member of a powerful group. When the feeling of we-ness failed to yield expected results, or when perceptions of the initial expectations did not satisfy the needs he/she has about the group – for instance when the union failed to bargain for improvement in salary negotiations or better working conditions – stress might accrue, where an individual thought negatively about the group he/she liked. That might ultimately account for the resultant burnout when the situation got worse in the work environment. An individual here experienced counter transference, where the effect of the group he/she voluntarily joined yielded perceived negative results to the objectives he/she set for him/herself, when the choice for membership of the group was made.

2.3.6. FORTIGENIC PARADIGM – A theory of burnout.

Fortigenic paradigm attempted to describe the inner abilities or coping mechanisms of an individual when faced with challenges on a day-to-day basis. It was about individual developing coping strategies that allowed him to protect him/herself or make a buffer against any stressful condition, in order to cope in life.

The theory of fortigenic paradigm focused on the strength of an individual i.e. psychological strengths that were health, positive attitude and pro-social behavior. The presence of those psychological factors within an individual indicated the coping abilities an individual would have as a buffer against burnout. Any individual prone to or susceptible to burnout displayed unhealthy, negative and anti-social tendencies.

For an individual to be free from burnout effect there should be specific constructs in the fortigenic paradigm that were indicated by the following factors;

- **A Sense of Coherence:** That referred to a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that an individual's internal and external environments were made predictable, and that there was a high probability that things would work out well as could reasonably be expected. Theoretically therefore, individuals with high level of burnout would be expected to have a weak sense of coherence in their handling of the day-to-day activities at work.

There were three dimensions, which represented the concept of coherence in an individual. These dimensions were;

1. **Comprehensibility:** That referred to the extent to which an individual perceived stimuli from the internal and external environments as information that was ordered, structured and consistent. The stimuli were perceived here as comprehensible on a cognitive level.

2. **Manageability:** That referred to the extent to which individuals experienced events in life as situations that were endurable or manageable and could be seen as new challenges.
 3. **Meaningfulness:** That referred to the extent to which an individual felt that life made sense on an emotional and not just cognitive level.
- **Generalized Self-Efficacy:** It was described as a general, stable cognition trait that individuals held and carried with them. It reflected the expectation that individuals possessed the ability to perform the tasks successfully in a variety of situations. When there was a frequent situation-specific experience of personal success across time, an individual would experience a rise in general self-efficacy in life. The situation suggested that an individual would experience fulfillment in life or at work, and burnout could thus not easily be experienced.
 - **Locus of Control:** The situation described the perception an individual had about his/her ability to exercise control over the environment surrounding him/her. The locus control was both internally and externally based to an individual, based on an environment that affected an individual. The individual who was characterized by the internal locus of control believed he/she had control over his/her environment and his/her personal successes. The individual with the external locus of control on the other hand viewed his/her life as controlled by the external factors such as chance or powerful others, having influence over him/her. An external locus of control was associated with burnout among professional social workers, while the internal locus of control contributed toward their psychological well-being.

2.4 THE CAUSES OF BURNOUT:

2.4.1. STRESS AS A MAJOR CAUSE OF BURNOUT.

Zastrow, (1992:645), stated that; “ The professional who burns out is unable to deal successfully with the overwhelming emotional stress of a job, and this failure to cope can be manifested in a number of ways, ranging from impaired performance and absenteeism, to various types of personal problems such as drug abuse, marital problems and mental illness. ”

People who experienced burnout reflected certain symptoms that were associated with fatigue and stress.

Freudenberger, (1997:76) described the symptoms as cynicism and negativism and a tendency to be inflexible and almost rigid in thinking, which often led to a closed mind about change or innovation. Basically the stress a person felt came from two backgrounds; namely, the internal and external factors that influenced the person's life on a daily basis, whether or not an individual was alone or with others in a work environment.

Factors internal to an individual as cause for stress: The major cause of burnout was stress, which placed itself manifestly inside the psychological factors within a person. The person might burnout as a result of his lack of personal capacity to cope with the situation, or some work conditions like heavy workload and schedule, reducing the person's capacity to cope at work. Sometimes it might be a combination of many factors – internal and external to the individual – however the effect was felt and displayed by the individual as he/she tried to react to the stress condition, to make coping effective. Such states might be accompanied by physical symptoms like gastric upsets, headaches, migraines, and back pains – among the milder types. The gastric ulcers, high blood pressure, and heart diseases were some of the more severe forms of stress illnesses discovered.

Stress as caused by social interaction with the environment: A normal human being lived with an amount of stress derived from social interactions made daily. Stress was a manifestation of the activities of life from which we could not disengage and activities about which success, fame, production and all other gains were made, to sustain what we are doing. Bureaucracy was impersonal – it required that a social worker should place his/her work on rules/procedures, which more often than not might not favor the social worker based on performance of tasks and duties. When such a thing happened, the social worker would experience stress, denied him/her of coping and later resulted in burnout. Social interaction left little room for one to be totally independent from the influence of other people – more especially those in authority or those who had power and advantage over one. Reacting to situations where one needed to be subjected to authority and could not protect him/herself from such influence often landed an individual in a stressful situation.

2.4.2. WORK CONDITIONS.

2.4.2.1. Changes at the work place: Changes at the work place might cause stress to the practitioner. Such changes might be severe with time, until the practitioner lost control, resulting in him/her burning out. According to Fineman, (1985:10), “The aura of change permeated many people’s views of their organization: some as a specific feature of their stresses, most as a long standing, generalized form of ‘change shock’”. A social worker might not believe that change at the work place in terms of the structure of the building where a building was rebuilt in a different setting would contribute to service as he/she used to know. Adaptation and familiarity in the new building block might pose problems to the social worker and frustrate his/her coping at work. When that happened the practitioner could get grossly affected at work

2.4.2.2. Changes brought by changing authorities and other office-bearers: Again the coming in of the new authority figure in terms of the Director or a supervisor may pose problems to a social work practitioner who was used to the out-going incumbent. Such a change may pose challenges to the

practitioner who was used to the mannerisms and styles of the outgoing authority, but failed to adapt to the newcomer-authority because of perceptions. Such changes indicated a change in the organization's climate and it was a reorganization that required stability among social work practitioners who had to deal with the demands of work under the new authority. Inability to reintegrate and work within a changed environment indicated a 'cutting off' from the situation, which was the practitioner's perceived loss that was brought by changes he/she would naturally try to resist. When everything failed in that direction, such a change could become too difficult for the social worker to handle, and might thus result in burnout. According to Fineman, (1985:11-12), "Uncertainties about what's going to happen are so high. The impression I get is a lot of political deviousness from Director level that increases the anxiety for everyone."

2.4.2.3. The attitude of the social workers: The image of social work professional practice was often tainted by the practitioner's negative perception about how others perceived him/her. There was a feeling of being in a low profession which pervades the minds of practitioners in a probation office, interfering with the way the practitioner would deliver services to the clients, adjust himself within the agency and coped generally with the day to day work. When such a feeling came, it overcame every intention and abilities a social worker as a professional would have, and at extreme level it accounted for an excessive stress, which often resulted in burnout.

As Fineman, (1985:75) put it, "The feeling of being in a low status profession, picking up the society's human debris, was an oft repeated sentiment. It caused anguish in different ways".

2.4.2.4. Relationships with professional colleagues inside and outside the organization: Generally social workers wanted to see themselves as part of the larger society and the profession that they represented should be seen as contributing equally and being important, to boost their self-image. Every social worker therefore would resent any situation that rendered his/her

service to look like it was under-placed to other professions. When such a feeling was aroused, fueled by low self-esteem of the practitioner, the result would be low output at work, leading ultimately toward dropout absenteeism and other symptoms of burnout at work. The attitude may be made partly by the public toward the probationers work. In other instances it might be prompted by the attitude of other agencies with which collaboration was sort to help clients. The social workers in those settings might act indifferently or directly rebuke or seek to undermine the practitioner's profession. The experience often created an imbalanced feeling and it accounted for lack of co-operation and working together necessary to facilitate client-services. According Fineman, (1985:77); "Typical descriptions cited the Department of Health and Social Security as responding to 'just another bloody social worker'; the police viewing social workers as 'soft, namby pambies'; and magistrates disliking social workers because they robbed them of some of their power. Certainly court-work highlighted a struggle for recognition".

2.4.2.5. The social worker-client relationships: The social worker's relationship with the client was an important part of practice. In most instances it was the central part of social work that derived from the skills of the practitioner. Satisfaction to clients was the major function and objective of the practice. That situation might turn negative due to certain dynamics at the work place. Some of the clients might be too difficult to work with. Such a situation might end up draining the social worker's resources and rendered him /her helpless in a situation. In other instances it might be a question of a social worker being overwhelmed by the client's problem, which had semblance with the situation the social worker once had undergone or experienced. Dealing with such a situation often left the social worker fatigued and later the result would be burnout. Work in a multidisciplinary setting or in collaboration with other professions often resulted in a social worker being 'competitive' or 'jockeying for position or power' – an experience which usually created misunderstandings, lack of cooperation and conflict at work,

accounting for loss in morale and good working spirit among professionals. When the situation continued to be experienced for some time, the whole thing could end up in withdrawal by the social worker concerned – a thing that symptomized burnout.

According to Fineman, (1985:77); “The social worker’s view of a client’s difficulties could be very different from the doctor’s, medical consultant’s, psychiatrist’s, or some other interested party. There could then follow a contest of power, and often an ill-matched one at that”.

2.4.2.6. Preoccupation with perfection at work: Social workers were often pre-occupied with harrowing memories of fait like failure when thinking about their clients. Those memories made social workers to be extra-careful when handling client’s situations. The extra-care had negative connotations for practice, since it denied the practitioner a chance to freely engage in professional practice without fear or sense of vulnerability. Things that accounted for vulnerability included a need to avoid unnecessary error in service delivery or self-protection against a lawsuit or legal sanction.

Fineman, (1985:88) concluded that; “The consciousness of their (Social worker’s) vulnerability to stricture through legal sanctions and press inquiry was sometimes translated into fear, and elaborated self-protection. The dramatic failures were remembered, hanging like a noose above their necks”.

2.4.2.7. Burdensome workloads: Conditions at work resulted in the professionals getting stress that accumulated and could result in burnout. A professional who had a low sense of achievement, or who found that he/she was overloaded with work, could have experienced stress. When all those added to other negative experiences, the person might ultimately lose control and experienced burnout.

Maslach, (1976:19), found that; “High case loads in the helping professions are a major cause of stress, and may contribute to burnout. Burnout often becomes inevitable when the professional is forced to provide care for too many people. As the ratio increases, the result is higher and higher emotional overload until, like a wire that has too much electricity flowing through it, the worker just burns out and emotionally disconnects”.

2.4.2.8. The bureaucratic set-up in which social workers did their duties: The

bureaucratic set-up within the agency or organization where the social worker worked might be the cause of burnout. The demands placed on the social worker by bureaucracy also proved to be constricting to the social worker. The social worker was faced with the service delivery need based on face-to-face contact with clients. That situation often made clashes with the bureaucratic expectations where the social worker needed to meet the organizational objectives, over the bureaucratic conditions that limited the movement and free flow of plans with clients. For instance bureaucracy would expect the social worker to fulfill the service delivery process within a structured pattern suitable to the needs of the organization, based on authority structure and other protocol. If that situation was not done properly or on time, service to clients may suffer delay or not to be entertained. The hierarchy through which budget and other resource processes in the organization often frustrated plans of the social worker who wanted to deal with crises facing the clients as speedily as possible, only to find that there was a let-down by bureaucracy.

According to Fineman, (1985:73), “ Few social workers found it easy or comfortable to think in bureaucratic terms. Most were client-centered in their concerns and skills, which, together with their office problems, left them little surplus energy to devote to tackling a ‘faceless bureaucracy’.

Organizational factors in the workplace negatively affect workers

(social workers) in varying degrees because it constrains autonomy and promotes bureaucratization. Bureaucracy can render social workers unable to use the sophisticated techniques they have been taught.”

The work environment stressors included the following;

Unpredictable and constant changing policies, procedures and laws: The policies of the organization need to be relatively stable and permanent to allow the generations of staff to understand or get used to them, in order that they could internalize them and act them on daily or occasional basis. Any policy that was unpredictable or constantly changing could cause confusion among the social workers in the execution of their duties, and that might amount stress experienced by the social workers as they performed their duties. With time and without any improvements on the condition, social workers might experience burnout, which could result because of accumulated stress at work.

Accommodating new administrative officials and supervisory personnel: At times it could be difficult for social workers to work smoothly with the changes in supervision or management roles taking place often. A new supervisor or manager might come up with a set of procedures that might disorientate the social workers that were used to the former supervisor/manager. Misunderstanding on the basis of convention as against changes need to be managed carefully as different supervisors/managers could affect the organization differently, to the detriment of clients and direct dissatisfaction of the social workers that might land up in burnout experience, if matters deteriorated.

Increased pace or amount of work required: That situation talked about the required standard of social workers’ output, based on the amount of work and time frames to meet to achieve the set organizational goals. At times it was relatively difficult for the social workers to meet the deadlines, given high workloads and strict deadlines to furnish the output in the form of service to clients, accompanied by

month-end reports to be written. Social workers found it extremely difficult to achieve the objectives based on their two clashing roles in the organization – a thing that landed them in great depression- therewith burnout.

Changes in staff: The staff turn-over that usually characterized conditions of many organizations over time, led to the changes in staff in the organization, which often made it impossible for the social workers to form good working relationships necessary to allow team spirit and culture to control the day-to-day activities of the staff. It was observed that the organization needed positive working relationships among staff. The absence of such relationships, made possible by changing staff over time became a liability in the process of social work service rendering in an organization. That could easily lead to staff clashes at work and later when conditions worsened; burnout might follow, with a lot of staff starting to be apathetic or withdrawn form the work environment.

Inadequate resources to meet the client needs: The inadequate resources like transport, telephone or fax machine that supposed to help the social workers in facilitating the process of helping clients, often lead to frustrations and stress to the social workers. For instance four social workers sharing one pull-car to service clients found it almost impossible to perform their tasks, as there was little chance for the social workers to get the car when they needed it on time. That usually led to work stoppages that often stressed the social workers. With repeated occurrences of that nature burnout would be experienced b the social workers- a thing that even would lead to production at work deteriorating.

Office environment and general working conditions: The social workers needed a supportive atmosphere at work, which led to a warm well-coming environment so that they could be motivated to stay and improve production of the organization. Any condition of service that was contributing to social workers feeling uncomfortable usually led to disinterest and apathy among the social workers at work. Conditions of work like low salaries and heavy workloads frustrated the social workers to the level

they could not want to stay in the organization any longer – a thing that explained burnout among them.

Lack of organizational support for social workers: The organization needed to support the social workers while they performed their duties. Things like training of staff and recreational facilities needed to be availed to staff so that they could be helped to cope with work and at the same time enjoy being part of the organization. Social workers got frustrated when they saw policies of the organization become difficult to understand or apply. The above situations caused the social workers burnout experience easily because as employees they depended on the organization for their success on helping clients as well as their satisfaction in the work environment.

Low salary and lack of benefits: The salary perceived by the social workers to be low usually would cause them to become discontented. It frustrated social workers to work for a salary that they interpreted as low, compared to the amount of work they handled, which was seen as too high. The disparity between the work and salary might result in social workers seeking greener pastures somewhere as they could not tolerate little compensation for work that they performed, which they saw as too much.

Public criticism and reprimands: Social workers often got harsh criticism from the public that included other professions or certain organizations over work they did or some observable problem. More often than not that was a public rebuke which might be baseless, but was made strong by the conditions under which the social workers found themselves at work. For example social worker shad to face a number of criticism from the courts over delays in reports of child custody and the others – a thing that was often exaggerated or fairly stated, but the social worker was helpless to rectify because of the policies of his/her organization. When that happened a social worker could easily become frustrated and lose interest – a thing that obviously would spell burnout.

Finally it was the organization's duty to see to it that the welfare of its staff was taken care of all times, to ensure staff-return and the improvement in production at work. Zischka and Fox, (1983:44), asserted that; "The organizational climate which is unresponsive to the unique needs, skills, wants, values and stresses of the professionals working in it may promote burnout among its staff members."

2.4.2.9. Clients as cause of burnout: Clients also contributed toward stress of the professionals. Belligerent clients, and obnoxious clients as well as incest clients in severe abuse cases drained professional's emotions and led them to burnout. Working with clients that reminded professionals of their presently experienced difficulties was emotionally draining. The work place of the professionals sustained loses in productivity together with added costs of replacement of social workers drained in burnout.

Daniel and Rogers, (1981: 232) concluded on the point that; "Stress now contributes 90% of all diseases. Half of all visits to doctors are stress-related. Anxiety reduction may now be the largest single business in the western world."

2.4.2.10. Training of social workers as cause for burnout: At times some social workers felt that their training was not enough to allow them to cope with the immensity of service delivery. The complain usually was around the induction given to the novices; the retaining of the experienced social workers and the actual supervision leading toward the acquisition of skills and more specialized knowledge of the social work profession. Supervisors were reluctant to organize necessary training sessions properly, or the situation might be that there were no proper resources or time allocated fairly for that need. When the social work practitioner realized a lack in skill or knowledge, or when anything happened at work resulting in blame to the social worker, tensions begun to develop and the social worker would easily loose interest at work, therewith a growing sense of self-neglect, ultimately leading toward burnout.

Fineman, (1985:82), gave an account of trainees in the Department of Health and Welfare in Britain as once complained that there was an inadequate organizational bridging

between training and the job, which was described by some social work trainees as lacking – where few induction procedures and little support or supervision were done.

2.4.3. THE MAIN CONTRIBUTORS TO BURNOUT.

According to Maslach, (1982:69), the factors that contributed mainly to burnout in the work environment included the following situations;

Administrative inefficiencies: Those might be reflected in the way a social worker happened to make wrong judgments, confused clients' records or generalized treatment of clients without recognizing the client's self-determination or personality differences. Such an experience might have made a social worker to feel small when confronted by the supervisor. With repeated incidences of that nature, the social worker might have his/her spirit dampened at work, with the possibility for heightened stress, and later burnout.

Incompetent management: Supervision at work might lead to a number of errors in training, which were done to the detriment of work and the social work staff. A supervisor may struggle to keep the staff morale up and contributed toward the staff losing direction and control at work. Lack of clarity on procedures and authority might incapacitate the supervisor in making appropriate judgement and decisions about the work and staff matters – leading to such problems as back logs in output and delays in service rendering. A social worker under such supervision might find it hard to cope, and with increases in the incidence of that nature, stress might result, leading the social worker to lose interest, therewith the possibility of burnout.

Poor interpersonal relationships: The relationships among staff and between staff and management were important to determine the direction of the organization toward goal attainment. Poor relationships as a result of

inconsistencies in staff appraisal and bad management often confused purpose and led toward staff morale declining. When staff morale was down, production also declined – a thing that often accounted for stress and strive at work. With incidences of that nature accumulating, burnout was more likely to be experienced among staff.

Lack of transparency by managers: Lack of transparency in an organization might lead to distrust and resistance by social work professionals when executing their activities. In a big organization staff relationships were diffuse, relating to each other and toward authorities through setup bureaucratic norms. That situation stifled the relationships of staff and created bottlenecks toward the in-flow and out-flows of information affecting the clients. When that happened the staff might feel left out or neglected – a thing that might lead toward stress among them, and later burnout.

Lack of incentives and recognition of efficient work by social workers: Social workers like any other workers required recognition and acknowledgement of their effort at work. That would serve as a motivational factor to help social workers to improve their productivity. When incentives and recognition of staff efforts were low or absent by management, staff might begin to feel rejected. That feeling, when cumulative may result in staff totally losing morale and degenerating into inactivity. Over time with no improvement on side, the staff concerned would easily get worn out or burned out.

Absence of professional support systems for the needy professionals: The work situation should be organized and structured along the staff needs. The organization therefore supposed to provide for staff needs in the areas of recreation, health and welfare – socially appealing to the staff needs at work to ensure they were motivated at work. The absence of such provision made staff feel neglected and less wanted – a thing that might lead to staff turnover or

admiring outside organizations to the detriment of their own organization. The psychological problem associated with that situation translated into the staff being indifferent and uncooperative at times – increasing tensions that ultimately could lead to clashes that easily ended up draining the staff emotions while at work.

2.4.4. THE GENERAL EFFECTS OF BURNOUT.

Burnout has serious consequences both to the social workers and the work environment. According to Daniels and Rogers, (1981:232); “The work place of the professionals sustains losses in productivity together with costs of replacement of staff drained of burnout.” The same authors further asserted that; “The stress now contributes 90% of all the diseases. Half of all visits to doctors are stress related. Anxiety reduction may now be the largest single business in the western world.”

2.4.5. BURNOUT EFFECTS ON THE WORKPLACE.

The following were among the factors that were affected when burnout took place among professionals;

Loss in production and productivity: Burnout effect in the work environment affected production and productivity of the organization. If the social workers experienced difficulties in terms of high and unmanageable levels of stress, the effect of such a development would be translated into loss for the organization, which took account of what social workers did. Added to that loss in production was the accompanying loss in the ability of the organization to account for the overall factors that contribute toward production, i.e. productivity of the organization that was calculated on the process, rather than the end-result of the process, which in that case was production itself.

High staff turnover: That referred to loss in crucial staff members of the organization, usually led by disgruntlement of staff over conditions of work, or any other reasons. Staff turn-over was seen as a liability for almost every organization, such that it was always necessary for the managers to prevent such an experience or phenomenon taking place in the organization, when the opportunity arose. Losing a number of social workers in the organization would spell a disaster in that organization, and the tendency for managers was to curtail that process as much as they possibly could. Staff turnover indicated high potential for burnout among staff members in an organization.

Accumulation in negative work incidences: Accumulation in negative work incidences referred to the situation where, due to the presence of certain stressful situations among the staff at work, there developed some incidences that usually became negative because of relationship breakdown among staff members. Such scenario might indicate the level of tension at which the staff worked, as it was often followed by burnout experienced by the staff at the work place.

Relationship breakdown among staff: That alluded to the misunderstandings and lack of cooperation among the staff at the work place, due to a deliberate intention to disengage from the organization as a functional group. Relationship breakdown usually spelled confusion and chaos at work, as some of the essential services were inevitably the product of an established network of collaboration, cooperation and teamwork. When the factors mentioned did not exist or were weak for one reason or another, progress at work place was to be seen as a pipe dream. Burnout at the workplace among social workers therefore was an antithesis of good working relationships.

2.4.6. THE EFFECTS OF BURNOUT AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS

Burnout effects on the social work professionals were found centered on the following factors that were common features among social workers affected with burnout at their

workplaces;

Feeling of oppression among the social workers: The feeling of oppression referred to the perception that social workers were being deliberately denied opportunities they deserved at the work place. Working under a difficult supervisor or not receiving promotion when one thought he/she deserved that, might cause a social worker to feel oppressed at work – a feeling of discrimination related to a demand that perceived to be of value to one. A feeling of discrimination or oppression might be cited as a form of protest to engage meaningfully into work, resulting from a social worker's burnout experience at work

Adoption of 'I don't-care-attitude' by professionals: The attitude referred to a detached sense of engagement when a social worker adopted a negative attitude toward work and toward anything that related to his/her duties. It was a common feeling of dejection and worklessness that pervaded a social worker who was drained and screwed-up to a high degree indicating he/she was totally burnout. Adopting that attitude meant the social worker was totally hopeless to a point of no return.

Diminishing interest on work and among colleagues: The condition alluded to a situation where a social worker was degenerating due to some stumbling block to his/her coping mechanism at work, usually when certain conditions like salary could not satisfy her/his aspirations. That would call for a loss in motivation, resulting in the social worker being disinterested at work and its environment. Such a diminishing interest invited a feeling in a social worker of being withdrawn and psychologically misplacing his/her energies at work, while he/she could spend more energy on something different, especially anything that rebelled against the mainstream work objectives.

Increase in temperament: Increase in temperament suggested that the social worker who was affected by burnout in the workplace was prone to maladjustment of a personality that could turn to be violent, reckless, irritable and argumentative. All

these qualities were a defection of normal behavior, and helped the incumbent to uphold a negative personality. When that happened a social worker could no longer become rational in her/his behavior, symptomizing burnout from such a person.

General feelings of sickness: A depressed social worker at work suffering from burnout was apt to feel uneasy and his/her health could more often than not deteriorate into illness symptoms that could be observed. Feeling a profuse headache that could not seize to give pain to the social worker due to over stretched thoughtful processes in the individual, might land the individual in hospital, treated medically while that origin of the illness was in burnout. Psychosomatic disorders in individuals were sicknesses that had their origins traced from sheer social problems as interpreted and perceived by culprits. While one would need medicine to recover from the illness, social contact at work might need to be changed or improved so that the causal factor/s should be addressed, for the individual to be relieved totally from such burnout.

Despondency and lack of concentration: Here the conditions refer to a feeling of dejection and doubtfulness that culminated in making the social worker to losing focus at work and generally disengaged him/herself from the major activities of the organization. That also spelled the social worker was over saturated; meaning that there was no space in him/her that could accommodate anything to do with work. In that scenario the social worker would have lost direction and purpose at work – a thing that spelled burnout.

Dwindling self-esteem and negligence at work: The condition referred to a situation where a social worker deteriorated to an extent where a sense of identity was no longer important in the social worker's life. The social worker became a care-free person; neglecting his/her responsibilities at work and feeling no challenge in his/her consciousness. The self-esteem was important for a social worker to account for what and how, as well as why he/she did what she/he did at work – something that made the social worker attach some value and meaning in her/his work choices. Failure to do

that implied the social; worker was so burned out that he/she could not make any judgment about things at work.

General absenteeism from work: Absenteeism was a condition of staying away from work without any responsible reason or intention to do so, followed by a sense of withdrawal that was usually accompanied by a feeling of dejection and hopelessness at work. It was a severe form of burnout where 'I don't care attitude' begun to work the social worker out. Calculated on the basis of production, absenteeism was interpreted as a great loss in terms of production decline and the slump in the organization's mission and objectives. Generally no organization could survive with the rate of absenteeism of its staff members.

Indulgence or over-indulgence in substance abuse like liquor and/or drugs: Social workers, out of being stressed at work, might turn to drugs or liquor or any substances that were aimed at solacing the individual out of stress for a while. Individuals who preferred to escape from any condition that challenged them, to ensure strain reduction in the effect of burnout experienced, usually showed such tendencies. Unfortunately such indulgences in drugs or liquor or any such substances was a fake romance of hopeful recovery from stress, but a self-destructive effort which landed an individual in deeper personal problems.

2.5. RECOMMENDATIONS: How to manage stress – a possibility for ending burnout.

There was a need to eliminate burnout in order to allow the social worker's to cope with their work, and with their social and family lives. To achieve that suggested first that stress should be managed. That should be accompanied by identifying a source of threat within the personality of a social worker, to expose vulnerabilities that stood on the way of the social worker to cope at work.

2.5.1. Prevention as a proactive measure to end burnout: Preventing burnout was better than cure, under normal, favorable circumstances. In the 7th Annual Conference on coping with burnout in Johannesburg, Malan and Rothmann, (2001:Agust) stated that; “Prevention is better than cure.” Maintaining a healthy life-style should help social workers to avoid illnesses and situations that predisposed them to burnout. Coupled with that recommendation was that social scientists and practitioners like social workers in management positions should understand burnout and its contributing factors so that they could assist organizations to utilize the potential of all employees effectively, and offer them assistance through counseling and motivation wherever needed. The situation should help arrest helplessness and boost the morale of social workers to maintain their health and well being generally.

2.5.2. Strategies for coping with burnout: There was a need to develop a strategy for social workers to cope at work, so that they could outlive the effect of burnout that incapacitated them during work. Cilliers, (2002), at the 1st Burnout Conference in Potchestroom, recommended three levels at which coping with burnout could be maintained. Those included;

2.5.2.1. The Individual Level: The individual was said to have the responsibility to recognize the signs and symptoms of burnout in order to cope with it. Coping in that sense was defined as both intra-personal and action-oriented efforts to manage the environmental and the internal demands and conflicts among social workers, which taxed or exceeded a social worker’s resourcefulness. Intra-personally an individual should use such resources as awareness, taking responsibility to do something about burnout; understanding the issue and developing new tools to improve the situation. The coping strategies here might be two fold; namely direct action strategy and palliation strategy. Firstly, Direct action; which referred to taking direct action in which an individual tried to master the stressful transaction with the environment. Secondly, palliation strategy; in which an individual attempted to reduce the disturbance when he/she was unable to manage the environment, or the individual’s internal self.

2.5.2.2. The Inter-personal Level: The coping strategy referred to having and using social support systems defined as networks of occupational relationships and mechanisms. Examples like offering therapy, exercise/recreation etc, which equaled the affirmation or acknowledgement of appropriate behavior and direct aid to individuals, would be useful in that regard. The situation allowed for interaction of social workers to intensify their cooperation and team building during work, by reducing stress and anxiety created by working as a group.

2.5.2.3. The Organizational Level: That referred to the organizational structure that dealt with the needs of staff. It was assumed here that the environment and the state of the organization could account for the health and performance of social work staff. Any stress accumulated by a person could be associated with the health of the organization's environment. It was thus strongly recommended that the organizational environment should meet with the basic health requirements of its employees, to stimulate the performance for improved productivity and satisfaction at work. Occupational health could be improved through organizational development i.e. offering such development programmes to change or adjust the attitudes of the employees could be achieved. Among others situations related to the above; to reduce staff-client ratios; making 'time-out' offers; limiting hours of stressful work; training staff; improving working conditions and offering burnout workshops, were best possible mechanisms or options suggested to improve the work situation.

2.5.3. Other general strategies to reduce burnout: Among the general strategies recommended to manage stress and possibly reduce burnout effect were the following:

The social worker should be encouraged to think positively all the time: A social worker experiencing burnout interpreted the world around him/herself negatively and everything that came his/her way was seen in a negative way. The person could hardly believe in him/herself and what he/she could achieve. Life was simply

horrible. Zastrow, (1992:650) asserted that; “ The positive thinking philosophy asserts that taking a positive view and positive action will lead to others liking you, your being appreciated, your liking yourself, your being productive and creative, your having a pleasant disposition, and good things happening to yourself.” Concluding the remark, the same writer asserted that people under stress could reduce stress either by changing their thoughts and perceptions about the events.

The professional needed to develop a sense of identity: That referred to a sense of self in the environment of confusion and complexities. That sense of self helped a person to be proud and want to achieve goals without limiting his/her ability or potential that was buried in perceptions about self. Zastrow, (1992:656), stated; “Identity is having a sense of who we are, a knowledge and a feeling of the ways in which we are separate, distinct persons”.

The professional was encouraged to change the thoughts that produced burnout: Irrational thoughts and other misperceptions about work and life needed to be avoided and the professional should begin to think only about those things that encouraged him/her in life. The ability of the social worker to adapt to new situations and develop strong coping mechanism during trying times, could afford professional social workers an opportunity to avoid stress, and thus became safe from burnout

Professionals needed to engage in social activities: Engaging in leisure activities like sport, culture and recreation would help improve social workers’ social lives. Interposing work with leisure had been positive in contributing toward positively thinking individuals, healthy and confident in approach in most respects. Leisure time might include playing games, going to cinema or singing in a choir. Schaufel (1978:69) indicated that; “Stress reduces stress; that is, an appropriate amount of stressful activities in one area (such as playing tennis) help reduce excessive stress in others”.

Professionals should get used to relaxation: Too often burnout resulted from overloading oneself with work or working continuously without a break. Relaxing suggested taking time off work. That was so because the body could cope by taking a certain amount of pressure and could not cope beyond its capacities. Thompson, (1994:83) stated on that; “Relaxation suggests disengaging purposefully to ease pressure of the mind and/or the body from demands placed on a person by tasks performed by him. The aim is to rebuild the energies and readiness to resume tasks more prepared later on.”

2.6. FINAL REMARKS.

There was an acknowledgement by many authors that not all social work professionals experienced burnout. That was so because individuals were different and the way they experienced stress, and reacted to it was different. A social work professional would have a stressful situation at work, but managed to cope with it, while another practitioner with the same stressful condition, and under the same working conditions, would fail to control the situation, landing the practitioner ultimately in burnout.

The researcher believed that all social workers, like all human beings, experienced stress several times in their lives – sometimes many times a day, depending how much one worked and contacts he/she made. That stress would be inevitable – tied directly to the daily chores and routines of professional work one did at the work place. It was generally accepted that a certain amount of stress was needed to cope with the work one did, serving here as a motivation for a practitioner to succeed on his/her work. That amount of stress would be manageable, tolerable and limited for it to cause any harm to the professional doing his/her work.

As Hilman, (1985:17) put it, “At this point, stress may be unavoidable – it is an unpleasant fact of life, in the short term at least.”

However conditions may change, with time the stress level rose, requiring the practitioner to have strong resistance. For those whose resistance was lower, that indicated the

condition of stress that was overpowering to them, simply because they could not take it any longer. The end-result of that process could be burnout experienced by the social worker that signified a high state of tension or burnout.

2.7. CONCLUSION.

The literature review was based on burnout, which was a condition of high tension that resulted from extreme stress among social workers in their work place. The cause of that burnout was traced among a number of factors including working conditions, personality of a professional based on his/her perceptions about the work environment, and the conditions at home which interfered with the professional work done by the social worker at the work place. The work also looked into some of the basic theories of burnout, explaining burnout within the context of a working environment of the social worker, and the personal state of affairs of such a practitioner. Finally, suggestions were made of how to manage stress in order that a social worker could overcome the burnout effect, to allow for a free work environment of improved working conditions and productivity.

Health Education Authority Report, (1988:10-12), sited on their concluding remarks that; “Perhaps the greatest significance of this case lies in the way it demonstrates the need to recognize the seeds of stress at many levels, in families, social workers, managers and in the operation of a department. There is then a consequent duty to seek to remedy the causes of that stress”

Perhaps it would make sense, on the researcher’s final note in Chapter Two of the research, to chose the following poetic words that spelled how it felt to experience burnout: Walt Whitman, (1819 – 1892); cited in Russell (1930: 7), as quoted by Professor Willmar Schaufelli in the 1st Conference of Burnout in Potchestroom, (2002:March), reflected in a poem;

“I think I could turn and live with animals,
They are so placid and self-contained.



I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition.

They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins.

They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God.

Not one is dissatisfied, not one is deened with the mania of owning things.

Not one kneels to another, not to his kind that lived thousand of years ago.

Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.”

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. INTRODUCTION.

The following work dealt with how the researcher planned the process of data collection and subsequent data analysis, on the study of burnout, as it affected social workers in their places of work. The work included the methodology or the perspective through which research was carried out in dealing with data from the respondents. The researcher relied heavily on the qualitative method of data collection. The researcher also carried out sampling. For ethical considerations, the researcher had to ensure that the work done was in line with expectations of research as conducted in social sciences; i.e. consideration of factors such as safeguarding the interests of respondents and dealing with the work professionally. Some of the limitations of the study were highlighted, as well as the research strategies used.

3.2. RESEARCH STRATEGY.

The researcher chose a strategy based on the qualitative research approach. The research model was chosen as a strategy in dealing with the issues, concerns, needs or problems that arose as a routine part of activity in the real world. The target in research was to engage social studies with the intention to establish facts about them – facts that in turn should be used to alter conditions in favor of improvements in a situation. Denscombe, (1998:57), asserted that; “The thinking here is that research should not only be used to gain a better understanding of problems which arise in everyday practice, but actual set out to alter things”.

The model was particularly useful in research concerning an organization or institution that involved activities of various sorts, where the respondents became an important part

of the research as directly linked to the activity that took place in the organization. In the study of burnout undertaken by the researcher, the research strategy was geared toward the social services departments mentioned in chapter one of the study. Here the researcher set up communication channels between himself and the respondents strategically, involving the respondents, rather than only taking them as mere respondents for furnishing information on research. In other words, the process of research as based on that strategy became an on-going or evolving process of discovery and activity.

There were four defining characteristics of research strategy that were important in qualitative research process worth noting; as seen by the writer, Denscombe, (1998:57-58);

- **Research strategy or model was practical in its application:** The research was aimed at dealing with real issues and problems typically at work and in organizations. It involved itself directly with what the respondents did, highlighting their attitudes, emotions and problems as real work issues.
- **Research advocated for change:** The model dealt with practical situations that involved real problems, which should be studied and discoveries made about phenomenon investigated – a process that would culminate in action to change the condition, assisted by facts obtained from the study.
- **Research was cyclical in nature:** The approach was cyclical in nature because research contained material that was used to advocate for change, and once that change was achieved, the research had further ground to evaluate progress and make feedback, which contained prelude material for further investigation.
- **Research encouraged participation by respondents:** Passivity was discouraged by the model in research, and advocated for participation by the respondents that were taken as important elements of the research process that affected their lives. For instance, in social work practice the model was most suitable as the

profession believed that people, be they clients, respondents or any other persons, could not be used as guinea pigs in the process of research, but had to be respected, and actually allowed full participation to share in the research process that affected their lives.

In the study of burnout, the researcher sought to, using the model discussed above, complete the research on the basis of findings from the respondents, and recommend action to address the burnout experience by social workers at their places of work. The outcome of the research may, if successful and accepted, serve as a means to minimize or contain burnout among the social workers in the population stated in chapter one of the study. Another instance may be to target tertiary institutions as was outlined in the objectives of research in chapter one, where the students of social work could be engaged to obtain information to arm themselves in preventing burnout in their future practice, to prosper, as potential social work professionals.

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN.

The qualitative research method was employed for the study based on the explorative/descriptive design. Denscombe, (1998:207), wrote that qualitative research method was concerned basically with two things in its data analysis process;

- **A concern with meanings and the way respondents understood things:** The way respondents understood and felt about burnout as experienced by them at the workplace, was important because that would assist the researcher ultimately in drawing factual conclusions from the findings.
- **Concern with patterns of behavior of respondents:** Behavior of the respondents was important in data analysis. Using a qualitative method of data analysis was to ensure that the relationships at work, beliefs, attitudes and mannerisms among the respondents were considered valuable action-forming and event-producing factors. The patterns of behavior of respondents directed the researcher in

evaluating and assessing the nature of burnout as it affected the respondents at work. Also important was the environment in which the respondents reflected their behavior, in order to come up with complete findings on the study.

Hakim, (1997:26), also stated that qualitative research method was concerned with the researcher's own account of attitudes, motivations and behaviors of the respondents, and had the following useful qualities;

- Qualitative research was extremely valuable in identifying patterns of associations between factors on the ground of study, as compared to general abstractions obtained from an analysis of aggregate data.
- Again it could offer substantively different and complementary information on the attitudes and experiences of respondents that meaningfully cohered to yield a complete data for the findings in the research being conducted.
- It could be used for preliminary exploratory work before mounting any large scale or more complex study; and,
- It could be used in the development of theory to facilitate general knowledge or future studies intended by the researcher.

According to Mouton and Marais (1990:204); "Qualitative research is based on induction, holism and subjectivism". Its strategy is inductive in that the researcher attempts to understand a situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the setting. Usually qualitative research design begins with a specific observation, using an exploratory design, and build ups toward the general patterns where the researcher could be exposed to a broad information base. In the study of burnout among social workers, the concern may start with social workers needs at work, and continue to touch on policy issues affecting the agency situations, whereupon recommendations may be channeled to solve an array of problems situations.

The purposes of an exploratory design in qualitative research, according to Babbie, (1998:90), are;

- To satisfy the curiosity and desire of the researcher for better understanding of the phenomenon under study.
- To have a fairly large base of study field to enable the researcher to acquire extensive knowledge on the subject under investigation.
- To have an opportunity based on the knowledge acquired, to prepare work for future study.

Qualitative research provided an opportunity for the researcher to talk to social workers directly to hear their views on burnout. The researcher could gain information by posing probing questions, which were aimed at eliciting enough information from the respondents. Respondents were given latitude to expand extensively on their responses, so that a large base of response-information could be gathered, for final preparation of data. In this way the researcher could come close to the social workers in order that he could understand their meanings, attitudes and nature in general. The researcher thus asked those who were studied (the respondents) to become instructors to him/her in the ways of life they found meaningful. Spradley in Ely, (1999:60).

In the study of burnout among social workers, the qualitative exploratory/descriptive design should enable the researcher to identify the patterns of associations of factors among the respondents, based on how burnout affected them. The experiences of the respondents at work should be explored, to check how such experiences at work accounted for stress, which ultimately caused burnout among social workers in their duties. Again, the impact of burnout on the work environment, including production and productivity, should be assessed; as it is important to determine the role social workers played in various organizations they were stationed. According to Babbie (1998:91);

“Descriptive research (method) provides detailed descriptions of the setting being investigated”.

3.4. SAMPLING PROCEDURES.

According to Ely et al, (1999:65), a sampling strategy by the researcher, is intended broadly to facilitate a process wherein the researcher can generate and test theory from the analysis of the respondents' data. The strategy here implied that the researcher could take the sampling decisions prior to the generation and subsequent analysis of data, indicating independent stages in the research process.

A decision was therefore taken by the researcher beforehand to consult with the social work agencies in order to determine, out of the feelings of the social workers, what appropriate questions ought to be asked, and how much relevance these questions would have on the research being conducted. Fortunately, some of the respondents were students at the university where the researcher worked, and it was thus easy for the researcher to communicate with them in this prior investigation and gain a feel for the problems experienced by such social workers. The plans made by the researcher took into consideration all the meetings of social workers and forums where the respondents deliberated on issues of concern in social work. Other information about social work service delivery and important documents on practice was also obtained from social workers to help formulate the structure of questions to be asked.

Random non-probability sampling was selected as a method of sampling to investigate the social workers from a population of the area between East London and Adelaide in the Social Services Departments and other Non-Governmental Organizations – in the Eastern Cape Province. Random non-probability sampling was seen as the best method to strengthen objectivity on the part of the researcher by preventing bias and ensured that a broad spectrum of social workers was included in the sample without qualification or limitation. All the respondents were selected randomly without classification or categorization, using a diary of all the social workers (obtained initially from the

Provincial conference of Social Workers) in the sampled area. The researcher selected every fifth social worker (from the first to the last in the row) from the diary of the social workers in the targeted area.

The choice of the area where sampling was made included Adelaide, Fort Beaufort, Alice, Middledrift, King Williamstown, Zwelitsha, East London and Mdantsane districts. These areas were thought to be suitable for conducting the research on the following grounds;

- Availability of resources (social work agencies/organizations) to facilitate the research being conducted,
- Accessibility of the centers/organizations to assist the researcher on cost-effective objectives, and.
- The researcher had an advantage of knowing the background of the sampled area since he worked in it for some time.

A sample of thirty social workers was chosen to represent the population of all the social workers in the social services departments mentioned above. The researcher was satisfied with the sample size, which was carefully assessed and was made from a relatively small population. It was hoped by the researcher that the sample chosen would yield reliable information from the social workers as respondents in those areas. The sample included social workers from all the Government organizations (all agencies in the above-mentioned districts and the Courts), and Non-Governmental Organizations like the National Institute of Crime and the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NICRO).

3.5. SAMPLING TOOLS.

The researcher considered the questionnaire, as a mode and an instrument to explore, identify and define all action required of the respondents. The questionnaire used was

attached as appendix in the research work. In the cases where questionnaires might fail to elicit information required from the respondents, due to difficulties in the postal system or any other problem/s, special arrangement in terms of a telephonic interview could be considered. That could constitute a form of qualitative interview intended, as thought by Baxter, Hughes and Tight (1996:182), to make it possible for the respondents to offer more elaborate texts and clarified versions of their experiences. Burgess in Mason, (1998:42), called this “a conversation with purpose”. Qualitative interviews might add an additional dimension to the burnout study, or might help the researcher to approach the questions from another angle and in depth.

The researcher relied mostly on open-ended questions to ensure that the respondents gave in-depth answers. Open-ended questions helped to explore deeper what the respondents felt about the subject being investigated. Closed questions could be asked in specific cases to target only those situations where specific information was required, to qualify data. In this study the researcher concentrated more on open-ended questions. Selected closed questions were asked to acquire knowledge like age, sex, years of service of respondents, marital status and other such special information, which were thought to be relevant in the process of the study.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The researcher assured the respondents of confidentiality to guide the process through which a relationship was built between the researcher and the respondents. Such confidentiality was necessary in conducting research, shared Creswell (1994:147-148), for the following reasons;

- The respondents needed protection to freely and limitlessly respond to the questions of research being asked in the questionnaire. The researcher made sure such an important aspect of communication in research was dealt with.

- The researcher, as a practicing professional was bound and guided by the values of ethical code to which his practice was bound. Everything, including the research being conducted, was limited to the code of ethics as a requirement of standard practice to all professionals – where confidentiality formed a core value.
- The researcher needed to maintain good relationships with the respondents and the employers of the respondents in various social service departments, in order to guide and enable positive future transactions based on research needs or any other contacts of professional value to the research.

To guarantee respondents of confidentiality, the researcher endeavored to consult with management of social workers where permission was requested to access records at their workplace, and also at any other places where help could be found such as the University library. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that every response should be taken care of; to ascertain that the study produced only the intended results of research, based on the subject being investigated. The researcher also had to assure the respondents that their condition/situation at work could not be changed by their cooperation and participation in the research.

3.7. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS/INTEPRETATION.

3.7.1. COLLECTION OF DATA.

The questionnaire method was selected on the study of burnout among social workers as it had, on a large scale, an advantage of;

- Large coverage on the population being studied,
- Cost-effectiveness when compared with other modes of interview, and,
- Helping limit generalizability among the responses from the respondents.

The questionnaire was sent to the respondents containing a set of formal questions carefully assessed to illicit the relevant information from them. The questionnaire was a formal interview model attempting to extract only those responses that could help establish more about the nature of burnout among social workers.

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire had to be assessed by the researcher to ensure that data collected suited the requirements of the subject under study. The researcher on the process of assessment confirmed the following conditions;

- **On reliability:** Reliability, according to Babbie, (1998:129), was seen as a matter of whether a particular technique like a questionnaire could serve the research – applied repeatedly to the same object – and come to yield the same result each time it was used. It was observed by the researcher that the questions put to the respondents were reliable since the respondents showed consistency in the way they responded to certain questions. Again reliability was confirmed through a standardized set of questions, formalized to encourage the responses to tackle the topic of the subject studied without much deviance. Consistency in answering was confirmed by the researcher when analyzing data.
- **On validity:** According to Lee, (1993:100), validity referred to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflected the real meaning of the concept under consideration. Validity therefore aimed at minimizing or eliminating bias in research process. The researcher had used his professional judgment to check on validity of the instruments/tools of sampling, to prevent bias of any sort. The questionnaire was tested prior to circulation to the respondents by crosschecking certain meanings and vocabulary used, as well as maintaining consistency in the questions asked, in order that their validity could be ascertained.

The questionnaire had to be specific enough for certain answers to be targeted from the respondents. The researcher was especially interested in establishing how the social workers felt about their situation at work prompting the design of questions relevant to

the respondents' feelings on burnout. These included questions regarding relationships at work; among social workers and supervisors/managers, and social workers themselves as colleagues. Another interest was based on the effect burnout had on production in the work place, and how that affected social work progress with the clients the social workers served.

3.7.2. DATA ANALYSIS/INTERPRETATION.

Data analysis was handled using the qualitative research procedure. Ely, (1991:111), believed that to analyze was to find some ways to separate out what the researcher considered to have essential meaning in the raw data provided by the respondents. This could be achieved by reducing, organizing and/or combining the information from the raw data, to allow the researcher to have readable findings that were in order, understandable and economical. The work should present the findings, which can be shared in the end by many consumers of research. This suggested therefore, that considerable organization of data received from the respondents was necessary before any meaningful analysis of that data could be made.

The process of data analysis followed in this research process was in the following order;

- **Encoding the data:** Encoding of data that referred to a process of putting data into categories that brought together similar ideas, concepts or themes. Babbie, (1998:362). That also meant organizing data into steps or stages that could bring logic and consistency of thought flow in the facts presented. Rubin and Rubin, (1995:230) saw that process as re-assembling the information into themes and arguments that could be examined and compared with other information put into the same category, and later expanded such comparison onto other information.
- **Clarification of concepts used in data collection:** The meanings of concepts should be clarified to make everything understandable without difficulty, to enhance readership by consumers of research. Concepts and/or terms used should

be simplified, and texts and words in the research should be unambiguous to allow easy reading, especially to those who should use the research. The researcher made sure the questions were concise and clear for the respondents.

- **Interpretation of data:** Interpretation of data involved the process of deductive reasoning where data comparison was made by the researcher to ensure clarity over the real meaning of the findings. It involved the researcher carefully checking the authenticity of data presented by the respondents, given what the researcher wanted to determine from the research. This also meant checking reliability of such data. Data interpretation also dealt with the selection of useful responses against any irrelevant matter, ensuring that information received should keep track with the topic of discussion. As Rubin and Rubin, (1995:230) put it; “After doing the entire grouping, the researcher worked on figuring out the theoretical or policy implications of the data, what broader questions could be answered, and what insights could be provided”.
- **Making a summary of data collected:** Making a summary suggested coming with a statement that could be reliable in terms of the expected findings of research. The researcher would be attempting to draw conclusions from statements presented, logically, to deduct meaning from the responses. The summary contained the assertion by the researcher based on his convictions and expectations of the research. However, the summary might still need to be tested, and thus further comparison could be made, to concretize the facts of data available.
- **Qualification of data findings against the statement of research:** This suggests presentation of final data as findings by the researcher after organizing the data. The findings need to correlate with and confirm the statement of researcher to ensure that all data collected could then be summarized through the selection of the most needed information, which then should be qualified against the statement

of research. In that way the research could be ready for presentation to the public or consumers of research.

The researcher used qualitative data because he believed it to be more insightful, interesting and flexible than a quantitative method. The general meaning of events was more easily grasped through a qualitative data gathering method than through quantitative design. As a result it was possible to discover the feelings of the respondents on burnout as experienced by them, as well as other emotions accompanying the way the respondents reacted to various situations at work., The method was flexible enough to allow the researcher to probe deeper into the behaviors of the respondents, and to detect how they felt about certain things at work. The qualitative method of data collection therefore assisted the researcher in finding a broad base from which to draw the conclusions of the research presented.

3.8. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS.

One of the limitations of research in general is generalization of the research findings by the researcher. Generalization prevents the researcher from seeing objectively through the research process, and causes misdirected findings, as the researcher may lose the main frame of information. To avoid problems related to generalization in this study, the researcher sought to:

- Become aware of what kinds of explanations the researcher attempted to construct on the sampling process.
- Understand the relationships between theory (on the part of the subject being investigated) and the responses on data collected from the respondents.
- Understand the relevance of research in the public domain as a public concern.

Some researchers such as Hammersley in Ley, (1998:160), with whom this researcher agrees, believe that all qualitative research should be relevant to some public concern. This meaning that research should appeal to the consumers of research and all other interested parties to an extent that it became public property, satisfying to all necessary requirements for such a broad position. This requires that the researcher ensured the following, in order that his research could be effective:

- The researcher should think carefully and act strategically when constructing research and making general statements. False or inappropriate generalizations could hamper the research content.
- Such generalizations as might be made, should be framed in such a way that it fitted into the wider set of issues or questions (public domain) as a matter of legitimate public concern. Lee, (1998:161)

On the other hand, the respondents might generalize their responses due to prejudice or fear of incriminating themselves before their employers, choosing to give general rather than factual accounts of real work issues. That problem might be created by conditions of mistrust on the part of the respondents to their supervisors or management at work. The researcher attempted to avoid this situation by assuring respondents of confidentiality, with an emphasis, deemed to maintain objectivity throughout the research process.

It was found in some cases that respondents were working in agency settings where there was no provision for telephone or computer equipment. Such lack of important facilities could easily have hampered the research process. It was also noted that some of the social workers had reservations on the way the postal system operated in their area because some of reports of other mailed documents getting lost, and the slowness of the system in delivering letters or parcels. The researchers chose to hand-deliver the questionnaires in these areas, rather than post them, and ensured that later he physically collected the completed questionnaires, to ensure a smooth process of data collection.

3.9. CONCLUSION.

The researcher carried out the research using a qualitative research method of data analysis. The questionnaires were prepared and sent to thirty respondents from various social services departments where they worked as social workers in different job categories. Twenty of such respondents returned their responses, which was taken as a fair sample to represent the population of social workers in the social services centers mentioned formerly. Reliability and validity of questions in the questionnaire were assessed before the questionnaires could be sent out to the respondents. The researcher was careful in choosing the relevant questions to be asked, so that the research could be direct and guided, as was the requirement of the qualitative research method. According to Ely, (1999:60); “ It is more difficult when what is being said strikes a chord, a chord we wish to share because we have been there, and because researchers sometimes develop warm ties with the people (respondents) they are studying”.

The researcher, using the qualitative method of data analysis, then worked on data gathered from the respondents, to prepare the findings. The law of confidentiality governing the professional conduct on research was observed and the respondents were assured of confidentiality in handling their responses. There was careful organization of the responses, with the researcher summarizing the responses to arrive at the anticipated findings. Comparison of data gathered was made, correlating such data with the theory information about the subject of study, in order that a summary of such a process could help generate useful findings.

The limitations of research were addressed. The researcher dealt with, among others, the limitation based of generalization as often made by the respondents and researchers in any research study conducted. A method to counteract such limitations was implemented by the researcher where the questionnaires contained the types of questions that directed the respondents toward more specific answers. After carefully sorting out and organizing data, and after crosschecks were made on validity and reliability of sampling

tools/instruments, the researcher then completed the process and made research findings finally available.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. INTRODUCTION.

The objective in this section was to work with data collected from the respondents on the subject of burnout. The intention was to determine whether the data collected supported the hypothesis that the working conditions of the social workers had a direct effect on burnout. The social workers interviewed all worked in the social services organizations in the aforementioned districts of the Eastern Cape Province. The researcher applied the qualitative research method of data collection, aiming to gain knowledge of the respondent's feelings and attitudes toward burnout.

Some of the data has been presented in the form of tables to compare and contrast it with any categorization or encoding necessary. The remainder deals with the interpretation of the respondent's feelings and attitudes on the subject of burnout being studied. Data analysis was performed through making comparisons between the respondents' findings and the theories on burnout discussed in chapter two of the study.

4.2. FINDINGS: Presentation of data.

The researcher sent out questionnaires to thirty social workers between Adelaide and East London, as a sample of the Eastern Cape (social work) population as mentioned in chapter one. Out of the thirty questionnaires distributed, twenty responses were returned, taken here as a reasonable sample to effect the study of burnout among social work professionals in the afore-mentioned areas of social services organizations. The findings on the responses included the following;

4.2.1. PERSONAL PARTICULARS OF RESPONDENTS.

a) Age groups of respondents	%
20 – 30 years.	35%
31 – 40 years.	50%
41 – 50 years.	10%
51 and above.	Zero%
No response	5%

Table one

Total 100%

All the respondents interviewed were between the ages 23 and 45. Fifty percent of the respondents were between thirty-one and forty years. Thirty-five percent of the respondents were between the ages of 20 and 30. Ten percent were between 41 and 45 years. Ages 51 and over were not represented. Five percent of the respondents declined to give their responses.

b) Sex of the respondents	%
Male.	5%
Female.	95%
Not commented.	Zero%

Table two

Total 100%

Only five percent of the respondents were male. Ninety-five percent were female.

c) Marital status of the respondents	%
Married	30%
Divorced/separated	Zero%
Unmarried.	5%
Single.	65%
No response.	Zero%

Table three

Total 100%

Sixty-five percent of the respondents were single. Thirty percent were married, while five percent were single, i.e. they had a chance of marrying in future. There were no respondents who were divorced or separated in that category.

d) Job rank and job description of the respondents	%
Managers.	5%
Supervisors.	10%
Senior Social Workers.	15%
Junior Social Workers.	70%
No response.	Zero%
Table four	Total 100%

All the respondents were qualified social work professionals. Five percent of the respondents were managers assigned to manage the organization. Supervisors constituted ten percent of the respondents. There were fifteen senior social workers in that category of respondents. Seventy percent was made up of junior social workers that were in the majority. Half of that category of respondents were social workers who were between one year and two years of service in their varying degrees; i.e. novices.

On the job description, the five percent in the category of managers was found being responsible for overall social work activities in the Alice – Fort Beaufort region. The ten percent who were supervisors were placed in Bisho, being responsible for coordination and facilitation of the social work activities in three regions; namely King Williams Town, Alice-Fort Beaufort and East London districts. Senior Social Workers were found to be placed each in the region, for an overall coordination of social work activities as well as rendering of support to the junior social workers in those regions. Other social workers and junior social workers constituting seventy percent of the respondents were directly involved in social service activities aimed at meeting the clients' needs. All were found in all the sampled areas as reflected in chapter three of the research.

e) Years of service of the respondents

Number of years in service	%
0-5 years.	65%
6-10 years.	20%
11-15 years.	5%
16-20 years.	0%
20 and over.	5%
No response.	5%

Table five

Total 100%

Sixty percent of respondents had a service of between zero and five years. Of these, five percent had a service of three months, and the rest ran between eighteen months and three years. Twenty percent had a service of between six years and ten years. Fifteen percent of these respondents had a service of seven years, while the other five percent had a service of ten years, four months. On eleven to fifteen years category, only five percent respondents had a service of 12 years. In the sixteen to twenty years category, there were no responses. Five percent of respondents were found in the twenty years and over category, while five percent respondents did not make any comments.

4.2.2. THE NATURE OF STRESS AMONG RESPONDENTS.

Nature of stress	%
Work related stress.	80%
Personal stress.	10%
No stress.	10%
No response.	Zero%

Table 6

Total%:100

Eighty percent of the respondents reported having work related stress. That stress varied from various factors including work overload, relationship problems among colleagues

and supervisor-social worker relationships, as well as low salary among others. Ten percent of respondents experienced personal stress. That stress was caused by factors such as family relationships, love problems and personality problems. The other ten percent respondents reported having experienced no stress at all.

4.2.3. COPING ABILITIES OF RESPONDENTS AT WORK.

Nature of coping.	%	Deadlines	%
Promotion of respondents	%	Meeting deadlines	%
Merit award.	0%	Always meeting deadlines.	30%
Service promotion.	30%	Meeting deadlines seldom.	20%
Any other promotion.	0%	Never meeting deadlines.	45%
Never promoted.	70%	No response.	5%

Table 7

Total%:100

Total%:100

Only thirty percent respondents reported being promoted once at work. Promotion came as a result of long service. Seventy percent were never promoted. Of those respondents who were promoted (thirty percent), thirty percent mentioned that they always met deadlines at work. Other twenty percent reported having met deadlines only seldom, while forty-five percent respondents never met deadlines at all, at work.

4.2.4. RELATIONSHIPS OF RESPONDENTS AT WORK.

a) Relationships with supervisors/managers

%

Very good	10%
Good.	30%
Fair.	10%
Bad.	25%
Very bad.	5%
Undecided.	0%
No response.	20%

Table 8

Total%:100

Only ten percent of the respondents viewed their supervisor as being very cooperative, highly helpful and easy to approach and work with. Thirty percent saw their supervisor as good to work with. Another ten percent respondents said their supervisor was fair. Some of the respondents in that category contradicted themselves. For instance the respondents would cite that the supervisor was fair, but also stated that the same supervisor was strict in handling procedures in other things. Twenty-five percent saw the supervisor as totally bad. According to the respondents, the supervisor was always not available when needed. In another instance of the same category, five percent respondents saw the supervisor as very uncooperative and, in the words of a respondent; 'the supervisor was unable to motivate me. She did not appreciate' Twenty percent respondents refrained from making any comments.

b) Relationships with colleagues

%

Positive relationships.	40%
Negative relationships.	35%
Not sure.	10%
Undecided,	15%

Table 9

Total%:100

Forty percent of respondents reported cooperation with their colleagues at work. Thirty-five percent reported differences, indicating mistrust and lack of cooperation as a negative condition at work. Ten percent of the respondents were not very sure, while fifteen percent of the other respondents were undecided.

c) Relationships with clients

%

Positive relationships	40%
Negative relationships	35%
Not sure.	15%

Table 10

Total%:100

Forty percent of the respondents reported coping well with the clients within a good working relationship atmosphere. Thirty-five respondents on the other hand had negative experiences with the clients. They reported that some clients were hostile and others difficult to work with at times. The other fifteen percent respondents were not sure..

4.2.5. RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCES AT WORK.

a) Personal fulfillment at work.

%

Very happy	10%
Happy.	35%
Unhappy.	50%
Very unhappy.	5%

Table 11

Total%:100

Ten percent of respondents reported to be very happy at work. The other thirty-five percent mentioned that the work was gratifying. Fifty percent respondents on the other hand did not find the work satisfying at all. Five percent mentioned that they were very unhappy at work.

c) Problems affecting respondents at work%

Marital/love problems.	30%
Breadwinner/financial problems at home.	20%
Care of child/ren.	40%
Sick/terminally ill next of kin.	5%
Distance from home.	5%
No response.	Nil

*Table 12***Total%:100**

Thirty percent of respondents reported that they experienced marital/love problems that interfere with their work, causing problems of stress. Twenty percent other respondents complained about financial problems at home that complicated their work situation. The other forty percent respondents cited problems child-rearing (caring for infant) at home as a stressful condition for them at the work place. They worried about changing nannies, sickly babies and unsafe environment where the child was left while the respondent was at work. The other five percent respondents reported transportation difficulties as bringing them late at work and late at home after work. Sickness of next of kin was reported by another five percent respondents as frustrating her while at work.

d) Respondents contemplating changing career**%**

Changed career once.	0%
Contemplating change.	65%
Not to change career.	35%
Not decided.	0%

*Table 13.***Total%:100**

Sixty-five percent of respondents contemplated changing career, including their present job due to pressure of being dissatisfied at work. Out of all the respondents no one had ever changed jobs before. The other thirty-five percent respondents never contemplated changing the job or shifting from the social work career at all.

e) Discrimination at the work place**%**

Once discriminated.	45%
Never discriminated.	30%
Not sure	20%
No response.	5%

*Table 14***Total % 100**

Forty-five percent of respondents reported being discriminated against at work. Another thirty percent said they were never discriminated against at work. Twenty percent were not sure, while five percent never commented on the experience.

4.2.6. ATTITUDE OF RESPONDENTS AT WORK.**a) Attitude toward salary.****%**

Very happy.	0%
Happy.	10%
Unhappy.	65%
Very unhappy.	20%
No response.	5%

*Table 15***Total % 100**

No respondents described themselves as very happy with their salary. Ten percent of respondents reported that they were happy with the present salary at work. Sixty-five percent other respondents on the other side showed dissatisfaction. Twenty percent other respondents were extremely unhappy about the present salary at work.

b) Attitude toward supervisors/managers**%**

Very positive.	10%
Positive.	35%
Negative.	30%
Very negative.	25%
Not sure.	Zero%

Table 16.**Total % 100**

The attitude of the respondents to supervisors was largely negative. Ten percent of the respondents reported that their relationship with supervisors was extremely positive. The other thirty-five percent said they had a good relationship with supervisors. On the other hand, thirty percent reported that their relationship with supervisors was negative. A further twenty-five percent described their attitude towards their supervisors as very negative. Those with poor relationships with their supervisors cited factors such as lack of cooperation and lack of good supervision from their seniors.

c) Attitude toward work and work environment**%**

Contemplating to change (social work) career.	65%
Retaining the present job.	20%
Not decided.	15%
No response.	Zero%

Table 17**Total % 100**

The majority of the respondents were disgruntled at work. Sixty-five percent of them contemplated leaving the present job for jobs elsewhere. A number of dissatisfying conditions like low salary, lack of promotion or other opportunities at work led to such a feeling among respondents. Twenty percent, however, wanted to remain in the present work which they found satisfying. Fifteen percent were undecided.

4.2.7. REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY RESPONDENTS.

Suggestions from respondents	%
Need for policy transformation in an organization.	5%
Need for in-service training and improvement of supervision	5%
Need for study opportunities to improve skills levels.	5%
Need for hiring more staff to complement client needs.	5%
No response.	80%

Table 18

Total % 100

The majority of the respondents declined to make any suggestions or remarks. Eighty percent respondents in all declined to comment, while twenty percent made recommendations. However, the few respondents who made recommendations listed some significant factors that needed attention. Among other things suggested were transformation on the policy of the organization; need for in-service training and improvement of supervision; augmenting present staff by hiring more to complement staff on workload, and affording social workers an opportunity to study further in order to improve their skills level.

4.3. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.

The researcher in this section attempts to discuss information gathered from the respondents using a qualitative method of research. Interpretation of data was dealt with in the light of information gathered from the literature review in chapter two to see whether there was a correlation between the responses gathered from social workers (respondents), with that presented by different writers on the subject of burnout. In analyzing the data the researcher depended wholly on what the respondents felt, that was the essence of qualitative approach the researcher sort for pursuing the study. Added to the rest was the researcher's opinionating, attempting to make concrete sense out of the responses gathered so far. For instance the researcher had to make deductions from certain descriptions by the respondents pertaining to their attitude toward work and their

supervisors. The researcher was thus able to put in context everything the respondents felt so that it could help in clarifying facts about the subject of burnout.

Based on data presented above, the findings reflected over fifty percent of the respondents as being prone to burnout. When questionnaires were sent to the respondents, the respondents felt strongly on certain relevant issues at work like salaries; lack of training for social workers, together with lack of opportunities for self-improvement. In addition negative relationships with the supervisors were indicated as a cause of problems they were facing. The above conditions made the respondents uncomfortable at work, to the extent that a respondent could chose to seek other employment. The emotional impact of such conditions at work explained, in large part, the stressful nature of the respondents' circumstances, which indicated a condition of burnout among the social workers.

4.3.1. TENTATIVE STATEMENT OF RESEARCH.

The researcher's intention was to establish whether the working conditions of social workers had an effect on burnout experienced by the respondents. It was observed that social workers experienced and suffered burnout at work due to the condition of work that predisposed them to stress. It was stress that accounted for burnout later when cumulative, to the level where coping had diminished, preventing or incapacitating the social worker from managing his/her work or affairs anymore.

4.3.2. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA.

4.3.2.1. THE PERSONAL PROFILE AND PARTICULARS OF THE RESPONDENTS.

The particulars of the respondents like their ages, sex, marital status, job description and job rank, were assessed in terms of the condition of work they did. It was found during the research findings that the majority of the respondents, who suffered stress most at

work, and those who were prone to burnout, were largely experienced social workers, having been at work for more than five years. All the married respondents and those single social workers who had children out of wedlock, reported frustrations at work leading toward stress based on unsatisfactory salaries and the effect of personal/family problems on the work situation, and the lack of promotion.

These factors made sense for this category because the social workers concerned were generally threatened by their circumstances more than those who were not married or were without children. The novice social workers showed a lower rate of being stressed than those with more years of service at work. Those who were younger in age reported less on stress than those older.

The chief social workers and supervisors recounted more stressful events than those who were service oriented or in subordinate positions at work. That came as a result of more responsibilities that were placed on them than the rest of the social workers at service positions. The respondents with more years of service related more stressful events than those who were beginners or in a two years service category. The number of years spent on the job predisposed a social worker to many negative experiences at work.

According to Zastrow (1992:647), burnout occurs as a result of an individual's thoughts and perceptions about the events at work. In other words, burnout primarily results from what social workers told themselves about the events or experiences they encountered during work.

The novice social workers and those between one year and two years of service reported stress; however the effect of such stress was less as compared to those of two years and more in work experiences. It was reasoned that those in a novice position were inexperienced and thus could not challenge the status quo – hence they were eager to work and could not experience or suffer more stress related to work than their senior counterparts. Their position at novice level lacked fundamental experience to challenge

or cause changes in policy of the organization. Moreover they needed to learn more about the organization.

Furthermore, the interpretation of the condition of stress depended on an individual social worker, and thus the stress effect could be different for certain individuals as opposed to the others in a work situation. That accounted for a situation where one social worker could want to leave the organization he/she was working for, while another social worker in the same situation, and subjected to the same conditions found no reason to leave the organization. This explains those social workers who could still find meaning and want to continue working for the organization, even if he/she found little or no gratification at work.

4.3.2.2. THE NATURE OF STRESS AMONG THE RESPONDENTS.

Stress as an indicator of burnout.

There were several indicators of burnout among social workers reflected in the respondents' findings. The burnout indicators pointed to a number of factors that related to the condition of employment of the respondents. Although the majority of the respondents suffered from stress related to work, not all of them, however, would end up in burnout. Burnout was the accumulation effect of stress that reached a point where the respondent could no longer cope at work. As Cooper: 1993:19 had indicated, it needed a combination of stress with a sense of loss of control over one's life business to contribute toward burnout. This is why most social workers could report to work as normal, even though they suffered stress at work.

However, there were a number of social workers that showed tendencies of burnout. One respondent reflected that she had made up her mind to leave her job for another because she could no longer find any challenges in her work. That represented a high level of frustration, in which no other options were considered. Fineman, (1985:16), put it as a

psychological state of high anxiety, reflected in self-descriptions of the social workers such as 'fearful', 'very unhappy', 'overwhelmed', and 'all screwed-up inside'

The working condition like the workload put before the social workers; the low salaries received for performing such duties and un motivating work, which was seen as routine by social workers, all accounted for burnout experienced by the respondents. The respondents sought greener pastures or chose to pursue their postgraduate studies, pushed by factors that they could not tolerate at work.

Stress as a contributor to burnout.

It was observed by the researcher that almost all social workers interviewed through the questionnaires suffered from stress at varying degrees based on different conditions at work. Only few respondents stated that they did not experience stress at work. Even though the said respondents claimed that they did not experience stress at work, indicators were reflected in their descriptions of the general situation at work that some times the work load was too heavy to handle. That situation accounted for their feeling uncomfortable – a clear indicator characterizing stress on the respondents' part, therewith the resultant burnout.

The findings of the respondents also showed that all the respondents suffered stress at one point or another during their duties, and such stress was as a result of the working conditions respondents were subjected to. As (Zastrow 1992:316) would put it; "Stress is an emotional and physiological reaction to stressors". Some of the respondents reported the relationships with their clients as being problematic, leading to anxiety that culminated in stress, when such a problem was unresolved. Others had problems with family issues affecting them at work, while others were stressed by the workload placed before them. In its nature stress impacted on the social workers when a number of factors at work accumulated to an extent that the social workers could not cope.

4.3.2.3. THE COPING ABILITIES OF THE RESPONDENTS.

Meeting the deadlines: Thirty percent of the respondents reported having always met the deadlines at work. Twenty percent of respondents on the other hand said they seldom missed deadlines. Meanwhile forty-five percent of the respondents reported missing the deadlines totally at the work place.

It was observed by the researcher that those respondents who claimed to miss deadlines more often were incapacitated by workloads that demanded more of their time at work. In some instances the bureaucratic system made it almost impossible for the social workers to finish the necessary reports on time. As Fineman, (1985:73), saw it; “Bureaucracy could render the social workers unable to use the sophisticated skills and techniques that they had been taught because it constrained their autonomy”. Few social workers could find it easy or comfortable to think in bureaucratic terms. Most of them were client-centered in their concerns and skills, which, together with their problems, left them little surplus energies to devote to tackling a complex bureaucracy. Again at times a social worker could hardly find enough time to process a report at month-end, on the work done. A shortage in staff complement was noted as another major cause of such delays on social workers who missed deadlines at work.

Satisfying the clients’ needs: It was established that the majority of the respondents could not cope with the clients’ needs. Ninety percent respondents had a busy schedule and the workload was always too high for them to handle. The respondents felt that they were over-worked – an experience which frustrated them most of the time, since they felt they could not meet their professional obligations – that of satisfying the clients’ needs. As a result some of the social workers preferred to quit the present job for others with promising prospects on their future, or pursue other degrees other than in the social work profession. Preferred options were, among others, in the fields of law, commerce or management.

Promotion at work: It was reported that only thirty percent of the respondents were once promoted at work. The majority of social work staff were reported not promoted ever. Some of the respondents had a service of more than twenty years, but were never promoted once.

Lack of promotion or some recognition of social workers' effort could have negative impact on social workers doing their duties. As a result the situation could have been frustrating to the social workers, and that alone could lead to staff morale being lowered at work. The respondents also reported that they hardly knew how the procedure on promotions worked. That in itself left the social workers confused about the procedures and policies at work which could account for apathy among respondents, bringing the resultant stress, that could ultimately led toward burnout.

Respondents' skills level: It was established by the researcher that the majority of the social workers did not receive proper training or induction on the job that they occupied. The novice social workers complained that they did not receive enough supervision to allow them to improve skills. Some social workers claimed that supervisors attended workshops often alone and discriminated against them when attending such forums. The situation could easily make the social workers to feel inferior and uncared for at work, and thus account for burnout.

4.3.2.4. THE RESPONDENT'S EXPERIENCES AT THE WORK ENVIRONMENT.

According to the findings, eighty-five percent of the respondents were dissatisfied with the salary; because they claimed that it did not meet their expectations. Respondents cited their heavy workloads amongst other grievances that led them to complain about what respondents called 'a meager salary'. Employees in general are often not satisfied with their salaries. However, in this instance the situation seems particularly serious as such a high percentage of the respondents were dissatisfied.

Respondents complained about boredom at work. Over sixty percent of them stated that there were no recreational facilities at work. Lack of recreational facilities was found to be another cause, or at least contributed toward apathy and loss of interest by the respondents at work. At the agency where the respondents reported the presence of some recreational facilities, such facilities were also reported to be of no use since they were dilapidated. The researcher found that the social workers were frustrated by the above conditions to an extent that some could not manage their work well, an indicator of burnout that led the respondents to disengage from work. All the respondents indicated that they needed recreational facilities at work

4.3.2.5. THE RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK AND NATURE OF WORK DONE BY THE RESPONDENTS.

The respondents were social workers employed as professionals in various agencies to assist clients with their needs. Their work was carried out under the guidance of an experienced supervisor assisting the social workers in the execution of their daily duties, aided by management that helped with the necessary resources and other logistics to ensure proper service delivery at the work place.

The researcher observed, based on the responses received, that management and supervisors of social workers had, in some cases, disappointed the respondents because they were alleged to have failed to fulfill their professional obligations. Claims of discrimination by certain supervisors against some respondents, and the reported relationship problems with managers and supervisors in certain instances indicated that the professional responsibilities of social workers could be made difficult by conditions at work.

The researcher came to realize that most of the respondents were either novice or had less than five years of experience in the work they did. This was coupled with a lack of in-service training, and guidance by the supervisors at work, to equip them with experience and skills needed for them to perform their duties more effectively. That situation alone,

among others, could have accounted for the social workers' inability to meet the expectations of clients, contributing toward their lost interest at work. Again one of the respondents claimed that the supervisor had discriminated against her by not allowing her to attend a workshop planned to improve her quality of work, and attend many times herself alone. This experience was depressing to the novice social worker and caused tension in her, and could result in the social worker losing interest in her work.

4.3.2.6. THE GENERAL ATTITUDE OF SOCIAL WORKERS.

Social workers' attitude toward the organization: The researcher noticed that the attitude of the respondents highly depended on their emotions as regard their organization and the future of their role in such settings. It was found by the researcher that the respondents' attitudes varied. Less than thirty percent of the respondents were found to be happy and wanted to remain in their jobs. The majority of the respondents wanted to leave the present job for another, even if it were for the different reasons. Others wanted to pursue their further education.

This suggested the negative or indifferent attitudes of the majority of respondents with regard to their present job. Again all those respondents who wanted to remain in their present occupations did so provided certain changes took place to improve the situation.

Such attitudes are not conducive to good future prospects for the social services organizations. There is potential for organizations degenerating into chaos, to a point where service rendering could be seriously impaired. These attitudes needed to be addressed and conditions improved at work to ensure progress on the part of the working staff, as well as productivity for the organizations.

Social workers' attitudes toward their managers/supervisors: Only ten percent of the respondents reported that their relationship with the supervisors was very good. Thirty percent thought that they were treated well by their supervisors in general at the work place.

Of the ten percent respondents who thought their supervisors were fair; more than half that number also thought that their supervisors were not helpful enough in other areas of work. For example, a respondent thought that a supervisor was fair in helping her with the reports, but the same supervisor could be strict and uncooperative in other instances such explaining procedures and giving fair guidance on work.

The implication drawn from the experience was that the majority of the respondents thought that their supervisors were not very helpful, as seen in the category of those who did not make comments. Some of the respondents feared self-incrimination, preferring to be non-committal about their situation. Burnout was thus found to be a strong possibility among the respondents who saw their supervisors as blocking progress toward servicing their clients at work.

Social workers' attitudes toward their colleagues: Almost half the number of respondents felt that the relationships with their colleagues were positive. The respondents felt the colleagues were supportive at work, interesting and in a sense made workload easier to handle. On the other hand, thirty to forty percent of the respondents reported that they had negative relationships with their colleagues. They described negative relationships as based on lack of sharing, mistrust among colleagues at work, age and personality differences. Another problem noted was a complaint about workload that created disagreements among colleagues over how it was distributed. One social worker felt she was given a heavier workload than the others. The researcher thought that a good working relationship was needed in order that cooperation at work could be fostered among social workers to achieve their work objectives. The absence of a good working relationship spelt problems for the clients and the organization and its image, while it contributed toward burnout for the social workers involved.

Social workers' attitudes toward their social work profession/career: It was established by the researcher that less than forty percent of the respondents wanted to retain their profession, come what may. On the other hand, sixty percent of the respondents were certain to want to quit their jobs. The reasons for wanting to quit were

total dissatisfaction with the salary, workload that was always high, and discontentment with the supervisors. Some of the respondents mentioned lack of improvement in the work that they saw as routine, and lack of managements' initiative on training to improve the social worker's education, as strong reasons that led to their intentions to quit the present jobs they were occupying.

The number of those respondents who did not comment was significant in that regard, since it comprised some respondents who wanted to keep quiet about their objectives regarding dissatisfaction at the workplace.

It was also noted that half of those respondents who wanted to stay in their profession did so provisionally. They expressed concern over the profession, and required that management should improve certain conditions of work like salary, in-service training and recruitment of enough staff to minimize workloads. That indicated the high level of frustration the respondents had about their working conditions, and it spelt out also the level of burnout as reflected in some of the respondents' attitudes toward their social work profession.

4.3.2.7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND GENERAL COMMENTS BY THE RESPONDENTS.

The respondents generally felt the working conditions should be improved. The respondents suggested some changes in the work environment so that their work could improve. Among the changes recommended by the respondents, salary improvement came first. Other changes needed at work included the recruitment of new staff, changing the policies of the organization, making recreational facilities available, training of staff and promotion of social workers. It was reasoned by social workers that the above-mentioned problems contributed toward the experience of burnout suffered by the respondents, and that service could improve if those changes were effected at the workplaces.

4.3.3. CONCLUSION.

Most of the respondents' inputs confirmed the hypothesis that burnout existed among the social workers in the social services organizations in the sampled areas of the Eastern Cape. The findings were that the social workers as professionals experienced a number of work related problems, and those problems together with a lack of coping strategies could lead to burnout.

The researcher noted the problems that could contribute towards burnout to have been, among others; the working conditions that predisposed respondents to stress such as poor salaries, heavy workloads, poor relationships among social workers as colleagues and between social workers and supervisors/managers. The other problems included boredom suffered by the respondents as a result of performing routine tasks that failed to stimulate and motivate the respondents, causing apathy and disengagement from the work environment.

Burnout as experienced by social workers caused the respondents to contemplate looking for other work, or contributed to them going back to tertiary institutions in pursuit of different degree courses in other disciplines such as law, commerce or management – away from social work career line – escaping from what they called 'unrewarding and boring social work career'.

The researcher discovered that the respondents were stressed and they expressed the stress in their responses to the questionnaires. All the factors highlighted on the conditions of the respondents at various working environments in the social services centers mentioned above, indicated that most of the respondents were dissatisfied in their workstation, and as a result some showed the signs of becoming burnout.

Even though some respondents claimed they could cope, they still mentioned some those grievances about some aspects of work which caused them hardships or tensions. They wished these conditions could change so that they could work happily in the work

environment. By implication there were committed social workers that could still resist vacating their work and/or their profession on the basis of given burnout problems as experienced in the workplace. Although some respondents reflected that they could strive within the system to help better the conditions, they would do so by stating conditions for their stay. That situation indicated that the respondents did experience stress at work – a situation that could further deteriorate and potentially lead to burnout at any given time in future.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION.

In the concluding chapter, the researcher gives his final remarks, to highlight his feelings on the completed research. The researcher will assess whether the aims of the research were achieved, as indicated in chapter one of the study. The significance of theoretical perspectives in an exploratory study of burnout among social workers in the work environment was reflected in chapter two of the research.

This was discussed in conjunction with the general findings as tabled in chapter four of the research, to compare the theory with the given responses during data analysis. The researcher chose the qualitative research method as design to carry out the research. The application of a qualitative exploratory/descriptive method of research was maintained throughout the research process, which the researcher selected as the best approach to conduct research. The recommendations and the researcher's impressions followed, highlighted here as a final point on the research conducted, to help in resolving the problems of burnout experienced by the social workers while doing their duties.

5.2. CONCLUSIONS/FINAL REMARKS.

5.2.1. THE RESEARCHER'S IMPRESSIONS

Many researchers have produced a large body of research findings and suggested theories on the subject of burnout. This was explored to make it possible for the researcher to tackle the same subject with relative ease. The researcher could thus form a theoretical frame of reference based on work by other researchers. This foundation of knowledge on burnout was assessed to be valid and relevant to the study. The theory was tested on the social work respondents based (as professional social workers) in various social services

centers in the organizations in the Eastern Cape. Their responses confirmed and qualified the theory of burnout.

Based on the experience of the researcher as a professional social worker, the study of burnout was found to be a social problem that needed to be investigated. The need to conduct research then became paramount objective of the researcher, who needed to confirm theory of burnout, based on the findings during the investigation of the subject.

The social workers in a selected part of the Eastern Cape were targeted as respondents to pursue that goal, selecting a sample from the population of all social workers in the social services centers mentioned above. The researcher also established that burnout had gripped a number of social workers so much that they were contemplating resignation because they were run-down by the present occupation which they could no longer bear.. This is taken as a clear indicator of burnout.

Another important indicator was a case of a small group of social workers that contemplated pursuing their studies in law, management and commerce, leaving social work profession altogether, as they felt it could no longer satisfy their aspirations. Interestingly, the respondents chose to leave not because they were attracted by pull factors from other opportunities, but because they were compelled by the push factors from the untenable conditions of employment they worked under. Other significant factors such as low salary, heavy workload, relationship problems with supervisors and/or management; lack of staff, and other conditions were found to be detrimental to effective social work.

Stress had been found to be the cause of burnout in all the instances mentioned above. The accumulation of such stress in a social worker over time, and given the inability of the social worker to cope, predisposed the respondents to burnout. Although a number of the respondents claimed that they coped at work despite all work related adversities they faced, the implication was that the general stress levels was too high, and that any time burnout would soon catch up with the social workers concerned.

Given the report of the *The Daily Dispatch*, (August 26, 2003:6), that reported that 'Social Workers quit in droves' from the Eastern Cape's social services centers; and also the reports from the respondents, the researcher assessed the conditions as unbearable.. The researcher reasoned that only the tip of the ice-berg had been uncovered in the research process and that probably even more social workers were experiencing burnout in their work places.

The sample showed that more than ninety percent of all the respondents had one problem (or concern) or the other at work, while doing their duties. A meeting of 20th October 2003, organized by the Department of Social Development in Bisho, to address the concerns of social workers, also served as an indicator of the grave nature of frustrations felt by the social workers in the Eastern Cape Province. The meeting was intended to identify the causes of the social workers' concerns, their feelings about these concerns associated with their work, and possibly offer some form of redress to these problems.

5.2.2. THE RESEARCHER'S PARADIGM.

It was the researcher's belief that burnout experienced by social work practitioners was connected to the working conditions the social workers were subjected to. The work environment proved not to be favorable to the needs of some respondents who complained about many things ranging from treatment by seniors, to boredom at work. These conditions contributed toward stress felt by the respondents; to an extent that burnout resulted when no improvements were forthcoming.

The researcher also believed that the respondents could have something to do with burnout they experienced. It was discovered that not all social workers inevitably experienced burnout even though all were subjected to similar working conditions. This implied social workers' personalities had a great deal to do with stress they felt. The inner abilities or lack of such defense mechanisms accounted for what the respondents experienced at work. The way a social worker perceived things predisposed him/her to

stress, and then burnout, more than another social worker in the same situation. As Zastrow (1992:647), would sum it up; "Burnout primarily results from what people tell themselves about events or experiences they encounter".

The interplay of the experiences at home and those at work, displayed in the work environment might be one of the indicators of what a personality could contribute toward the way an individual social worker felt, as different from another social worker. Other social workers reported that once they were at work, they easily forgot about personal things and went on with work unabated. The social workers claimed that they dealt with these conditions when they came home after work.

In addition, the researcher believed that burnout could be managed, if not eliminated at work, to allow for social service delivery to improve the clients' services, and social workers to find satisfaction, reward and interest in their work. The respondents gave some of the recommendations of things they wished should improve in order that their working conditions could be bettered. These suggestions and those made in theory work in chapter two of the research, bore relevance to tackling the burnout scourge experienced among the social workers.

Furthermore, it was the researcher's belief that bureaucracy in social services organizations was largely responsible for burnout experienced by the respondents. The social workers were expected to work for the clients through the authority patterns described by bureaucratic norms, which often placed untold burden on the shoulders of the respondents. For instance it was an expected norm for the social workers to furnish reports every month-end, and meet relentless deadlines. Heavy workloads demanded careful assessment and evaluation of the cases handled by social workers. To accomplish this required sufficient time, which bureaucratic systems did not always allow.

While bureaucracy systems pressurized social workers to meet with deadlines, they concentrated on service delivery to clients which led to clashes and misunderstandings between supervisors and management on one hand, and social workers on the other.

.This often led the respondents to think of supervisors as unreasonable, resulting in them feeling confused, suppressed, unsupported and uncared for at work. This caused some social workers disengaging from their work.

Fireman, (1985:73), in this regard asserted that; “Few social workers found it easy or comfortable to think in bureaucratic terms. Most were client-centered in their concerns and skills, which, together with their office problems, left them little surplus energy to devote to tackling a ‘faceless bureaucracy’”.

The organizational factors in the workplace negatively affected social workers in varying degrees because it constrained autonomy and promoted bureaucratization. Bureaucracy could render social workers unable to use the sophisticated techniques they had been taught. Also affected in that instance were the policies of the organization, which more often than not placed strict and inflexible rules and procedures in the way of social workers performing their duties. Such policies should be reviewed to allow opportunities for social workers to accomplish their tasks, and be flexible enough not place burdens in the way of social workers.

Finally, it would be the duty of management to strive towards improved work conditions to allow productivity to prosper in favor of the clients, and greater job satisfaction. The researcher believed that management had the prerogative to deal with the issues affecting the social workers and the organization because they had sufficient power and other support structures under their authority to change things. The chance was still there for the authorities to improve the situation, rather than to leave the problem to reach such proportions that it would be too late to resolve.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.3.1. CRITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS.

During the research process the researcher learned that the respondents were emotional about their situation at work, and burnout was seriously having a profound effect on the lives of the social workers. This explained high staff turnover, lowered production and general apathy among the social workers. Relationships among social work colleagues and between social workers and supervisors were found to be poor in some cases, blocking in the working environment. This needed attention, as it could possibly be avoided.

Avoiding the above situations and ensuring progress in the social service's environments required that the conditions should be changed. Tapping the recommendations as reflected in the theory work in chapter two, the researcher had recommended the following:

Easing the bureaucratic pressure on social workers: Social workers complained about the pressures bureaucracy placed on them, like the time wasted while they reported to their seniors and followed certain procedures that frustrated their progress in helping clients. All those came as a result of meetings and other gatherings social workers had to attend, as a form of procedure. More often than not the respondents reported that those meetings were wasteful gatherings because supervisors spent time on irrelevant matters to the neglect of the main duties they should have concentrated on. The researcher thought that it would be better if the number of meetings were reduced to allow more time for the social workers to be able to complete their tasks related to service to the clients.

Management should in that sense become flexible to accommodate the need of clients fully, and cut down on unnecessary procedures and other formalities of authority structure that could be dealt with separately from the service times allocated to the social

workers. For example management could introduce more effective internal communication systems, channeling communication through that system to make ample time available to the social workers performing their client-oriented duties. In this way social workers would work freely, and effectively – serving both the clients and management's schedules, as set in the bureaucratic procedures and policies.

Changing or adjusting the policies of the organization: The researcher observed that there was a need for changes to be made in some of the policies of the organization, to ensure smooth service delivery by the social workers. Complaints by the respondents on issues such as promotions, sharing of workloads, staff under-complement and salaries, needed management to be vigilant and competitive because they touched at the heart of performance operations concerning social workers, and if neglected, they might cause serious organizational problems in terms of staff turn-over, under production and relationship problems at work - as already noted in the research findings in chapter four and also in the theory work in Chapter Two of the study. Policies of an organization could be used as a strategy to sort out problems and flexibly ensure the improvement in production processes at work.

The researcher believed that the flexible use of policies in an organization by management had the ability to control, direct and channel staff energies toward the proper and accepted conduct at work, if an informed and careful approach by the supervisors or managers toward matters of policy were being implemented.

Training and/or retraining of managers: Managers should be trained to keep up with new management trends that equipped them with new leadership skills. Retraining of managers in an organization would have to be a priority, and scheduled often to ascertain the abilities and proper skill applications by the incumbents, reflecting good leadership qualities necessary to enhance the democratic culture at work. The researcher noticed that certain managers clung to the old style of management, which frustrated the subordinates.

Some respondents claimed that they were discriminated against at work, and that served as an indicator of a suppressive style of management. Training of managers should be tailored along the lines of properly scheduled sessions on workshops and other forums based on leadership training. Such training should be entrenched and be made a policy of the organization – and part of its culture – to ensure managers used proper leadership skills to improve conditions at work, and thus productivity as well.

Prevention of burnout: The researcher believed that burnout could be prevented at work. Prevention as a pro-active measure to end burnout would help social workers cope with stressful work situations, and manage stress to the extent that they adapted to the condition, and allowed it to serve them in turn as a motivator to perform better at work. The assertion above was confirmed by the theory that was espoused by Robbins (1983:82-83); who proposed that stress was a causal factor and a determinant of performance in an organization.

Preventing burnout among social workers therefore, required that management should ensure that stress was managed carefully, and social workers were allowed to carry manageable workloads and, to empower themselves to counter-act failure.. Schaufel, (1978:69), indicated that; “Stress reduces stress; that is, an appropriate amount of stressful activities in one area helps to reduce excessive stress in others”.

Managers should supervise activities and assist the social workers in all work logistics to succeed in carrying out their duties. Another important point in preventing burnout is the need to educate students of social work training in their various tertiary level institutions about the existence and negative effects of burnout in the work places. This would help prepare and arm the students with knowledge about burnout and coping skills for them to manage stress at work.

Changes that might result from improvements made from the recommendations above might lead to great progress in coping with burnout in the three areas of activity at the

work place, namely the personal, interpersonal and organizational categories, as proposed by Cilliers (2002:March);

The Individual Level: The researcher believed that an individual has the responsibility to recognize the signs of burnout in order that he/she could cope with it. Coping in that instance was thought to be intra-personal and action-oriented efforts in an individual to manage the environmental and internal demands and/or conflict situations that might tax or exceed social workers' resourcefulness. Intra-personally, the social worker had such resources as awareness, emotions, motivation and intellect, which could be used proactively when management made conducive conditions available at work in terms of good and supportive policies, democratic leadership and culture, cultivated at the work environment. The social worker at his/her individual capacity could more readily cope with burnout, and certainly contribute toward the organization and clients he/she was working with.

The Inter-Personal Level: The demands of work in an organization were such that individual social workers inevitably shared in the execution of their duties to service clients. A measure of interdependence was fostered among the social workers by virtue of working for a single organization, where the resources in that organization had to be shared, exchanged and/or used circularly, to allow for every social worker to reach out to them. Such a nature required cooperation, accommodation of others, understanding and compromise in some instances. The absence of good working relationship as seen on the findings of the respondents in chapter four automatically would annul those prerequisites of inter-personal activities necessary in the organization, owing to burnout suffered by social workers.

The researcher believed, therefore, that inter-personal contact between social workers at the work place was necessary for them to use support systems available defined as occupational relationships and mechanisms – that referred to examples such as offering therapy, exercises/recreation, task groups for self-education of social workers etc, which equaled the affirmation or acknowledgement of proper behavior and direct aid to social

work individuals. If successful, this could allow for interaction of social workers to intensify their cooperation and team building during work, and theretofore reduce stress and anxiety created by working as a group. All those could only materialize, of course if management was supportive and previous recommendations were to be fulfilled.

The Organizational Level: This referred to the organizational structure that dealt with the needs of the social workers. It was believed by the researcher that it was the environment and the state of the organization that usually accounted for the health and performance of the social workers. Any stress accumulated by a social worker could be associated with the health condition of the organizational environment. The researcher thus recommended strongly that the organizational environment should always meet with the basic health requirements of its staff, like being in good working relationships, happy/satisfied, and motivated; to stimulate the performance for improved productivity and progress at work. Occupational health could be improved through organizational development, i.e. through offering development programmes that helped to change or adjust the attitudes of the social workers at work.

The researcher firmly believed that the programmes, among others, such as reducing staff-client ratios; availing 'time-out' offers; limiting hours of stressful work; training of social workers and/or retraining of supervisors; changing or adjusting work policies, offering burnout workshops and improving general working conditions, would be most desirable in changing the environment of social work organizations for the better.

5.3.2. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS.

The researcher recognized an established validity among the wishes and recommendations by the respondents relating to how they felt about the status quo at their work places. The researcher felt strongly that management should listen to the aspirations of the social workers in order that the social workers morale at work could be boosted. The following were among the important recommendations the respondents had made, reflected in chapter four of the research;

Clarification of promotion procedures for social workers: The respondents were lost as to how promotion procedures were run at work. What constituted the process of one being promoted was not clear to them. Lack of clarity in job specification and/or job description processes was found to be one of the impediments to progress to the respondents, as it led to apathy and indifference at work among the affected social workers. This was a policy issue that hinged on the attitudes of the respondents toward their organization, and manifested itself in the burnout that affected them at work. The researcher would suggest that management should recognize those social workers that were due for promotion. Even though promotion might not have been offered to the social worker concerned, a mere acknowledgement that might come through some reward system, would be ideal for every social worker to feel cared for and respected at work. This could easily improve relations at work.

Employment of more social workers: The respondents wanted more social workers to be employed, to help an under-complement of staff struggling to cope with the workload. Social workers felt frustrated and helpless when they could not finish their work on time and that worked on them psychologically to an extent that some contemplated resigning because they felt they were not coping. A good staff compliment could help ease pressure on the respondents and boost the social workers' morale in performing their duties.

The researcher recommended the reduction in social worker-client ratios that were high among organizational settings where social workers performed their duties. One social worker to fifty clients would be ideal, calculated on the monthly scale of performance of duty, to produce more efficient results.

Provision for training social workers: The social workers had aspired to receive training that could advance their skills application at work, as that would make them improve the quality of their work. Such an aspiration was thwarted by the conditions at the workplaces where no training, in-service training and any other form of empowerment were given to social workers. Social workers were generally mobile professionals who needed to go up the ladder at work like any other worker. Such

movement was impossible or slow, and the social workers were affected to the detriment of the clients they served. Provision for training social workers would go a long way in improving the organizations' progress and image in service delivery to the clients.

Improvement of salaries for social workers: Social workers complained about low salaries, and felt that they were doing more work than the salaries they were receiving. One social worker reported that she was a breadwinner at home and had two children to look after. No doubt many others are in this position too. The researcher thought that even if salaries would not be increased to satisfy personal staff needs completely, some form of reward-remuneration should be devised, to make social workers competitive and motivated at work. Some form of incentives to invoke a sense of competitiveness was necessary to reward deserving social workers.

Provision for recreational facilities at work: The respondents needed recreational facilities at work to be entertained so that they could curtail boredom at work. The demands work placed on the social workers daily left them tired and they needed something different in the form of sport or any form of recreation to revive their spirits. When realized, recreation was an ideal strategy at building work culture; based on positive work relationships, collaboration, cooperation and sharing by staff at work. The researcher supported the call by respondents for management to refurbish and repair all the dilapidated recreational facilities at work, or make available new facilities where they were needed, to encourage the social workers to use them in recreational activities. When that was realized, the social workers were going to be reenergized back into work and helped to avoid such ailments as headaches, stomach pains or tiredness – as types of illnesses that emanated from social conditions which were not conducive at work, making social workers prone to stress, and later burnout when the situation worsened.

5.4. GENERAL CONCLUSION.

The research on burnout was found to be interesting by the researcher, who, from the beginning engaged the subject with enthusiasm until the end of the process. The topic was introduced in chapter one with clearly laid-out objectives that the researcher wanted to achieve. Following on the aims of research, the rationale for conducting the research spelled out the major concerns the researcher had about the study of burnout among social workers in the Eastern Cape's Social Services Organizations. All major concepts used in the research topic were clearly defined so that the consumers of the research could understand without any difficulties the meaning of the study based on burnout.

The theory background of the study of burnout was carried out in chapter two of the research, containing a broad spectrum of theoretical inputs from the informed researchers and writers generally, on the subject of burnout. The theory helped the researcher to select a paradigm for arguing his point on the subject, choosing his perspective on how to approach the research. It also assisted the researcher in testing the responses made by the respondents on the subject of burnout under investigation. Chapter three dealt with the methodology, which outlined the direction the researcher chose; i.e. the perspective of a qualitative exploratory/descriptive research design, which was applied in all the processes of research undertaken. The limitations of the research process were assessed against the background of any conditions that might hamper the process of research. The researcher ensured in the whole process that the research went ahead unhindered.

The researcher dealt with the findings and carried out data analysis from those findings in chapter four of the study. A qualitative method of research was applied, based on the exploratory/descriptive design. A sampling method based on that design was used, and later data analysis and data interpretation conducted. In chapter five, the researcher made final concluding remarks about the research undertaken, and also recommendations, to help improve conditions of the social workers at their various social services centers in the Eastern Cape. The researcher was satisfied with the outcome of the research.

It was the researcher's belief that burnout experienced by social workers at various work places in the Eastern Cape was a microcosm of the larger problem in all the social work population in South Africa. Again it was reflected by other researchers that burnout cut across the professional practice fields to include all other areas including law, medicine, commerce, agriculture, education and many others. The Health Education Authority Report (1988:10-12), made concluding remarks that; " Perhaps the greatest significance of this (burnout) case lies in the way it demonstrates the need to recognize the seeds of stress at many levels, in families, social workers, managers and in the operation of the department. There is then a consequent duty to seek to remedy the causes of that stress".

The researcher after all thought it befitting, on the subject of burnout investigated, to finally close with a moving poem written by Walt-Whitman, (1892): cited by Russell, (1930:7), and as it was quoted in the 1st Conference of Burnout in Potchestroom by Willmar Schaufelli, (2003: March):

"I think I could turn and live with animals,
They are so placid and self-contained.
I stand and look at them long and long.
They do not sweat and whine about their condition.

They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins.
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God.
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is deemed with the mania of owning things.
Not one kneels to another, not to his kind that lived thousand years ago.
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth".

ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A

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ANNEXURE B

DEAR RESPONDENT.

RE: REQUEST FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION ON RESEARCH: BURNOUT.

YOU ARE HUMBLY REQUESTED TO HELP FURNISH THE INFORMATION REGARDING THE SUBJECT OF BURNOUT AS OBSERVED IN YOUR WORK SETTING. CONSIDER ANSWERING ALL QUESTIONS. THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.

PLEASE FIND HEREIN ENCLOSED A QUESTIONNAIRE TO WHICH YOU ARE ASKED TO FURNISH INFORMATION AS PROMPTLY AS YOU CAN. YOUR RESPONSE IS GOING TO BE IMPORTANT IN ALLOWING US KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE CONDITIONS AT WORK THAT ACCOUNT FOR BURNOUT. ALL QUESTIONS ARE EASY TO ANSWER.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO GIVE YOUR HONEST FEELINGS ON YOUR ANSWERS.

THANK YOU IN ANTICIPATION.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Ramphele'.

T.Z. RAMPHELE.

RESEARCHER.

ANNEXURE C.

QUESTIONNAIRE.

NB. Please tick the appropriate response on all questions that require you to make a choice-answer. Attempt to give comprehensive detail where you are required to explain or give reasons.

1. Please fill in your personal details below:

AGE:

SEX:

MARITAL STATUS:

JOB DESCRIPTION (social work):

JOB RANK (e.g. Junior, senior social worker)

2. How long have you been in your present job?

3. Describe your working relationships with your immediate superior.

4. Have you ever been charged with any disciplinary offence at work?

YE S
NO
OT HE R

Please expand on your answer.

5. Are you satisfied with your present salary?

YE S
NO
OT HE R

6. Have you ever considered changing the present job for another?

YE S
NO
OT

HE R

Please expand on your answer.

7. Are your relationships with your colleagues positive?

YE S
NO
OT HE R

Please expand on your answer.

8. Have you experienced any changes on the work environment recently?

YE S
NO
OT HE R

If yes, how did the changes affect you?

9. Do you think there is a need for any changes at your work place?

YE S
NO
OT HE R

Please expand on your answer

10. Describe the recreational facilities, if any, your employer provides your staff at the work place?

11. Are any of your work conditions stressful to you?

YES
NO

OTHER

Please expand on your answer.

12. Do you sometimes worry about personal things, which disturb you while at work?

YES
NO
OTHER

Please expand on your answer.

13. Do you miss the deadlines at work?

Y E S
N O
O T H E R

Please expand on your answer.

14. Have you ever been promoted at work?

Y E S
N O
O T H E R

15. What do you find most fulfilling at work presently?

16. Describe any thing/condition that frustrates you at work.

17. Have you ever thought of changing your profession?

Y E S
N O
O T H E R

Please expand on your answer?

18. Have you ever felt discriminated against at the work place?

Y E

S
NO
OT
HE
R

Please expand on your answer?

19. Are you happy at work?

YE
S
NO
OT
HE
R

Please expand on your answer.

20. Is there anything else you would like to add that is relevant to the topic?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PROMPT RESPONSE!
PLEASE POST THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO ME IN THE STAMPED ENVELOPE
PROVIDED.

Social workers quit in droves

By Ncumisa Sikunyana

EAST LONDON — Scores of social workers are leaving the province and the profession. This was confirmed by Gcobani Maswana, a provincial spokesperson for the Department of Welfare.

A preliminary report which was commissioned by Social Development Minister Zola Skweyiya confirmed that social workers were leaving the profession as well as the country in droves.

The report was delivered last week and Skweyiya has declared social work a "scarce skill".

According to the report published in a national newspaper, social workers were discouraged by low salaries, overwork and poor — sometimes dangerous — working conditions.

Maswana said "The provincial department is working on a retention strategy due to be released soon. We want our social workers to know that their services are most needed here at home."

Maswana added that the province, which had always faced a situation where demand outweighed the supply, was now in an even more difficult situation as the number of social workers "decreased each passing day".

The province has about 865 registered social workers and about 455 worked in the public sector.

"The shortage of social workers results in numerous backlogs in foster care and child support grants," said Maswana.



ROUGH RIDERS: Safety and Security Minister Charles Nqakula with Europ Uris donated by the EU. Standing alongside are Provincial Safety MEC Denn Mpongoma.

Cash loans robbed

QUEENSTOWN — Four armed men robbed Viva Cash Loans in Whittlesea of about R13 000 yesterday morning.

Captain Gcinikaya Taleni said staff were in the process of opening the store when they were confronted by the men who forced them into the premises at gunpoint and ordered them to lie on the floor.

One staff member was forced to open a safe and the money was removed. All cellphones and personal documents were stolen.

No one was injured and there have been no arrests. — DDR

R25m fake CDs seized

DURBAN — Police seized counterfeit compact discs valued at an estimated R25 million during an operation in Durban harbour yesterday.

Superintendent Vishnu Naidoo said the police had established from documents which came with the containers that the compact discs were from Singapore and destined for Lagos in Nigeria.

Vishnu said the compact discs would be handed over to customs and excise officials.

International Phonographic Industry will conduct an investigation in order to establish the origin of the discs. — Sapa

EC fight against receives 4x4 boos

By Denver Donian

BISHO — The fight against crime in rural areas received a boost at the weekend with the handing over of 15 Uri 4x4 Desert Runners to Eastern Cape police by the European Union (EU).

The specially manufactured vehicles, valued at just over R2,5 million, have been sponsored by the EU in terms of their programme: Assistance to Policing in the Eastern Cape.

The vehicles were handed over to Safety and Security Minister Charles Nqakula by EU Ambassador Michael Lake here on Sunday.

The Uri 4x4 is capable of dealing with extreme road conditions, mainly off-road and is low in maintenance and running costs.

It originated in Namibia, where

the spider-like vehicle was developed and successfully commissioned in a paramilitary role.

The name "Uri" means "jump" in an indigenous Namibian language.

A practical demonstration proved the vehicles' capabilities in adverse road conditions.

Of the eight policing areas in the province, Umtata and the Drakensberg areas will each receive four vehicles, Queenstown two, and Grahamstown, East London, Uitenhage, Cradock and the Karoo one each.

All police officers assigned to use the vehicles have completed a two-day 4x4 course.

Handing over the vehicles, Lake said the EU recognised the pivotal role of the SA Police Service in safeguarding democracy and the hard-won rights and freedoms of

post-apartheid. "The process of the long road to have been together."

"Through the programme of / in the Eastern Cape to have been its initial vision of sourcing and tion of a rugged SABS complete."

Lake said | Uri's excell allow the Ea vice to sign service delivered commu Nqakula ex tion to the EU the vehicles with the sco

Weather

OUTLOOK FOR 14h00
26/8/03

Expected temperatures	Today
POLYMER	EASTERN CAPE

Lukhanji gears up fo



ANNEXURE F2

EC social

DAILY DISPATCH - MONDAY OCT 25, 2004

workers to begin go-slow

EAST LONDON — Social workers employed by the Eastern Cape Social Development Department will today begin industrial action in an attempt to force the department to upgrade their salaries.

The social workers agreed on the action at the Eastern Cape Social Workers' Forum meeting held in Queenstown on Saturday.

Forum secretary Zandile Matyila yesterday said the social workers were paid according to their three-year degree qualifications instead of their four-year postgraduate qualifications.

"There have been negotiations with the department since last year. The department just makes verbal promises and there is no written commitment from it," Matyila said.

She said a delegation of social workers consisting of representatives from the

districts will today submit a letter to secure an appointment with Premier Nosimo Balindlela on Wednesday.

She also said the social workers would embark on a go-slow from today until Wednesday.

Asked if the go-slow would affect service to the public, Matyila said: "It will affect service delivery. We want to highlight our frustration to the public."

"When social workers are underpaid that affects their morale to render effective service and if they are not properly paid they go to other provinces."

Matyila said if there was still no response from the department by Wednesday, the social workers would picket until next week on Tuesday and then hold a protest march the following day in Bhisho. She said the social workers' salary upgrade had been outstanding for seven years.

National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union provincial secretary Cyril Langbooi said: "We fully support the action by the social wor-

kers and we will be of assistance to them in any form until their demand is met."

He said the union had been negotiating with the department, but all it received was "promises without tangible results".

"The blame for the hampering of services should be put squarely at the door of the department," Langbooi said.

Departmental spokesman Gcobani Maswana said the department had consulted the province and national government on upgrading the salaries.

He said a task team had been formed to look into the upgrading of social workers' salaries, and the department was in the process of finalising the question of funding with Treasury.

Maswana said the social workers should reconsider their industrial action.

In another development, about 6 000 members of the Independent Municipal and Allied Workers' Union (Imatu) in the Eastern Cape have threatened to go on strike to challenge what the union calls illegal and unfair action by the government and the SA Local Government Association (Salga).

The resolution for members of the union to go on strike was taken at Imatu's regional conference on October 16 and seeks to influence the union's national leadership to support a call by the Eastern Cape for a national strike.

Imatu spokesperson Cynthia Hayward said certain actions by both the national and Eastern Cape provincial governments which included "the taking over of the emergency service by the province and integration of the local government into the public service sector made the strike necessary".

The union is also opposed to a plan at local government to create and implement a single municipal pension fund.

"This will prove costly for both the ratepayers and employees. The existing local government sector funds' assets are in excess of R54 billion. A large-scale withdrawal or shift will affect the market and erode assets."

Hayward said the move by the national government to have a single public service sector would "make it even more difficult for the average South African to access the services guaranteed by the Constitution".

The transfer of emergency services to Bhisho had resulted in failure to pay employees money owed for overtime and allowances while their insurance had lapsed and pension benefits were not paid out.

Hayward was unable to disclose the proposed day of the province-wide industrial action. — DDR-DDC

Social workers still picketing

By Mayibongwe Maqhina

EAST LONDON — Government-employed social workers in the province will continue with their industrial action until their demands are met, Eastern Cape Social Workers' Forum secretary Zandile Matyila said yesterday.

The social workers have been on a go-slow since Monday. From today they plan to picket during lunch time outside the department's offices.

They are demanding salary upgrades, which have been outstanding for seven years, and acknowledgement that their degrees are a four-year qualification.

Matyila said they asked for an appointment with Premier Nosimo Balindlela on Monday, but this has not yet been arranged.

"We will picket until next Tuesday and then hold a march on Wednesday next week," she said.

Departmental spokesperson Gcobani Maswana said the go-slow had had no impact on service delivery.

DAILY DISPATCH

THURSDAY, Oct. 28, 2004
ANNEXURE F3

