

**EXPLORING JOB SATISFACTION AMONGST
GOVERNMENT SOCIAL WORKERS IN
EAST LONDON**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Social Science (Social Work),
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By

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**WHERE OUR WORK IS,
THERE LET OUR JOY BE...**

(Tertullian)

ABSTRACT

During this research an attempt was made to gain an understanding of job satisfaction amongst government social workers.

To achieve this, twenty social workers employed at the Department of Welfare in East London and Mdantsane were interviewed.

South African literature on this topic is limited and it is believed that this study will present a valuable basis to pursue in further research. Literature that was consulted was found to be supportive of the theoretical notion that social work has long been recognised as being a stressful profession and that the nature of social work practice itself can be potentially stressful.

The study found that there are many stressors and dissatisfactions which government social workers are currently experiencing. Some of the social workers have indicated a desire to leave the profession as a result of the dissatisfactions.

The study findings suggest a need for combining organisational with individual oriented initiatives to decrease the many stressors the social workers are experiencing.

The thesis ends with recommendations of various strategies for addressing the concerns of the social workers in order to increase their job satisfaction.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

This research is concerned with exploring job satisfaction of government social workers in East London and Mdantsane. Thus, the genesis of the research is to develop a clearer understanding of how government social workers experience their jobs in general, focusing on factors such as job related stressors, which may be limiting job satisfaction for social workers.

Job satisfaction has been defined as:

“...a worker’s attitude about various aspects of the job, such as working conditions, supervision and administration, salary and benefits, opportunities to grow, and interactions with youth (clients) and colleagues”

(Krueger 1986 : 5).

“Job satisfaction is an important area of study for social work because of the humanitarian values of the profession, the concern about client outcome, the economic impact of absenteeism and turnover, and the necessity of attracting competent individuals to the field”

(Butler 1990 : 112).

Social work grew out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people. Since its beginnings over a century ago, social work practice has focused on meeting human needs and developing human potential. Human rights and social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action. In solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, the profession strives to alleviate poverty and to liberate vulnerable and oppressed people in order to promote social inclusion. Social work values are embodied in the profession's national and international codes of ethics (International Federation of Social Workers 2000).

A clearer understanding of how social workers experience their jobs is an important area for investigation, since it is considered desirable that social workers experience job satisfaction in their work. If they are found to be dissatisfied in general, or with particular facets of their work, then new considerations need to be made, for the purpose of enhancing their job satisfaction.

If government social workers are found to be dissatisfied with their work and frustrated by many aspects of the working situation, then their overall experiences and attitude towards their profession may be negative. This can be cause for much concern, since job dissatisfaction and job-related stressors are likely to be associated with poor client outcome, higher turnover rates and burnout.

Rothman (1982 : 152) highlights the importance of social workers in the community by stating that social workers, unlike other helping professionals, are particularly trained to work with the community, linking individuals to resources they need. The author explains that, in other areas such as in corporate social responsibility, affirmative action and organisational development, social workers require appropriate, if not unique, skills in planning and programme development, organisational maintenance and community relations.

Koeske and Koeske (1989 : 243) suggest that a continuing condition of high stress places the social worker at risk for emotional exhaustion. If the stress is not alleviated, the social worker may experience a loss of morale, plan to leave the job, or develop psychological and physiological symptoms.

Similarly, Pines and Kafry (1978 : 503) note that stressed and dissatisfied social workers may reach a state of personal exhaustion. This may result in burnout, which is characterised by physical depletion, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, emotional drain and the development of negative self-concepts and attitudes towards work, life and other people.

A clearer understanding of how government social workers experience their jobs is an important area for investigation, since it is considered desirable that social workers experience job satisfaction in their work. If they are found to be dissatisfied in general, or with particular facets of their work, then new considerations need to be made, for the purpose of enhancing the job

satisfaction.

Krueger (1986 : 5) suggests that there is a correlation between satisfaction and effectiveness.

Thus, if the general experiences of government social workers are negative, this may affect the services provided to clients.

The political, social and economic changes accompanying the transition to the New South Africa have had far-reaching consequences for the provision of welfare services. In addition to highlighting the gross inequalities in the provision of welfare services, change has also stimulated the need to broaden these welfare services (Harnett 1992 : 1).

The Margo Commission (in Snyman 1990 :143) envisaged that the welfare system will have to provide assurances against poverty, unemployment, disability and illness. This is indicative of the complex role the social worker plays within the welfare system.

It seems that relatively little progress has been made in the understanding of occupational stress within social services. This is particularly important since these staff members are involved in providing services for the most vulnerable members of society, during a time of organisational change and growing pressure on resources. In addition, social services departments have been subject to increasing public attention, often in response to unfavorable media publicity (Bradly & Sutherland 1995 : 361).

In conclusion, the bibliographic sources consulted for the purpose of the background of this study, support the notion that the nature of social work practice can be potentially stressful.

The intention of this study was to explore the job experiences unique to social workers employed at government offices, and assist in the understanding of the complex interrelationships between stress, support and job satisfaction for the social worker.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The overall goal of the research was to obtain a clearer understanding of how government social workers in East London and Mdantsane experience their profession. To this end experiences and attitudes of a sample of government social workers were explored. This entailed examination of the following:

- 1.2.1 How do government social workers generally experience their profession?
- 1.2.2 What motivated the respondents to become social workers and the extent to which practice has or has not met these expectations?
- 1.2.3 Issues pertaining to the social workers' job-descriptions.
- 1.2.4 The satisfactions and / or dissatisfactions of their profession.
- 1.2.5 Organisational factors which affect the social workers' feelings and / or attitudes towards their work .

This enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of job satisfaction in the social work profession. If the research highlights any job dissatisfactions, the researcher aims to suggest recommendations for increased job satisfaction for social workers.

1.3 ANTICIPATED VALUE OF THE FINDINGS

1.3.1 It was anticipated that a clearer understanding of how government social workers experience their profession would be highlighted.

1.3.2 It was believed that the findings of the study would support the theoretical notion that social workers experience many stressors in their profession.

Recommendations should highlight guidelines for more effective services and job satisfaction of the social worker.

1.3.3 To highlight the reality of what the social work profession involves, thereby better preparing social work students for their future careers.

1.3.4 To form the basis for future research of an explanatory nature.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The category of research design used in the study is exploratory - descriptive, since the aim of the research was to explore and describe the job satisfaction of government social workers.

As McKendrick (1987 : 256) explains, the main objective of an exploratory research design is to broaden understanding, construct general ideas and highlight avenues for further study regarding the research topic. The researcher chose the qualitative research method, as the research topic

involved experiences in the lived world. Qualitative research involves issues such as understanding, meaning, and the human experience.

According to Giorgi (1970 : 18), it is therefore a “human scientific” approach, concerned with the understanding of the human experience.

Furthermore , the researcher chose the qualitative research method, as the research topic involved the gaining of in-depth, first-hand data from which one respondent’s responses may vary from another’s responses. As stated by Grinnell (1988 : 186), such qualitative research focuses on describing and comprehending the subjective meanings of events as the individual experiences it. Marlow (1998 : 10) adds that qualitative information involves the non-numerical examination of phenomena, using words instead of numbers, and focuses on the underlying meanings.

The sample consisted of 20 (twenty) social workers employed at the Department of Welfare in East London and Mdantsane. Inclusion in the sample was determined by willingness to participate. The sampling procedure utilised in this study was non-probable purposive sampling, as a specific sample for the research has been chosen. As Grinnell (1988 : 251) highlights, non-probability samples are suited to exploratory studies where we are merely interested in obtaining as much unique data on a research question as possible. The researcher selected respondents on the basis of knowledge about them (they are employed government social workers in East London and Mdantsane). Thus the respondents were purposely chosen.

Bailey (1985 : 93) defines an interview schedule as an instrument that is not given directly to respondents, but is filled in by the interviewer, who reads the questions to the respondents. Thus the researcher is able to clarify the questions if needed. The interviews were semi-structured.

The researcher guided each interview with the aid of an interview schedule, comprising open and closed ended questions, so as not to limit the interviewees' responses. Questions were broad enough to encompass a wide range of information. The same questions were repeated at each interview.

The researcher made use of note-taking throughout the interviews. The researcher followed Grinnell's (1988 : 296) suggestion of recording responses throughout the interview, supplemented with direct quotations for illustrative purposes.

To gain a broad understanding of the government social workers' job satisfactions, it was anticipated that a significant variance of the respondents would exist with regard to the age, present social work position and field of social work practice.

All data analysis was done by hand. As directed by Rubin & Babbie (1997 : 397), analysis included the process of sorting and comparing data. The data was then organised into categories. As Marlow (1998 : 10) suggests, analysis of qualitative information consists of creating categories after the verbal material has been collected.

The information gained from the interviews was also compared to related studies and literature available. In addition, common themes were extracted in support of the literature review.

No pilot study was conducted, other than that the first interview was used to test the schedule for timing, ease of response and clarity.

1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITS OF THE STUDY

The sample (20) was small yet relatively diverse with respect to age, present social work position and field on social work practice.

The study involved government organisations in East London and Mdantsane, focusing on one area only, thereby concentrating on a certain population of government social workers. The sample was therefore not representative of the population of all government social workers. This limited the extent to which results can be generalised to the wider population of government social workers.

However, for the purpose of this small-scale study, the sample was adequate, as these are the only government service rendering organisations in East London and Mdantsane, and the researcher interviewed willing social workers employed by these organisations.

In addition, the researcher found that, while all topics were addressed, not all respondents explored the various questions in the same way. The researcher concluded that some of the respondents were hesitant in stating their true experiences, perhaps for fear of the possibility of being victimised by management and / or colleagues at the organization in which the respondents are employed. This decreased the generalisation of the findings.

Every effort was made to ensure the confidentiality and the anonymity of participants.

Government social workers were the typical sample for this research and the nonprobable purposive sampling method reduced the reliability of the sample. However, for the size and nature of this study, it proved effective, as there is only one government agency in East London.

As Grinnell (1988 : 253) suggests, a primary assumption in purposive sampling is that by selecting

persons who are “typical” with regard to the study’s variables, any errors of judgment in selection will tend to counterbalance one another.

The exploratory - descriptive design used in the study limited the validity of the findings, as this design might not provide conclusive answers to the research questions, but rather further insight. However, the aim of this research was to explore the respondents’ job satisfaction, rather than provide conclusive answers. It was thus suggested that the research developed questions and hypotheses for further research.

The researcher is a social worker herself, and has her own opinions regarding the research topic.

The researcher remained aware of her own thoughts and feelings during the interviews (through the use of comprehensive note taking) and during the analysis of the data. By remaining aware of her own opinions regarding the job satisfactions of social workers, the researcher was cautious not to limit the study.

1.6 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED WITH THE STUDY

1.6.1 Not all the social workers employed at the Department of Welfare were willing to be interviewed. This was due to the length of each interview, and to time constraints and work schedules of the social workers.

The researcher interviewed at least one social worker from every area of the agency's field

of social work practice and from every position that can be held in the Department of Welfare, except for the position of Director.

A possible bias existed in that those willing to be interviewed could be more/less dissatisfied than others.

1.6.2 It was expected that the exclusive use of English in this study might be a problem since this is not the mother-tongue of all the respondents. This problem was addressed in the interviews, as the respondents who were not familiar with some of the terms asked the researcher to explain the concepts.

1.6.3 Due to the interviewees' work schedules and time constraints, the interviews were conducted in the agency in which the interviewees are employed. The researcher felt that this might have been a problem, as the researcher observed that several of the interviewees seemed hesitant to answer the various questions, particularly the questions relating to organisational factors and support structures.

1.6.4 Initially the researcher stated in the research proposal that the interviews would be taped and transcribed. However, several respondents asked for information to be “off the record” and were hesitant in answering certain questions. Thus the researcher chose to make exclusive use of note-taking for each interview.

1.7 DEFINITIONS OF THE CONCEPTS

The following are definitions of terms and concepts central to the research:

Researcher: This term has been used interchangeably to refer to the author and researcher of this thesis.

Experience: Knowledge or skill resulting from practice or learning (Longham Dictionary of Psychology and Psychiatry 1988 sv “experience”).

Social Work: The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance wellbeing. Utilising theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (International Federation of Social Workers 2000).

Social Worker: The social worker is concerned with the interactions between people and their social environment which affect the ability of people to accomplish their life tasks, alleviate distress, and realise their aspirations and values.

The tasks of a social worker are to (1) enhance the problem – solving and coping capacities of people, (2) link people with systems that provide them with resources and opportunities, (3) promote the effective and humane operation of these systems, and (4) contribute to the development and improvement of social policy (Pincus and Minahan 1973 : 9).

Department of Welfare: A primary objective of the Department of Welfare is to ensure that people with social needs and problems receive assistance and to promote the social welfare of individuals, groups and communities (SA Parliament: House of Assembly 1993).

The Department of Welfare is now integrated and provincial.

Stressor: A stimulus that leads to anxiety or other mental disorders unless the individual’s coping skills are used effectively (The Social Work Dictionary 1995 sv “stressor”).

Job Satisfaction:

“...a worker’s attitude about various aspects of the job”

(Krueger 1986 : 5)

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The thesis is set out in the following manner:

Chapter one introduces the research topic and provides a brief overview of the study. The following areas are outlined:

Background of the study; specific objectives of the research; anticipated value of the findings; research design and methodology; scope and limits of the study; specific problems experienced with the study; and definitions of the concepts.

Chapter two of this study is a literature review of available literature and past studies regarding the research topic.

Chapter three deals with the design and methodology of the research. The sampling procedure and the selected sample population are explored. In addition, the instruments of data collection and the analysis of the data are examined. The limitations of the study are further explored in this chapter.

In **chapter four** the findings of the study are presented and discussed.

Chapter five closes with several recommendations and conclusions made by the researcher, based

on the preceding findings. Appendices and the bibliography follow the main body of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Social work has long been recognized as being a stressful profession. The theoretical notion underlying social work practice, is that social workers experience many stressors in their profession, and various stress-reduction strategies need to be implemented in order to reduce stress for social workers.

It is from this perspective that literature was reviewed.

Trecker (1971 : 78) explains that :

“...the goal of the social work profession is mostly directed at helping people so that they can help themselves.”

Zastrow (1993 : 2) states:

recreational “The goal of social workers is to fulfill the social, financial, health and

requirements of all individuals in a society.

When other institutions in the society fail at times to meet the basic needs of individuals or groups of people, then social services are needed and demanded.”

The International Federation of Social Workers (2000) write the following:

“Social work in its various forms addresses the multiple complex transactions between people and their environments. Its mission is to enable all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives and prevent dysfunction. Professional social work is focused on problem solving and change. As such, social workers are change agents in society and in the lives of individuals, families and communities they serve. Social work is an interrelated system of values, theory and practice.”

The above definitions highlight the complexity of the social work occupation. Social workers are

indispensable to our society, as is evident from their high caseload.

The researcher has been exposed to the working environment of various social workers, and

noted that the social workers are often very stressed and frustrated with various aspects of their jobs.

A study conducted by Collings and Murray (1996 : 383) investigating predictors of stress amongst social workers yielded the following findings:

“...high levels of measured stress seem to be significantly associated with :

- * having a high workload;
- * dissatisfaction with supervision;
- * issues regarding promotion;
- * perceiving society to have unrealistic expectations of social workers;
- * pressure involved in planning and reaching work targets;
- * having no answers to specific client problems.”

Collings and Murray (1996 : 374) suggest that much of what is known about stress amongst social workers is anecdotal and that “...there is a dearth of systematic research findings on the subject”.

2.2 PROVISION OF WELFARE SERVICES

The political, social and economic changes accompanying the transition South Africa has undergone, and is undergoing, have had far-reaching consequences for the provision of welfare services. According to Snyman (in Harnett 1992 : 143),

“... the realities of disinvestment, sanctions, debt problems, rising unemployment, a high increase in the national population and slow economic growth have led to rapidly rising public expenditure, and at the same time limited the government’s ability to finance this expenditure.”

Eight years after Snyman’s above quotation, it appears that, currently, South Africa’s provision of welfare services is still in crisis.

In October 1999, the Minister for Welfare, Population and Development, Dr Zola Skweyiya, held a National Consultative Process (NCP) to discuss critical issues and challenges in the welfare and development sector.

Over six days of hearings, about 70 civil society organisations made submissions in an effort to provide a comprehensive and sustainable response to South Africa’s social crisis. Following the submissions made at the NCP, Minister Skweyiya released a 10-point programme to ensure that the welfare and development portfolio could address the crisis and ensure the creation of a “caring society”. Dr Skweyiya stated that, in his opinion, the welfare system was failing those people who most need its support.

Dr Skweyiya added that the country was sitting on a time bomb of poverty and social integration and that action needs to be taken now to correct the weaknesses in the welfare system (Skweyiya 2000 : 1).

Dr Skweyiya explained that South Africa had been and is experiencing a deep social crisis and that this crisis has the potential to reverse the democratic gains made since 1994. In addition, the disintegration of the social fabric, of family and community life, was a reality that had not been acknowledged at a fundamental level. The South African social policies assumed the ability of

families and communities to respond to the crisis. Welfare had proceeded as if these social institutions were fully functional and provided the full range of social support that was required to restore the wellbeing of people. Persistent and increasing levels of poverty, violence, social inequality, and unfulfilled expectations placed an enormous burden on existing social welfare services.

In addition, low economic growth and highly inequitable income distribution had placed increased demands on the range of social welfare services offered by government (Skweyiya 2000 : 2).

In 1989 at the historical National Social Welfare Policy Conference held in Johannesburg, social workers denounced the Government's racial policy and committed themselves to building a united welfare movement which was, "non-racial, democratic and unitary welfare system within a unitary state...which will promote justice peace and equality...and the equitable distribution of resources" (Patel 1989 : 4).

Thus began social work's commitment to evolve an appropriate welfare policy for a non-racial South Africa. Leaders in this united movement now occupy political positions, serve as advisors to national and provincial welfare ministries or are members of workgroups and technical committees working to reshape welfare policy (Patel 1989 : 4).

2.3 MANAGEMENT TASKS AND ACTIVITIES IN SOCIAL WELFARE

According to Loewenberg and Dolgoff (1972 : 64), social welfare administration is a systematic process of intervention employed by managers in the service of achieving selected organisational objectives.

Fatout and Rose (1995 : 73) suggest that the general duties of the social work manager may not be to perform the social work tasks, but rather to help in maintaining the agency in operation and to improve its standard of performance.

Patti (1983 : 45) states that the social work agency operates under a mandate contained in public law and administrative regulations.

The author explains that these mandates are seldom specific enough to provide detailed guidance for agency action, and so it falls to the administrator and staff to clarify and interpret these directives and ultimately see that they are translated into goals and objectives that provide guidelines for the agency operations.

In addition, Patti (1983 : 45) suggests that in this task is the responsibility for advocating changes and modifications in the policy that may make it more sensitive to organisational realities and local circumstances.

Similarly, Schulman (1987 : 70) states the following:

“Thus the administrator is not merely a passive recipient and implementer of external mandates, but also seeks to influence the shape of policy based on the agency’s experience”.

According to Patti (1983 : 47) programmes are the instruments through which the social work agency accomplishes its goals and objectives.

Schulman (1987 : 13) describes the programme plan as a model for action that includes intended outcomes, the nature of the services provided, the recipient to be served, and the resources required. The author further states that planning is a continuous activity involving incremental adjustments and modifications on the initial design.

In addition, Piccard (1988 : 90) explains that in community needs and conditions, altered funding arrangements, and the ideas and interests of agency staff, frequently require that programmes be updated and refined according to current realities.

According to Tripodi and Fellin (1977 : 239), the relationship between the social workers' manager/s and staff is very crucial in the successful operation of a democratic decision-making system. The authors give importance to a type of management strategy in social welfare services termed "participatory management", which is a form of management encouraging a democratic participation in the management of an agency or an organisation.

Participatory management implies that staff will have a voice and a vote in management decisions that affect their work. This kind of management encourages employees to stay in the organisation and improve their role performance (Tripodi and Fellin 1977 : 239).

Warhan (1975 : 66) explains that social work managers do not work with clients, but with superiors and subordinates, peers and other colleagues within the organisational systems. The author adds that social workers may rely on authority based on position, as well as on skill. It is stated that in social work itself, authority derives partly from the personal and professional

qualities and skills of the individuals involved, but also from statutes, rules and regulations and the positions which the social work managers hold (Warhan 1975 : 66).

According to Weinbach (1994 : 45) authority exercised by the social work manager is essential, for without it, organisational activities cannot be coordinated. Warhan (1975 : 42) highlights the aspect that in social services, the job of providing services to individuals is done by the social workers. The author adds that the quality of the work that is done by the social worker is always affected substantially by the decisions which are made at higher levels in the agency. Similarly, Weinbach (1994 : 54) suggests that management is seen as primarily a decision-making process and the job of the manager is to make the process as conscious and rational as possible.

2.4 ASSESING AGENCY PROGRAMMES

Loewenberg and Dolgoff (1972 :56) explain that programme evaluation is increasingly important, both to account for policy making and funding bodies, and also as a service of information for internal planning and decision-making purposes. The authors add that the increased emphasis on evaluation in social welfare has necessitated the development of more elaborate management information systems that can generate data on activities, costs, outcomes, and a variety of other aspects of agency performance.

This information can be variously useful for providing corrective feedback, identifying skills and attitudes that need improvement, supporting and rewarding effective performances.

Piccard (1988 : 97) suggests that organisations are open systems that must adapt to changing environmental conditions if they are to remain relevant and effective. Even when events in the

external world do not require change, conditions and processes within the agency will, from time to time, create problems, and the need for suggestions for improvements arises. These should be addressed by the managers. The author explains that managers are, consequently, central actors, in efforts to modify policies, programmes and procedures in agencies.

2.5 SOCIAL WORK STRESSORS

Pines and Kafry (1978 : 500) postulated that social workers are a rather homogeneous group, emotionally, whose sensitivity to clients' problems makes them vulnerable to work stress.

In many ways, stress, and consequently frustration, can be seen as a central part of social work, in so far as much of social work practice consists of intervening in situations where clients are under

stress (that is, subject to inappropriate levels of pressure).

Whether it be counselling, or welfare planning, the social work task is rarely, if ever, unconnected

with stress (Thompson, Murphy & Stradling 1994 : 16).

However there is generally no distinction made between stress and pressure.

Arroba and James (1987 : 3) capture the distinction well when they comment:

“Pressure and stress are words which are often used interchangeably.

They are not in fact the same. Everyone needs a certain amount of pressure. Pressure can lead to stress. No one needs stress...

stress is your response to an inappropriate level of pressure.

It is a response to pressure, not the pressure itself.”

Several researchers have surveyed social workers and other helping professionals in order to determine, in general, the kinds of clients and types of service roles that are distressing.

Barret and McKelvey (1980 : 270) reviewed the relevant literature and identified the following events as stressful in social welfare work with clients:

- * Emergencies
- * Threats to worker
- * Court hearings
- * Client regression

- * No-win situations
- * Severe abuse / neglect situations
- * Foster parent withdrawal

2.6 CAUSES OF STRESS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

Smith, Beck, Cooper, Cox Ottaway & Talbot (1982 : 189-190) present six main causes of stress for social workers, as follows:

2.6.1 WORK:

Work can be stressful when there is too much of it, too little, or if it is too difficult. In social work, too much work is a fact of life, due to the infinite demand, measured against finite supply. Similarly, Koeske and Koeske

(1989 : 243) highlight that a heavy workload represents a demanding environment that, under certain conditions, will place the social worker under stress.

2.6.2 RELATIONS AT WORK:

Poor working relationships can considerably raise pressure levels and thus prove stressful. Mistrust is not generally associated with relationships between social work colleagues, but as value issues are predominant in social work, conflictual relations are not uncommon.

2.6.3 UNCERTAINTY:

Uncertainty and conflicting demands raise anxiety levels and thus fuel stress.

2.6.4 CAREER PROSPECTS:

Under-promotion refers to the frustration that arises as a result of unrealised or disappointed ambitions. There are significant numbers of experienced social workers who seek a new challenge, but do not have the opportunity.

2.6.5 ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE:

This may act as an inhibitor of an individual's freedom and creativity. A stifling organisation may limit personal control and thus cause frustration

and resentment.

2.6.6 BALANCE BETWEEN WORK AND HOME LIFE:

In the social work profession, this may occur when work frustrations and emotions spill over into the home life (Smith et al 1982 : 189-190).

2.7 ROLE STRESS

Thompson et al (1994 : 19) identify role stress as one of the main stressors. This includes role ambiguity (uncertainty about the scope of responsibility); role incompatibility (conflicting expectations, for example, clients vs management); role conflict (conflicting messages of what is expected) and role overload (expected to play too many roles).

Role stress can be seen as very much part and parcel of social work. Social work roles are often unclear, manifold and contradictory, as indeed are the problems and issues social workers deal with daily (Thompson et al 1994 : 20).

Kahn (1964 : 380) notes that role stress can result in:

“...low job satisfaction, low confidence in the organisation and a high degree of job-related tension. A very frequent behavioural response to role stress is withdrawal or avoidance of those who are seen as creating the stress...while a mechanism of defense, (it) is not a mechanism of solution.”

Some studies find that a high rate of role conflict and role ambiguity is associated with high burnout among social workers (Harrison, Jayaratne and Chess in Sek-yum 1993 : 104). Corcoran

and Bryce (in Sek-yum 1993 : 104) remark that occupational stress derived from role conflict, role ambiguity and excessive workload, can be considered the primary cause of burnout.

2.8 ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

Arches (1991 : 205) points to the fact that a workplace negatively affects workers in varying degrees because it constrains autonomy and promotes bureaucratisation. As social workers become part of the bureaucracy, they are often unable to use the sophisticated techniques they have been taught.

Bureaucracies, because of their rigid lines of decision-making and authority, undermine professional concepts of morality and confront the worker with ethical dilemmas over which he or she has little control (Arches 1991 : 205).

Brady (1993 : 87) states that certain aspects of office design can contribute to staff being unproductive and managers in social work services should try to be aware of this and hence try to avoid it. The author recommends giving immediate attention to uncomfortable staff environments, as this affects employees' motivation and productivity, thus affecting the entire organisation.

Thompson et al (1994 : 19) state that stressors are characterised by tension, low morale and communication difficulties. This is a good example of how stress is not simply a matter of

individual pathology (that is, a low tolerance of pressure), but also has a strong organisational dimension, in so far as the role structure of an organisation can play a major part.

Thompson et al (1994 : 19) suggest that stress within social work should not be measured or conceived solely in terms of the individual practitioner. We need to see the pressure and stress experienced by the individual in the wider context; we should not ‘blame the victim’ : ‘Social work agencies need to remember just how stressful social work can be and, when an employee shows clear signs of stress, the question should not be :

“What is the weakness in this employee?” but, “what is the weakness in the organisation that allows this to happen?”

According to recent literature, there are signs that some authors are beginning to move away from a model of stress which locates the problem within the individual. This is illustrated by the following comment from a practitioner interviewed as part of a stress research study in the “helping professions”:

‘The reason for the stress wasn’t within me, it was in the task and the system. I wanted them to deal with those rather than look at my personal issues’

(Thompson et al 1994 : 19)

However, in direct opposition to the above, Thompson et al (1994 : 22) state that unfortunately, the traditional view of stress is one which sees it simply as a weakness of the individual, rather than a dynamic interplay of personal and organisational factors. The authors suggest the

existence, in some organisations, of a 'culture' of stress that both reflects and engenders a high level of stress. Where this arises, staff, service users and the organisation as a whole are likely to suffer.

The authors add that a common but unhelpful response to stress within organisations is to deny or

marginalise its existence and to play down its significance. Often, this manifests itself in a view of

stress as an individual pathology, a sign of personal, rather than organisational, weakness. This

can prove to be the basis of a vicious circle in which people under stress are made to feel that they

are inadequate and solely responsible for their predicament, thus producing an even more stressful

situation.

According to Caputo (1988 : 76) the quality of staff work and interactions can be influenced by the organisation's structure, as the structure can help to determine who will work with whom and on what tasks. For the author, the purpose of structure is to allow the organisation to divide its work into various units and then provide ways to integrate this work.

Similarly Edwards and Yankey (1991 : 98) state that if the agency services need to be coordinated with other integrating programmes, then staff teams should be established.

Caputo (1988 : 98) explains that the structure of the organisation can also be affected by the composition of the staff, and in some instances, the structure emerges out of the special strengths or weaknesses that the staff possess. Caputo (1988 : 78) adds that each organisation has its own needs and the structure of the organisation should be planned towards achieving the goals of that organisation.

Bamford (1990 : 78) argues that an organisational structure is the formal specification of authority, responsibility and expectations. The author explains that the managers' task is to create and maintain a framework that permits a degree of constancy and predictability in the relations between organisational participants, and yet to permit them sufficient flexibility to respond creatively to routine and unanticipated events.

According to Bamford (1990 : 79) the manager determines the division of labour in the agency; how authority is to be distributed in the system; the nature and number of job specialities; rules to govern behaviour in a wide variety of situations; procedures regarding workflow and relationships between work units.

Similarly, Piccard (1988 : 46) states the following:

“Though these instruments provide only a partial picture of the living organisation, they may be likened to a skeletal structure that creates certainty of organisational coherence.”

Abels and Murphy (1981 : 51) explain that managers may view the formal hierarchy of authority as a channel of communication from top to bottom, primarily for the transmission of orders. The authors state that communication upwards may be recognized as serving the purpose of providing management with the information for decision-making. It is further suggested that communication must be facilitated throughout an organisation and the primary responsibility for channelling it effectively for organisational purposes rests with the managers (Abels and Murphy 1981 : 51).

Similarly, Weinbach (1994 : 45) states that the managers need to keep channels of communication open and to decide what to communicate, when, how and to whom. Abels and Murphy (1981 : 70) explain that another function attributed to effective communication which serves purposes much broader than the transmission of information, is to help strengthen the bonds between the individual and the organisation.

According to Cournoyer (1988 : 262) stressors that fall in the category of the work environment include those that are related to the work setting. They are not limited to the immediate physical environment, but include interactions with persons, organisations and institutions that the worker undertakes as part of the job. Common work-environment stressors for case workers include the following:

- Unpredictable and constantly changing policies
- procedures and laws
- accommodating to new administrative officials and supervisory personnel
- increased pace or amount of work required

- changes in staff
- inadequate resources to meet client needs
- office environment
- lack of organisational support for workers
- poor peer relationships
- low salary
- low status
- public criticism

(Cournoyer 1988 : 262).

Zischka and Fox (1983 : 44) suggest a relationship between organisational structure and burnout. Similarly, Armstrong (in Zischka and Fox 1983 : 44) names organisational functioning as an important variable in burnout. The author emphasizes that poor communication, lack of support and feedback, unrealistic demands, lack of variety and autonomy, centralised decision making and high pressure contribute to burnout.

According to Zischka and Fox (1983 :45) burnout results from a nonreciprocal, nonsupportive relationship between professionals and those for whom they work, with dissatisfaction and disaffection arising from unmet expectations. The authors stress that obviously, a prominent determinant in burnout is organisational climate, as bureaucratically structured social organisations are too often unresponsive to the unique needs, skills, wants, stresses and values of the professionals working in them.

According to Zischka and Fox (1983 : 45) professionals enter the field of social work because they derive satisfaction from working to help others. What they do is consistent with what they believe. What they do is tied up with who they are. They expect to work in an environment that supports their efforts and their values. The workplace, therefore, plays a particularly powerful and central role in the professional's lives. They expect it to provide sanction and economic security. Especially in this field, they need to feel satisfaction and emotional support as well. They expect that in the workplace they can reach professional and personal potential.

Instead of finding in organisations a place to meet their expectations, workers find themselves in an environment in which they are constantly prodded and pushed to show an increase in performance levels, while resources and, most important, support diminishes continually; in which tasks are always added on, but no task is ever taken away; in which room for promotion and advancement is nearly nonexistent; in which memos and directives are the means of communication; in which what they have done is never as important as what they have not done. The logical target for change is the organisation (Zischka and Fox 1983 : 45).

Arches (1991 : 206) suggests that as long as social workers lack the autonomy they expect to use in their work with clients, they are likely to be dissatisfied and experience some degree of burnout. Workers are most satisfied when they have autonomy, are not limited by demands of

funding sources, and are not stifled by bureaucracy. The bureaucratic structure controls and coordinates workers, even those who are by traditional definition, professional. The workplace that is most conducive to carrying out humane, holistic, and dignified work is one that challenges the dominant economic system and its assumptions about the efficiency of the bureaucratic organisation.

2.9 CONDUCTING JOB AND WORK LOAD ANALYSIS

The design of jobs has a critical impact on organisational goals and employee performance. According to Brady (1993 : 78) the way tasks and responsibilities are divided and shared can affect the productivity, and unsatisfying or highly demanding jobs are difficult to fill. Hence thoughtful job design benefits both the organisation and the staff.

Hasenfield (1992 : 76) suggests that, to enhance productivity, every organisation should undertake a “task analysis” of its major jobs. The author states that this analysis provides clear job expectations, facilitates performance reviews, connects staff with the goals of the organisation, helps in identifying training needs, and assists in determining staff support required to perform certain activities.

Similarly, Bamford (1990 : 87) notes that a good job analysis ensures a balanced workload. The author comments that employees who are inundated with tasks or have an inordinate number of clients are likely to feel over-burdened and perhaps exploited.

2.10 INCREASING JOB SATISFACTION

In social work as well as other helping professions, job satisfaction has been found to be associated with intention to quit, high turnover, low productivity and poor job performance (Barber in Rauktis and Koeske 1994 : 43).

Bamford (1990 : 87) writes that, to increase job satisfaction, organisations can try a variety of approaches, of which job enrichment is the most appealing. The author explains that staff should experience inherent satisfaction in what they do. They must feel that their work is worthwhile if they are to feel committed to it. Other approaches include work simplification and job rotation. According to Hasenfield (1992 : 56) work simplification creates specialised jobs, which allows staff with limited training and experience to perform work adequately. In addition, job rotation permits staff to take turns performing several work– simplified jobs. Hasenfield (1992 : 56) suggests that this provides more flexible work assignments and reduces monotony.

Edwards and Yankey (1991 : 45) suggest that job enrichment allows staff to discern outcomes of their work and to observe how they are having an impact. In addition, staff may experience a new level of independence, autonomy, and discretion in performing their work. The author further explains that job enrichment provides staff with an opportunity to experience an entirely new job and expose their skills and talents.

2.11 UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS AS A CAUSATIVE FACTOR FOR SOCIAL WORK STRESS

Lewis (in Kestnbaum 1984 : 376) suggests that social workers enter the field wanting to help others. After their illusions about the nature of the work are shed, they become angry, depressed and resigned. The author explains that this occurs when social workers are “confronted with impossible assignments.”

Unrealistically high expectations will interfere with the recognition of small and moderate gains in therapy, resulting in the therapist’s dissatisfaction with his or her performance. If dissatisfaction becomes entrenched, the therapist’s morale will sink and the likelihood of stress will rise. Thus increased attention to the dangers of having unrealistic expectations and learning to recognise ‘small therapeutic progress’ is important in reducing social workers’ levels of stress and frustration (Kestnbaum 1984 : 377).

2.12 APPRECIATION FROM CLIENTS

Kestnbaum (1984 : 376) suggests that a therapist may also assess the progress in therapy through feedback from clients. Success in meeting the therapist’s expectations may be measured partially by the client’s verbal reports of changes. Streepy (in Kestnbaum 1984 : 376) writes the following of one study:

“The degree of positive feedback that workers received from clients was significantly related to burnout; the greater the frequency of positive feedback, the lower the burnout score.”

Similarly Kestnbaum (1984 : 376) adds that certainly therapists want to help clients, and feedback from the clients is a valuable measure of effectiveness or lack of it.

Commenting on the reduction of stress for social workers, Kestnbaum (1984 : 377) suggests that if therapists are to feel rewarded and replenished in their jobs and avoid burnout, it is essential that

they receive adequate gratification. Although this gratification may come from many sources, that

of feeling helpful to clients is paramount. As Lustbader (1991 : 18) comments:

“.....giving help eventually embitters us, unless we
are compensated at least by appreciation...”

2.13 BURNOUT

As a result of the high stress levels, a concept often closely associated with social work is that of “burnout”. This denotes a stage which some people reach where prolonged stress has produced a state of apathy and disillusionment (Thompson et al 1994 : 16-17).

Cherniss (1980 : 24) states that burnout is a process in which a service provider psychologically disengages from the work in response to job-related stress. It is a coping strategy used when direct-action coping efforts prove futile. It leads to loss of concern for clients, loss of positive regard for co-workers and the agency, and emotional withdrawal from work.

A letter in a “Community Care” report, in June 1984, stated the following, which indicates the detrimental effect of burnout:

“How do you get senior colleagues to notice you are suffering from acute burnout? Do you send a memo or collapse in tears?

I want to be bright and helpful but instead I am prickly and defensive. I feel dispensable, disposable and despondent”

(Health Education Authority 1988 : 10).

According to Edelwich and Brodsky, (1980 : 44) individuals who are more susceptible to burnout are those who tend to be very idealistic and enthusiastic, and have a desire to give to others and their jobs. This explains why social workers are particularly vulnerable to burnout.

Maslach and Jackson (in Sek-yum 1993 : 101) explain that the importance of comprehending and intervening in the phenomenon of staff burnout has become a pressing concern due to the high cost burnout is believed to have for the agency, the client system and the social service workers. Gillespie (in Sek-yum 1993 : 101) discusses burnout as taking its toll through low self esteem, abnormal desire for vacations and an inability for workers to take their jobs seriously. The author describes burnout as bringing about a cynical and dehumanised perception of clients, which results in low morale and impaired performance, and that it constitutes a major drain on an agency’s effectiveness in terms of the expense of staff turnover.

Among the various researchers of burnout, Maslach and Jackson (in Sek-yum 1993 : 103) have made an important contribution to the definition of burnout. They define burnout as

encompassing three distinct aspects, which include: (1) emotional exhaustion, (2) lack of personal accomplishment and (3) depersonalisation.

According to Maslach and Jackson (in Sek-yum 1993 : 103), emotional exhaustion is often central to burnout: a loss of feeling, a loss of trust, a loss of interest and a loss of spirit. By emotional exhaustion, the authors state that the suffering individuals feel that they can no longer give themselves to their work as they intended to.

Maslach and Jackson (in Sek-yum 1993 : 103) describe the second aspect of burnout, i.e., lack of personal accomplishment, as the tendency for human service workers to evaluate themselves negatively, leading them to believe that they are failing in their duty to help others. The authors add that the third aspect of burnout, depersonalisation, refers to the change in the workers' perceptions of clients through the development of negative, cynical attitudes and feelings towards their clients. This dehumanised or depersonalised perception of others can lead helpers to think that their clients are responsible for their own problems.

A depersonalised perception of clients can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy, since such a perception may lead to negative reactions on the part of clients, which may cause the workers to maintain and strengthen their own negative attitudes (Maslach and Jackson in Sek-yum 1993 : 103).

Koeske and Koeske (1989 : 244) suggest that social workers who feel emotionally and practically supported by a partner at work and at home are likely to be able to endure demanding workloads with less impairment than their poorly supported co-workers. A similar advantage may be

expected for social workers who possess a sense of personal accomplishment regarding their work. In this case, an overload of client contracts probably would induce less stress if the social worker sensed that intended positive client outcomes were being achieved. Thus, social support and a sense of personal accomplishment are two conditions or resources that may act as “buffers” against the debilitating stress response that burned – out helpers manifest (Koeske and Koeske 1989 : 244).

Burnout has also been equated with alienation, depression, anxiety, loss of idealism, and loss of spirit, and has been characterised as a coping mechanism in response to stress (Freudenberger in Soderfeldt, Soderfeldt and Warg 1995 : 639). The author explains that burnout has also been regarded as an outcome of stressful working conditions rather than as a coping mechanism.

2.14 EUSTRESS

Although there is considerable evidence that occupational stress can have substantial human and economic costs, the experience of stress does not necessarily have a negative outcome (Bradley and Sutherland 1995 : 314).

It should be noted that both the press and professional literature have often confused or equated stress with burnout. Though these two concepts are similar, they are not identical. As Farber (in Sek-yum 1993 : 104) states, burnout is the result of unmediated stress – of being stressed and

having no support system. On the other hand, stress can have both positive and negative effects. It occurs when there is a substantial imbalance between environmental demand and the response capability of the individual. As the environmental demands increase, or the response capability of the individual decreases, the likelihood of stress causing a burntout state becomes more probable (Farber in Sek-yum 1993 : 104).

Cournoyer (1988 : 259) states that stress is not inherently dysfunctional or disease-producing. A certain amount of stress may be essential to biopsychosocial well-being.

For many people, moderate stress is a motivational force; for others, the biophysical and biochemical reactions not only enhance stamina and alertness, but also heighten concentration and thought processes.

The term 'eustress' has been used to describe an adaptive healthy response to a stressful situation.

Thus, if the problems of job-related stress are to be addressed in a way which facilitates the recognition of individual and organisational needs, it is vital that we have a clear understanding of

the causes and outcomes of occupational stress.

This is particularly true for employees in social services organisations, because of the relative lack

of empirically based research in this area (Bradley and Sutherland 1995 : 314).

2.15 THE NEED TO ALLEVIATE SOCIAL WORK STRESSORS

It seems that relatively little progress has been made in our understanding of occupational stress within social services. This is particularly important since these staff are involved in providing

services for the most vulnerable members of society, during a time of organisational change and growing pressure on resources.

In addition, social services departments have been subject to increasing public attention, often in response to unfavourable media publicity (Bradley and Sutherland 1995 : 361).

Stress - reduction strategies amongst social workers are an important issue, not only because of lowered general well-being in sufferers, but also because a stressed workforce can reduce the efficacy of service delivery.

Many researchers investigated what should be done about the reduction of stress for social workers. The reviewed articles offered the following suggestions to alleviate stress, and consequently burnout:

- * Improve staff communications.
- * Define work objective clearly.
- * Offer freedom in client and work studies.
- * Provide a supportive environment.
- * Provide understanding from senior colleagues.
- * Provide clear job requirements.
- * Create low work pressure and increase job security.
- * Give adequate training.
- * Provide supervisor training.
- * Attempt to increase financial resources.

(Soderfeldt, Soderfeldt and Warg 1995 : 643).

2.16 MOTIVATION IN SOCIAL WORK

Weinbach (1994 : 182) argues that effective use of knowledge of motivation is a “people skill” that is certainly an asset to the counsellor or therapist or to the macro-level practitioner, as well as to the manager. Social workers in management should have an understanding of motivation, as it is applicable to successful performance within their roles as managers. Social workers as managers are responsible for positively influencing the productivity of social workers around them.

Harris and Kelly (1991 : 26) explain that social workers will improve their skill of delegation by analysing the workload, style of management, and staff, and this will increase the motivation of the people that they are working with.

According to Smit and Cronje (1992 : 287) effective communication increases motivation. Motivational communication involves both personal and group situations. Effective leaders motivate individuals when communicating, for purposes of a job or task orientation, proper task instruction and job performance. The authors add that a key to motivational success is to give immediate positive recognition when positive performance is identified.

Edwards and Yankey (1991 : 91) write that motivation to accomplish results tends to increase when people have meaningful goals and objectives towards which to work. The authors explain that people perform more effectively and enthusiastically when they have meaningful goals and measurable objectives.

In order to increase motivational values, Edwards and Yankey (1991 : 91) suggest the following six objectives which may help to meet the goals:

- * The objectives must be specific.
- * The objectives must be realistic.
- * The objectives need to be challenging.
- * The objectives need to be personalised.
- * The objectives must be measurable.
- * The objectives need to be time-bounded.

Edwards and Yankey (1991 : 91) further state that, in order to provide maximum motivational power, objectives must be accepted by the individual; they need to have a personal meaning for the individual and their attainment must be controllable by the individual.

2.17 DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF

Hasenfield (1992 : 56) explains that for training programmes to develop staff, they must build on the staff's internal desire to improve. The author adds that training programmes must also provide sufficient reinforcement and feedback to ensure significant positive impact.

Brady (1993 : 67) states that training should fit within the overall strategy of the organisation, when considering how staff development can be used to enhance productivity. In addition, the author explains that staff development should assist the organisation in dealing with its future requirements.

According to Schulman (1987 : 80) the quality of services provided by a social work agency is largely dependant on the intelligence, skills and commitment of its staff. The manager / s must be clear about the personal, experiential and educational characteristics necessary for a successful performance in the various jobs and furthermore, she/he must develop criteria against which to assess employee behaviour.

Patti (1983 : 90) explains that, having selected appropriate staff, the administrator is then responsible for providing developmental opportunities to employees, professional and nonprofessional alike.

Patti (1983 : 90) states the following:

“Developmental opportunities are generally made available through on-the-job supervision; in the service-training and continuation of education; constructive performance evaluations; special assignments and so on”.

Patti (1983 : 91) further suggests that clear agency goals and policies, effective communication up and down the hierarchy, opportunities for workers to exercise some discretion in the performance of their responsibilities and supportive and expert supervision are among the environmental qualities that appear to stimulate employee growth.

2.18 SOCIAL WORK AND INVOLVEMENT FROM THE COMMUNITY

In any organisation, involvement from the community is desired. Ross and Lappin (in Harnett 1992 : 26) explain that when organisations fulfill social welfare functions in the community, the needs of the geographic community are met, and at the same time, the organisation becomes a more accepted part of community life.

With regards to community participation, Ross and Lappin (in Harnett 1992 : 26) observe that the functional community becomes increasingly conscious of the importance of its participation in the community, as well as its responsibility towards the community.

Fine and Beleta (in Harnett 1992 : 1) see community participation being carried out on three levels: local, which focuses on enhancing individual and community skills; regional and national

development programmes, where participation takes the form of representation on committee or task forces; and government level, which includes lobbying for changes in government policy.

Ross and Lappin (in Harnett 1992 : 26), from a social work perspective, identify the following objectives of community participation:

- keeping the agency or association or council related to other important groups in the community;
- maintaining contact with new developments;
- keeping some control over plans for future developments in the community;
- co-ordinating services with those of other agencies;
- supporting co-operative planning and developments of new services in the community.

2.19 SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

Kestnbaum (1984 : 377) suggests that supervisors should include how to set realistic expectations in therapy and how to recognise client growth as major items on their training agendas for beginning therapists. These skills should be periodically practiced with experienced staff as well. It cannot be assumed that these are intuitive skills present in all therapists. Among the issues that supervisors must consider throughout the teaching process, burnout prevention is crucial.

The author adds that it may be helpful to inquire every so often as to whether the therapist is pleased with the progress a client is making. By identifying and highlighting seemingly minor examples of client growth, the supervisor can help a supervisee recognize that, from the client's perspective, these are major changes that require support and nurturing.

The need for supportive supervision has long been recognized in social work and social work supervision has long been considered an important predictor of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. A 1927 study of case workers identified "unhappiness in work" as the second most common reason given for job turnover (Pretzer in Rauktis and Koeske 1994 : 41). Another early study found that "support and encouragement" and "appreciation of efforts" ranked second and third in a 12-item list of helpful aspects of supervision (Cruser in Rauktis and Koeske 1994 : 41).

In 1969 a study by Kermish and Kushin (in Rauktis and Koeske 1994 : 40) found that four of the six reasons social workers resigned from their agencies related directly to the quality and nature of supervision. Olmstead and Christensen (in Rauktis and Koeske 1994 : 41) also found that the agency's supervision improved perceived work performance and increased worker satisfaction.

Concern about the effects of dissatisfaction and burnout among social workers has increasingly focused attention on the role that supervision plays in alleviating the negative effects of job stress. In providing supportive supervision, the supervisor attempts to "allay anxiety, reduce guilt, increase certainty and conviction, and relieve dissatisfaction" (Kadushin in Rauktis and Koeske 1994 : 41). In other words, supportive supervision is concerned with stress management on the job.

According to Edelwich and Brodsky (1980 : 158) and Cherniss (1980 : 160), support from the social work supervisor to the supervisee is an essential element in reducing stress, and consequently burnout. According to the authors, it is through support that social workers will be guided in setting realistic goals in their jobs, that they focus on success not failure, on the process of the job and not the results, and that they keep to time management.

Rauktis and Koeske (1994 : 56) suggest that when supervisors lack the administrative and educational skills to help their staff solve complex problems and manage difficult caseloads, they too are at risk for becoming dissatisfied, frustrated, burned-out and eventually ineffectual. Clearly, the consequences of this affects the supervisor and the worker, as well as the profession of social work as a whole. The authors stress that every effort must be made by the profession, schools of social work and human service organisations to prepare supervisors for playing active roles in educating, directing as well as supporting their subordinates.

2.20 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the authors consulted in this literature review support the notion that the nature of social work practice can be potentially stressful, and that aspects of client relationships, workload, work relationships, and properties of the organisation are potential stressors. In addition, evaluation criteria of the work are mostly unclear, and role conflicts are abundant. Social workers encounter uncertainty and limited resources to meet high demands.

Various strategies need to be implemented to reduce stress for social workers. Continued efforts must also be made to identify stressors unique to social work and to continue to explore the complex interrelationships between stress, support, and satisfaction for the social worker.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

A detailed description of the research design and methodology is found in this chapter.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Kerlinger (in Grinnell 1985 : 123):

“Research designs are the plans, structures, and strategies of investigations which seek to obtain answers to various research questions.”

The category of research design used in the study is exploratory - descriptive, since the aim of the study is to explore the job satisfaction of government social workers.

Reid and Smith (1981 : 67) explain that the exploratory design is used when the research aims at gaining a preliminary understanding of phenomenon or to stimulate the development of theories, concepts or hypotheses.

As McKendrick (1987 : 256) explains, the main objective of an exploratory research design is to broaden understanding, construct general ideas and highlight avenues for further study regarding the research topic.

Collins (in McKendrick 1987 : 256) adds that the fact that the sample size is small, but from it a wide range of data collected, is another typical example of exploratory research.

According to Reid and Smith (1981 : 69), the role of exploratory research is limited to laying the foundations for more definite or larger studies.

This should not however undermine the importance of such exploratory research as, according to Reid and Smith (1981 : 69), hypotheses based on some data may be better than those based on fiction and hence the great importance that such exploratory research contributes to the field of social work.

Grinnell (1988 : 220) suggests that an exploratory level design probes a subject on which little is known. Questions will therefore be of a more descriptive nature.

Little South African literature was found pertaining to the research topic. The researcher, who herself is concerned with the field of social work, therefore wished to explore the experiences of government social workers in East London, South Africa. The design utilised therefore had to be able to explore the broad questions and aspects raised by the research topic.

An element of comparison was evident in the research, as the findings of the study were compared

with theory consulted in the literature review. Although the research was strongly grounded in

theory, exploration of the personal experience of government social workers in East London, was

the main objective.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Bailey (1985 : 32) contends that “there is a wide range of alternative methodologies, or approaches and criteria for understanding social phenomena...(which may)...range from qualitative to quantitative.” Methodology may therefore be understood as those factors that outline the way one approaches the research topic and seeks answers and information in the undertaking.

The qualitative method was employed in this research study. The researcher agreed with Banister and Burman (1994 : 50), who explain that quantitative measures might simplify phenomena and misrepresent the nature of the questions under investigation.

Qualitative information involves the non-numerical examination of phenomena, using words instead of numbers, and focuses on the underlying meanings (Marlow 1998 :10).

Qualitative methodology refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data: peoples’ own words and observable behavior. The researcher aimed to look at the settings and people holistically, so they are therefore not reduced to variables but are viewed as a whole (Rubin and Babbie 1997 : 56).

The aim of qualitative research is to experience with the co-researcher (respondent), the lived world and to be open for whatever emerges in order to develop an adequate understanding of the phenomenon (Ashworth, de Koning and Giorgi 1986 : 202).

By experiencing the lived world, one is able to gain insight and interpretation becomes possible, which is inevitably the goal of the researcher (Ashworth, de Koning and Giorgi 1986 : 204).

According to Reid and Smith (1981 :89), such qualitative research is based on the assumption that valid understanding can be gained through knowledge accumulated first-hand by a single researcher.

As stated by Grinnell (1988 : 186), qualitative research also focuses on describing and comprehending the subjective meanings of events as the individual experiences it.

With regards to the topic of study, the researcher interviewed the twenty respondents individually with the aim of collecting as much first-hand data from them as possible. The importance of such a qualitative method can also be illustrated with regards to describing individual responses that may differ to other respondents' responses.

This method of research is greatly suitable to this study, due to it being an exploratory study and hence the aim is to obtain first-hand, in depth information from the participants themselves.

An interview was arranged with each respondent, at a suitable time due to the respondents' busy work schedules. The interviews were semi-structured, comprising open and closed-ended questions. As stated by Reid and Smith (1981 : 209), the semi-structured interview is thus very useful in obtaining fuller answers and clarifying misunderstandings and hence its suitability to this study. The nature of the semi-structured interview also makes it possible to make use of

probes and to follow any interesting avenues, which may be revealed with a particular respondent.

The average time taken for each interview was 45 minutes, although this varied, as one of the interviews was approximately two hours, and three of the interviews were thirty minutes in length. The interview session was structured according to the interview schedule (see Appendix 1).

An interview format was chosen because of its adaptability and because it allows the researcher to do the following:

“...follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do. The way in which a response is made (the tone of voice, facial expression, hesitation and so on) can provide information that a written response would conceal...a response in a interview can be developed and clarified”

(Bell 1996 : 91).

Bailey (1985 : 93) defines an interview schedule as an instrument that is not given directly to respondents, but is filled in by the interviewer, who reads the questions to the respondents. Thus the researcher was able to clarify the questions if needed during the interviews.

The interview schedule was administered by the researcher. However, there was a degree of flexibility within the structure provided, as several of the respondents discussed issues not specifically noted on the schedule, yet these were issues relevant to the research topic.

The researcher avoided using a tape recorder, rather focusing on comprehensive note-taking throughout the interviews.

This was decided upon as the researcher was aware that the research topic was threatening to the respondents, as several of the questions focused on the agency's role in job satisfaction. This was

reinforced by the researcher's observation that several of the interviewees were hesitant in responding to some of the questions, particularly questions pertaining to the organisational factors, management and supervision issues. Several of the respondents asked the researcher for some of the examples they provided to be "off the record."

The researcher agreed with Grinnell (1988 : 297) who states that occasionally, respondents will object to having their comments tape-recorded. The researcher followed Grinnell's (1988 : 296) suggestion of recording summaries of responses from time to time throughout the interview, supplemented with direct quotations for illustrative purposes.

The purpose of research interviews is clearly defined as data gathering, not service delivery.

Therefore, while note-taking may be distracting and even inappropriate in a treatment interview, it

can be an acceptable and integral part of the research interview (Grinnell 1988 : 296).

The choice of using the handwritten recording method proved to be a valid one, as respondents appeared comfortable with the structure of the interview. The office door was closed, and confidentiality was explained and guaranteed by the researcher.

No pilot study was conducted, other than that the first interview was used to test the schedule for timing , ease of response and clarity.

3.3 THE SAMPLING PROCEDURE

According to Yeakel and Banter (in Grinnell 1985 : 133), a sample can be defined as:

“...a small portion of the total set of objectives, events or persons which together comprise the subject of the study.”

Criteria for inclusion in the sample were: A social worker, employed at a government agency (Department of Welfare) in East London and Mdantsane. The size of the sample was twenty and inclusion in the sample was determined by willingness to participate.

The sampling procedure utilised in this study was a nonprobable purposive sampling, as a specific sample for the research had been chosen. As Grinnell (1988 : 251) explains, non-probability samples are suited to exploratory studies where we are merely interested in obtaining as much unique data on a research question as possible. The researcher selected respondents on the basis of specific knowledge about them (they are employed government social workers in East London and Mdantsane). The respondents were thus purposely chosen.

A significant variance of the respondents existed with regard to the age, present social work position and field of social work practice.

While the sampling method employed was possibly less reliable than a probability method, it proved the most practical and effective for this study.

3.4 THE INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

3.4.1 The interview schedule (Appendix 1).

The interview schedule served to guide the interview, ensuring that each topic / area was addressed and understood by the respondents.

According to Atkinson and Coffey (1996 : 27), social workers and other social scientists make extensive use of and largely rely on individual's verbal accounts to learn about social phenomena.

By essentially utilising a semi-structured interview, it allowed for greater flexibility and modification of questions to the needs of the respondents if necessary. By making use of this flexible, non-standardised and dynamic tool, it was anticipated that descriptively pertinent data would be obtained from the respondents.

3.4.2 Recording Instruments

The interviews were conducted with the researcher writing down the respondents' responses word for word during the interview. If necessary, the researcher would ask the respondents for clarification on an answer so that the responses were recorded as fully as possible.

To ensure greater reliability, the same explanations, instructions and guidelines were repeated at each interview.

As with the selection of the sample, other variables were not controlled for. Noise levels, interruptions and general atmosphere varied with each interview. A particular variable which was not controlled for, was the atmosphere of the agency setting, as certain questions pertained to organisational factors and some respondents were hesitant when answering these questions.

With regards to content and face validity (Rubin and Babbie 1997 : 146-147), the instrument of data collection did explore what it was intended to: job satisfaction amongst government social workers. The instrument also appeared relevant to the respondents.

3.5 ANALYSIS OF DATA

All data analysis was done by hand, due to the manageable number of the respondents.

As directed by Rubin & Babbie (1997 : 397), analysis included the process of sorting and comparing data. The data was then organised into categories. As Marlow (1998 : 10) suggests, analysis of qualitative information consists of creating categories after the verbal material has been collected.

Similarities and common themes were sought as the information in each category was compared. According to Reid and Smith (1981 : 286), qualitative analysis involves the researcher looking for patterns or themes in the data. The researcher thus identified categories into which the

responses fell and subsequently themes were identified. This type of analysis means that the richness of each individual's responses was preserved and not reduced to numeric values.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher's primary focus was on the respondents' individual responses as obtained from the semi-structured interviews.

Data was analysed according to the structure of the interview schedule. This ensured greater validity of the analysis process. The main categories were: job expectations; social work roles; positive job experiences; job dissatisfactions; burnout; organisational factors; support structures and community involvement.

3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

3.6.1 The findings of the study cannot be generalised as the sample size (20) is not representative of the wider population of government social workers. Further research could however provide a representative sample and for this reason the researcher believes that this study could lay the foundation for further research into this area.

From the literature reviewed, it was evident that South African literature on the experience of social work is limited. Although the sample is not representative of the population of social workers, these findings contribute to the knowledge base, as although limited, some generalisations could be made and this is a contribution to the limited South

African literature.

Since the research was grounded in theory, findings may be compared to other studies, which allows for more extensive generalisation of findings.

- 3.6.2 A further limitation with regards to the generalisation of the findings is that different government welfare agencies in different provinces may function /operate differently from the two government welfare agencies in the Eastern Cape studied in this research. This could result in different findings being obtained from different government welfare agencies.
- 3.6.3 There is a limited number of male social workers employed at the Department of Welfare in East London and Mdantsane , and they could not be interviewed due to work schedules and time constraints. The fact that only female social workers were interviewed, is a limitation of the study.
- 3.6.4 The non-probable purposive sampling method reduced the reliability of the sample, as it may have resulted in generalisations.
- 3.6.5 The exploratory - descriptive design used in the study limited the validity of the findings, as this type of design could not provide conclusive answers to the research questions, but rather further insights and possible directions. However, the insights gained from the study complemented the theories and findings consulted in the literature review.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

University guidelines on ethical considerations were adhered to. The goal of the study was to explore job satisfaction amongst government social workers with the initial motivation being that

the findings, and consequently the recommendations based on the findings, would highlight avenues for increased job satisfaction for government social workers.

The researcher explained to the respondents that participation was voluntary, discussed the format of the interview schedule, and assured the respondents of confidentiality by explaining that names would not be divulged in the feedback of data.

The researcher informed the respondents that a copy of the research study will be distributed to both of the welfare agencies when finalised.

It was interesting for the researcher to note that various of the respondents from both welfare agencies where the research was conducted, requested access to a copy of the report as soon as possible, as they were interested in the general findings of the study. Several respondents suggested that they may send a copy of the study to staff in the district and provincial levels, as they stated that it was important to make these staff aware of the findings of the study.

3.8 CONCLUSION

A step-by-step exposition of the manner in which the research was conducted was given in this chapter.

The aim was to inform the reader how the research was carried out. In addition, this chapter mentioned some of the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings and the discussion thereof are presented in this chapter. These are presented according to the main categories identified in the interview schedule:

- 4.1 Job Expectations
- 4.2 Social Work Roles
- 4.3 Positive Job Experiences
- 4.4 Job Dissatisfactions
- 4.5 Burnout
- 4.6 Organisational Factors
- 4.7 Support Structures
- 4.8 Community Involvement
- 4.9 Conclusion

In addition correspondence to relevant literature identified in Chapter Two will be made.

Tables have been used to illustrate distribution of the following:

Age and Gender Distribution of Respondents

Table 4.1

Marital Status of Respondents

Table 4.2

Respondents' Field of Social Work Practice

Table 4.3

Respondents' Present Position in the Agency

Table 4.4

Table 4.1 : Age and Gender Distribution of Respondents

| Respondents' Age in Years | Gender | Frequency |
|----------------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 25 - 35 | F | 12 |
| 35 - 45 | F | 8 |
| 45 - 55 | F | 0 |
| Total | | 20 |

From Table 4.1 it can be deduced that the majority of social workers interviewed were within the age range of 25 - 35 years.

Table 4.1 further indicates that the respondents are all female. As discussed previously in the study, this is due to the fact that there is a limited number of male social workers employed at the agencies where the research was conducted and due to work schedules and time constraints, they could not be interviewed.

Table 4.2 : Marital Status of Respondents

| Marital Status of Respondents | Frequency |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Single | 13 |
| Married | 7 |
| Total | 20 |

The results indicate that the majority of the respondents are single.

Table 4.3 : Respondents' Field of Social Work Practice

| Respondents' Field of Social Work Practice | Frequency |
|---|------------------|
| Field Social Worker | 14 |
| Intake Officer | 10 |
| Probation Officer | 4 |
| Canalisation Officer | 2 |
| Welfare Planning | 6 |
| Family Advocate | 1 |
| Intermediatory Work | 1 |
| Supervisor, involved in all of the above | 2 |
| Total | 40 |

With regards to Table 4.3, it is firstly important to note that many of the respondents are involved in more than one field of practice, and that some of them work within a rotation system where their fields will alternate from time to time.

From Table 4.3 it can be deduced that the majority of the respondents interviewed are field social workers. As field social workers they are exposed to working with a variety of categories of problems, and are mainly involved in the “grassroots” level of social work practice. In addition, two respondents indicated that they are involved in all of the agency’s fields

of social work practice. Thus it can be seen that the majority of respondents interviewed have experience in a wide and varied field of social work practice.

Table 4.4 : Respondents’ Present Position in the Agency

| Respondents’ Present Position in the Agency | Frequency |
|--|------------------|
| Junior Social Worker | 5 |
| Senior Social Worker | 7 |
| Chief Social Worker | 8 |
| Total | 20 |

Table 4.4 indicates that the majority of the respondents are presently in a senior or chief position in the agency. The majority of the respondents have therefore traditionally had the minimum of four years experience in the agency and are therefore familiar with their particular fields of social work practice, and with the various agency procedures.

An interesting factor is that one respondent is presently classified as senior social worker when she should have been promoted to chief social worker, and three respondents presently ranked as junior social workers should have been promoted to senior staff level. These respondents explained that the fact that they were not duly promoted has frustrated and discouraged them. This is supported by Smith et al (1982 : 189), who suggest that under-promotion is a major cause of stress for social workers.

The following research findings and the discussion of these findings are presented according to the eight main categories identified in the interview schedule.

4.1 JOB EXPECTATIONS

What motivated your decision to become a social worker?

All twenty respondents stated that they decided to become a social worker, as they wanted to help people. Two of the respondents said they felt an ‘inborn will’ to help others, and that it almost felt like a ‘calling’ to the profession.

Two of the respondents had direct contacts with social workers during their childhood, which also

reinforced their decision to study social work. Another two respondents first began studying in different career paths, but, through direct contact with the social work profession, changed their course of study to the field of social work.

Three respondents described their ‘poor’ background as being the main reason for choosing to study social work.

The main statement made by all twenty respondents is that they chose to become social workers as they wanted to help people. This corresponds with Trecker's (1971 : 78) explanation that the goals of the social work is mostly directed at helping people so that they could help themselves.

How do you experience your profession?

Four respondents described the social work profession as frustrating, mainly due to lack of resources. These respondents explained that lack of resources hindered their ability to do their work to the best of their abilities.

Three respondents remarked that the profession was challenging, mainly due to the fact that there is so much to do, explaining that they did their work as best they could, but that it was a "challenge" as there are many obstacles in the way of doing the job.

One respondent described the profession as having "no movement" and that she felt it was time to "move on". She explained that she will soon be graduating with a Bachelor of Commerce degree and is interested in pursuing a career path in this direction.

Two respondents explained that they enjoy the social work profession, but that the agency "setup" must change, as it hinders their growth in the field.

Two respondents stressed that they love the profession, but that it is not valued enough by other professionals, and by society itself.

Three respondents commented that there is no motivation to grow in this profession and they are seriously considering leaving the social work field.

Two respondents described the profession as “depressing”, explaining that it is not what they anticipated it would be.

Three respondents suggested that the profession was “discouraging”, “disorientating”, and “limiting” respectively.

Is your job description what you anticipated it would be? Please elaborate.

Twelve respondents explained that their job description is not what they expected it would be. These respondents suggested that their work involved functions that are not part of a social worker’s job description, such as standing in queues with clients; taking clients for fingerprints; typing their own court reports; doing foster care placements only, rather than counselling; and involvement in supervision only, rather than direct contact with clients.

Five of the twelve respondents indicated that there is too much administrative work within the social work profession, and this left too little time for intensive therapy and counselling. One respondent explained that the focus on Crisis Intervention overshadowed preventive work.

Another respondent indicated that she felt like a ‘band-aid’ social worker, who only covers the surface, but does not get to the core of the problem. One respondent clearly stated that she felt

her job mostly entailed rendering material assistance to clients, and that this was not the role of a social worker, but rather that of a clerk.

Four respondents explained that they felt that their job description is “partly” what they anticipated it would be, as they were doing some of the work they expected to do, but that part of the work is not what they envisioned they would be doing.

Four respondents noted that their job description is realistically what they anticipated it would be. Three of these four respondents explained that they knew, in advance, what the social work profession realistically entailed, as they were told by other social workers what was expected of them.

If you could change your job description, what would you change? Why?

Five of the respondents indicated that they would not change their job description. Fifteen respondents said that they would change various aspects, such as the following:-

- * More manpower is necessary for the workload;
- * Less administrative functions (highlighted by three respondents);
- * More time for therapeutic interventions (highlighted by four respondents);
- * The job description needs to be more specific;

- * One should be able to specialise in certain fields of social work (comment by two respondents);
- * More resources to work with;
- * Decrease the high caseload (stressed by two respondents);
- * Running of more projects in the community;

Do you have a clear definition of what is expected of you as a social worker?

YES

NO

If not please identify issues that contribute to your uncertainty.

Eleven respondents stated that they had a clear definition of what is expected of them as social workers. Nine respondents commented that they did not have a clear definition of their job.

One respondent noted:

“The services I render go beyond the boundaries of my role as a social worker, especially in a changing society such as ours.”

Several comments on issues that contribute to the social workers’ uncertainty of their job description include the following:-

- * “I am expected to be “all over” in one time, doing so many different things.”
- * “There are no guidelines to what I am expected to do.”

- * “I don’t even know the mission statement of the Department of Welfare.”
- * “I am expected to do too much.”
- * “I don’t think that the government knows what they expect from us.”
- * “I have never seen, nor have I been told, of my job description.”

These findings support the suggestion of Smith et al (1982 : 189), that uncertainty and conflicting demands raise anxiety levels for social workers.

The respondents’ uncertainty regarding their work, such as doing ‘band-aid’ social work, rendering material assistance and completing too many administrative functions, rather than intensive therapeutic interventions which they were taught, could be factors which raise social workers’ anxiety levels and may fuel stress.

4.2 SOCIAL WORK ROLES

Do you feel that this role is ambiguous at times? Please explain.

Eighteen of the respondents interviewed indicated that they felt that their role as a social worker was ambiguous at times. Various responses included the following:-

- * “The clients expect us to play too many roles, and it is impossible to help everybody”
(stated by four respondents).

- * “There are too many reports to write, committee meetings to attend and clients to consult; I cannot do all of this simultaneously, as is expected of me.”
- * “Clients expect too much, especially the clients in the rural areas.”
- * “The workload does not give me the opportunity to play the many roles I am expected to play.”
- * “There are too many roles such as organiser, educator, secretary, mediator, advocator and social worker.”
- * “There is no clear-cut definition of what is expected of me; I do everything.”
- * “The clients expect you to perform too many roles and to move mountains for them.”
- * “Sometimes I feel that I am not a professional, but rather a taxi driver, and a clerk.”
- * “I am a jack of all trades and a master of none.”
- * “I feel my various roles go beyond the call of duty.”

Two respondents reported that they did not feel their roles as social workers was ambiguous.

These findings correspond closely with Thompson et al (1994 : 20), who comment that social work roles are often unclear, manifold and contradictory, as are the issues social workers deal with daily. In addition, the authors highlight that role stress is one of the main stressors for social

workers. This includes role ambiguity, which was also identified by many of the respondents in the study.

The findings further correlate with Kestnbaum (1984 : 377), who notes that unrealistically high expectations from clients may result in the therapist's dissatisfaction with his or her performance.

The respondents' comments mirrored these views.

4.3 POSITIVE JOB EXPERIENCES

What are the positive experiences for you in the social work profession?

All of the respondents stated that the main positive experience in the social work profession is knowing that they have helped their clients.

Respondents stated the following as positive job experiences:-

- * Changing the negative aspects in the lives of clients into positive aspects.
- * Even one success out of 125 cases, is positive.
- * Knowing that you have made a difference in people's lives (highlighted by seven of the respondents).
- * Learning to work with different people is a positive experience.

- * It is positive to learn the dynamics of human behaviour.
- * It is pleasing to be able to evaluate the client's progress.
- * Social work is a profession in which one can continuously grow.
- * Helping clients fulfills a personal need.
- * It is positive when other professions recognize the social workers' efforts.
- * "...learning about people is learning about life, because life is about people..."
- * Making a difference in peoples' lives.

The above responses support the various reasons the respondents gave for wanting to pursue a career in the social work profession. The main positive experience, that of helping their clients, is

the main reason all the respondents decided to study for a career in social work.

Ten of the respondents stressed the importance of receiving appreciation from clients. As one of the respondents commented:

"It make such a difference when clients say 'thank you'. It makes me feel as if I am doing something right."

This need for appreciation from clients is expressed well by Lustbader (1991 : 18), whose comment I quote:

"...giving help eventually embitters us, unless we are compensated at least by appreciation...."

In addition, Kestnbaum (1984 : 377) notes that for therapists to feel rewarded in their jobs,

adequate gratification is essential.

4.4 JOB DISSATISFACTIONS

Are you currently experiencing any dissatisfaction at work? Please explain the nature of the dissatisfaction.

All of the respondents interviewed stated that they are currently experiencing dissatisfaction at work. The nature of the dissatisfaction included the following:-

- * Lack of resources, for example cars, places of safety, children's homes, shelters for abused women. The shortage of resources affects the services the clients receive.
- * The social workers are not practicing what they were trained to do; there is too much administrative work, and too little time for therapeutic intervention.
- * Too many decisions are taken by 'those in the top level' who do not know the needs of the social workers.
- * The restructuring of the department is a dissatisfaction.
- * No status exists in the social work profession; the profession is not recognised or respected by many clients and by the community in general.
- * Shortage of staff.
- * The workload causes stress, which influences the workers' attitude towards the work.
- * Many of the social workers are involved in a 'power struggle', instead of working together.

- * Lack of adequate supervision and clear guidance.
- * Three respondents indicated that the attitude of many social workers is that of apathy.
- * Two respondents commented that their casework focuses on one aspect only and thus little variety exists.
- * Four of the respondents interviewed stated that they were dissatisfied with their salaries.
- * Two respondents explained that there was a lack of incentives, for example, there is no encouragement to advance from one level to the next in the agency and promotion is delayed.
- * Three respondents stated that there are too many unrealistic demands from clients.
- * Due to the high caseload, three respondents indicated that they were often unable to meet deadlines, which created pressure.
- * The social work managers are the biggest dissatisfaction (comment by nine respondents).

These nine respondents generally explained that managers are not sympathetic to the social workers' needs and do not discuss new policies and procedures with the social workers. In addition, four respondents stated that, in their opinion, some of the managers do not possess the skills necessary to perform their managerial roles.

- * The physical working environment (the building, the offices) is a dissatisfaction.”

The following five statements, expressed by five different respondents, serve as a summary to many of the dissatisfactions experienced by the respondents:-

* “Many clients think that social workers just give grants. We are not a hand-out system only.”

* “The community does not know we are trying our best.”

* “Our services are not noticed and I feel I am in the ‘unloved profession’ a lot of the time.”

* “The community and some clients see the role of a social worker as a ‘miracle worker’ and then

blame us for not being able to perform miracles.”

* “Many people feel that the social work field is the ‘dumping ground’ for everything that needs dumping.”

* “There is a need to do more ‘social work’ and not just ‘welfare work’.”

The responses outlined indicate that the social workers interviewed are generally dissatisfied with many aspects of their work. Three of the respondents even expressed their desire to leave the profession, if a better opportunity presented itself. Many of these dissatisfactions correspond closely with the dissatisfactions and stressors presented in the literature review, discussed in Chapter Two.

Bradley and Sutherland (1995 : 316) comment that social workers are providing services during a time of organisational change and growing pressure on resources, which may lead to increased stress for the worker. This idea was highlighted by various respondents.

Koeske and Koeske (1989 : 243) highlight that a heavy workload represents a demanding environment that, under certain conditions, will place the social worker under stress. Workload is a dissatisfaction amongst many of the respondents in this study.

Many of the respondents identified working under inadequate management as one of the major dissatisfactions. According to Tripodi and Fellin (1977 : 239) the relationship between the social work manager/s and staff is very crucial in the successful operation of a democratic decision making system.

The authors give importance to a type of management strategy in social welfare services termed “participatory management”, which is a form of management encouraging a democratic participation in the management of an agency or an organization. The authors add that participatory management implies that staff will have a voice and a vote in management decisions that affect their work and that this kind of management encourages employees to stay in the organisation and improve their role performance. In contrast to this, some of the respondents in this study stated that their managers are unsympathetic to their needs and do not discuss new policies and procedures with them.

What are your foreseeable solutions to the dissatisfactions?

These included the following responses:-

- * The community needs to be educated regarding the social work profession.
- * There is a need for more community work and group work, so that more clients can be reached and the caseload can hopefully decrease.
- * More social workers need to be employed.
- * There should be more emphasis on preventive work.
- * The government needs to address the issue of salaries for social workers.
- * Incompetent social workers should be retrenched.
- * There is a need for more workshops on motivation and stress-reduction strategies.
- * The 'power - struggle' amongst social workers needs to stop.
- * Social workers need to advocate for more resources.
- * Re-structure the physical working environment for example, paint the building and the offices.
- * Provide training programmes for managers, equipping them with necessary managerial skills.
- * Social workers should be allowed to specialise in a specific area of social work.
- * More vacation time should be allocated for stressed social workers.

Two of the twenty respondents stated that they could not identify foreseeable solutions to the dissatisfactions. One of the respondents indicated that she did not have 'much faith in the

system', while the second respondent explained that she felt there was nothing she could do, as the workers employed in the provincial level are inadequate.

In your opinion, does any dissatisfaction you experience have a negative impact on your clients?

YES

NO

SOMETIMES

Please elaborate.

Six of the respondents commented that the dissatisfactions they experience do not have a negative

impact on their clients. Three of these respondents stated that it would not be fair to project their own dissatisfactions onto their clients. The fourth respondent commented that she needs to remain professional at all times. The fifth respondent explained that the client is not part of her problems and should not be blamed for them. The sixth respondent in this category stated that she has always distanced her clients from her personal and work-related dissatisfactions.

Seven of the respondents interviewed stressed that the dissatisfactions they experience have a negative impact on their clients.

These responses included the following:-

* "If I am stressed, I sometimes do not even want to see my clients. I tell everybody that

I am busy writing reports, just to avoid seeing some of the clients sometimes.”

* “When I feel dissatisfied, it affects my dealings with my clients, even if I try not to let this happen.”

* “I cannot help taking out some of my frustrations on my clients, especially on a bad day.”

* “In any job, if you are unhappy, you do not give the client the services they are deserving of.”

* “I know it is not the client’s fault, but on a bad day, I may take out my frustrations on him/her.”

* “If I am irritated, my client can usually see this, even if I try hard not to let it show.”

* “On a really bad day at work, I will do my best to avoid seeing clients.”

Seven of the twenty respondents indicated that the dissatisfactions they experience sometimes have a negative impact on their clients, depending on certain circumstances.

From the results in this category, it is evident that social workers experience many

dissatisfactions which may lead to stressors and that this often has a negative impact on the service recipients, the clients.

These findings closely correlate to Bradley and Sutherland's (1995 : 316) suggestion that a stressed workforce can reduce the efficacy of service delivery to the clients.

4.5 BURNOUT

Do you experience feelings of:

apathy

disillusionment

at work, or in your personal life, that result from work-related factors?

YES

NO

MAYBE

Please elaborate.

Fifteen of the twenty respondents interviewed indicated that they experienced feelings of apathy and disillusionment at work and in their personal lives, that result from work-related factors.

Feelings of apathy and disillusionment are linked to burnout, which is discussed in Chapter Two.

The following are some of the responses:-

- * “There are days I do not want to get up for work. The stressors at work affect my personal life.”
- * “I sometimes sit in my office and do not know where to begin. I tend to use ‘avoidance tactics’ so as not to see some of the clients. This affects my personal life too...”
- * “I often do not feel like going to work and I then tend to lose interest in my family and myself.”
- * “Sometimes I feel so demotivated and my whole approach to my profession is then wrong.”
- * “My caseload is so high that I feel ‘why should I do anything?’”
- * “I am very emotional and my work sometimes makes me feel totally negative about everything. I then take these feelings home.”
- * “I often feel as if I have no energy and then I do not want to carry on with my work.”
- * “I sometimes feel emotionally drained and then I do not feel like counselling the clients or doing any work.”

- * “Sometimes I do not look forward to going to work. I have only been employed here for a short time.”
- * “I often don’t even feel like waking up in the morning. I then just about curse my office.”
- * “I come to work because I have to, but my heart is not there anymore.”
- * “I have taken leave before, not because I was ill, but because I knew I needed time off as I was not effecting my work.”
- * “I have submitted ‘sick certificates’ but I knew that I was not sick, I was just incapable of not doing my work properly sometimes.”
- * “I am now at a point where I come to work because I get a salary and not because I love my my job.”
- * “I only look forward to pay day! I am currently looking for another job, definitely not as a government social worker.”

Five of the respondents said that they do not experience feelings of apathy and disillusionment.

One of these five respondents stated that she has learnt how to deal with her stress, as she lives a balanced life-style, whilst the second respondent explained that she was ‘lucky’ as she has not

experienced these feelings yet.

The third respondent explained that she has “learnt to rise above the stress” and tries to remain optimistic.

The fourth and fifth respondents explained that they are new to this field and have not felt apathetic or disillusioned up to now.

The fact that fifteen of the twenty respondents indicated that they experienced feelings linked to “burnout” is corroborated by Pines and Kafry (1978 : 500) who postulate that social workers are a rather homogeneous group, emotionally, whose sensitivity to clients’ problems makes them more vulnerable to work stress.

As a result of high work stress levels, a concept often closely associated with social work is that of “burnout”.

Cherniss (1980 : 24) states that burnout is a process in which a service provider psychologically disengages from the work in response to job-related stress.

It leads to loss of concern for clients, loss of positive-regard for co-workers and the agency and emotional withdrawal from work. This mirrors the effects identified by many of the respondents.

Many of the respondents’ statements regarding burnout is supported by various authors in the literature review chapter. Maslach and Jackson (in Sek-yum 1993 : 101) explain that the importance of comprehending and intervening in the phenomenon of staff burnout has become a pressing concern due to the high cost burnout is believed to have for the agency, the client system and the social workers. Gillespie (in Sek-yum 1993 : 101) discusses burnout as taking its toll through low self esteem, abnormal desire for vacation and an inability for workers to take their jobs seriously.

The author describes burnout as bringing about a cynical and dehumanised perception of clients which results in low morale and impaired performance, and that it constitutes a major drain on an agency's effectiveness in terms of the expense of staff turnover.

In your working environment, do you receive any additional in-service training?

YES

NO

Please identify topics that were most meaningful to you.

Sixteen respondents stated they have received additional training. The topics identified as the most meaningful workshops are as follows:-

- * Child Abuse
- * Conflict Management
- * Intermediary Services
- * New Child Care Act
- * Time Management
- * Communication Skills

- * Substance Abuse
- * Domestic Violence
- * Diversion Training
- * Developmental / Assessment training
- * HIV / AIDS

However, eight of the sixteen respondents explained that additional in-service training does not occur frequently; that it is often irrelevant to the work they do; and that there is no follow-up to the training.

Four respondents reported that they have not received any additional in-service training.

It is noteworthy that there was no workshop on stress-reduction strategies. Since the majority of the respondents indicated that they experience many dissatisfactions and stated that they had experienced burnout at work, perhaps in-service training concentrating on stress-reduction strategies may be beneficial to the respondents.

4.6 ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

Describe the relationship between you and your co-workers.

Seventeen of the twenty respondents stated that their relationships with their co-workers are very good.

Three respondents explained that their relationship with co-workers was not always positive, mainly due to the cultural differences, power struggles and major differences of opinion, which causes certain problems.

How does this effect your working environment?

All twenty respondents explained that a positive relationship with co-workers is essential for the existence of a positive working environment. One of the respondents indicated that relations at work can be damaged by one individual. Another respondent stated that tension in the office makes the working environment stressful for everybody. A third respondent explained that a power- struggle between co-workers creates an unpleasant environment. A fourth respondent commented that there is a need for co-workers to talk to one another about certain problems and to support one another.

From the above responses, it is thus evident that a good relationship amongst the co-workers is necessary for a positive working environment. As one of the respondents stated, "...good communication between the co-workers is necessary."

Smith et al (1982 : 189-190) highlight that poor working relationships can considerably raise pressure levels and thus prove stressful. Mistrust is not generally associated with relationships between social work colleagues, but as value issues are predominant in social work, conflictual relations are not uncommon.

Do you regard your prospects for promotion as realistic in this agency?

YES

NO

With regard to promotions, seventeen of the respondents commented that they regarded their prospects for promotion as unrealistic in the agency. Three respondents stated that they felt they had a good chance of being promoted.

Smith et al (1982 : 189 - 190) suggest that there are significant numbers of experienced social workers who seek a new challenge with regard to career prospects, but do not have the opportunity and that under-promotion is a major cause of stress for social workers.

Does the bureaucratic structure of this agency have a positive, or negative effect on your dealings at work? Briefly elaborate.

In response to the question which stated whether the bureaucratic structure of the agency has a positive or negative effect in the respondents' dealings at work, nineteen respondents stated that the structure was negative, and one respondent suggested that the bureaucratic structure was both positive and negative (depending on what the social workers' needs were). This respondent suggested that it is a good structure when the worker is a follower rather than a leader.

General responses were the following:-

- * The bureaucratic structure is limiting.
- * The future of the department is uncertain.
- * The regional and provincial level employees are inadequate (this was stressed by five respondents).
- * The bureaucratic structure is 'binding'.
- * No creativity or initiative is tolerated.
- * The structure does not allow for mobility.
- * The current functioning of the department as a whole is frustrating.
- * The information is not passed on to everybody.
- * There are too many channels to go through; information gets lost through these channels.
- * The channels of communication are useless.
- * Problems are passed from one level to the next, but nothing is done about the problems.
- * "I raise my concerns through the appropriate channels, but there is no follow-up."

These findings relate to Arches' (1991 : 205) comment that as social workers become part of the bureaucracy, they are often unable to use the sophisticated techniques they have been taught. The author suggests that bureaucratisation constrains autonomy.

The need to see the stress experienced by the individual in the wider context is expressed well by Thompson et al (1994 : 91), whose comment I quote:

“....the question should not be ‘what is the weakness in this employee?’ but ‘what is the weakness in the organisation

that allows this to happen’?...”

According to Caputo (1988 : 76) the quality of staff work and interactions can be influenced by the organisation’s structure, as the structure can help to determine who will work with whom and on what tasks. For the author, the purpose of structure is to allow the organisation to divide its work into various units and then provide ways to integrate this work.

The research findings indicate that nineteen of the twenty respondents reported that the bureaucratic structure of the organisation was negative. This is supported by Zischka and Fox (1983 : 45) who stress that obviously, a prominent determinant in burnout is organisational climate, as bureaucratically structured social organisations are too often unresponsive to the unique needs, skills, wants, stresses and values of the professionals working in them. Similarly, Armstrong (in Zischka and Fox 1983 : 44) names organisational functioning as an important variable in burnout.

The author emphasizes that poor communication, lack of support and feedback, unrealistic demands, lack of variety and autonomy, centralised decision making and high pressure contribute to burnout.

Arches (1991 : 206) suggest that workers are most satisfied when they have autonomy, are not limited by demands of funding sources, and are not stifled by bureaucracy.

4.7 SUPPORT STRUCTURES

Describe your supervision experience at the agency.

Eighteen of the respondents explained that they have a positive social worker – supervisor relationship. These respondents explained that they were generally happy with their supervisor and that they felt that it is vital to have a good supervisor, who provides support, encouragement and guidance.

Two respondents described their supervision experiences as dissatisfactory. Their responses were the following:-

* “I feel my supervisor is not adequately trained and she does not provide me with the relevant guidance that I need.”

* “My supervisor does not know much more than what I already know. I often don’t find her input very useful.”

What other support structures (if any) are available to you at the agency?

Eighteen respondents explained that their supervisors and colleagues are their support structures; one respondent reported that only her colleagues gave her guidance and support; and one respondent noted that the head of the office provides her with the support she needs.

Do you make use of the above support structures? Please give reasons.

All twenty of the respondents emphasized that they make use of the support structures available to them. The general response is that their job is stressful, they have many dissatisfactions, and their support structures are thus very important to them.

The fact that all twenty respondents indicated that support structures are necessary, correlates to the literature reviewed. In 1969 a study by Kermish and Kushin (in Rauktis and Koeske 1994 : 40) found that four of the six reasons social workers resigned from their agencies, related directly to the quality and nature of supervision.

Olmstead and Christensen (in Rauktis and Koeske 1994 : 41) also found that the agency's supervision improved perceived work performance and increased work satisfaction.

According to Edelwich and Brodsky (1980 : 158) and Cherniss (1980 : 160), support from the social work supervisor to the supervisee is an essential element in reducing stress, and consequently burnout.

The authors state that, it is through supportive supervision that social workers will be guided in setting realistic goals in their jobs and that they focus on success rather than failure.

4.8 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

To what extent are your clients informed of your role as a social worker?

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Not informed | |
|--------------|--|

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Informed | |
| Misinformed | |

Two respondents stated that clients were not informed of the role of the social worker. One respondent reported that clients were informed, and seventeen respondents explained that clients were misinformed of social workers' roles.

What impact does this have on your service delivery?

Eighteen of the respondents commented that the fact that clients were either not informed or misinformed of their role as social workers does not affect their service delivery. The general indication was that the social workers themselves knew what they were capable of doing for clients and would explain their roles to the clients and the community. The respondents stated that they would normally refer the clients if they could not assist them.

Ten of the eighteen respondents explained that it was frustrating, demotivating and stressful when the clients expect too much, or expect the social workers to perform duties that are not part of their job descriptions.

One respondent reported that her service delivery is negatively affected by the fact that clients were misinformed of her role as a social worker. This respondent explained that she feels “inadequate” and “belittled” when clients expect her to do things such as give them food-parcels, fix their electricity and help with school fees.

One respondent explained that her service delivery is not affected, as her clients were informed of her role as a social worker.

Describe how you feel the clients can be made more aware of social workers' roles and duties.

Seventeen respondents highlighted that community awareness programmes are necessary for clients to be made more aware of social workers' roles and duties.

Three respondents stated that community awareness programmes will not work as there are too few social workers with too high caseloads to go into communities to run awareness programmes on the roles of social workers. These respondents suggested that the best that can be done to promote social workers' roles and duties, is to explain, on a one-to-one process with their clients, their roles and what they can realistically do for their clients.

The importance of involvement from the community is highlighted by Ross and Lappin (in Harnett 1992 : 26) who explain that in any organisation, involvement from the community is desired. The authors note that, when organisations fulfill social welfare functions in the community, the needs of the geographic community are met, and at the same time, the organisation becomes a more accepted part of community life.

4.9 CONCLUSION

Any other comments you would like to make?

Five respondents had no other comments to make.

The following are comments made by fifteen of the respondents:-

- * “The Department of Welfare is dead.”
- * “It is good that someone is interested in our work. Please send a copy of the research to provincial and national office.”
- * “The management is the biggest problem. We need a new management team.”
- * “I am leaving the social work field.”
- * “The social work profession needs to be recognised and respected. Very few people respect the profession.”
- * “Despite the dissatisfactions, it is the responsibility of the social workers to develop themselves.
social workers need to change their overall attitudes.”
- * “Inefficiency is one of the main reasons for the Department not running well.”
- * “I am still positive and still hoping for positive changes.”
- * “We do not work under normal conditions and circumstances in the Department. We are expected to do too much and there is a lack of resources.”
- * “More social workers need to be employed.”
- * “There needs to be a drastic improvement in the working environment and conditions.”
- * “The Department of Welfare needs to be restructured.”
- * “My job as a social worker is getting worse as the years go by.”
- * “We need people in management who know what they are doing.”
- * “Lack of resources is one of the main problems. There is a lack of basic resources. We don’t

even have stationery to work with.”

4.10 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The findings which emerged from this study highlight the many dissatisfactions government social

workers are currently experiencing.

All of the respondents indicated that they chose the social work profession because they wanted to help people. However, factors such as their job description; unrealistic expectations from the community and from clients themselves; the ambiguous role of their profession; the many stressors they encounter; and various organisational factors described in this chapter, are combining and resulting in many of the respondents becoming dissatisfied with their jobs.

Although all twenty respondents stated that the main positive experience in the social work profession was knowing that they have helped their clients, it is important to note that three of the

twenty respondents are presently thinking of leaving the social work profession; that fifteen respondents have experienced burnout; and that all twenty of the respondents explained that they were experiencing dissatisfaction at work.

It is thus evident that the respondents interviewed are experiencing many job dissatisfactions.

These dissatisfactions need to be addressed. Recommendations will be highlighted in Chapter

Five of this study.

Job dissatisfaction amongst social workers is not a new phenomenon. The findings of this study correlate closely with literature consulted, as discussed in the literature review chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the research indicate that the social workers interviewed are generally experiencing many stressors and dissatisfactions at work. These results can be used to

bring about increased job satisfaction for the social workers. Based on the research findings the following recommendations are made for social workers and their employers:-

- * Defining work objectives clearly.
- * Providing clear job requirements; recognising the need for independence, self-esteem, acceptance and support.
- * Developing clear, consistent and realistic goals to reduce conflict and ambiguity.
- * Reducing client - staff ratios and workloads when excessive. This may include the employment of more social workers.
- * Providing opportunities, wherever possible, for social workers to participate in making decisions affecting their own job performance and ability to provide client services.
- * The organisation of a 'balanced day's work' with a mix of stressful and less stressful work, alternate periods of direct client contact with administrative activities. The rotation of work assignments maybe useful.
- * Developing and improving staff training and development:- incorporating programmes on stress
in the workplace, interpersonal skills and motivation in social work.
- * Providing adequate training for supervisors.

- * Developing ways of using a supervision system amongst staff, whereby co-workers can identify a colleague who is suffering from burnout.
- * The encouragement of worker support groups, where social workers are encouraged to communicate their dissatisfactions.
- * Maximizing opportunities for social workers to be involved in policy development and decision making.
- * Evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of agency policies and programmes.
- * Helping social workers to develop realistic coping strategies, discussed in group supervision on a weekly basis.
- * Abolishing the stereotypical view that social workers do not need to express their personal needs and frustrations related to working with others.
- * Awarding 'certificates of achievement' for work well done.
- * Promoting deserving social workers.
- * Providing opportunities for management and staff to meet and discuss the satisfactions and / or dissatisfaction of work, the organisational factors and general stressors.
- * Making the physical working environment as pleasant as possible.
- * Providing support for social workers that are stressed.

- * Allowing social workers to take “stress-leave” due to stress-related factors.
- * Educating the community about the role of the social worker:- the running of community awareness programmes.
- * Social workers need to be continuously reminded of the factors which motivated them to study social work.
- * Social workers need to ‘stand together’ and advocate their profession instead of involving themselves in power-struggles.

From the above recommendations, the researcher feels that communication is of the utmost importance. This includes communication between the social workers themselves; the social workers’ supervisors and managers; communication between all the levels which could (indirectly) affect the social workers, for example, workers at the provincial level; communication between the social worker and the client; and the community as a whole.

It is only through constructive communication that social workers can make their stressors and dissatisfactions known.

To emphasize the importance of communication, the statement made by Martin Luther King is noted:

“People don’t get along because they fear each other. People fear each other because they don’t know each other. They don’t know each other because they have not properly communicated with each other.”

The researcher is aware that some of the recommendations identified in the study call for fundamental changes in the social work profession, but not attempting to make some changes may serve to continue and perhaps escalate the job dissatisfaction social workers are currently experiencing.

5.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Job dissatisfaction and the many stressors experienced by social workers, particularly in South Africa, require more research. As the study findings suggest, if the social worker is dissatisfied, which may lead to burnout, this may have a negative effect on the service recipient, the client.

The various experiences of social workers are perhaps complex issues to study, as there are many factors involved and much diversity among individual social workers.

This was a small-scale study, though past research and available literature suggests that there are many facets of job dissatisfaction and stressors for social workers.

Researchers are thus encouraged to explore this topic further. Perhaps from future research in this field, various strategies can be implemented with the aim of attempting to make the experience of being a social worker less stressful, with fewer dissatisfactions.

It is recommended that action research be used, by implementing various recommendations into the social work agencies and monitoring the results obtained.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

“The secret to living is giving. All that is not given is lost.

Service is the rent we pay for living here.”

(Mahatma Gandhi)

The purpose of the study was to explore job satisfaction amongst government social workers employed at the Department of Welfare in East London and Mdantsane.

The various findings indicate that all of the respondents in the study chose a career in social work,

as they wanted to help other people. The majority of the respondents are used to ‘giving’ to

clients what they can, whether it be therapeutic intervention or material assistance. Although it is

noted from the findings that the majority of respondents were happy even if their ‘giving’ only

helped one client, the social workers are generally dissatisfied with many work-related factors and

are experiencing stressors in their jobs (discussed in Chapter Four).

Since social workers provide a direct service to their clients, the study indicates that their stressors and dissatisfactions may affect the quality of services provided to the clients.

I return to the statement made by one of the respondents in the study:

“I sometimes sit in my office and do not know where to begin. I tend to use ‘avoidance tactics’ so as not to see some of the clients. This affects my personal life too...”

On 4 April 1982 Shirley Woodcock died at the age of 3 years 3 months. She was in the care of the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and had been placed by the authority with foster parents. The Director of Social Services appointed three senior officers to the Department to investigate the matter and report. The report of the inquiry team identified stress amongst the social workers as a major problem in the handling of the case. The stressors identified in the report mirrored the stressors and dissatisfactions indicated by the respondents in this study.

The concluding paragraph of the summary report was as follows:

“Perhaps the greatest significance of this case lies in the way it demonstrates the need to recognise 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”

(Health Education Authority 1988 : 10-12).

There can be no other more poignant example of the damage which can ultimately befall clients as a result of excessive and unrelieved stress in the professionals and organisations supposed to be caring for them. At times, the failure to recognise and deal with stress and dissatisfactions, can have tragic results.

There is still much misunderstanding about social work, clouded by negative perceptions of social workers. This misunderstanding of social workers' roles should not be allowed to detract from what social workers have to offer.

I reiterate Zastrow's (1993 : 2) goal of social workers:-

“The goal of social workers is to fulfill the social, financial, health and recreational requirements of all individuals in a society. When other institutions in the society fail at times to meet the basic needs of individuals or groups of people, then social services are needed and demanded.”

Social workers provide a vital, direct service to the community. Their dissatisfactions and stressors need to be addressed. The consequences resulting from a failure to do so, may have broad ramifications not only for the social workers concerned, but for the clients, the agencies and ultimately, our society.

APPENDIX ONE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A. Identifying Information

1. Age in years:

2. Gender:

3. Marital Status:

B. Present Position

4. What field of social work do you work in?

Field social worker

Intake Officer

Probation Officer

Canalisation Officer

Welfare Planning

Other

5. What position do you hold in the agency?

Junior social worker

Senior social worker

Chief social worker

Director

C Job Expectations

6. What motivated your decision to become a social worker?

7. How do you experience your profession?

8. Is your job description what you anticipated it would be? Please elaborate.

9. If you could change your job description, what would you change? Why?

10. Do you have a clear definition of what is expected of you as a social worker?

YES

NO

If not, please identify issues that contribute to your uncertainty.

D. Social Work Roles

11. Do you feel that this role is ambiguous at times? Please explain.

E. Positive Job Experiences

12. What are the positive experiences for you in the social work profession?

F. Job Dissatisfactions

13. Are you currently experiencing any dissatisfaction at work? Please explain the nature of the dissatisfaction.

14. What are your foreseeable solutions to the dissatisfactions?

15. In your opinion, does any dissatisfaction you experience have a negative impact on your clients? YES

NO

SOMETIMES

Please elaborate.

G. Burnout

16. Do you experience feelings of: apathy
 disillusionment

at work, or in your personal life, that result from work-related factors?

- YES
 NO
 MAYBE

Please elaborate.

17. In your working environment, do you receive any additional in-service training?

- YES
 NO

Please identify topics that were most meaningful to you.

H. Organisational Factors

18. Describe the relationship between you and your co-workers.

19. How does this effect your working environment?

20. Do you regard your prospects for promotion as realistic in this agency?

YES

NO

21. Does the bureaucratic structure of this agency have a positive, or negative effect on your dealings at work? Briefly elaborate.

I. Support Structures

22. Describe your supervision experience at the agency.

23. What other support structures (if any) are available to you at the agency?

24. ~~Do you make use of the above support structures? Please give reasons.~~

J. Community Involvement

25. (a) To what extent are your clients informed of your role as a social worker?

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Not Informed | |
| Informed | |
| Misinformed | |

(b) What impact does this have on your service delivery?

26. Describe how you feel the clients can be made more aware of social workers' roles and duties.

K. Conclusion

27. Any other comments you would like to make?

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