

**The roles and experiences of registered
counsellors working in school settings in
Gauteng, South Africa**

SJ Dark



orcid.org/0000-0002-5572-6306

Mini-dissertation accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree Masters of Arts in Research Psychology at the
North-West University

Supervisor: Prof Werner de Klerk

Graduation: May 2020

Student number: 29643945

CONTENT LIST

Acknowledgements	i
Summary	ii
Preface	iv
Permission Letter from Supervisor	v
Declaration	vi
Structure of Research Mini-Dissertation	vii
Section 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Overview of the Literature.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement.....	11
1.3 Aim of the Study.....	12
Section 2: Article: The Roles and Experiences of Registered Counsellors Working in School Settings	18
2.1 Instructions for Authors.....	18
2.2 Manuscript: The Roles and Experiences of Registered Counsellors Working in School Settings.....	23
Section 3: Critical Reflection	60
Complete Reference List	69
Addendums	
Addendum A: Consent Form: Participants.....	76
Addendum B: Goodwill Permission.....	84
Addendum C: Goodwill Permission.....	86
Addendum D: Approval Letter: Department of Education.....	88

Addendum E: Approval Letter: Ekurhuleni North District.....	90
Addendum F: Approval Letter: Ekurhuleni South District.....	91
Addendum G: Approval Letter: HREC.....	92
Addendum H: Declaration by the Language Editor.....	94
Addendum I: Example of Transcription.....	95

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following contributors to this research study without whom I would not have finished successfully:

- My supervisor, **Prof Werner de Klerk**, for being very professional and knowledgeable in your field. Your passion for psychological research is contagious. It has been a great privilege working with you.
- My husband, **George**, for understanding when I was under pressure with a deadline and being the calm to my storm.
- My parents, **James** and **Stevie**, for contributing towards my overall well-being and being a motivation to succeed. My sister, **Nicola**, for making me laugh when life got too serious.
- **Anneté Nel**, for your role as my independent person and a shoulder to cry on when needed.
- And last, but definitely not least, I would like to thank the **participants** for taking part in this research study.

SUMMARY

The role and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa.

Keywords: registered counsellor, psychology, mental healthcare, education, qualitative descriptive design.

In the past, mental healthcare in South Africa faced a crisis whereby there were not enough psychologists available to service the public and often the services were only available to the limited number of the population who could afford it. The post-apartheid government recognised the need for a psychological service that could serve as screening tool for mental health issues and also offer short-term counselling where appropriate. Thus, the registered counsellor psychological profession was created in the hopes of fulfilling this need. Since the conception of the registration category there have been very few research studies conducted on registered counsellors. Studies that had been conducted focused on the relevance of the category, whether the category served a purpose and where registered counsellors found employment. Research had found that a number of professionals found employment within the educational setting. There were no known studies focusing on a specific job market, such as education, and exploring the roles and experiences of the registered counsellors working there.

The following qualitative research study made use of a qualitative descriptive research design whereby purposive sampling was used to recruit participants to share their roles and experiences of being registered counsellors employed within school settings. There were six participants of whom five were female, and all aged between 28 to 34 years from three schools within the Ekurhuleni North and South Districts in the Gauteng Province, South Africa. The data

was gathered by using a demographic questionnaire as well as a semi-structured interview.

Conventional content analysis was used to identify the categories for this research study.

The categories that were identified were as follows: the registered counsellor journey, which describes how they came to be registered counsellors and working within the school settings; the roles of the registered counsellor within the school context; occupational difficulties that registered counsellors faced; positive experiences from working within school settings and an awareness of the limitations of the scope of practice.

This research study was a first of its kind and could therefore also serve as basis for future research. It explored the registered counsellor's roles and experiences and therefore shed light on some of the possibilities of the profession. The research study revealed that registered counsellors were playing a vital role within the schools where they were employed by affording the learners a chance for mental healthcare intervention to which they otherwise might not have had access.

It is recommended that this research study be considered by the Department of Education as well as the Health Professions Council of South Africa when recommendations are made in terms of the role registered counsellors can play in school settings.

PREFACE

This mini-dissertation adheres to rules and regulations afforded by the A Rules of the North-West University with regard to the article model. In addition, the mini-dissertation also adheres to the established guidelines provided by the American Psychological Association (APA, 6th edition), while Section 2 adheres to the author guidelines for the *Journal of Psychology in Africa*. This journal is an accredited and peer-reviewed journal, and the aim is to publish this article. The content list will guide the reader through the mini-dissertation using chronological page numbers.

The researcher, Stephanie Dark, obtained approval for this research study from the Scientific Committee (COMPRES) that formed part of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University. Furthermore, ethical approval was then granted by the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC), also located at the university, after which approval was granted by the Department of Education and the Ekurhuleni North and Ekurhuleni South District offices. After completion, this mini-dissertation underwent professional language editing by Yvonne Smuts who is an accredited member of the South African Translator's Institute and therefore ensured adherence to the professional standard expected by the North-West University. The research study was also reviewed by Turn-it-in to ensure the originality of the research study which was checked against national and international databases and therefore fell within the acceptable norms regarding similarities.

PERMISSION LETTER FROM SUPERVISOR

Permission is hereby granted for the submission by first author, Stephanie Dark, of the following article for examination purposes towards the obtainment of a master's degree in Research Psychology:

The role and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa.

The role of the co-author, Prof Werner de Klerk, was that of supervisor and project head as well as peer-reviewing the research study.



Prof Werner de Klerk

13/11/2019

DECLARATION

I, Stephanie Dark, hereby declare that this research study entitled *The role and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa* is original work done by myself. This study serves as partial fulfilment of my master's degree in Research Psychology done at the North-West University in Potchefstroom. This work has never been submitted for examination. The necessary consent of all relevant parties was given to conduct this study and throughout this dissertation the required acknowledgement was given to all referenced material.

See Pdf

5/11/2019

Stephanie Dark

Student number: 29643945

STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH MINI-DISSERTATION

This mini-dissertation comprises three sections. Section 1 (current section) consists of the literature overview which provides all relevant information regarding the study. Section 2 (see page 17 of mini-dissertation) provides the article which sheds light on the methodology, findings, discussion of the findings and the conclusion of the research study. Section 3 (see page 58 of mini-dissertation) provides a critical reflection of the researcher on her research study as well as the contributions and applications of the research study.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This section of the mini-dissertation provides an in-depth overview to ensure an opportunity for the reader to gain a complete understanding of important concepts of the present research study. The topics that will be discussed include: 1) mental health; 2) background on primary mental healthcare in South Africa; 3) mental health and well-being in South African communities; 4) the role of the registered counsellor in South Africa; 5) studies on registered counsellors in South Africa; and 6) registered counsellors, community well-being and schools. This section also includes the problem statement and aim of the research study.

Overview of Literature

In Section 1 of this mini-dissertation, the literature overview, the following terms were investigated: “registered counsellors”, “scope of practice”, “employment of registered counsellors”, “mental health”, “community”, “community well-being”, “education”, “youth and adolescent mental health problems.” The researcher made use of several databases, namely Science Direct, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, SAGE journals, Elsevier and JSTOR journals.

Mental Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines aspects that describe ‘mental health’. These include “subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependence and recognition of the ability to realize one’s intellectual and emotional potential” (WHO, 2003, p. 7). Furthermore, the WHO encompasses other aspects into the definition such as the ability to cope with normal stresses of life and to work productively or contribute towards a community (WHO, 2003). A more recent definition of mental health

formulated by authors Galderisi, Heinz, Kastrup, Beezhold and Sartorius (2015) state the following:

Mental health is a dynamic state of internal equilibrium which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represents important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium. (p. 232)

These two definitions, however different, encompass the same key aspect of mental health whereby degrees of personal satisfaction with life are attained in a healthy way. It is not necessarily striving for perfection, but an ability to function and play a role in society which create meaning for the individual. However, for various personal and/or systemic reasons people often need mental healthcare services assistance to attain a state of perceived 'mental health' whereby the individual is able to cope and play a role within his/her given society (Galderisi et al., 2015). Rouillard, Wilson and Weideman (2016) suggest that within South Africa at least a third of the population struggle with a certain degree of mental health issues. Thus, it becomes important to look at the mental healthcare services history and availability within South Africa.

Background on primary mental healthcare services in South Africa. In South Africa's past, the promotion of mental health and healthcare services, such as psychiatric facilities and psychiatrists, primary mental healthcare practitioners, including mental healthcare nurses, and access to psychologists, was woefully neglected largely by the oppressive state

enterprises of the time (Bantjes, Swartz, & Niewoudt, 2017; Rouillard et al., 2016). Therefore, mental health issues went untreated with some of the most common causes being interpersonal violence, trauma associated with violence or neglect, post-traumatic stress symptoms or disorders, substance abuse, suicide and adjustment-related disturbances in children, among other things (Department of Health, 1997).

Abel and Louw (2009) reported before 2002 the majority of mental healthcare services were inadequately distributed across races and classes with clinical and counselling psychologists reporting client bases of over 75% consisting of white, middle to upper class urban-living, English- or Afrikaans-speaking people. At the time these same authors found this statistic alarming as they also reported that South Africa had a 'black' majority of about 90% with around 40% living in non-urban areas. The post-apartheid regime made many changes to try and correct these inadequate services, such as the implementation of the White Paper policy for the transformation of health services in South Africa (Department of Health, 1997). However, a much later study researched there were still only approximately 280 psychiatrists and 320 psychologists available per 100 000 people in South Africa (Rouillard et al., 2016). The Whitepaper policy for the transformation of health services in South Africa (Department of Health, 1997) was an attempt to outline that primary health interventions be universally accessible to all citizens. The policy also outlined a shift in focus towards improving the psychological well-being of people and their communities (Department of Health, 1997).

Unfortunately, years after this policy was introduced the lack of adequate mental healthcare services in South Africa is still a point of concern whereby well-aligned policies are out of sync with reality which reflects a lack of service provision brought on by poorly trained or overworked staff and organisational capacity deficiencies (Shierenbeck, Johansson, Andersson,

& Van Rooyen, 2013). Regrettably, the statistical research that is available to the public on government mental healthcare resources is limited, and the latest report on the state of mental healthcare service providers conducted by the World Health Organization in 2017 is indicated by the tables below:

Table 1

Mental Healthcare Facilities in South Africa

Facilities that offer mental healthcare services	Total number of facilities available countrywide
Outpatient facilities attached to a hospital	61
Mental hospitals	64
Psychiatric units in general hospitals	40
Inpatient facilities for children or adolescents	5

Note. Data on mental healthcare facilities by the World Health Organization (2017)

Table 2

Mental Health Workforce in South Africa

Mental Health Workforce	Rate of Professionals per 100 000 Population
Psychiatrists	1.52
Child psychiatrists	0.08
Mental health nurses	unknown
Psychologists	unknown
Social workers	unknown
Other paid mental health workers	unknown

Note. Data on mental healthcare facilities by the World Health Organization (2017)

In response to the increasing demands for mental healthcare services that could reach all demographics of the population and to be more affordable, the Professional Board for Psychology of the Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA] created another ‘mid-level’ psychological registration category (Abel & Louw, 2009). The category of the registered counsellor was first introduced by the HPCSA in 2003 and has grown to 3 505 members to date (Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA], 2019). The main purpose of this category was to provide mental healthcare services that were focused on primary psychological services that were accessible to varied members of the public with the focus being on “prevention, promotion and community-based care” as well as “enhancing psychological well-being of the public” (HPCSA, 2005, p. 2). Therefore, Elkonin and Sandison (2006) stated that the role of the registered counsellor should be a balance between curative and preventative treatment models with the focus on promotion of well-being for individuals, groups and especially communities.

Mental health and well-being in South African communities. To understand psychological well-being in communities the term *community* and what it entails within the South African context must be explored. A community in South Africa is defined as “a network of persons who share a self-ascribed sense of connectedness and identity, anchored in the practice and transmission of living heritage” (Department of Arts and Culture, 2009, p. 4). Other definitions of *community* add to this by stating a community is linked by social, geographical or interest aspects, such as culture, religion or sexual orientation, to name a few (Van der Westhuizen, 2007), and these relationships have complex interactions and processes unique to every community (Van der Merwe & Dunbar-Krige, 2007).

As community has been discussed above, attention needs to turn to defining *well-being*. Psychological well-being is best described by researchers Ryff and Keyes (1995) when they

propose the six theory dimensions of well-being for the first time which can be measured and are applicable across all ages and genders. The model has since been tested by others who found it to be a reasonably reliable model of well-being, also holding cross-cultural applications as well as applications within the South African context (Abbott, Ploubidis, Huppert, Kuh, & Croudace, 2009; Edwards, Ngcobo, & Pillay, 2004; Henn, Hill, & Jorgensen, 2016; Mlangeni & Van Dyk, 2017; Sirgatti et al., 2013; Van Dierendonck, Diaz, Rodriquez-Carvajal, Blanco, & Moreno-Jimenez, 2007; Zizek, Trevor, & Cancer, 2015). The six dimensions described by Ryff and Keyes (1995) and incorporated in the Ryff scales of psychological well-being assessment are as follows: self-acceptance (the degree of satisfaction with the self as a whole), positive relations with others (how satisfying interpersonal relationships are), autonomy (to what degree the person can make his/her own decisions, based on personal standards), environmental mastery (degree of control over external environment), purpose in life (goal-oriented living and determination to reach personal goals) and finally, personal growth (how open the individual is to new experiences or how satisfied he/she is with life). Therefore, it can be said that the White Paper policy (Department of Health, 1997) and the registered counsellor registration category (HPCSA, 2005) are driven by the intent to assist communities to live their lives fully by achieving psychological well-being.

The Role of the Registered Counsellor in South Africa

The role of the registered counsellor is to ensure that psychological services are made available to the general public and that these services are aimed at the enhancement of psychological well-being in community contexts (HPCSA, 2005). Therefore, the difference between the registered counsellor and other specialised psychological categories such as clinical, counselling, industrial, educational and research lies in their primary function which is to prevent

mental health problems from occurring and to intervene, if they do occur, and if the basic intervention is unsuccessful, to make referrals to appropriate specialised practitioners (HPCSA, 2005). This broad description is simplified by a description of their roles which are to conduct “screening and identification”, “containment of presenting difficulties”, “provide preventative counselling interventions”, “psycho-education and training” and to do certain psychological assessments focused on basic functioning in areas of intelligence, aptitude, ability, learning potential, personality, developmental measures, scholastics and interests (HPCSA, 2005, p. 2).

To become a registered counsellor training is involved in the form of a 4-year B.Psych. degree or honours degree in psychology followed by a supervised internship of approximately 720 hours community service working within the scope of practice of a registered counsellor (HPCSA, 2005). Once this has been completed the counsellor needs to write a national board examination aimed at assessing whether the counsellor has developed the required core competencies of the profession and is able to adhere to the stringent ethical standards of practice provided by the council. Once this has been completed successfully registration as a registered counsellor can take place (HPCSA, 2005) and the search for employment begins.

Studies on Registered Counsellors in South Africa

Since the conception of the registered counsellor there were very few research studies conducted on the category. One study focused on what perceptions of the category were (Rouillard et al., 2016). These authors found that people became registered counsellors because of an expressed need to be involved in assisting those with mental health difficulties or as an alternative to not being accepted to or completing a master’s degree programme. Furthermore, their study revealed an uncertainty amongst registered counsellor professionals with regard to the

context in which they should be working. Most were not working at a primary level of intervention as intended (Rouillard et al., 2016).

Another study by Elkonin and Sandison (2010) was conducted on employment patterns and perceptions of registered counsellors. This research revealed that the registered counsellors were not being utilised in the field as intended and most ended up in private practice which defeated the intended 'primary healthcare level' intention of the category. Both studies by Rouillard et al. (2016) and Abel and Louw (2009) additionally found that more than half of professional registered counsellors were not working in their intended fields and had moved on to alternate career paths. The reason for this seemed to be a lack of vacancies made available to registered counsellors. These studies drew links between the absence of available posts and the possible lack of funds for such posts in primary healthcare facilities as well as a gap in knowledge among professionals about the registration category (Abel & Louw, 2009; Rouillard et al., 2016).

Most revealing the study conducted by Elkonin and Sandison (2010) found that registered counsellors practising within their field most often found themselves working in settings where psychological assistance was needed with regard to career and academic issues and lifestyle choices. The same authors also found that other areas such as psycho-education, life skills, study methods, health behaviour, assistance with anxiety and depression as well as anger management, sexuality and self-esteem development were also found to be important roles which registered counsellors fulfilled. Furthermore, registered counsellors were allowed to work with the assessment of intellectual and/or scholastic barriers, aptitude tests and career placements (HPCSA, 2005). Abel and Louw (2009) found that a portion of 14.9% of their sample of registered counsellors was working in the education sector. Therefore, the counsellor's role could

be very useful in the educative field for the purposes of screening for psychological problems and implementing primary level mental health interventions as evidenced by the scope of practice which emphasises the use of mental health screening and short-term psychological interventions (individual or groups) as well as the role of enhancing personal functioning and conducting psychological assessments (cognitive, career etc.) or referring more complex matters to other mental healthcare practitioners (Government Notice, 2011).

Registered Counsellors, Community Well-being and Schools

One of the important role players in communities is their schools, and the National Development Plan (2011) requires the Department of Basic Education to use schools to promote access to a variety of public services for school learners in areas such as health, poverty alleviation, psychosocial support, sport and culture. This becomes important as the learners become the future role players and/or stakeholders of a community, and eventually the South African society (National Development Plan, 2011). The role of psychology in the process outlined by the National Development Plan will focus primarily on psychosocial support. When looking at what is meant by psychosocial support specifically, the National Development Plan (2011) states “the psychosocial well-being of learners from early childhood to higher education is also central to the success of a good quality education system” (p. 263). Therefore, it becomes important to look at the factors that impact upon mental health, psychological well-being and the possible social issues school learners may face.

In a study of mental health issues amongst high school learners in the Western Cape, of the 20 855 learners surveyed, 14.9% of those learners fell within the ‘high risk’ category for mental health issues (Plüddemann et al., 2014). The most common psychiatric disorders in adolescents include depression and other mood disorders such as anxiety and trauma-related

mood disorders which increase the risk of suicide (Patel, Flisher, Hetrick, & McGorry, 2007).

The authors Kessler et al. (2005), Paruk and Karim (2016), Patel et al. (2007) and Plüddemann et al. (2014) all highlight the need for increased screening of mental health illnesses and intervention programmes in terms of adolescent care. The authors found short- and long-term effects of mental illness including poor academic achievement and higher probability of risk behaviours such as substance abuse, violence and teenage pregnancy, among other issues.

Other studies have found that factors that influence psychological well-being in children and adolescents in schools include substance abuse and risky sexual behaviour (Patrick et al., 2010), verbal and physical abuse or bullying (Greeff & Grobler, 2008; Liang, Flisher, & Lombard, 2006; Mncube & Steinmann, 2014), cyber bullying or social media harassment (Smit, 2015), sexual violence and harassment (Mncube & Steinmann, 2014) and educators who fail to employ inclusive educational strategies to those school learners who struggle academically (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel, & Tlale, 2015). Some factors outside of school systems that also impact on school learners' academic, psychological and social well-being are financial difficulties (Phurutse, 2005) and parental involvement on home and school level (Berryhill, 2016). It now becomes clear that the registered counsellor could play an important role within a school system dealing preventatively or curatively with the issues faced by youth and their families; however, are registered counsellors involved in the educative field?

Overall, previous research studies focused on 'where' registered counsellors were working and 'what' they were doing as well as counsellors and other professionals' 'perceptions' of the field. To date, there does not seem to be an in-depth research study conducted focusing on a certain field of work that would shed light on the specifics of the counsellor's job. Such a research study may enable a reader to understand 'how' registered counsellors are currently

contributing. Thus, it becomes important to study the roles and experiences registered counsellors have within the educative field in order to understand what they are achieving and where/if the counsellors are being used effectively. It is also important to understand whether there needs to be a promoting of registered counsellors to work within the educative field to assist the National Development Plan (2011).

Problem Statement

Most research studies that have been conducted on the registered counsellors in South Africa through the years have been focused in the Western and Eastern Cape areas (Elkonin & Sandison, 2006, 2010; Kotze & Carolissen, 2005) or have not been area-specific, but focused on the category as a whole (Abel & Louw, 2009). This research study will focus on registered counsellors working in Gauteng, as there are no studies that have focused on this group. To date, there are 3 505 counsellors registered at the HPCSA of whom approximately 871 can be found in Gauteng. Therefore, 24.85% of registered counsellors reside in Gauteng alone (HPCSA, 2019). This is a large number of the registered counsellor pool in South Africa and justifies the focus on this province. Furthermore, previous studies have included counsellors who do not practise as registered counsellors; they have other occupations instead. These studies have also focused on where counsellors have found work and why they feel they have been underrepresented in the field of psychology (Abel & Louw, 2009; Elkonin & Sandison, 2006, 2010; Kotze & Carolissen, 2005; Rouillard et al., 2016). Therefore, this research study wishes to explore the roles counsellors play in the specific field of education and their experiences of these roles as a previously unexplored field of interest. Seemingly, there is gap in the research on registered counsellors with regard to the roles and experiences of their work, specifically in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The qualitative research study has made use of a qualitative

descriptive research design that has enabled the researcher to report the data as it is presented by the participants. Therefore, the research question that guides the research study is as follows:

What are the roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng?

Aim of the Study

The aim of this research study was to identify and describe registered counsellors' roles and experiences working in the specific field of education. The findings of this research study will shed an in-depth light on a specific field of work, namely education, which to date, has not been conducted with regard to registered counsellors. Furthermore, this research study aims to present the psychological community with a better understanding of the possible role a registered counsellor could play in the field of education.

References

- Abbot, R. A., Ploubidis, G. B., Huppert, F. A., Kuh, D. & Croudace, T. J. (2010). An evaluation of the precision of measurement of Ryff's psychological well-being scales in a population sample. *Social Indicators Research*, 97, 357-373. doi: 10.1007/s11205-009-9506-x.
- Abel, A., & Louw, J. (2009). Registered counsellors and professional work in South African psychology. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 39, 99-108.
- Bantjes, J., Swartz, L., & Niewoudt, P. (2017). Human rights and mental health in post-apartheid South Africa: Lessons from health care professionals working with suicidal inmates in the prison system. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 17(29). doi: 10.1186/s12914-017-0136-0
- Berryhill, M. B. (2016). Coparenting and parental school involvement. *Child Youth Care Forum*, 46(2), 261-283.
- Edwards, S. D., Ngcobo, H. S. B. & Pillay, A. L. (2004). Psychological well-being in South African university students. *Psychological Reports*, 95, 1279-1282.
- Elkonin, D. S., & Sandison, A. (2006). Mind the gap: Have the registered counsellors fallen through? *South African Journal of Psychology*, 36, 598-612.
- Elkonin, D. S., & Sandison, A. (2010). Perceptions of registered counsellor efficacy. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 40(1), 90-96.
- Engelbrecht, P., Nel, M., Nel, N., & Tlale, D. (2015). Enacting understanding of inclusion in complex contexts: Classroom practices of South African teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(3), 1-10. doi: 10.15700/saje.v35n3a1074
- Galderisi, S., Heinz, A., Kastrup, M., Beezhold, J., & Sartorius, N. (2015). Toward a new definition of mental health. *World Psychiatry*, 14(2), 231-233. doi: 10.1002/wps:20231

- Greeff, P., & Grobler, A. A. (2008). Bullying during the intermediate school phase: A South African study. *Childhood, 15*(1), 127-144.
- Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA]. *iRegister*. Retrieved from <http://isystems.hpcsa.co.za/iregister/>
- Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA]. (2005). *Framework for education, training and registration as a registered counsellor, Form 258*. Professional Board for Psychology.
- Henn, C. M., Hill, C., & Jorgensen, L. I. (2016). An investigation into the factor structure of the Ryff Scales of psychological well-being. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 42*(1), a1275.
- Kessler, R. C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K. R., & Walters, E. E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age of onset distributions of DSM-IV in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 62*, 593-602.
- Kotze, L., & Carolissen, R. (2005). *The employment patterns of B.Psych. graduates in the Western Cape*. Unpublished manuscript. Stellenbosch, South Africa: Department of Psychology, University of Stellenbosch.
- Liang, H., Flisher, A. J., & Lombard, C. J. (2006). Bullying, violence, and risk behaviour in South African school students. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 31*, 161-171.
- Mlangeni, N. G., & Van Dyk, G. A. (2017). Psychosocial factors influencing psychological wellbeing of South African state security forces: An exploratory study (Unpublished masters dissertation). University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch.
- Mncube, V., & Steinmann, C. (2014). Gang-related violence in South African schools. *Journal of Social Sciences, 39*(2), 203-211.

- Paruk, S., & Karim, E. (2016). Update on adolescent mental health. *South African Medical Journal*, 106(6), 548-550.
- Patel, V., Flisher, A. J., Hetrick, S., & McGorry, P. (2007). Mental health of young people: A global public health challenge. *Lancet*, 369, 1302-1313.
- Patrick, M. E., Palen, L-A., Caldwell, L., Gleeson, S., Smith, E., & Wegner, L. (2010). A qualitative assessment of South African adolescents' motivations for and against substance use and sexual behaviour. *Journal of Research on Adolescents*, 20(2), 456-481.
- Phurutse, M. C. (2005). *Factors affecting teaching and learning in South African public schools*. Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.
- Plüddemann, A., Morojele, N., Myers, B., Townsend, L., Lombard, C. J., Williams, P. P., Carney, T., & Nel, E. (2014). The prevalence of risk for mental health problems among high school students in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 44(1), 30-35.
- Rouillard, M. C. M., Wilson, L., & Weideman, S. (2016). Registered counsellors' perceptions of their role in the South African context of providing mental health-care services. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 46(1), 63-73.
- Ryff, C. D. & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(4), 719-727.
- Shierenbeck, I., Johansson, P., Andersson, L., & Van Rooyen, D. (2013). Barriers to accessing and receiving mental health care in Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Health and Human Rights Journal*, 15(2), 110-123.
- Sirigatti, S., Penzo, I., Iani, L., Mazzeschi, A., Hatalskaja, H., Giannetti, E., & Stefanile, C. (2013). Measurement invariance of Ryff's psychological well-being scales across Italian

- and Belarusian students. *Social Indicators Research*, 113, 67-80. doi: 10.1007/s11205-012-0082-0.
- Smit, D. M. (2015). Cyberbullying in South African and American schools: A legal comparative study. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(2).
- South Africa. Department of Arts & Culture. (2009). *National policy on South African living heritage*. Retrieved from http://www.maropeng.co.za/uploads/files/National_Policy_on_South_African_Living_Heritage__ICH_.pdf
- South Africa. Department of Health. (1997). *White paper for the transformation of the health system in South Africa*. Pretoria, South Africa: Government Gazette.
- South Africa. Government Notice. (2011). *Health Professions Act 65 of 1974: Regulations defining the scope of the profession of psychology*. Pretoria, South Africa: Government Gazette.
- South Africa. National Planning Commission. (2011). *National development plan: Vision for 2030*. Retrieved from http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/devplan_2.pdf
- Van der Merwe, M., & Dunbar-Krige, H. (2007). Learning in community psychology. In N. Duncan, B. Bowman, A. Naidoo, J. Pillay, & V. Roos (Eds.), *Community psychology: Analysis, context and action* (pp. 295-308). Cape Town, South Africa: UCT Press.
- Van der Westhuizen, G. J. (2007). Understanding community learning. In N. Duncan, B. Bowman, A. Naidoo, J. Pillay, & V. Roos (Eds.), *Community psychology: Analysis, context and action* (pp. 346-356). Cape Town, South Africa: UCT Press.

- Van Dierendonk, D., Diaz, D., Rodriguez-Carvajal, R., Blanco, A., & Moreno-Jimenez, B. (2008). Ryff's six-factor model of psychological well-being, a Spanish exploration. *Social Indicators Research*, 87, 473-479. doi: 10.1007/s11205-007-9174-7.
- World Health Organization [WHO]. (2003). *Investing in mental health*. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/mental_health/media/investing_mnh.pdf
- World Health Organization [WHO]. (2017). *Mental health atlas*. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/atlas/profiles-2017/ZAF.pdf?ua=1
- Zizek, S. S., Treven, S., & Cancer, V. (2015). Employees in Slovenia and their psychological well-being based on Ryff's model of psychological well-being. *Social Indicators Research*, 121, 483-502. doi: 10.1007/s11205-014-0645-3.

SECTION 2: ARTICLE

The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings

2.1 Guidelines for authors: *Journal of Psychology in Africa*

This article will be submitted for possible publication in *Journal of Psychology in Africa*. Thus, there will first be a summary of the author guidelines for this specific journal, followed by the article.

Instructions for Authors

Manuscripts

Manuscripts should be written in English and conform to the publication guidelines of the latest edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual of instructions for authors. Manuscripts can be a maximum of 7 000 words.

Submission

Manuscripts should be prepared in MSWord, double spaced with wide margins and submitted via email to the Editor-in-Chief at the following address: elias.mpfu@sydney.edu.au. Before submitting a manuscript, authors should peruse and consult a recent issue of the *Journal of Psychology in Africa* for general layout and style.

Manuscript Format

All pages must be numbered consecutively, including those containing the references, tables and figures. The typescript of a manuscript should be arranged as follows:

- Title: this should be brief, sufficiently informative for retrieval by automatic searching techniques and contain important keywords (preferably <13).

- Author(s) and address(es) of author(s): The corresponding author(s) must be indicated. The author's/authors' respective address(es) where the work was done must be indicated. An email address, telephone number and fax number for each corresponding author must be provided.
- Abstract: Articles and abstracts must be in English. Submission of abstracts translated into French, Portuguese and/or Spanish is encouraged. For data-based contributions, the abstract should be structured as follows: Objective – the primary purpose of the paper; Method – data source, participants, design, measures, data analysis; Results – key findings, implications, future directions; and Conclusions – summary in relation to the research questions and theory development. For all other contributions (except editorials, book reviews and special announcements), the abstract must be a concise statement of the content of the paper. Abstracts must not exceed 150 words. The statement of the abstract should summarise the information presented in the paper but should not include references.
- Text: (1) Per APA guidelines, only one space should follow any punctuation. (2) Do not insert spaces at the beginning or end of paragraphs. (3) Do not use colour in text. (4) Do not align references using spaces or tabs; use a hanging indent.
- Tables and figures: These should contain only information directly relevant to the content of the paper. Each table and figure must include a full, stand-alone caption, and each must be sequentially mentioned in the text. Collect tables and figures together at the end of the manuscript or supply as separate files. Indicate the correct placement in the text in this form <insert Table 1 here>. Figures must conform to the journal's style. Pay particular attention to line thickness, font and figure proportions, taking into account the

journal's printed page size – plan around one column width (82 mm) or two column widths (170 mm). For digital photographs or scanned images, the resolution should be at least 300 dpi for colour or greyscale artwork and a minimum of 600 dpi for black line drawings. These files can be saved (in order of preference) in PSD, PDF or JPEG format. Graphs, charts or maps can be saved in AI, PDF or EPS format. MS Office files (Word, PowerPoint, Excel) are also acceptable but DO NOT EMBED Excel graphs or PowerPoint slides in an MS Word document.

Referencing

Referencing style should follow latest edition of the APA manual of instructions for authors.

- References in text: References in running text should be quoted as follows: (Louw & Mkize, 2012), or (Louw, 2011), or Louw (2000, 2004a, 2004b). All surnames should be cited the first time the reference occurs, e.g., Louw, Mkize, and Naidoo (2009) or (Louw, Mkize, & Naidoo, 2010). Subsequent citations should use et al., e.g. Louw et al. (2004) or (Louw et al., 2004). “Unpublished observations” and “personal communications” may be cited in the text, but not in the reference list. Manuscripts submitted but not yet published can be included as references followed by “in press”.
- Reference list: Full references should be given at the end of the article in alphabetical order, using double spacing. References to journals should include the author's/authors' surname(s) and initial(s), the full title of the paper, the full name of the journal, the year of publication, the volume number and inclusive page numbers. Titles of journals must not be abbreviated. References to books should include the author's/authors' surname(s)

and initial(s), the year of publication, the full title of the book, the place of publication, and the publisher's name. References should be cited as per the examples below:

Journal Article

Peltzer, K. (2001). Factors at follow-up associated with adherence with directly observed therapy (DOT) for tuberculosis patients in South Africa. *Journal of Psychology in Africa, 11*(2), 165–185.

Book

Gore, A. (2006). *An inconvenient truth: The planetary emergency of global warming and what we can do about it*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale.

Edited Book

Galley, K. E. (Ed.). (2004). *Global climate change and wildlife in North America*. Bethesda, MD: Wildlife Society.

Chapter in a Book

Cook, D. A., & Wiley, C. Y. (2000). Psychotherapy with members of the African American churches and spiritual traditions. In P. S. Richards & A. E. Bergin (Eds), *Handbook of psychotherapy and religiosity diversity* (pp 369–396). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Newspaper Article (Signed)

Landler, M. (2007, June 2). Bush's greenhouse gas plan throws Europe off guard. *New York Times*, p. A7.35

Unpublished Thesis

Appoh, L. (1995). The effects of parental attitudes, beliefs and values on the nutritional status of their children in two communities in Ghana. (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Trondheim, Norway.

Conference Paper

Sternberg, R. J. (2001, June). *Cultural approaches to intellectual and social competencies*. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Society, Toronto, Canada. 36.

2.2 Article:

Running Head: REGISTERED COUNSELLORS WORKING IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings

Stephanie Dark (COMPRES, North-West University)

*Prof Werner de Klerk (COMPRES, North-West University)

Corresponding author: Prof Werner de Klerk*,

School of Psychosocial Health, Community Psychosocial Research (COMPRES), North-West

University, South Africa, Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom 2520, Internal Box 206,

Email: 12998699@nwu.ac.za

Telephone: +27182991725; or Fax: +27182991730

Abstract

Research on registered counsellor employment within the South African context has established that they have found employment in education. However, there is a gap in qualitative data concerning registered counsellors' experiences working within education. This research study has made use of a qualitative descriptive research design, and has aimed to explore the roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in schools within the Ekurhuleni North and South Districts of the Gauteng Province, South Africa. The data was analysed using conventional content analysis and the following categories were identified from the data: the registered counsellor journey; roles of the registered counsellor within the school context; occupational difficulties; positive experiences; and awareness of limitations of scope of practice. Future research should focus on broadening the scope of this research study to other districts and advocating for public awareness of the role registered counsellors can fulfil within the Department of Basic Education as well as South Africa.

Keywords: registered counsellor, psychology, mental healthcare, education, qualitative descriptive design.

Introduction

During the apartheid regime mental healthcare services in South Africa were neglected and the government did not adequately promote the importance of access to mental healthcare service providers such as psychiatric facilities, mental healthcare nurses and psychologists (Bantjes, Swartz, & Niewoudt, 2017; Rouillard, Wilson, & Weideman, 2016). Recognising the need for legislative change the post-apartheid government made many changes in an attempt to correct these inadequate services, an example being the implementation of the White Paper policy for the transformation of health services in South Africa (Department of Health, 1997). This policy outlines methods on how mental healthcare services should operate to promote community mental health. It has been over 20 years since the introduction of this policy and the lack of mental healthcare service delivery is still a point of great concern whereby policies are out of sync with reality due to organisational capacity shortages (Shierenbeck, Johansson, Andersson, & Van Rooyen, 2013).

In response to the clear need for accessible and affordable mental healthcare services the Professional Board for Psychology of the Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA] created an 'intermediate' psychological service provider, namely the registered counsellor who could render primary mental healthcare services with basic psychological support and do mental healthcare screening for referral to other appropriate services (Abel & Louw, 2009; Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA], 2005). This category was first introduced by the HPCSA in the year 2003 and grew to its current membership of 3 505 members (HPCSA, 2019). The HPCSA envisioned a category that would focus on providing basic mental healthcare services to varied members of the South African public with the focus being on prevention and promotion of mental health as well as increasing the psychological well-being of the community

(HPCSA, 2005). More specifically, the role of the registered counsellor was to conduct “screening and identification”, “containment of presenting difficulties”, “provide preventative counselling interventions”, “psycho-education and training” and to do certain psychological assessments focused on basic functioning in areas of intelligence, aptitude, ability, learning potential, personality, developmental measures, scholastics and interests (HPCSA, 2005, p. 2). Thus, the White Paper policy (Department of Health, 1997) and the registered counsellor registration category (HPCSA, 2005) are both driven to assist South African communities to achieve a sense of psychological well-being.

Since the formation of the registered counsellor category there have been very few studies that shed light on employment opportunities and specific work that individuals in this category conduct. The information provided by the few studies that have been conducted varies in nature. One study has focused on employment opportunities and perceptions of the registered counsellors (Elkonin & Sandosin, 2010). This study has revealed that a large portion of registered counsellors are working in private practice which defeats their intended purpose of working in the public sector for primary mental healthcare accessibility. Another study, which focused on the perceptions of the category, found that registered counsellors who were actively practising did so either because they had a need to assist those who suffered from mental health difficulties or because they had not previously been accepted into a master’s degree programme (Rouillard et al., 2016). Interestingly, Elkonin and Sandosin’s (2010) research also found that registered counsellors were working in settings where psychological assistance was needed in the form of career and academic counselling and life skills training. More specifically, their research revealed that registered counsellors were conducting psycho-education such as promotion of mental health, sexuality, self-esteem development as well as anxiety, depression and anger

management. Another study by Abel and Louw (2009) found that 14.9% of their sample of registered counsellors was working within the education sector.

Problem Statement

The National Development Plan (2011) requires the Department of Basic Education to use schools to promote access to a variety of public services for learners in areas such as health, poverty alleviation, psychosocial support, sport and culture. This is very important, as adolescents are the future stakeholders within the South African society (Department of Health, 2017). The authors Kessler et al. (2005), Paruk and Karim (2016), Patel et al. (2007) and Plüddemann et al. (2014) all highlight the need for increased screening of mental health illnesses and intervention programmes in terms of adolescent care. The authors found short- and long-term effects of mental illness, including poor academic achievement and a higher probability of risk behaviours such as substance abuse, violence and teenage pregnancy, among other issues. Following the goals of the National Development Plan (2011), in order for adolescents to achieve mental health well-being, they need access to primary mental healthcare services. It therefore, becomes important to understand the role registered counsellors play with regard to the educative field to shed light on what they are achieving and whether they are being used effectively within the education sector.

Goal of the Study

This research study used the qualitative descriptive research design which aimed to explore the roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in the Ekurhuleni North and South Districts located within the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The Ekurhuleni Metro, situated in the Gauteng Province, has an estimated population of about 4.7% of the registered counsellors in South Africa (HPCSA, 2019). The deputy director of the

Ekurhuleni North District Office of the Department of Education confirmed that there were registered counsellors working in school settings across the district. Therefore, the Ekurhuleni Metro was chosen as an appropriate research population. The following research question directed the research study: *What are the roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings?*

Method

Research Design

A qualitative descriptive research design was used, as it provided for a deeper understanding of the roles and experiences of counsellors working in school settings. The design allowed for the exploration of previously unexplored research and the objective of this research design allowed categories to be reported on as they emerged in their basic form (Sandelowski, 2000). A “qualitative descriptive study is the method of choice when straight descriptions of phenomena are desired” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 334).

Participants and Research Context

To provide proper insight into the aim of the research study the participants had to fulfil specific criteria. The participants had to be registered counsellors employed within a school that was situated in the Ekurhuleni North or Ekurhuleni South Districts of the Gauteng Province, South Africa. Furthermore, the participants had to be registered at the HPCSA and have a year or more experience working as a registered counsellor within a school setting to provide proper insight into the research questions posed. The participants signed informed consent to confirm their willing participation in the research study and they also had to speak either English or Afrikaans. The principals of the schools served as gatekeepers for the research study and provided the participants with the invitation to participate. The contact details of the independent

mediator were provided by the principals and the participants contacted the mediator to offer their voluntarily participation. The final research sample consisted of six participants from three different schools in the districts. Five of the participants were female and one was male. Four participants were Caucasian, one was African and another was Coloured. Their experience as registered counsellors working in school settings varied as shown in the table below (table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants

Participant number	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Home language	Years as registered counsellor at HPCSA	Years experience working in school settings	Years experience at current school
P1	28	Female	African	English	6	6	6
P2	28	Male	Caucasian	Afrikaans	2	2	2
P3	32	Female	Caucasian	Afrikaans	6	6	6
P4	34	Female	Caucasian	Afrikaans	11	10	3
P5	29	Female	Coloured	English	5	2	2
P6	33	Female	Caucasian	Afrikaans	2	1	1

Data Collection

Two data collection methods were used in this research study. The first was a *demographic questionnaire* which was used to gather basic information from the participants regarding their age, race, home language, years of experience as a registered counsellor and years of experience working in school settings. The second data collection methods occurred in the form of a *semi-structured interview* which enabled the participants to share their experiences working as registered counsellors in school settings. Sandelowski (2000) proposed that qualitative descriptive research was about “discovering the who, what and where of events or experiences, or their basic nature and shape” (p. 338) and the prescribed way of doing so was by

making use of moderately structured, open-ended interviews. The semi-structured interview was appropriate, as the researchers had specific questions that needed to be answered with the aim of the research study in mind but it also allowed for probing which led to further and deeper exploration of the roles as experienced by the participants.

The primary researcher kept a written account of her own preconceived ideas and beliefs about the research. By committing these ideas to paper the researcher acknowledged the ideas and beliefs existed which enabled the researcher to keep it separate from the participants' accounts, thus managing the subjectivity (Morrow, 2005).

Data Analysis

The data collected through the semi-structured interviews was transcribed verbatim, followed by the conventional content analysis. The method of conventional content analysis, as prescribed by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), involved the researcher starting the analysis process by first reading through all the data to gain a clearer picture of the data as a whole. The data was then further analysed by looking at each word or sentence for themes or concepts that might have developed. The primary researcher then made notes of initial thoughts and ideas about the data, and developed categories under which the codes could be placed and logically understood. Then the categories and sub-categories were given definitions and reported on as the data appeared. "Qualitative content analysis is the least interpretive of the qualitative analysis approaches in that there is no mandate to re-present the data in any other terms but their own" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338). In keeping with this thought, the researcher presented the data as it appeared, and did not add or create any other meaning than that which the data had shared.

Trustworthiness

The researchers carefully considered how trustworthiness of the research study would be ensured and adhered to the following principles throughout the process. Maxwell (1992) described various types of qualitative validity which were applicable to this research study. Descriptive validity – the factual accuracy and reporting of data – was assured by storing the original audio recordings and the personal notes and thoughts of the researcher as proof that data had been recorded accurately in the report (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 2004). Next, interpretive validity (Maxwell, 1992) was considered which referred to the accurate reporting on the concepts and meanings the participants had brought to the interviews. Peer review, in this case being the research supervisor, was used (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, evaluation validity was considered, which referred to the researcher reporting the data objectively and without bias (Maxwell, 1992). In this case, the primary researcher approached the possibility of bias by using reflexivity by keeping extensive reflective notes throughout the data collection, interpretation and reporting processes (Krefting, 1991). Member-checking of the findings also played a crucial role by assuring that accurate inferences were drawn from the participants' accounts (Shenton, 2004). Finally, the researchers considered theoretical validity – the accuracy of the theories that were linked to the data (Maxwell, 1992).

The methodology used in this research study, qualitative descriptive research, does not call for theoretical links to be made to the data, but rather requires the researcher to report the accurate accounts of the participants as they have described it with few and careful interpretations made by the researcher (Sandelowski, 2000, 2010). The concept of theoretical validity has been upheld by the researcher, ensuring that a rich description of the data is provided (Krefting, 1991).

Ethical Considerations

The ethical approval for this research study was provided by the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University (NWU-00015-18-S1) after which permission was obtained from the Department of Education head office in Gauteng as well as the district directors of the Ekurhuleni North and Ekurhuleni South Districts of Gauteng, South Africa. Next, approval was obtained from the principals and governing body of each school who had to sign letters of goodwill to provide permission for the research study to continue.

After the permissions had been received, the independent mediator provided the participants with informed consent which they completed before participation in the research study. The ethical considerations of confidentiality and anonymity were explained to participants, and upheld by the allocation of a participant number and the assurance that no personal or revealing data will be made public. Participants were also allowed to withdraw from the research study at any time (prior to data analysis). Interviews were conducted in the privacy of participants' respective offices at the schools, creating a safe environment for them. All relevant documentation will be stored safely at the North-West University.

Findings

Through the process of conventional content analysis, the following five categories were identified (see table 2). Quotes were used throughout to substantiate the categories.

Table 2

Categories regarding the Roles and Experiences of Registered Counsellors in School Settings

Category 1	The registered counsellor journey
Category 2	Roles of the registered counsellor within the school context
Category 3	Occupational difficulties
Category 4	Positive experiences
Category 5	Awareness of limitations of scope of practice

Category 1: The Registered Counsellor Journey

The participants in this research study have honours degrees in psychology and completed a practicum over six months of 720 hours which then qualified them to write the registered counsellor board examination after which they registered with the HPCSA. Some participants had prior qualifications and then switched to study psychology. One participant (P3) studied social work; another participant (P5) was an educator, and one (P6) was a qualified pastor. Most of the participants specialised in education during their undergraduate years. Only two of the participants had a different academic approach: “[...] I studied B. Social Sciences [...] after which I did the honours in psychology [...]” (P4), and another participant completed a B.Psych. qualification. All of the participants did most of their practical experience within a school setting: “[...] we had to do therapy, crisis intervention, career counselling, basically what fell within the scope of a registered counsellor [...]” (P5). Another participant added to the training requirements: “[...] a lot of psychological assessments [...] remedial education [...]” (P3). One participant also worked at a prison: “[...] my role there was group therapy training sessions for the juvenile prisoners and intake officer [...]” (P4). Another participant did individual and group counselling through a private practice: “[...] focused mostly on just life issues [...] parents getting divorced [...] traumatic experiences [...]” (P6). Most participants felt they had good training experiences. Only one participant who specialised in education psychology in her honours year expressed a wish for a wider training scope that included subjects like trauma counselling: “[...] realized that I wasn’t trained for what the whole term registered counsellor means outside the context of the school [...]” (P1).

Most of the participants found employment within one of the school settings where they completed their practical training. One participant was first employed as an educator: “[...] I was

a teacher for the first term and in that time, I was doing my board exam [...] (P1). Another participant started with a school governing body post after the internship. Another participant took a while to find a school counsellor post and also became an educator for a few years while working as a registered counsellor after hours: *“[...] so I was doing assessments [...] for a psychologist [...]*” (P5). Two of the participants expressed having to actively look for work after the internship: *“[...] they advertised for a counsellor and then I immediately started [...]*” (P4) and the other participant stated, *“[...] I believe it’s difficult for counsellors to get the foot in the door [...]*” (P6) when referring to finding employment opportunities in schools. The data revealed that the counsellors had well rounded professional training experiences in schools to prepare them for work within an educational context.

Category 2: Roles of Registered Counsellors within the School Context

The research has revealed that registered counsellors working in school settings have vast and many facettled roles to fulfil. The first is working with the school learners themselves who are referred for counselling and tend to come from various walks of life in terms of socio-economic status and culture: *“[...] we as registered counsellors within the schooling environment work with quite a diverse type of learner whether it be racial, social, physical”* (P2). The psychological work that is required of a counsellor has been revealed to be same with all participants as explained in the following:

“[...] a lot of psychological assessments, learning support or remedial education and then also a lot of emotional support in terms of actual counselling, group counselling and individual counselling – dealing quite a bit with bullying, low self-esteem you know the general sort of life skill” (P3).

Counsellors often have to make referrals to appropriate sources, depending on the situation. The types of referral sources are varied, but the most referrals occur to social services and/or psychiatric services: “[...] most of our referrals were for psychiatric so to get that assessment [...] especially more the social worker side. There was a few that we had to refer to hospital that was suicidal [...]” (P4). This data reveals that registered counsellors are able to deal with a variety of psychological issues, and are knowledgeable on what processes to follow and referrals to make when necessary, but when referrals have been made the role of the counsellors then changes to ‘case manager’ whereby follow-up still occurs as Participant 4 explains:

“Then I would check in with the kids on a regular basis [...] how you’re doing? How is the medication? [...] how is the treatment? [...] trying to follow up if they are going to their psychiatrist or psychologist for appointments [...].”

The counsellors also have to deal with drug use/abuse in the schools, but limit their role to drug education: *“We don’t deal so much with the rehabilitation, we do refer them to SANCA [South African National Council on Alcoholism] for that process but we do some support groups and we also do parental engagement so we have drug workshops [...]”* (P3). Participants also involve themselves in the education of study methods with the learners as explained by Participant 6: *“[...] that fits our scope of practice to help them study better and more effectively.”*

Another big part of the participants’ work is conducting assessments. The participants have to conduct cognitive, scholastic and emotional assessments: *“[...] currently we do scholastic assessments, and then we also do the Ravens assessment [...]”* (P3) and *“[...] the Bender, the Wepman, [...], the ESSI, reader and spelling, [...] the Beck for emotional [...]”* (P5).

Career assessments need to be conducted with school leaving learners and constitute part of another role participants have to fulfil. Participants make use of varied assessment tools: “[...] *the DAT, the SDS [...]*” (P6) and “[...] *a vision board or a career board [...]*” (P5). Within the education setting the participants also have to be knowledgeable about everything surrounding assessment accommodations as they are charged with the applications for learners: “[...] *we do concessions, accommodations [...]*” (P2). There has been some frustration felt by participants in terms of the concession and accommodation application processes: “[...] *the assessments we have been doing for concessions has been changed constantly, [...]* you fill in the forms and the department sends it back and says ‘no, it must be on this form’ [...]” (P4). Additionally, the participant who works in a mainstream school has revealed that application to special education is also the role of a school counsellor: “[...] *and if there is children that really fall out of the mainstream that we try to assess them to get into the specialized education*” (P4).

Another responsibility that falls within the job description of the counsellors who work in special needs schools is the monitoring of disability weightings, as it determines post establishment in special schools:

“[...] if we, for example, get more SID learners in and some SLD children in, that weighs above your MID learner, then you would have more teachers [...] so if our disabilities drop we will lose educators and we also lose therapists” (P1).

The participants are also allowed to take part in extramural activities on a volunteer basis, but have to guard against dual roles as Participant 2 explains:

“I think for a sport lover I also get the 50/50 so I can be a registered counsellor at school but I can also coach [...]. I think you need to have quite a thorough understanding of where you lie with your clients [...]”

Another participant who works in a school that is also a resource centre for the surrounding community has extra tasks that need to be completed as she explains:

“I am busy with research for the school. I am doing research on careers and to help mainstream kids to get to the right institution and what they need to get for that career. So at this stage I am busy with that research” (P6).

One participant explains that sometimes counsellors are asked to perform roles they should not be asked to perform, as described by a participant when asked to get involved in disciplinary issues: *“[...] kids will start to see us as disciplinarians and not therapists [...] the kids are fearful of coming to us, because whatever they tell us they’re scared there is going to be repercussions or a consequence (P5).* The participants try to be very firm about their scope and their role as ‘therapist’ within the schools: *“[...] we borderline on things which we always need to be very careful of, because we are bombarded with lots of stuff” (P1).* The participants have expressed feelings of being overwhelmed at times, brought on by all of the different roles they need to fulfil:

“[...] we need to look at the staff, to find needs for them, to build coping mechanisms, [...] arrange supervision for the team [...], we run feeding schemes – basically everything. And the list goes on, so yes, there is a lot of responsibility” (P2).

Irrespective of the amount of work and feelings of being overwhelmed at times, overall, the participants feel valued and a sense of pride in their respective roles within their schools.

All participants expressed feelings of love and passion for the work they do as registered counsellors as stated by Participant 1:

“I don’t think I would run out of passion as long as I do what I get to do irrespective whether it’s in or out of school level as long as I get to work with people and help people that for me is enough – I love what I do, I love it.”

However, there is a feeling of resentment towards the HPCSA for removing the intelligence assessments from the list which registered counsellors are allowed to perform: *“[...] it does handicap us because at the end of the day, like I mentioned before, we can’t get a clear conceptualization of what is going on”* (P2). It is especially difficult for the participants, because they work in education and often have to conduct cognitive assessments:

“I feel being trained in the JSAIS and the SSAIS, just giving you that extra bit of knowledge in a specific assessment, now having that taken away [...] that was quite a big thing for me [...] especially in the educational field” (P3).

All of the participants agree there is a need for counsellors working in educational settings: *“Definitely – it supports the teachers, [...] it’s easier to refer to the onsite counsellor there that can help contain and refer”* (P4). The participants go further by saying they feel the need for psychological assistance in schools is being met in some special needs schools, but there is a great need for counsellors in mainstream schools too as expressed by this participant:

“I think the important thing to know is that especially in Gauteng [...] I think we definitely shorthanded in schools and I think registered counsellors [...] I think the areas that they come from is very harsh and I think we definitely need to be more out there and maybe considering helping other schools not only within our school [...]”(P2).

Another participant explains that it can be very difficult to be a registered counsellor and find employment within a school setting:

“[...] they don’t really know what a counsellor can mean for the school and what they can achieve and help the learners achieve. I believe it is necessary for every school to have a counsellor, but a lot of principals are not there yet” (P6).

Another participant agrees and argues that there is a general ignorance in the public towards the registered counsellor field as a whole: *“[...] they don’t know the difference between being a counsellor and a social worker, they don’t know the difference between being a registered counsellor and a teacher [...] major problem” (P1).* Overall, participants feel that the need for registered counsellors in schools is great, but is not currently being met:

“I think there is not enough – even if you think about just mentioning schools they are saying that they do not qualify to have counsellors at schools, it’s taking something away from the kids it’s leaving them to be vulnerable, I mean you can see what is happening in our schools and it is shocking and if they had the support in the first place maybe it won’t go to that level” (P4).

Counsellors working within a school environment must also liaise with educators and school management as part of day-to-day activities and respective roles. Participants see it as a reciprocal relationship where both educator and counsellor work together to achieve a goal:

“[...] they have to give us samples of work they have to give us some feedback of the child [...] we do give them feedback and say ‘you know what try this in class if this happens’” (P3). The research has also revealed that the relationships with educators can be multi-faceted. One of the important factors the research has shown is that counsellors need to earn the trust of the educators through their job performance: *“[...] you need to build that trust with them and it’s also an issue of, you need to deliver if you say you are going to do something” (P1).* Counsellors are referred to school learners through the educators quite often but universally, participants

agree that most educators do not understand their role and how they can be used effectively:

“[...] some of the teachers you get a lot of referrals from, because they understand your role and what you can mean for them and the children” (P6).

There is confusion where counsellors are expected to act as psychologists: *“I think they have the expectation of what a psychologist does and they expect us as registered counsellors to do the same” (P2).* There is often the feeling that educators do not understand the role of the counsellor in the school: *“[...] I don’t think they fully understand our role and what the purpose of our role is and I think we get misunderstood” (P5).* This misunderstanding of the roles can often lead to an expectation from educators that counsellors should solve problems outside of their scope: *“[...] we have educators that say ‘fix this child’s medication’”(P3).* Other educators would make requests that force counsellors to explain their role; for example: *“[...] then teachers will come to you and ask you for favours that is not your role and it’s not part of your job description [...] like grading papers” (P6).* Counsellors also have to deal with disappointing the educators when counselling outcomes are not always what have been anticipated by the educator: *“[...] people expect counsellors within the educational field to be a miracle worker [...] they expect an immediate change in the child and I think that is sometimes something that I struggle with” (P3).* The same participant has found that explaining the role and scope of the counsellor often assists in clarifying the process of counselling for the educators which takes pressure off the counsellor: *“[...] just tell them how the process works just making them aware of what the limitations are” (P3).*

Registered counsellors working in schools have another role to play with regard to educators when they are asked to intervene in crises with educators themselves. Participants agree that the educators need to be assisted, and the conflict between being a registered

counsellor and a colleague is managed: “[...] we will listen to what the initial problem is, we will take it in and we will definitely refer that teacher out [...] I think for us personally it’s a bit of a conflict” (P2). However, working with educators also proves to be difficult at times when educators step outside their own scope of work:

“[...] our educators are very supportive and they are very willing to help even though it is sometime unethical [...] the teacher went to the police station [...] then obviously being a Friday afternoon they were willing to let the child go live with her for the weekend and give her a place of safety” (P3).

This becomes a difficult situation for the counsellors as they have to balance the best interest of the learners with the best interest of the educators as the same participant continues to describe:

“It was quite difficult for me because I did get very upset [...] we just had to explain to her what dangers she put herself in and the child in at that stage, but yes I think it was quite a difficult situation to deal with” (P3).

Therefore, it seems counsellors also need to play a protective role towards the educators and the learners to protect both parties from potential harm.

A final role registered counsellors also have to fulfil is having to liaise with their respective Department of Education district offices for support. Overall, the consensus among participants seems to be that there is a healthy relationship between themselves and their respective districts: “[...] in the district I think we all share a common work language and I think we support each other [...]” (P2). However, some participants have experienced frustration with the Department of Education for failing to identify and properly assist school learners with barriers to learning: “I’m honestly fed-up with the system not working [...] kids just being pushed from one grade to the next even if they don’t have the ability to do it [...]” (P4). When these

school learners are not assisted in remedial or special needs education, the counsellor working in a mainstream school feels behavioural problems then start to take forefront: “[...] *they are not coping, emotionally withdrawn, some of them act out [...]*” (P4). This creates frustration for the counsellors as they witness school learners develop bad behaviour due to their inability to cope academically.

Category 3: Occupational Difficulties

All participants have experience working with school learners who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds and therefore, lack resources for private school and healthcare facilities: “[...] *we have a lot of poor kids at this school [...]*” (P5). The financial situation of the school learners makes private mental healthcare impossible: “[...] *parents can’t afford the counsellors or psychologists [...]*” (P6) and so the counsellors at the school become the school learners’ only form of psychological intervention. The participants find that, at times, it becomes emotionally strenuous to work with these school learners. Cases can often lead to a sense of hopelessness for the school learners because of their circumstances: “[...] *they’re never going to get out because of where they live*” (P1) and the same sense of hopelessness for the counsellors trying to intervene: “[...] *it makes you question as a counsellor, is what I am doing enough? [...]* *because try as much as you can at school, but they are going back to the same circumstances at home*” (P1). The amount of abuse cases most participants have to deal with are especially difficult: “[...] *we have a lot of abuse cases [...]*” (P5) and “[...] *the workload for us, it’s on a continuous basis, like the bill keeps running, the bill keeps running, and nobody is stopping the ticket they just keep it running [...]*” (P1). The counsellors are sometimes exposed to acts of violence themselves: “[...] *I’ve stopped kids that try to throw kids off the balcony and hang him by his feet [...]*” (P1). However, through these feelings of hopelessness participants attempt to

keep a positive outlook and try to find hope for themselves and the school learners as Participant 1 continues: “[...] even if you can provide just that one strand of hope [...] for me that’s enough.”

Most participants in this research study work within special needs school settings for school learners with cognitive impairments. To do psychological counselling with these school learners the participants often need to fulfil various roles: “[...] so it’s the mediation role [...] we have to be problem solvers [...] we have to do basic support structures [...]” (P1). Moreover, counsellors need to be very creative in their counselling approaches, as traditional techniques do not necessarily work for school learners with cognitive impairments: “[...] very verbal therapies don’t really work with every learner [...] so we would do something like creative expressive arts [...] on some, solution focused has worked [...]” (P5). Counselling is also aimed at more life skills and social adaptation: “[...] it is more important for me to help the children work on social cue’s and socially help them adapt so that they find their place in society [...]” (P6) as well as self-esteem issues: “[...] a lot of them struggle with their self-image [...] because they are lacking a few things that other people around them have in society [...]” (P6). The participants enjoy the counselling processes with the school learners but their limited cognitive capacity and the extra effort do make it challenging: “[...] it’s very draining, because we give so much of ourselves, but it is also rewarding [...] you are helping [...]” (P1).

A final occupational difficulty for the counsellors is working with educators as colleagues whereby some experience a certain dislike from the educators. This manifests in two ways, either older educators who do not believe in psychological assistance do not refer learners or do not engage in participants trying to work with them: “[...] the majority finds it taboo, you know, older generations don’t believe in psychology” (P5), or other younger educators resent the

freedom that comes with being a school-based counsellor versus an educator: “[...] younger teachers also start to resent [...] and it’s material things that they resent that we get to sit in our offices, we have phones, we have air-cons, we have a desk, we have freedom” (P5).

The research has revealed that a working relationship with educators plays a key role in the counsellors’ work with the learners but the relationships can, at times, be difficult to build and to keep.

Category 4: Positive Experiences

The participants working in their respective school settings have feelings of value and pride in their work which stem from a few aspects. Counsellors expressed being trusted by their management to make decisions that will impact the school as expressed by these participants when referring to the management: “[...] I think he trusts us [...]” (P3) and “[...] we have to give our recommendations [...]” (P5). Counsellors also feel valued by the workload relief they bring to their educators by being available to handle sensitive cases brought to the attention of the school: “[...] they don’t necessarily have the time or space for that in the educational system” (P6). There is also a sense of pride in the title of ‘registered counsellor’: “[...] in our profession we are education therapists [...] they try to be fancy by giving us that name, but we are registered counsellors, which means we have honorary degrees [...]” (P1). However, one participant feels that anybody working in the field of education might, at times, feel undervalued: “[...] when you work in the education field we are not as valued as what we should be and that is across the board from being a teacher to being a registered counsellor” (P1). The same participant feels that counsellors working in educational settings do it for the passion of the work and not monetary gain because they are paid less than those counsellors working in the private sector: “[...] when you study further the aim is to make more money, irrespective of what people

believe, the aim is to make money and when entering education you are obviously entering because of passion” (P1). It is clear from the data that registered counsellors working in school settings do feel a sense of value and pride in their work, which is important to them.

Furthermore, self-care is also an important positive factor for most of the participants. For some, self-care needs to be learnt: *“[...] physically I’ll get sick [...] my body just shuts down [...] self-care is something that I had to learn (P1) but it is a very important aspect of their everyday professional lives: “[...] you also need to look after yourself as an individual and you also need to have boundaries set, because if you emotionally invest in every case I think you are going to burn out quite easily” (P3). Self-care is not necessarily an easy task within a school setting in terms of workload demands: “[...] keep it moving, keep it moving [...] and I was depleted (P1). For most participants it is a necessity to work within a team to share the load required of a school counsellor as expressed by this participant: “[...] there are so many things going on like I’ve mentioned all our responsibilities and to try and take everything onto yourself. I literally think your head will explode – its’ definitely impossible” (P2). Another participant who does work at a school alone shares the same view: “[...] I am the only one at the school and we’ve got about a thousand kids and it is impossible to get to everyone” (P4). Registered counsellors working in school settings also value teamwork as a form of self-care and spend time discussing cases with one another: “[...] we spend the first hour of the day really just talking [...]” (P5) and [...] Our team is very supportive [...] we do some debriefing at times (P3). Self-care is also practised privately via supervision or relaxation techniques at home: “[...] we do lots of arts and crafts, spending time with my family outdoors, seeing a supervisor as well” (P4). Working with a professional team also has the added benefits of networking and free professional advice as one participant explains:*

“[...] I tend to get stagnated cause I’m not always sure where to find a social worker [...] a colleague is good at working with social services [...] another colleague can give me pointers on how to maybe help a client” (P2).

Above all, working in a professional team seems to be most important for the value of peer debriefing.

Category 5: Awareness of Limitations of Scope of Practice

The research has revealed that for the most part registered counsellors work within their scope of practice: *“[...] I do try specifically to work in the scope of practice” (P4)* because it provides safety and structure from which to do their work: *“[...] I feel safe in those boundaries and I keep those boundaries [...]” (P6)*. As revealed in Category 3, registered counsellors often have to deal with difficult situations and additional resources might need to be called upon: *“[...] depending on the situation [...] we will contact social workers to assist us to deal with that family or even the police” (P4)*. Overall the participants were very aware of their limitations in terms of scope of practice and what that allows them to deal with in terms assessment, group and individual counselling, *“[...] more serious cases contained and then referred to the necessary individuals” (P3)*. However, working in public school environments counsellors often struggle with school learners who do not have access to proper resources: *“[...] I would say 90% of our learners come from challenging socio-economic environments” (P3)*. The public sector resources are limited and often do not assist immediately as demonstrated by this participant referring to the police who were asked to come to school for assistance with an abused learner: *“[...] they didn’t come saying ‘oh no we had a conference’ then we asked ‘is there no one else that can come?’ ‘No.’ Two days later they only picked him up and took him” (P5)*. This creates frustration and a feeling of helplessness within the work environment: *“[...] it’s the fact that the supportive*

structures around me shows that they can't help and that makes me helpless" (P1). One of the major outside support structures of which all participants make use is social workers, and when this resource is not available, counsellors are forced to try and assist their clients by working outside of their scope: *"[...] the only times that I really go above and beyond is when we have to get social workers involved and they are not doing it so then we bypass them sometimes, because their system isn't working"* (P4). The counsellors feel bound to assist the learners in any way possible when other support structures have failed as demonstrated by this statement: *"I think being a counsellor that's the whole thing that you learn is that you provide help any way possible [...] then I don't see it as stepping out, irrespective of whether it's in my scope or not"* (P1). Another participant revealed how they had to assist a school learner when social workers failed to:

"[...] you always have to act in the best interest of the child so I think if there is a case where you don't find any assistance you sort of have to think outside the box and see how you can assist this child. We've had children that we had to take to the police station sometimes which is not the role of a counsellor, take to the police, station sit there while they do the statements, support the child and all of that, which I feel is more the role of a social worker, not necessarily of a counsellor" (P3).

This frustration is further aggravated by registered counsellors feeling unable to build a support network or relationships with social workers: *"[...] the social workers don't necessarily stay at one agency or organization for a very long time, and that makes it quite challenging"* (P3).

Although social work support seems to play the largest part of the referral need and frustration, referral to other sources has also occurred. The research has found that when parents have the financial means to assist their children within the private sector, then referral and staying within

the bounds of the scope are easier. However, registered counsellors are placed under a lot of pressure to intervene in cases that might fall outside of their scope when other resources are also not available:

[...] suicide attempts, it's very difficult to immediately get a psychologist [...] especially a psychiatrist because it's three to six months waiting period [...] so you are in constant crisis mode of trying to mitigate and handle, mitigate and handle up until the person that is equipped enough to do it can help, which is frustrating, cause they are not going to do it now, within 3-6 months from now she could be dead" (P1).

Another participant explains how trends in school learner behaviour can also place pressure on their scope: *"[...] this doesn't necessarily fall within the scope of a counsellor but I think a lot of cutting or self-mutilation, that is quite a big thing going on at the moment [...]" (P3).*

Furthermore, counsellors working in school-based settings can also become the referral source themselves. At times they are asked to assist their district offices in terms of assessments which can add additional pressure when assessment might fall outside of their scope of practice: *"[...] they are inundated and are bothered with a lot of assessments [...] we are not allowed to do IQ testing [...] the expectation is there [...] it is unethical, but they do try things like that" (P2).*

Another participant has an opposing view: *"[...] I do think that the department of education is quite in tune with the roles of the scope of practice of counsellors, I think they know what is expected and what is out of bounds" (P3).* As demonstrated, a lack of referral resources within the public sector contributes to counsellors' needing to step outside of their scope to assist as well as experiencing feelings of helplessness and frustration: *"[...] there is some cases where you are stuck, the system is making you stuck, because the system isn't helping" (P1)* and *"[...] that's the thing that keeps us up at night, is this child going to be okay" (P5).* Furthermore, it

seems most participants have a good relationship with their district offices but sometimes they need to draw boundaries with regard to their scope of practice.

Ongoing training forms a crucial part of registered counsellors' careers as expressed by this participant: "[...] ongoing training and do constant research with regards to technology in the counselling areas [...]" (P2). Some participants go for training to learn new techniques: "[...] brain recursive therapy [...] you basically lessen the person's responses to whatever the stressor is [...]" (P4) while others do training to deepen their existing knowledge of a certain technique: "[...] to refresh knowledge on how cognitive therapy works, how solution focused therapy works [...]" (P2). However, half of the participants expressed a wish to continue their studies to a master's programme in educational psychology. Two of the participants are already enrolled in the educational psychology master's programme: "[...] doing the master's will enable me to broaden my scope and to bring that knowledge back into the school as well [...]" (P3). Another participant has started a master's degree in research psychology some years ago but did not finish the programme: "[...] I really didn't enjoy research, that wasn't my thing [...] just focus on the counselling and do that [...]" (P4). One of the biggest motivators for counsellors working in school settings to pursue a master's degree in educational psychology is the removal of the intelligence assessments from the registered counsellors' scope: "[...] we are not allowed to do that anymore so that was, not the only motivation obviously, but just being able to work on a bigger scale" (P3). One participant who had no plans to continue with her master's studies used financial reasons as motivating factors:

"[...] and that's also the reason I stopped at registered counselling and not studying any further, because I feel more people have the means to pay for a counsellor rather than a psychologist cause psychologist prices are very high [...]" (P6).

The participants all expressed a great love and respect for the registered counsellor field. Some would pursue further education and others not, depending on the individual's personal motivating factors but overall, those who would pursue a master's degree would do so for the broadening of their scope.

Discussion

This qualitative research study made use of the qualitative descriptive research design, and aimed to explore the roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in the Ekurhuleni North and Ekurhuleni South Districts of the Gauteng Province, South Africa. The following research question directed the study: "What are the roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings?" The qualitative descriptive research design assumed the position that the researcher did not possess any pre-existing theoretical underpinnings, but allowed the research findings to guide the process (Sandelowski, 2000, 2010; Neergard, Olesen, Andersen, & Sondergaard, 2009). With this framework in mind, this discussion sheds light on the findings as presented by the data and will draw links with existing literature where appropriate.

A point of clear frustration for registered counsellors working in schools is the unreliable state resources. The counsellors in this research study explain that most of the learners with whom they work come from poor socio-economic backgrounds and therefore, they do not have the resources for private psychological care. Consequently, the findings have revealed the counsellors are sometimes forced to operate in a 'grey area' where resources have failed and the counsellors have become the only resources for assistance. This takes an emotional toll on the counsellors as they are, at times, forced to work outside of their scope of practice. This causes frustration with a support system that does not work due to the inadequate or inundated referral

resources. As literature has revealed, the lack of adequate mental healthcare services still experienced in South Africa today (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2017; Shierenbeck et al., 2013) affects the school counsellors directly and places them in a difficult situation, often needing to choose intervention above scope of practice.

Regardless, the research has revealed that the work done in school settings by registered counsellors is contributing positively to the overall well-being of the learners. This is important, as one of the goals of the National Development Plan (2011) is to create psychosocial support within the education system to address the psychological well-being and social issues that school learners may face. The expectation is for learners to emerge from their educative experience as psychologically healthy individuals to integrate into society (National Development Plan, 2011). The creation of job opportunities for registered counsellors in school settings is fulfilling some of the intended requirements of this plan, as the participants have revealed that registered counsellors in schools are tasked with a variety of roles they need to fulfil. These roles range from psychological support to the learners in the form of assisting with mental health issues and general life skills. The participants also play the role of counsellor and colleague to educators, act as liaison with the Department of Education, they are involved in administration procedures within the school environment, and they are tasked to deal with most social and emotional aspects concerning the learners. The counsellors in this research study are also involved in assisting with various cognitive assessments, applications for assessment accommodations, arranging professional development of the staff, running feeding schemes and creating various strategies to enhance the overall well-being of the school learners. It is, therefore, clear that registered counsellors are an integral part in enhancing the psychosocial well-being of learners within their schools.

Thus, the role of registered counsellors in education settings comes with a sense of professional value for them. This is important, as healthy working relationships and respect in the workplace lead to work satisfaction (Mabindisa, 2013). Rogers and Ashforth (2017) explain there are two types of respect within the workplace, namely a general respect that 'we' are valued at the organisation and particular respect that the organisation values 'me' for particular attributes and achievements. Following this, the counsellors from this study working in school settings receive more of the 'we' value by feelings of general work satisfaction and appreciation as part of the team. However, this research study has found that registered counsellors often have to work harder to earn the 'me' value as they struggle with having to prove their individual professional worth to educators. This is something which can be further frustrated by the confusion of their role with psychologists and other professionals.

Abel and Louw (2009) and Rouillard et al. (2016) have found that the general public is unaware of the registered counsellor category and therefore, they do not know of its uses and scope. It is clear from this research study that this is still the case, and not enough has been done to educate the public about the role of the registered counsellor in the psychological field. This could be a contributing factor to the fact that participants have revealed that employment in educational settings for registered counsellors has been found to be difficult at times as job opportunities as school-based counsellors are relatively scarce and mostly found within special needs schools. The participants have also expressed the need for more registered counsellor vacancies to be made available in all schools. This links directly to the main purpose of the registered counsellor category which is a focus on the prevention and promotion of mental healthcare (HPCSA, 2005). Furthermore, the data has revealed that registered counsellors are often forced to find employment in other fields, such as teaching, because of the lack of available

vacancies. This relates to existing research by Abel and Louw (2009) and Rouillard et al. (2016) whereby a lack of vacancies for the registered counsellors has been a reason for registered counsellors having to find employment in alternate career paths.

Lastly, professional development is also important to registered counsellors. The development is either linked to enhancing or expanding current knowledge for work as a registered counsellor or aimed at higher education by completing a master's degree to broaden the current scope of work. With the removal of the intelligence tests from their scope (Wilks, 2013) the counsellors in this study have felt a clear sense of professional loss which has caused a significant limit to work within a school setting as cognitive assessments form a big part of their work. This is a clear motivating factor for the counsellor working within a school setting for pursuing a master's degree and not remaining a registered counsellor professional.

Limitations and Recommendations

Limitations of this research study include the small sample size, gender and ethnicity of participants. With regard to gender, most participants were female with only one male and in terms of race, most participants were Caucasian with only one African and one Coloured participant. The limitations of the sample size make generalisation of the findings impossible, as it is not representative of all gender and ethnic groups within the Ekurhuleni North and South Districts. Therefore, future research on registered counsellors working in school settings should focus on including larger and more diverse gender and ethnic groups to diversify.

Two of the three schools were special needs schools for mild/moderate intellectual disabilities, with only one mainstream high school included. There was consequently not enough data gathered from mild/moderate intellectual difficulty and mainstream schools, and no data

was gathered from registered counsellors possibly working in primary schools, full service schools or special needs schools for learners with physical or severe intellectual disabilities.

Other recommendations for future research to explore their roles and experiences include a broader focus on other schools within the Ekurhuleni North and South Districts such as primary schools, high schools, full-service schools or other special needs schools that employ registered counsellors. Future research should also focus on other districts in Gauteng as well as other provinces in South Africa. Furthermore, an exploration of the roles and experiences of registered counsellors working on a part-time basis for schools and therefore, not employed as full-time counsellors in a school setting should be undertaken.

All of these recommended future studies could provide data for advocating with the Department of Basic Education for more posts to be established within schools, as this study has revealed that there is value in having registered counsellors employed within school settings, performing psychological interventions and support.

Networking should also be taking place between the Department of Basic Education, the Department of Health as well as the HPCSA to explore the role registered counsellors could be playing in schools to assist with the psychological well-being of the youth. Furthermore, it is recommended that the HPCSA needs to do more to actively campaign for public awareness of the registered counsellor field and as an alternative registration option for psychology honours students who are not pursuing a master's degree. Consequently, the advocating should focus on 'keeping the profession alive'. This can be achieved through marketing the registered counsellor profession as an attractive career path to follow, as this research and previous literature have revealed that registered counsellors often pursue other professions or master's degrees due to the limitations of work availability and/or scope.

Conclusion

The aim of this research study was to explore the roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in the Ekurhuleni North and Ekurhuleni South Districts of the Gauteng Province, South Africa. The research found that registered counsellors had a multi-faceted role within a school setting which included being counsellor to students and colleagues, conducting various cognitive assessments, managing school administration procedures, liaising with their respective district offices over various matters and ensuring the overall well-being of the learners in the schools. However, registered counsellors also encountered many frustrations, including difficulty finding employment within school contexts, struggling with colleagues who had unrealistic expectations, creating an environment in which the counsellors had to prove their worth. At times, they were working outside of their scope due to a lack of resources.

Overall, it seems that registered counsellors are contributing meaningfully to the psychological field by working within school settings. They are able to identify problems early on, offer short-term assistance or interventions, and if necessary, make the appropriated referrals to other sources.

References

- Abel, A., & Louw, J. (2009). Registered counsellors and professional work in South African psychology. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 39, 99-108.
- Bantjes, J., Swartz, L., & Niewoudt, P. (2017). Human rights and mental health in post-apartheid South Africa: Lessons from health care professionals working with suicidal inmates in the prison system. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 17(29). doi: 10.1186/s12914-017-0136-0
- Cutcliffe, J. R., & McKenna, H. P. (2004). Expert qualitative researchers and the use of audit trails. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 45(2), 126-135.
- Elkonin, D. S., & Sandison, A. (2010). Perceptions of registered counsellor efficacy. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 40(1), 90-96.
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15, 1277-1288. doi: 10.1177/1049732305276687
- Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA]. *iRegister*. Retrieved from <http://isystems.hpcsa.co.za/iregister/>
- Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA]. (2005). *Framework for education, training and registration as a registered counsellor, Form 258*. Professional Board for Psychology.
- Kessler, R. C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K. R., & Walters, E. E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age of onset distributions of DSM-IV in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62, 593-602.
- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: Assessment of trustworthiness. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45(3), 214-222.

- Mabandisa, V. (2013). *Impact of staff turnover on organisational effectiveness and employee performance at the department of home affairs in the Eastern Cape Province* (Unpublished master's dissertation). Durban: Durban University of Technology.
- Maxwell, J. A. (1992). Understanding and validity of qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(3), 279-300.
- Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 250-260. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.250
- Neergard, M. A., Olesen, F., Andersen, R. S., & Sondergaard, J. (2009). Qualitative description – the poor cousin of health research? *Medical Research Methodology*, 9(52).
- Paruk, S., & Karim, E. (2016). Update on adolescent mental health. *South African Medical Journal*, 106(6), 548-550.
- Patel, V., Flisher, A. J., Hetrick, S., & McGorry, P. (2007). Mental health of young people: A global public health challenge. *Lancet*, 369, 1302-1313.
- Plüddemann, A., Morojele, N., Myers, B., Townsend, L., Lombard, C. J., Williams, P. P., Carney, T., & Nel, E. (2014). The prevalence of risk for mental health problems among high school students in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 44(1), 30-35.
- Rogers, K. M., & Ashforth, B. E. (2017). Respect in organizations: Feeling valued as “we” and “me”. *Journal of Management*, 43(5), 1578-1608.
- Rouillard, M. C. M., Wilson, L., & Weideman, S. (2016). Registered counsellors' perceptions of their role in the South African context of providing mental health-care services. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 46(1), 63-73.

- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23, 334-340.
- Sandelowski, M. (2010). What's in a name? Qualitative description revisited. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 33, 77-84.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75.
- Shierenbeck, I., Johansson, P., Andersson, L., & Van Rooyen, D. (2013). Barriers to accessing and receiving mental health care in Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Health and Human Rights Journal*, 15(2), 110-123.
- Sirigatti, S., Penzo, I., Iani, L., Mazzeschi, A., Hatalskaja, H., Giannetti, E., & Stefanile, C. (2013). Measurement invariance of Ryff's psychological well-being scales across Italian and Belarusian students. *Social Indicators Research*, 113, 67-80. doi: 10.1007/s11205-012-0082-0.
- South Africa. Department of Health. (1997). *White paper for the transformation of the health system in South Africa*. Pretoria, South Africa: Government Gazette.
- South Africa. Department of Health. (2017). *National adolescent and youth health policy*. Retrieved from <http://www.health.gov.za/index.php/shortcodes/2015-03-29-10-42-47/2015-04-30-08-18-10/2015-04-30-08-25-54?download=2366:adolescent-and-youth-policy-4th-sept>
- South Africa. National Planning Commission. (2011). *National development plan: Vision for 2030*. Retrieved from http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/devplan_2.pdf

Wilks, M. (2013). Division of registered counsellors and psychometrists. *Psytalk*, 4, 12-13.

Retrieved from <https://www.psyssa.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/PsyTalk-2013-Issue-4.pdf>

SECTION 3: CRITICAL REFLECTION

This section of the research study provides a personal reflection of the researcher in terms of the overall experiences of this research inquiry.

Critical Reflection

The following critical reflection will focus on the researcher's experiences during certain aspects of the research process. These aspects will include the process of data collection and analysis as well as the findings of the research study. By practising continuous reflexive awareness the researcher is able to scrutinise her own role in knowledge production (Raheim et al., 2016).

Data Collection

When writing a qualitative report, the researcher is obliged to acknowledge their own influence on the research by explaining their interactions with participants and how it might have influenced the participants (Armstrong, 2010).

Before the data collection process could commence authorisation to conduct the research study needed to be obtained from the Department of Education and the district directors of the Ekurhuleni North and South District Offices. The Department of Education granted permission to conduct the research study early July of 2018 which was shortly followed by Ekurhuleni North's permission at the end of July 2018. Ekurhuleni South District granted their permission at the end of August 2018 and final ethical approval was granted by HREC in October 2018. This process was quite slow and continuous follow-up on the progress ensured that permission was eventually granted. Next, I had to obtain informed consent to be signed by the school governing body and the school principals. At first, this led to more frustration, as appointments with principals were difficult to arrange due to their busy schedules. Eventually I was able to secure

appointments with the principals and after a brief discussion on the purpose of the research study I found every principal to be very welcoming and excited for the research to take place. They were willing to act as gatekeepers and arranged for the documents to be signed by the school governing bodies immediately. Lastly, my independent mediator had to obtain informed consent for the participants who volunteered to take part in the research study. This was the most anxiety provoking aspect of the data collection process, as participants took a long time to respond to the invitation and therefore, added to the pressure of keeping to the research timeline. However, throughout this process I learnt patience, adaptive skills, perseverance as well as working under pressure.

As a registered counsellor I have experienced interacting with people professionally and helping them to understand their own motives and challenges. However, as a researcher my role was different. The training I received from the university prepared me to conduct the research following the prescribed ways in which a researcher should conduct the data collection process and interviews. My training taught me to be objective throughout the interviews and to use the interview schedule as a way to keep on topic. Furthermore, it was important to allow the participants to react to their emotions but to keep my role as researcher and not fall in the role of a counsellor. The practical training classes ensured that I was equipped for the interviews. All of this was done in a concerted effort to be prepared and focused on the participants as the keepers of knowledge by “creating an anti-authoritative researcher-researched relationship” (Raheim et al., 2016, p 10). What greatly aided this was the use of reflective notes which assisted my ability to distance myself as the researcher and understand what was being said without too much influence on my part. The six research questions that formed part of the semi-structured interview guided the interview process and ensured that the interviews stayed focused and on

topic. The questions were as follows: *Can you describe the process of how you became a registered counsellor? How did you come to be a counsellor working in an educational context? Describe in detail the role that you perform as a registered counsellor at this school. What are your personal experiences working as a registered counsellor in this educational context? How do these experiences influence your role as counsellor in this context? How does your role within the educational context relate to your scope of practice?*

I constantly reminded myself of my role as the researcher and to keep in mind that the goal was information gathering and not to act in a therapeutic manner. The outside educational psychologist was arranged to deal with any unforeseen emotional reaction to the interview process. This research process taught me how to conduct a semi-structured interview with empathy and acknowledgement of individual experiences without becoming therapeutic.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

When aiming to provide an accurate critical reflection on research data analysis, authors Roller and Lavrakas (2018) recommend the following be reported on in detail: a description of the transcription process, an explanation on the coding process as well as how interpretations are derived.

As a researcher in training I was taught to transcribe the audio recordings to a Word document myself as part of the initial immersion with the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As the interviews continued the transcriptions occurred as a parallel process to start a formulation of codes and category ideas. With each interview the new data was added to existing categories and new codes, and categories were added where necessary. This process took a long time and involved reading and rereading the transcriptions to ensure that all aspects were covered, correctly reported on and that all findings flowed directly from the data. However, as the

researcher I was aware that a description of data was dependent on the perceptions of the person describing it (Giorgi, 1992). In other words, the researcher selected what would be described and what aspects would feature which then transformed the experiences of the participants (Sandelowski, 2000). I had to keep in mind that I would be influencing the data. Once again the reflective notes formed an integral part of keeping me objective by allowing me to voice my own thoughts on paper and to ensure they were not influencing the data provided by the participants. Furthermore, member-checking took place which ensured the accuracy of the findings presented (Shenton, 2004). My research supervisor also played a significant role in assisting with category formulation which ensured the accuracy and objectivity of the data analysis.

The last aspect of reflection recommended by Roller and Lavrakas (2018) was commenting on how interpretations were arrived at. The university training I received taught me that each research design was unique in the way data was interpreted and analysed, and I needed to follow the prescribed rules governing my chosen design. First, I had to keep in mind the objective of my research method. Qualitative descriptive inquiry is not focused on linking the data with a philosophical or an abstract framework, but rather attempts to present the data ‘as is’ (Sandelowski, 2000). Therefore, this kind of inquiry presents the experiences of the participants as they have experienced them with carefully considered interpretation to accurately represent the participants’ views (Sandelowski, 2004, 2010).

With this strategy in mind I reported the findings as presented by the participants, organising them into logical categories and using direct quotes to substantiate the conclusions being drawn which, once again, ensure the accuracy of the analysis. Descriptive and interpretive validity were important in this study as an accurate account of the events and their meaning was desired (Maxwell, 1992). This validity was achieved by following two learned processes, namely peer

review and member-checking. My supervisor peer reviewed the analysis and questioned all conclusions drawn to ensure the validity of the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the data. Then member-checking occurred whereby I sent the findings to all participants for comment and confirmation to minimise any bias on my part.

Findings

This research study aimed to explore the roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings. As this research study was previously unexplored, the conclusions were focused on an explanation of the findings and also linking the data to aspects of the literature that were relevant (Abel & Louw, 2009; Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA], 2005; Mabindisa, 2013; National Development Plan, 2011; Rogers & Ashforth, 2017; Rouillard, Wilson, & Weideman, 2016; Shierenbeck, Johansson, Andersson, & Van Rooyen, 2013; Wilks, 2013). It was an inspiring experience to observe how the literature overview and the categories coincided and exciting to be adding new data to existing literature.

Having been a registered counsellor for eight years, five of which were spent working within the education field, this research study was of great interest and importance to me. As a practitioner in the same field as the studied topic I realised that minimisation of personal bias was of the utmost importance (refer to previous data collection and analysis sections for extensive details on how this was achieved). During my initial research of registered counsellor studies in South Africa I was only able to find a small handful of published studies conducted on registered counsellors and their role within mental healthcare despite the field being in existence for 15 years (Abel & Louw, 2009; Elkonin & Sandison, 2006, 2010; Kotze & Carolissen, 2005; Rouillard et al., 2016). These studies mostly focused on registered counsellor efficacy and employment patterns in broad terms, and one study focused on the counsellors' perceptions of

their role in the South African healthcare context (see Rouillard et al., 2016). Therefore, this research study endeavoured to dive deeper and focus on an employment category, namely education, to find out what the roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in education were. The research study was important to shed light on the role registered counsellors could be playing within the educational context in aid of prevention of mental healthcare issues in our future adults.

Registered counsellors working within school contexts have various important roles they fulfil. I feel that they deserve to be recognised as valid and valued professionals within the South African mental healthcare system. This research study has limitations and has only made a small contribution to the knowledge about registered counsellors but it has added to a previously unexplored body of research; that in itself is valuable. It is my personal hope that the findings of this research study will be taken seriously and inspire others to study registered counsellors with the possibilities of the field in mind. This research study has been a significant learning experience for me. I hope to further contribute to psychological research in the future by using the vast knowledge and exceptional standards I have been taught throughout this process.

References

- Abel, A., & Louw, J. (2009). Registered counsellors and professional work in South African psychology. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 39, 99-108.
- Armstrong, J. (2010). Naturalistic inquiry. In N. J. Salkind (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Research Design* (pp. 881-885). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. doi: 10.4135/9781412961288.n262
- Elkonin, D. S., & Sandison, A. (2006). Mind the gap: Have the registered counsellors fallen through? *South African Journal of Psychology*, 36, 598-612.
- Elkonin, D. S., & Sandison, A. (2010). Perceptions of registered counsellor efficacy. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 40(1), 90-96.
- Giorgi, S. (1992). Description versus interpretation: Competing alternative strategies for qualitative research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 23, 119-135.
- Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA]. (2005). *Framework for education, training and registration as a registered counsellor, Form 258*. Professional Board for Psychology.
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15, 1277-1288. doi: 10.1177/1049732305276687
- Kotze, L., & Carolissen, R. (2005). *The employment patterns of B.Psych. graduates in the Western Cape*. Unpublished manuscript. Stellenbosch, South Africa: Department of Psychology, University of Stellenbosch.
- Mabandisa, V. (2013). *Impact of staff turnover on organisational effectiveness and employee performance at the department of home affairs in the Eastern Cape Province* (Unpublished master's dissertation). Durban: Durban University of Technology.

- Maxwell, J. A. (1992). Understanding and validity of qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(3), 279-300.
- Raheim, M., Mgnussen, L. H., Sekse, R. J. T., Lunde, A., Jacobsen, T., & Blystad, A. (2016). Researcher-researched relationship in qualitative research: Shifts in positions and researcher vulnerability. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 11. doi: 10.3402/qhw.v11.30996
- Rogers, K. M., & Ashforth, B. E. (2017). Respect in organizations: Feeling valued as “we” and “me”. *Journal of Management*, 43(5), 1578-1608.
- Roller, M. R., & Lavrakas, P. J. (2018). A total quality framework approach to sharing qualitative research data: Comment on DuBois et al. (2018). *Qualitative Psychology*, 5(3), 394-401.
- Rouillard, M. C. M., Wilson, L., & Weideman, S. (2016). Registered counsellors’ perceptions of their role in the South African context of providing mental health-care services. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 46(1), 63-73.
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23, 334-340.
- Sandelowski, M. (2004). Using qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14, 1366-1386.
- Sandelowski, M. (2010). What’s in a name? Qualitative description revisited. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 33, 77-84.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75.

Shierenbeck, I., Johansson, P., Andersson, L., & Van Rooyen, D. (2013). Barriers to accessing and receiving mental health care in Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Health and Human Rights Journal*, 15(2), 110-123.

South Africa. National Planning Commission. (2011). *National development plan: Vision for 2030*. Retrieved from http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/devplan_2.pdf

Wilks, M. (2013). Division of registered counsellors and psychometrists. *Psytalk*, 4, 12-13. Retrieved from <https://www.psyssa.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/PsyTalk-2013-Issue-4.pdf>

COMPLETE REFERENCE LIST

- Abbot, R. A., Ploubidis, G. B., Huppert, F. A., Kuh, D. & Croudace, T. J. (2010). An evaluation of the precision of measurement of Ryff's psychological well-being scales in a population sample. *Social Indicators Research*, 97, 357-373. doi: 10.1007/s11205-009-9506-x.
- Abel, A., & Louw, J. (2009). Registered counsellors and professional work in South African psychology. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 39, 99-108.
- Armstrong, J. (2010). Naturalistic inquiry. In N. J. Salkind (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Research Design* (pp. 881-885). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. doi: 10.4135/9781412961288.n262
- Bantjes, J., Swartz, L., & Niewoudt, P. (2017). Human rights and mental health in post-apartheid South Africa: Lessons from health care professionals working with suicidal inmates in the prison system. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 17(29). doi: 10.1186/s12914-017-0136-0
- Berryhill, M. B. (2016). Coparenting and parental school involvement. *Child Youth Care Forum*, 46(2), 261-283.
- Cutcliffe, J. R., & McKenna, H. P. (2004). Expert qualitative researchers and the use of audit trails. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 45(2), 126-135.
- Edwards, S. D., Ngcobo, H. S. B. & Pillay, A. L. (2004). Psychological well-being in South African university students. *Psychological Reports*, 95, 1279-1282.
- Elkonin, D. S., & Sandison, A. (2006). Mind the gap: Have the registered counsellors fallen through? *South African Journal of Psychology*, 36, 598-612.

- Elkonin, D. S., & Sandison, A. (2010). Perceptions of registered counsellor efficacy. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 40(1), 90-96.
- Engelbrecht, P., Nel, M., Nel, N., & Tlale, D. (2015). Enacting understanding of inclusion in complex contexts: Classroom practices of South African teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(3), 1-10. doi: 10.15700/saje.v35n3a1074
- Galderisi, S., Heinz, A., Kastrup, M., Beezhold, J., & Sartorius, N. (2015). Toward a new definition of mental health. *World Psychiatry*, 14(2), 231-233. doi: 10.1002/wps:20231
- Giorgi, S. (1992). Description versus interpretation: Competing alternative strategies for qualitative research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 23, 119-135.
- Greeff, P., & Grobler, A. A. (2008). Bullying during the intermediate school phase: A South African study. *Childhood*, 15(1), 127-144.
- Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA]. *iRegister*. Retrieved from <http://isystems.hpcsa.co.za/iregister/>
- Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA]. (2005). *Framework for education, training and registration as a registered counsellor, Form 258*. Professional Board for Psychology.
- Henn, C. M., Hill, C., & Jorgensen, L. I. (2016). An investigation into the factor structure of the Ryff Scales of psychological well-being. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 42(1), a1275.
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15, 1277-1288. doi: 10.1177/1049732305276687

- Kessler, R. C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K. R., & Walters, E. E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age of onset distributions of DSM-IV in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62, 593-602.
- Kotze, L., & Carolissen, R. (2005). *The employment patterns of B.Psych. graduates in the Western Cape*. Unpublished manuscript. Stellenbosch, South Africa: Department of Psychology, University of Stellenbosch.
- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: Assessment of trustworthiness. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45(3), 214-222.
- Liang, H., Flisher, A. J., & Lombard, C. J. (2006). Bullying, violence, and risk behaviour in South African school students. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 31, 161-171.
- Mabandisa, V. (2013). *Impact of staff turnover on organisational effectiveness and employee performance at the department of home affairs in the Eastern Cape Province* (Unpublished master's dissertation). Durban: Durban University of Technology.
- Mlangeni, N. G., & Van Dyk, G. A. (2017). Psychosocial factors influencing psychological wellbeing of South African state security forces: An exploratory study (Unpublished masters dissertation). University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch.
- Maxwell, J. A. (1992). Understanding and validity of qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(3), 279-300.
- Mncube, V., & Steinmann, C. (2014). Gang-related violence in South African schools. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 39(2), 203-211.
- Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 250-260. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.250

- Neergard, M. A., Olesen, F., Andersen, R. S., & Sondergaard, J. (2009). Qualitative description – the poor cousin of health research? *Medical Research Methodology*, 9(52).
- Paruk, S., & Karim, E. (2016). Update on adolescent mental health. *South African Medical Journal*, 106(6), 548-550.
- Patel, V., Flisher, A. J., Hetrick, S., & McGorry, P. (2007). Mental health of young people: A global public health challenge. *Lancet*, 369, 1302-1313.
- Patrick, M. E., Palen, L-A., Caldwell, L., Gleeson, S., Smith, E., & Wegner, L. (2010). A qualitative assessment of South African adolescents' motivations for and against substance use and sexual behaviour. *Journal of Research on Adolescents*, 20(2), 456-481.
- Phurutse, M. C. (2005). *Factors affecting teaching and learning in South African public schools*. Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.
- Plüddemann, A., Morojele, N., Myers, B., Townsend, L., Lombard, C. J., Williams, P. P., Carney, T., & Nel, E. (2014). The prevalence of risk for mental health problems among high school students in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 44(1), 30-35.
- Raheim, M., Mgnussen, L. H., Sekse, R. J. T., Lunde, A., Jacobsen, T., & Blystad, A. (2016). Researcher-researched relationship in qualitative research: Shifts in positions and researcher vulnerability. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 11. doi: 10.3402/qhw.v11.30996
- Rogers, K. M., & Ashforth, B. E. (2017). Respect in organizations: Feeling valued as “we” and “me”. *Journal of Management*, 43(5), 1578-1608.

- Roller, M. R., & Lavrakas, P. J. (2018). A total quality framework approach to sharing qualitative research data: Comment on DuBois et al. (2018). *Qualitative Psychology*, 5(3), 394-401.
- Rouillard, M. C. M., Wilson, L., & Weideman, S. (2016). Registered counsellors' perceptions of their role in the South African context of providing mental health-care services. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 46(1), 63-73.
- Ryff, C. D. & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(4), 719-727.
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23, 334-340.
- Sandelowski, M. (2004). Using qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14, 1366-1386.
- Sandelowski, M. (2010). What's in a name? Qualitative description revisited. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 33, 77-84.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75.
- Shierenbeck, I., Johansson, P., Andersson, L., & Van Rooyen, D. (2013). Barriers to accessing and receiving mental health care in Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Health and Human Rights Journal*, 15(2), 110-123.
- Smit, D. M. (2015). Cyberbullying in South African and American schools: A legal comparative study. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(2).
- South Africa. Department of Arts & Culture. (2009). *National policy on South African living heritage*. Retrieved from

http://www.maropeng.co.za/uploads/files/National_Policy_on_South_African_Living_Heritage__ICH_.pdf

South Africa. Department of Health. (1997). *White paper for the transformation of the health system in South Africa*. Pretoria, South Africa: Government Gazette.

South Africa. Department of Health. (2017). *National adolescent and youth health policy*.

Retrieved from <http://www.health.gov.za/index.php/shortcodes/2015-03-29-10-42-47/2015-04-30-08-18-10/2015-04-30-08-25-54?download=2366:adolescent-and-youth-policy-4th-sept>

South Africa. Government Notice, (2011). *Health Professions Act 65 of 1974: Regulations defining the scope of the profession of psychology*. Pretoria, South Africa: Government Gazette.

South Africa. National Planning Commission. (2011). *National development plan: Vision for 2030*. Retrieved from http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/devplan_2.pdf

Van der Merwe, M., & Dunbar-Krige, H. (2007). Learning in community psychology. In N. Duncan, B. Bowman, A. Naidoo, J. Pillay, & V. Roos (Eds.), *Community psychology: Analysis, context and action* (pp. 295-308). Cape Town, South Africa: UCT Press.

Van der Westhuizen, G. J. (2007). Understanding community learning. In N. Duncan, B. Bowman, A. Naidoo, J. Pillay, & V. Roos (Eds.), *Community psychology: Analysis, context and action* (pp. 346-356). Cape Town, South Africa: UCT Press.

Van Dierendonk, D., Diaz, D., Rodriguez-Carvajal, R., Blanco, A., & Moreno-Jimenez, B. (2008). Ryff's six-factor model of psychological well-being, a Spanish exploration. *Social Indicators Research*, 87, 473-479. doi: 10.1007/s11205-007-9174-7. Wilks, M. (2013). Division of registered counsellors and psychometrists. *Psytalk*, 4, 12-13.

Retrieved from <https://www.psyssa.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/PsyTalk-2013-Issue-4.pdf>

World Health Organization [WHO]. (2003). *Investing in mental health*. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/mental_health/media/investing_mnh.pdf

World Health Organization [WHO]. (2017). *Mental health atlas*. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/atlas/profiles-2017/ZAF.pdf?ua=1

Zizek, S. S., Treven, S., & Cancer, V. (2015). Employees in Slovenia and their psychological well-being based on Ryff's model of psychological well-being. *Social Indicators Research, 121*, 483-502. doi: 10.1007/s11205-014-0645-3.

ADDENDUM A: CONSENT FORM: PARTICIPANTS



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222
Fax: +2718 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>



INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR REGISTERED COUNSELLORS WORKING IN SCHOOL SETTINGS IN THE EKURHULENI NORTH And SOUTH DISTRICTS, SOUTH AFRICA.

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU-00015-18-S1

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Werner de Klerk (Project Head: Registered Research Psychologist)

POST GRADUATE STUDENT: Ms Stephanie Dark (MA/MSc student in Research Psychology)

ADDRESS: North-West University
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Psychosocial Health
Private bag X6001
Box 206
Potchefstroom
2520

CONTACT NUMBER: 084 779 3422

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of my (Stephanie Dark) Masters research mini-dissertation in Research Psychology. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might

9.1.5.6_HREC_ICF_Template_Apr2018

Page 1 of 8

be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point (prior data analysis), even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the **Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00015-18-S1)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

- *This study will be conducted at different schools in the Ekurhuleni North and South districts and will involve semi-structured interviews with Registered Counsellors who work within educational settings. The researcher (Ms Stephanie Dark) trained in interviewing by a registered Research Psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) will lead the study. A minimum of 9-12 participants will be included in this study.*
- *We plan to identify and describe the personal roles and experiences of registered counsellor working in school settings in the Ekurhuleni North district. The findings of the research will hopefully provide data regarding the work Registered Counsellors do within the field of education and therefore, offer valuable insight into the roles Registered Counsellors play within the educational field and the psychological community.*

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been invited to be part of this research because you are a Registered Counsellor working within an educational setting in the Ekurhuleni North district or Ekurhuleni South district who has valuable information regarding your own experiences and roles working within the field of education.*
- *You also fit the research because you are willing to participate in the research, willing to sign informed consent and willing to be interviewed and recorded (audio recording).*
- *You will not be able to take part in this research if you have less than one year experience working in an educative setting. You will also be excluded from this study if you are a person working within a school setting without an HPCSA registration under the category Registered Counsellor.*

What will be expected of you?

- *You will be expected to participate in a semi-structured interview which will require you to share your own experiences regarding your role working as a Registered Counsellor in a school setting. The interview will be scheduled on a time and date that suits you and the researcher (Ms Stephanie Dark). The interview will take approximately 50-60 minutes of your time. You will also be required to complete a demographic questionnaire which will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. Furthermore, you will be asked to review a summary of the preliminary analysis of the data (findings) and to comment on the accuracy thereof. This will be done via email between the researcher and individual participant.*
- *It is expected that both you and the independent person (who is providing you with this consent form) sign the informed consent form.*

- Once all the consent forms have been provided to the researcher (Ms Stephanie Dark), will make contact with you to decide on a date and time to conduct the interview. The interviews preferably need to take place in a private and secure location where the participant feels comfortable. Therefore, the researcher will request whether the private office of each participant can be used to conduct the interviews in.
- Refreshments in the form of bottled water will be provided to you during the interview. After your permission, you will again be informed that the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim with the purpose of preventing any assumptions on the part of the researcher.
- It is important to note that the semi-structured interview will take place 'after hours,' meaning, directly after school has ended, so not to interfere with contact time. It will be the responsibility of the participant to arrange his/her own transport after the interview has ended. If 'after hours' (directly after school) does not suit the participant then he/she will be welcome to suggest any other time that will be convenient.

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

- There are no direct benefits for you to take part in this study. However, the following can be foreseen as indirect benefits:
 1. This study will contribute to the currently limited knowledge available on the Registered Counsellor category of the HPCSA.
 2. Recommendations for future research will be derived from this study.
 3. The participants are provided with an opportunity to reflect upon their own roles and experiences regarding their work as Registered Counsellors in school settings.
 4. All participants will receive the findings of the study via email, which can add to their own knowledge regarding the role and experiences of Registered Counsellors working in school settings.

Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?

- The risks in this study are medium, but no physical risks are evident. The semi-structured interview will be conducted in a secure and comfortable private room (if possible, the participants private office at work).
- The aspects discussed in the interviews are psychological, so if at any point during the interview process or afterwards you feel emotional or upset about aspects discussed, the researcher will contain the situation (if needed within the interview) and there will be debriefing or psychological services available (free of charge). Because of the personal nature of the content of the interview the researcher promises to act professionally, respectfully, and with empathy at all times.

How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?

- The anonymity of your findings will be protected by allocating numbers to participants and also by coding the data during the transcription of the interviews. Furthermore, any identifying information from the audio recordings will be changed during the transcription phase and also allocated with a participant number. This will ensure that no link can be made to a specific participant.
- All voice recordings on the audio recording device will be copied (transferred) to the researcher and project head computers. Once this has been done the original

audio recordings on the audio device will be deleted. Only the transferred recordings on the password protected computers of the researcher and project head will exist. After this, the audio recordings will be transcribed and all identifying data will be changed by giving each participant a participant number (as explained earlier).

- Reporting on the findings will be anonymous. Only the researcher (Ms Stephanie Dark) and her study leader (Project Head: Dr Werner de Klerk) will have access to the data and will be able to look at your findings.
- Data will be kept safe and secure by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in the researchers' office and for electronic data (audio recordings and transcriptions) will be password protected. Data will be stored for seven years at the North-West University (within COMPRES (Community Psychosocial Research)), after which it will be destroyed by the North-West University. The HREC will be monitoring the research process to ensure that all aspect regarding this research project that has been approved will be adhered to.
- The findings of this study will only be used for this study and no other current or future studies.

How will you know about the findings of this research?

- We will provide you with the findings of this research after data analysis have been completed and a mini-dissertation has been compiled. A summarised version of the findings of the mini-dissertation will be emailed to you. Furthermore, if the participant should request feedback to be provided in person, the researcher will contact you to establish a date and time for the feedback that suits both researcher and participant. If the submission of an article for possible publication is successful, the findings of the study will also be available when it gets published.
- You will be informed of any new relevant findings via email.

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?

- No, you will not be paid to take part in the study.
- As mentioned previously, it will be the responsibility of the participant to arrange his/her own transport after the interview has been completed.

What will the role of the researcher and others involved be?

- An independent person (a Registered Research Psychologist at the HPCSA) will be responsible for the administration and collection of the consent forms from the participants and then provide the researcher with the signed consent forms.
- The researcher (Ms Stephanie Dark) will administer the demographic questionnaires and conduct the semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the researcher will ensure that the interviews take place in a safe and private environment and at a time that suits both researcher and participant. Before the interviews commence the researcher will also ensure that you (as participant) have given written consent to take part and that you are willing to be audio recorded. The researcher will also clarify the focus of the research again. Should a participant at any time feel the need to withdraw from the study, Ms Stephanie Dark will ensure this will happen without any prejudice. If a participant becomes uncomfortable or emotional during the interview the researcher will contain the situation and provide the necessary debriefing or psychological service details (free of charge), if requested by the participant.

As mentioned previously, the researcher (Ms Stephanie Dark) will be responsible for the autonomy and confidentiality of the data collected. Ms Stephanie Dark will analyse the data and report on the findings for her research dissertation (for the purposes of obtaining a MA/MSc degree in Research Psychology at the North-West University), as well as an article for possible publication in a scientific journal. Lastly, Ms Stephanie Dark will also be responsible with the distribution of the findings to all participants, which will occur via email.

- *The project head (Dr Werner de Klerk) will act as the study leader for Ms Stephanie Dark's research mini-dissertation and will oversee the whole research project to ensure that all ethical aspects are adhered to and that the independent person and researcher act accordingly regarding their research roles as specified. Dr Werner de Klerk will also provide monitoring reports to the HREC regarding the progress of this research study.*

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact Mrs Anneté Nel (the independent person) at 082 090 1323 if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206 or carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.
- If your participation in this study has elicited any negative emotional states and you wish to seek additional counselling with regards to this please contact Educational Psychologist, Mrs C. Maritz on 084 790 4110 who will provide you with psychological services free of charge.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in the research study titled: **The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa.**

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of participant

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (name) declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to
.....
- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I gave him/her time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (place) on (date) 20....

.....
Signature of person obtaining consent

Declaration by researcher

I, *Stephanie Dark*, declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I did/did not use an interpreter
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that he/she had time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of researcher

ADDENDUM B: GOODWILL PERMISSION FORM: PRINCIPALS



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

School of Psychosocial Health
Tel: 018 299 1725
Email: 12996699@nwu.ac.za

To Whom It May Concern

The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa

My name is Werner de Klerk (Senior Lecturer and Registered Research Psychologist) and the student that I am supervising is Ms Stephanie Dark (Master student in Research Psychology, North-West University). We have developed a research project with the main aim to explore the roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng; the study wishes to contribute to the body of knowledge already obtained by looking at whether or not these specific counsellors are practicing within their intended scope and role as laid out by the national government and the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) to clarify their positions and responsibilities in the educational field and to contribute to discussions regarding the role and scope of the registered counsellor. Provisional ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University with the clearance number (NWU-00015-18-S1). Permission was obtained from the Department of Education (Gauteng Province) and District Director, please see permission letters provided.

The proposed sample for this study is registered counsellors within the Ekurhuleni North and South districts, Gauteng, South Africa, working within school settings. A minimum of 9-12 participants will be included in this study, and semi-structured interviews will be conducted. The participants will also be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and this will take approximately 5-10 minutes. The interview will be scheduled on a time and date that suits the participants and the researcher and will take approximately 50-60 minutes.

You, the principal will act as the gatekeeper to the school and you will be asked to appoint an individual in the school (preferably your personal secretary) to act as mediator. The role of the mediator will be to provide the potential research participants with the information about the study. The contact details of the independent person will be provided on the study consent form which contains all the needed information about the study. Therefore, potential participants whom are interested in taking part in the study can contact the independent person. Both the participant and the independent person will sign the consent form in each other's presence. Once all the consent forms have been provided to the researcher (Ms Stephanie Dark), will she then make contact with the participants to decide on a date and time to conduct the interview.

Participants will be excluded from the study if they have less than one year work experience in an educational environment. Any other person(s) working within the school settings with the aim of promoting mental health without an HPCSA registration such as life coaches, youth workers or learner coordinators will also be excluded from this study. Furthermore; other mental health care practitioners, such as educational psychologists, counselling psychologists, clinical psychologists, industrial psychologists, research psychologists and psychometrists, will also be excluded from this research.

No direct benefits can be predicted for the participants of this study. However the research itself will shed light on the roles and experiences of registered counsellors within the educational context and could have an impact on future training and job creation for the registration category.

It is foreseen that risks do not outweigh the benefits. There are no foreseen physical or emotional risks to participants when taking part in this research study as participants will be asked about their roles and experiences of their work as registered counsellors which is not a sensitive topic. However, there might be heightened emotional responses during the interview process which will be dealt with accordingly and respectfully by taking a break from the interview if

necessary and offering debriefing by an independent Educational Psychologist. The researcher will take bottled water for the participant to drink in the interview should he/she becomes thirsty.

Anonymity will be maintained as far as possible by allocating numbers to participants and also by coding the data during transcription. This will ensure that no link can be made to a specific participant. Confidentiality will be ensured by the way the data will be captured- by changing identifying data during the transcription phase. Reporting of findings will be anonymous. Only the researcher (Ms Stephanie Dark) and I will have access to the data. Data will be kept safe and secure by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in my and the researcher's office and for electronic data it will be password protected. Data will be stored for seven years at the North-West University. The HREC will be monitoring the research process to ensure that all aspects regarding the research procedure that has been approved will be adhered to.

Participants will not be paid to partake in this study and there will also be no costs involved for them to partake.

Upon your permission, it would really help us if we could have a letter of support as well as guidelines and rules you may wish to indicate for us to follow. As per ethical guidelines, no registered counsellor would be forced to participate as we encourage voluntary participation. All information would be treated with confidentiality. General feedback would be offered to you and to all willing registered counsellors who participate in the study.

I am also willing to provide you with any further documentation such as the research proposal and letters of approval.



Dr Werner de Klerk
Programme Coordinator (MA/MSc Research Psychology)
Senior Lecturer / Research Psychologist
School of Psychosocial Health
North-West University
Potchefstroom

Signed on: 6/08/2018

LETTER OF SUPPORT: PRINCIPAL OF SCHOOL

Herewith I..... give permission to Dr Werner de Klerk and Ms Stephanie Dark to conduct their proposed study with registered counsellors within school settings in Gauteng, Ekurhuleni North and South districts entitled: *The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa*

Signed on:

ADDENDUM C: GOODWILL PERMISSION FORM: GOVERNING BODY



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

School of Psychosocial Health

Tel: 018 299 1725

Email: 12998699@nwu.ac.za

To Whom It May Concern

The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa

My name is Werner de Klerk (Senior Lecturer and Registered Research Psychologist) and the student that I am supervising is Ms Stephanie Dark (Master student in Research Psychology, North-West University). We have developed a research project with the main aim to explore the roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, the study wishes to contribute to the body of knowledge already obtained by looking at whether or not these specific counsellors are practicing within their intended scope and role as laid out by the national government and the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) to clarify their positions and responsibilities in the educational field and so contribute to discussions regarding the role and scope of the registered counsellor. Provisional ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University with the clearance number (NWU-00015-18-S1). Permission was obtained from the Department of Education (Gauteng Province) and District Director, please see permission letters provided.

The proposed sample for this study is registered counsellors within the Ekurhuleni North and South districts, Gauteng, South Africa, working within school settings. A minimum of 9-12 participants will be included in this study, and semi-structured interviews will be conducted. The participants will also be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and this will take approximately 5-10 minutes. The interview will be scheduled on a time and date that suits the participants and the researcher and will take approximately 50-60 minutes.

The principal will act as the gatekeeper to the school and he/she will be asked to appoint an individual in the school (preferably their personal secretary) to act as mediator. The role of the mediator will be to provide the potential research participants with the information about the study. The contact details of the independent person will be provided on the study consent form which contains all the needed information about the study. Therefore, potential participants whom are interested in taking part in the study can contact the independent person. Both the participant and the independent person will sign the consent form in each other's presence. Once all the consent forms have been provided to the researcher (Ms Stephanie Dark), will she then make contact with the participants to decide on a date and time to conduct the interview.

Participants will be excluded from the study if they have less than one year work experience in an educational environment. Any other person(s) working within the school settings with the aim of promoting mental health without an HPCSA registration such as life coaches, youth workers or learner coordinators will also be excluded from this study. Furthermore; other mental health care practitioners, such as educational psychologists, counselling psychologists, clinical psychologists, industrial psychologists, research psychologists and psychometrists, will also be excluded from this research.

No direct benefits can be predicted for the participants of this study. However the research itself will shed light on the roles and experiences of registered counsellors within the educational context and could have an impact on future training and job creation for the registration category.

It is foreseen that risks do not outweigh the benefits. There are no foreseen physical or emotional risks to participants when taking part in this research study as participants will be asked about their roles and experiences of their work as registered counsellors which is not a sensitive topic. However, there might be heightened emotional responses during the interview process which will be dealt with accordingly and respectfully by taking a break from the interview if

necessary and offering debriefing by an independent Educational Psychologist. The researcher will take bottled water for the participant to drink in the interview should he/she becomes thirsty.

Anonymity will be maintained as far as possible by allocating numbers to participants and also by coding the data during transcription. This will ensure that no link can be made to a specific participant. Confidentiality will be ensured by the way the data will be captured- by changing identifying data during the transcription phase. Reporting of findings will be anonymous. Only the researcher (Ms Stephanie Dark) and I will have access to the data. Data will be kept safe and secure by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in my and the researcher's office and for electronic data it will be password protected. Data will be stored for seven years at the North-West University. The HREC will be monitoring the research process to ensure that all aspects regarding the research procedure that has been approved will be adhered to.

Participants will not be paid to partake in this study and there will also be no costs involved for them to partake.

Upon your permission, it would really help us if we could have a letter of support as well as guidelines and rules you may wish to indicate for us to follow. As per ethical guidelines, no registered counsellor would be forced to participate as we encourage voluntary participation. All information would be treated with confidentiality. General feedback would be offered to you and to all willing registered counsellors who participate in the study.

I am also willing to provide you with any further documentation such as the research proposal and letters of approval.



Dr Werner de Klerk
Programme Coordinator (MA/MSc Research Psychology)
Senior Lecturer / Research Psychologist
School of Psychosocial Health
North-West University
Potchefstroom

Signed on: 6/08/2018

LETTER OF SUPPORT: GOVERNING BODY OF SCHOOL

Herewith I..... give permission to Dr Werner de Klerk and Ms Stephanie Dark to conduct their proposed study with registered counsellors within school settings in Gauteng, Ekurhuleni North and South districts entitled: *The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa*

Signed on:

ADDENDUM D: APPROVAL LETTER: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	11 July 2018
Validity of Research Approval:	05 February 2018 – 28 September 2018 2018/160
Name of Researcher:	Dark S.J
Address of Researcher:	60 Rietfontein road Glen Marais Kempston Park, 1619
Telephone Number:	084 779 3422
Email address:	stephaniedark@ymail.com
Research Topic:	The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa.
Type of qualification	Masters
Number and type of schools:	Three Primary Schools, One Secondary School, Four LSEN Schools, One Other
District/s/HO	Ekurhuleni North, Ekurhuleni South,

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Sammonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0486

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.ggp.gov.za

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
4. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Mr Gumani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 11/07/2018

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

ADDENDUM E: APPROVAL LETTER: EKURHULENI NORTH DISTRICT



EKURHULENI NORTH DISTRICT

Enquiries: Information Systems and Strategic Planning Directorate
Rajeev Mogaswane (T) 011 746 – 8295 (F) 011- 746 – 8295 (E) rajeev.mogaswane@education.gov.za

TO : MS DARK S.J.

FROM : MRS N.P. NTUTA
ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR

DATE : 19TH JULY 2018

SUBJECT : LETTER OF APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THREE SCHOOLS WITHIN EKURHULENI NORTH DISTRICT

The Ekurhuleni North District is situated at 78 Howard Avenue, Munpen Building under the Gauteng Department of Education. The District office is servicing a total of 266 schools both public and independent in the following areas of the City of Ekurhuleni: Benoni, Actonville, Wattville, Daveyton, Thembisa, Kempton Park, Edenvale and Bedfordview.

This letter serves an endorsement for approval granted by Gauteng Department of Education to Ms. Dark S.J. to conduct a research in three schools within Ekurhuleni North District i.e. Elandspark School, Uisizolwethu LSEN and Normanhuiskool.

The research topic is and for a Master degree: The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa.

The research is to be conducted in accordance to the stipulated conditions as per the approval letter from GDE Head Office and approval will be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed be flouted.

The validity of the research approval at the above mentioned six schools is from **05th February 2018 - 28 September 2018.**

The district's Information Systems and Strategic Planning and Inclusion and EOS-Special School (ISS) sub-directorates will closely monitor the work done at the said schools.

Kind regards,

MRS NP NTUTA
ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR: EKURHULENI NORTH

Making education a societal priority

Office of the District Director: Ekurhuleni North:

Munpen Building, 78 Howard Avenue, Benoni, 1500

Private Bag X 069, Benoni, 1500

Tel: (011) 746-8000 Fax: (011) 746-8027/70

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

ADDENDUM F: APPROVAL LETTER: EKURHULENI SOUTH DISTRICT



GAUTENG PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: A. Hutton
Tel No: 011 389-6220
Ref No: EOS: P&P 37/18

To: The Principals of School of Achievement, Drommedaris Primary, LVS van Dyk, LVS Witfield and Hoërskool Dr. E.G Jansen

Cc: CM & CL

Subject: Research Approval

Please be advised that the Gauteng Department of Education has given **Ms S.J Dark** permission to conduct research. The research is purely on a voluntary basis and the researcher would be speaking to the principals, educators and learners. The research at the schools will be conducted during Term 3 and 4 of 2018.

The research title is:

"The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school setting in Gauteng, South Africa."

Regards

B.P Luthuli
Act. District Director
14 August 2018

Making education a societal priority

Office of the District Director: Ekurhuleni South District
Room D3, 02 Robin Close, Infinity Office Park, Meyersdal, Alberton 1447
Tel: (011) 389 6000 Fax: (011) 389 6196
Email: Busi.Luthuli@gauteng.gov.za

ADDENDUM G: APPROVAL LETTER: HREC



Dr W de Klerk
Psychology
COMPRES

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research,
Training and Support

Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC)
Tel: 018-285 2291
Email: Wayne.Towers@nwu.ac.za

12 October 2018

Dear Dr de Klerk

APPROVAL OF YOUR APPLICATION BY THE HEALTH RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC) OF THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Ethics number: NWU-00015-18-S1

Kindly use the ethics reference number provided above in all future correspondence or documents submitted to the administrative assistant of the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) secretariat.

Study title: The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa

Study leader: Dr W de Klerk

Student: S Dark-29643945

Application type: Single study

Risk level: Medium (monitoring report required six-monthly)

Expiry date: 31 October 2019 (monitoring reports will be due at the end of April and October annually until completion)

You are kindly informed that after review by the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences, North-West University, your ethics approval application has been successful and was determined to fulfil all requirements for approval. Your study is approved for a year and may commence from 12/10/2018. It, however, requires the following further conditions specific to the progress of the study:

- Please provide the HREC with copies of the signed confidentiality agreements from the mediators when they become available.
- Please provide the HREC with a copy of the signed indemnity forms from Ms A Nel, when they become available.

As the study progresses the aforementioned conditions should be submitted to Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za with a cover letter with a specific subject title indicating "Outstanding documents for approval: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX." The letter should include the title of the approved study, the names of the researchers involved, that the documents are being submitted as part of the conditions of the approval set by the HREC, the nature of the document i.e. which condition is being fulfilled and any further explanation to clarify the submission.

The e-mail, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a specific subject line indicating the nature of the submission e.g. "Outstanding documents for approval: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". The e-mail should indicate the nature of the document being sent. This submission will be handled via the expedited process.

Continuation of the study is dependent on receipt of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation. A monitoring report should be submitted two months prior to the reporting dates as indicated i.e. annually for minimal risk studies, six-monthly for medium risk studies and three-monthly for high risk studies, to ensure timely renewal of the study. A final report must be provided at completion of the study or the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences must be notified if the study is temporarily suspended or terminated. The monitoring report template is obtainable from the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support at Ethics-HRECMonitoring@nwu.ac.za. Annually, a number of studies may be randomly selected for an internal audit.

The HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences requires immediate reporting of any aspects that warrants a change of ethical approval. Any amendments, extensions or other modifications to the proposal or other associated documentation must be submitted to the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences prior to implementing these changes. These requests should be submitted to Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za with a cover letter with a specific subject title indicating, "Amendment request: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". The letter should include the title of the approved study, the names of the researchers involved, the nature of the amendment/s being made (indicating what changes have been made as well as where they have been made), which documents have been attached and any further explanation to clarify the amendment request being submitted. The amendments made should be indicated in **yellow highlight** in the amended documents. The e-mail, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a *specific subject line* indicating that it is an amendment request e.g. "Amendment request: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". This e-mail should indicate the nature of the amendment. This submission will be handled via the expedited process.

Any adverse/unexpected/unforeseen events or incidents must be reported on either an adverse event report form or incident report form to Ethics-HRECIncident-SAE@nwu.ac.za. The e-mail, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a specific subject line indicating that it is a notification of a serious adverse event or incident in a specific project e.g. "SAE/Incident notification: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". Please note that the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.

The HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences complies with the South African National Health Act 61 (2003), the Regulations on Research with Human Participants (2014), the Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes (2015), the Belmont Report and the Declaration of Helsinki (2013).

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support at Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za.

Yours sincerely



Prof Wayne Towers
HREC Chairperson



Prof Minrie Greeff
Ethics Office Head

ADDENDUM H: DECLARATION BY THE LANGUAGE EDITOR

DECLARATION BY LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER

I, Yvonne Smuts, hereby declare that I have been appointed by Stephanie Dark (“the candidate”) to attend to the linguistic aspects of the minor dissertation that is hereby submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Research Psychology at the North-West University.

To the best of my knowledge, all suggestions and recommendations made by me in this regard have been attended to by the candidate.

Title of dissertation/thesis: *The roles and experiences of registered counsellors working in school settings in Gauteng, South Africa*

Date: 4 November 2019



(Ms) Y Smuts

BA (Languages) (UP)

HED (cum laude) (UP)

SATI Accredited Translator (1002242)

Member of Prolingua

ADDENDUM I: EXAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPTION

PARTICIPANT 5 – INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

RESEARCHER: Alright Participant 5, uhm, I just want to confirm that I have explained informed consent to you and you have agreed to participate in this study.

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Okay, my first question to you is can you please describe the process of how you became a registered counsellor.

PARTICIPANT 5: Okay, so I studied my BEd, my Bachelor of Education and I'm at the end of my fourth year I always was interested more in psychology, but also education, with the psychology of education, so uhm, I was asked to apply for the honours program, so I applied for the honours program and then after a year I qualified with a honours degree and the year after that I wrote my board exam.

RESEARCHER: Through which institution was this?

PARTICIPANT 5: The University of Johannesburg.

RESEARCHER: Okay and tel me, uhm, how did you come to hear about a registered counsellor role?

PARTICIPANT 5: So when I was studying my honours I wasn't quite sure what psychology it was, I just knew education and psychology so I think, uhm, during the orientation of the year in honours, which was January they informed us that at the end of this program you will be required to write a board exam which will then qualify us as Registered counsellors so I found out after I already registered for the degree, so that's how it came about.

RESEARCHER: Okay, to be a registered counsellor”

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja

RESEARCHER: and you had to do an internship, I take it, in your honours year?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja, so we did the practicum, uhm, it was 6 months long and it’s at the same school that I’m at now.

RESEARCHER: So you did it here?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yup

RESEARCHER: And what was required of you during that 6 months?

PARTICIPANT 5: So I had to act and perform as a registered counsellor would, but under supervision obviously, because I was a student. So we did assessments at that time we could do full IQ assessments in 2013 when I did my practicum. Obviously it’s changed now. We had to do therapy, crisis intervention, career counselling, basically what fell within the scope of a registered counsellor during the 2013 period.

RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and since you’ve mentioned the IQ assessment how do you feel about the fact that, that has been removed from the list of assessments that counsellors are allowed to do?

PARTICIPANT 5: So, uhm, I think you do, I think you should be required to do something more like a masters to understand the assessments, so I’m currently doing my masters now in education psychology and I feel like I’ve got a broader view of what

the purpose of the assessment is, so it is more in-depth when you're in your masters and I think it is very, uhm, surface the way we did the IQ assessment before and the problem, not the problem, the thing was we could perform the assessment but we couldn't diagnose, so it is still very limited and then we'd still have to refer somebody to a psychologist or another professional to get diagnosed, so I think in that case we might as well, should have just done masters, in order to diagnose. They should have allowed us to diagnose as counsellors, but I understand why you need a masters to diagnose, because it's just way more in-depth.

RESEARCHER: Yes, and tell me what other assessments did you do in the internship?

PARTICIPANT 5: Uhm, are you talking about specific assessments?

RESEARCHER: Mmm..Specific assessments

PARTICIPANT 5: So, SSAIS, when we did the full cognitive we did the Bender, the Weppman, the uhm, gosh, the ESSI, reader and spelling, the Connor's for emotional, we did the Beck for emotional, uhm, so that was really the only IQ...the SSAIS that generated the IQ was the only assessment that I was taught and then all of the other...I'm trying to think what else we do.

RESEARCHER: So, the other assessments you, who showed you how to do those?

PARTICIPANT 5: So, we were taught at University, but we didn't do the Ravens during our honours we were only taught the SSAIS.

RESEARCHER: So, where did you...were you trained for the Ravens?

PARTICIPANT 5: So, I was in my first year of masters, I'm currently in my second year, so I was trained then.

RESEARCHER: Okay, on how to the Ravens?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja

RESEARCHER: Alright, so those are kind of the assessments that you guys do. Alright, tell me more about some of the therapy or the counselling that you were required to do as an intern?

PARTICIPANT 5: Okay, so, we weren't really given specific...okay so currently, because this is a special needs school, so things that require very verbal, uhm, therapies don't really work necessarily with every learner. So every learner is obviously different, so we would do something like creative expressive arts therapy, so that's mainly what works well with MID and SID learners is creative expressive arts therapy, so that is the main therapy that is used here, so in my practical, the internship it was the same thing, so we used a lot of creative expressive arts and my supervisor is a creative expressive arts therapy professional if you want to say, so she trains lots of people on CET, uhm...CAT, CEAT creative expressive arts (laughing) so she taught me a lot about that therapy, cause most of the cases she supervised me on saw the need to use creative expressive arts therapy.

RESEARCHER: Okay, and would you say it is successful in this setting?

PARTICIPANT 5: So, there have been like one out of however many I have done therapy on that something like Solution Focused has worked, but most of the kids prefer CEAT.

RESEARCHER: Okay, that's quite interesting, and uh, tell me career counselling? How did you go about doing that?

PARTICIPANT 5: Okay, so uhm, in my practical I was taught you know you build like the child holistically, you see the child's interests, you see the child's background and find a career that will fit within that, uhm, background of the child so we do things like a vision board or like a career board or what career do you want to follow – a soccer player – now show me everything you think represents soccer and so we sort of go from there and then we did the typical career assessments. Gosh I don't even remember the names of the assessments. So we did the JPQ, obviously we did personality, uhm, can't even remember the other assessments, it's been so long. Uhm....What are the other career assessments?

RESEARCHER: Perhaps the D...

PARTICIPANT 5: The SDS, the self directed...

RESEARCHER: Search?

PARTICIPANT 5: Search ja,

RESEARCHER: And then uhm, it would have probably been a...oeh I have lost my words now.

PARTICIPANT 5: I can'r remember the names...

RESEARCHER: A DAT?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes, the DAT, uhm, but you see with our kids the DAT is a little more challenging, because they are special needs, so, I did DAT at another school for UJ, so we had to go and do it at the, what is that? The UJ school, whatever the UJ School.....UJ Metropolitan, we did the DAT there.

RESEARCHER: Okay so you were placed here but you also did practical elsewhere?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja, it was just that school that we did, uhm, we did entrance exams, so we used the JPQ, we used one of those career assessments and then for the Grade 11's we did career assessments for them as well in preparation for matric and then varsity.

RESEARCHER: And do you find that it helped the learners at all, the career assessments?

PARTICIPANT 5: I do think so, but I do still think that lots of the assessments are outdated in terms of careers. So lots of the careers that are in there are, you know, with the 4th industrial revolution, it's not really plausible anymore, it's not really useful anymore, something like a typist is still in most of the career assessments and there's thing like, you can become drone engineer now and kids, you know, they're interested in that, but there is no specific career path for them in that, so a lot of that needs to change and needs to be updated, because our careers have changed with social media and there is now avenues for our kids now more than typist or needlework or some of those things that are outdated.

RESEARCHER: Yes, agreed, uhm, would you say that it is up to the practitioner to update their knowledge about career paths etc. or is that something that literally needs to be included in the assessment?

PARTICIPANT 5: I think it's a little bit of both. I think through the practitioner's researching and having input on it, so when they have more input then obviously they'll start to see that those assessments are outdated and they'll start to search for other things that would possibly assess them in a more updated, new millennial, way.

RESEARCHER: Okay, alright, and I think I've covered everything that you said you had done in your internship, okay and then did you apply for a post at this school and started working here?

PARTICIPANT 5: No, so what happened was, uhm, they needed a male counsellor at this school so then they, uhm, I wasn't board registered yet, so they took on (name of person) and he was then brought on and he was the counsellor, the male counsellor here, cause obviously there was just two other counsellor's here and they were both female, 3 other counsellors and they were all female, and they needed a male, so they brought on (person's name). Then one female counsellor left to the department and then I was called to, I was asked to come and take up her position here.

RESEARCHER: Okay, so what did you do in the meantime?

PARTICIPANT 5: I was teaching.

RESEARCHER: Okay, where?

PARTICIPANT 5: So I taught at (High school's name) it's in the South of Johannesburg, and then I taught at a school in the West Rand called (Primary school's name).

RESEARCHER: So, which school did you go to first?

PARTICIPANT 5: (High School's name).

RESEARCHER: And what was your role there?

PARTICIPANT 5: I was a Gr 8 to Gr 11 English teacher.

RESEARCHER: And then at the other school?

PARTICIPANT 5: So, there I was the SBST coordinator...

RESEARCHER: What is that?

PARTICIPANT 5: School-based support team

RESEARCHER: Oh yes, the SBST okay...

PARTICIPANT 5: And I was a Grade 5 English teacher as well.

RESEARCHER: Okay, were you practicing as a Registered Counsellor as well in that time?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes, so I was doing assessments until they told us that we couldn't do IQ assessments anymore for a psychologist, so I was like a...I would do the assessments for her and she would, uhm, do the report, so we just worked hand-in-hand.

RESEARCHER: Alright, was she in private practice?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes, she was in private practice.

RESEARCHER: What type of psychologist?

PARTICIPANT 5: Educational psychologist.

RESEARCHER: Okay, and uh, you did that after hours for her?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes, on weekends mainly.

RESEARCHER: Okay, great, so, and any counselling in that time?

PARTICIPANT 5: No.

RESEARCHER: Okay so only the assessments?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes.

RESEARCHER: For how long was this?

PARTICIPANT 5: Uhm, I would say from the time I was board registered, so from 2014 up until about last year.

RESEARCHER: Okay so about 2018?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes.

RESEARCHER: So, you were asked to come back here last year?

PARTICIPANT 5: In 2017, the middle of 2017.

RESEARCHER: Okay and when did you start with your master's degree?

PARTICIPANT 5: Last year, 2018.

RESEARCHER: Okay, so you are now in your second year of your master's degree?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes.

RESEARCHER: And can you tell me why you specifically decided to pursue a master's degree as well?

PARTICIPANT 5: I think being a counsellor and a teacher by profession was very limited, because there are very limited things and interventions that you can put in, because the scope is limited in both, so I think also gaining a greater knowledge of the working of a child who has learning challenges or emotional challenges, it just better equips me to manage that and also to influence the teachers on how to manage that, because I've been in the classroom and in an office doing therapy so I think it just gives me a wider, a broader view, on how to help both parties, the teacher and the learners, cause there's a lot of conflict in-between and there's it's just about the approach for the kids and the approach for the teachers so I've been the teacher that's been angry, furious, doesn't want to hear anything, this child is naughty, duh, duh, duh...but then I've also been the teacher that's been empathetic, so I think it's just trying to find a balance between empathy and anger.

RESEARCHER: Okay, so what are the skills, the specific skills that you are hoping to learn? Or the scope that...what will be broadened for you from a counsellor to being an educational psychologist?

PARTICIPANT 5: So I think it's just being able to understand things deeper, like processing disorders with kids, uhm, managing kids with ADHD within a classroom setting, uhm, you know, emotional challenges, so you know trying to see the child's challenges and not the child's behaviour, seeing the child's challenges first and then their behaviour second, you know like, as the outcome, I think it's just being able to...just being better equipped to manage those types of situations.

RESEARCHER: So, do you feel, following that, that there is a place for registered counsellors in educational settings?

PARTICIPANT 5: Absolutely, there is a great need for counsellor's, not just in...mainly counsellors are found in special needs schools where there is sometimes, if not the same, but a greater need in mainstream schools, cause I've also had the experience of being in a mainstream school and seeing how not having a counsellor to do crisis interventions with angry kids, instead of dealing with the anger they immediately discipline, which is an understandable process to follow, but then what happens to the child after? What are the interventions? How are you checking the child's emotional state after that cause sometimes we have had cases where the kid was continuously disciplined and ended up committing suicide cause no one understood the child and I mean there is certain interventions that could be put in place...like at our school, if a kid really, really misbehaves they get referred to therapy, so there is some sort of intervention. I mean, we don't always win, but as long as we know we've put in as many interventions as possible.

RESEARCHER: Okay, do you feel that is an appropriate role for a counsellor to do the crisis intervention...?

PARTICIPANT 5: Mmm, learning support for kids with learning challenges, because most times, I didn't know about things like accommodations and concessions when I was in mainstream school and I had a learner in Grade 11 and he was 19, no he was 20 turning 21, and he could not read or write, but he was pushed through every year, pushed every year and if he was just assessed and maybe seen oh okay, he actually has this problem, he could be better suited in a full service school or a special needs school, I mean he could have been helped, but the teachers...teachers aren't trained to look for those things, they're trained to teach curriculum, they're trained to do register, they're trained to do everything but look for those types of issues.

RESEARCHER: Yes, so do you feel counsellors are currently in special needs schools, but they also need to be in mainstream schools?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes, in full-service schools.

RESEARCHER: And then what would the role of the educational psychologist be then if the role of the counsellor is the crisis intervention, the brief therapy etc? What would the role of the educational psychologist be?

PARTICIPANT 5: I think that's where the assessment now comes in, where like, uhm, assessing, seeing what the problem is and then providing the correct referrals and providing the correct interventions, more specified interventions though, ADHD, knowing which psychiatrist or which other professional to send the learners to, because also like, (colleague's name) and I, who is an intern psychologist now, have a network of people that we can send the kids to, like we have a psychiatrist, because we have relationships because of (counsellor colleague's name) uhm, in the district like who we can refer to.

RESEARCHER: Okay, so that would be how you see the roles should be?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja.

RESEARCHER: I just want to check my next...I think we have, uhm, the next question I have is, how did you come to be a counsellor working in an educational context? I think we have covered that question, uhm okay, except for the things that you have mentioned is there any more detail that describes your role as a registered counsellor at this school?

PARTICIPANT 5: Uhm, I can tell you a role that we've been given that we shouldn't maybe have been given. We tend to be asked to deal with a lot of the discipline issues, so when a child is called in for 'this child is disrespectful, you need to deal with this child, phone the parents and tell them that their child is being disrespectful' and sometimes we have unfortunately had to act as both, because of the lack of hands

or whatever the case may be, and sometimes we feel it is better us phoning the parent, because we can come with a more empathetic, objective, side than having the teacher that is angry and furious saying ‘your child is duh, duh, duh, duh, duh...’ Instead we can speak to the parents more calmly and the parent will then fully understand better. I’m not saying that all of the teachers are incapable of...but like I said I’ve been on the other side where I’ve been like ‘your child is a this, this and this’...but I think we’ve had to now intervene in situations that falls outside of our scope.

RESEARCHER: Okay, and are you comfortable with that?

PARTICIPANT 5: No, because then the kids will start to see us as disciplinarians and not therapists...where they can come to us freely. So, in the past we’ve actually sat in the educational guidance, uhm they do the discipline of the boys and the girls, we’ve sat in the office while they’ve been scolding a learner and then they’ve said ‘you’re going to Ms (Participant 5) and she is going to scold you out’ then the kids are fearful of coming to us, because whatever they tell us they’re scared there is going to be a repercussion or a consequence or whatever, so we have then, as soon as we see there is going to be a discipline issue then we walk out and then when the kid comes they have a more relaxed view of us. At first it’s not always that easy, but when we are in there it looks like we’re a part of...yes.

RESEARCHER: So, you have managed to manage this issue?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja

RESEARCHER: But sometimes it’s still slips through?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja

RESEARCHER: Tell me, is this something that is driven by management of the school? That you have to be part of the discipline or is this something that the educators just pull you in to?

PARTICIPANT 5: The educators just pull us into it, because they management, they do...I don't think they fully understand our role and what the purpose of our role is and I think we get misunderstood, so they know they can't tell us to get involved, but they sort of nudge us to be involved, because they think we sit in our office and we do nothing all day and we sitting...ja.

RESEARCHER: Okay, so you feel that they...uhm, is there a feeling of not being appreciated or?

PARTICIPANT 5: There is a resentment by teachers, because they see us not having to do the duties they do and that's why they have gotten us into doing things like detention, so that they show the staff that they (therapists) are doing something, but they don't understand, but it's because there is a misunderstanding about the role of a counsellor at a school because at the end of the day we have to be qualified to do an assessment, write a report etc. and those things come furthering our studies, writing board exams, being certified and we get questioned on 'what do you do.' But there have been cases where kids are losing their minds and they send them here to be contained and that necessarily wouldn't have happened if they were sent to another educator that doesn't have training in crisis intervention or anger management. So I think that they don't appreciate or understand what we actually do.

RESEARCHER: Is that something that you have tried to remedy?

PARTICIPANT 5: So, that is something that is very difficult cause there are a lot of older educators and registered counsellors were not around when they started so now they

feel like it's just a fad, it's just a whatever, you know, 'they just sit in their office and we have to be cramped in a classroom with however many kids.' So we have spoken to the influencers, we have spoken to educational guidance and said "you need to tell the educators what we actually do and don't make assumptions, you need to explain to the teachers," because it can't come from us, it has to be from management down, so there have been attempts in that.

RESEARCHER: Okay, uhm, you mentioned that a lot of the older generation they don't understand counsellors, do they understand psychologists?

PARTICIPANT 5: No.

RESEARCHER: Also not.

PARTICIPANT 5: So, I can't speak for all of them, but the majority finds it taboo, you know, older generations don't believe in psychology, you just put a band aid on, you keep moving, you have things to do, you have children to look after, and so they've never thought or even spoken about, self-care. Like, what is self-care for a woman with 3 kids that you know; they don't understand what it is.

RESEARCHER: Okay, uhm, and the younger generation? Are there young educators at this school?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes, there are, so there's a big gap between the ages of educators, so it's either they are early, middle or late twenties and then there's a gap between the thirties and the forties and then there are fifty, sixty, seventies, so that's the gap between, so there's a really big gap because in today's age people don't want to be teachers anymore, because of what they have to put up with so our younger teachers also start to resent...and it's material things that they resent that we get to sit in our offices, we have phones, we have air-cons, we have a desk, we have freedom, we

can go do whatever we want throughout the day you know, so there is also sort of resentment and misunderstanding of what we actually do, because when they walk past here during break, they see us doing nothing, but we don't counsel kids at break.

RESEARCHER: yes

PARTICIPANT 5: Kids are outside at break, but they will always catch us doing nothing, because when they free they see us being free. Ja.

RESEARCHER: Okay, and this is the young...the young generation, the younger educators as well. So you seem to be getting a lot of heat from both those generations or from educators as a whole?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja.

RESEARCHER: Okay, uhm, my next question is what are your personal experiences working as a counsellor in this educational context? I think you have actually given a personal experience at this point in time regarding the educators. Anything else that you feel you can mention under this question?

PARTICIPANT 5: As being a counsellor?

RESEARCHER: Mmmm...

PARTICIPANT 5: Uhm, I think also cause the school is predominantly Afrikaans in terms of management and I'm an English speaker, so I barely speak, I speak Afrikaans, but not well, but I can understand fluently and so I can respond. I think there is a disconnect, because I think some of the teachers won't necessarily come to me with

a kid, because they think they can't express themselves to me in Afrikaans and they don't want to speak English to me.

RESEARCHER: Oh okay.

PARTICIPANT 5: So, it's also stopped them from engaging a lot, so I've had to go and engage and then I'll tell them you can speak Afrikaans to me and I'll understand. I'm just going to respond in English so we both can understand each other. So, uhm, but most of the time I don't get referred any Afrikaans speaking learners, only the English, as well as the assessments that come in for us.

RESEARCHER: Okay, so assessments also English?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja.

RESEARCHER: What is the ratio Afrikaans and English learners in this school?

PARTICIPANT 5: So, it's still predominantly...so the kids are...in each grade there's one to two Afrikaans classes so if there's eight classes in Year 1 then there's two Afrikaans classes, so I don't know, for every Afrikaans learner there's probably like four English learners.

RESEARCHER: So actually, there are more English learners in this school?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja, ja definitely.

RESEARCHER: So, the management of the school is Afrikaans?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja, they're predominantly Afrikaans.

RESEARCHER: And tell me, uhm, what is it like emotionally working with learners in this school? Do you find it an easy job? Is it a difficult job? How do you manage...have you ever reached a point of burnout? How do you manage something like that?

PARTICIPANT 5: Uhm, so it's difficult, because these kids sort of draw a blank. They don't understand...let me say most of our cases are very dead-end cases in terms of therapy, so the kids can engage to a certain point, they can only engage to a certain point and, cause the problem is you can't say uhm, let's try some solution focused therapy, let's try and do the miracle question and then this child is going back to living in a shack with an abuse father and an abusive mother or an absent mother, absent father, so that to me is tiring, because we had a case where a child is being badly beaten and was mistreated by his father and we had to have him removed immediately so we then had to spend the afternoon till like the early evening at the police station waiting for them to fetch him. So, those types of things are very tiring on us and you see, those are the things the educators and management don't necessarily see. We take full responsibility for that child when it's an abuse case. We can't just leave it and we go to bed thinking, the police didn't fetch this child today and the child's going home tonight, we wake up hoping that this child will be alright and he'll come to school and he's fine, so that's the wear and tear for me cause we have a lot of abuse cases, we have a lot of poor kids at this school and white, black, whatever, there's not race with you know, nothing. So, it's very heart breaking to see that you know and that's the thing that keeps us up at night is, is this child going to be okay? You know, at home.

RESEARCHER: So, these are the majority of cases that you are dealing with and how do you deal with that? As you say, it's keeping you up at night? How do you deal with that?

PARTICIPANT 5: So, the five of us are pretty close, so we spend the first hour of the day really just talking, laughing, we eat a lot [laughing]

RESEARCHER: [laughing] eating is good.

PARTICIPANT 5: We always eating and I think it's our coping mechanism, we laugh very often. So we try to engage with one another, we talk about our cases with one another, uhm, whatever stress is on us, like last year, I was in my first year of masters, you know it's difficult and I got divorced and it was a whole lot of pressure, but this group really like kept me going and carrying on and you know, so it's the small things, so it's not this big conversation, it's just sitting and laughing and talking rubbish that helps us sort of debrief.

RESEARCHER: Debriefing, okay, and do you have any outside assistance, uh, like a psychologist who you see for supervision?

PARTICIPANT 5: So uhm, because I'm working under supervision still so I go to her for my clinical cases, but nothing for myself, but I do see, I personally see a psychologist.

RESEARCHER: And has that been a good experience for you as well?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Do you see a psychologist for the work? Is it about the work or is it more your personal life?

PARTICIPANT 5: So, I think it's the effect of the work on me, how it affects me personally I would say.

RESEARCHER: Okay, what kind of psychologist if I may ask?

PARTICIPANT 5: She is a clinical psychologist, cause I'm on anti-depressants so it's best for me to be with a clinical.

RESEARCHER: If I may ask, how often do you see the person?

PARTICIPANT 5: Uhm, so I got separated in September...[phone rings]...so I was checked into [facility name] for 21 days and now it's once a month or when needed sort of.

RESEARCHER: Okay great, so you use that also...with this group, that's also your debriefing?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja.

RESEARCHER: Okay, you mentioned earlier, and this is going to actually relate to one of my questions, so I'm going to ask that now. How does your role within the educational context relate to your scope of practice? And what I would like to first link it to is you mentioned that you have to go to the police station and sit with the learner until the thing is resolved etc. That sounds a lot like a social workers scope of practice?

PARTICIPANT 5: Mmmm...

RESEARCHER: So, does your scope, or does the work that you do often force you into a role of a social worker?

PARTICIPANT 5: In that case where we had to go to the police station, the people that were supposed to be responsible didn't want to be responsible, you know I spoke about it earlier on, they sort of push us out of our scope by like phoning parents, you're child has been naughty, so it was one of those cases where I just, I really don't want to go. So we couldn't necessarily, because it was reported to us first, so we

necessarily didn't feel right about...cause the state that the child was in was so severe and we couldn't just leave this learner and what actually happened was once the policeman came he said 'oh he's going to be fine' and then he ran away from the policeman and then was found walking on the highway. So it's stuff like that we're we've had to act like social workers.

RESEARCHER: Do you have any contact with social workers?

PARTICIPANT 5: We do, but we just have to go to social development near Hillbrow or wherever, I don't know exactly where it is, but it's in town somewhere and we phoned the social awareness officer at the police station, they take up to three days to come and fetch a child, so they could be physically hurt. So, we had a child whose father took a clothing iron and hit him and cut him [points to head] so we just had to clean him up here at school and we phoned the police. They didn't come saying 'oh no we had a conference' then we asked 'is there not one else that can come?' 'No.' Two days later they only picked him up and took him.

RESEARCHER: So, there is a serious gap in service delivery with social work, police etc?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja.

RESEARCHER: And that then forces you into the role of a social worker sometimes?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Do you uhm conduct home visits or anything like that?

PARTICIPANT 5: No, definitely not, no. We don't take kids home or anything like that.

RESEARCHER: Okay, so you draw the line when it comes to certain things?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes, we do.

RESEARCHER: Okay so you're just intervening because you have to and you can't leave that child alone, but then as soon as you are able you withdraw?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Are there any other incidences in which you have to step outside of your role as a registered counsellor or your scope rather?

PARTICIPANT 5: Mmm...I'm trying to think, besides the disciplining. I think also, detention. We have to conduct detention with the learners which is a punishment. It's a consequence for bad behaviour and then they send them to us as an intervention strategy, but then the kids will see us as a consequence to their actions, so they're not going to be willing to come to us afterwards if there is an issue, because then they call us 'the detention lady.' So then it would be the perspective. Yes.

RESEARCHER: So, the school is trying to turn detention into an intervention, but calling it detention?

PARTICIPANT 5: J a.

RESEARCHER: And have you questioned this? Are you able to question this?

PARTICIPANT 5: It falls on deaf ears. They just say 'you have to do this, because you are the therapists. You have to conduct detention.' Where they should have their own interventions in place like picking up papers and that's more effective, because coming to therapy is not punishment. They will go like 'ah I can sit and eat, I can

talk' so you know, there's no like real consequence. There's no real detention consequence you know.

RESEARCHER: Alright, and since you're now talking about being, you know, kind of forced into things that you don't necessarily want to do, has there ever been an example whereby you refused or you drew a line and said 'you want me to do this as a school, but mu scope just absolutely forbids it.'

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes, so we had a case here, actually the first child that has been expelled here in so long, uhm, he was misbehaving and then they wrote up this big report on why they want to get this child expelled and then on there it said 'was referred to therapy six times' and it was untrue and then it would reflect on us and then my HOD at the time said this child was never referred for therapy so you can't put this on the report. Then they said, but let's just say it so that it shows that therapy didn't work. And we said absolutely not, because we would have to sign the document, so we sat and we took that whole section out of the report. I was the therapist in the disciplinary hearing and so I said, I'm not going to be sitting there and being asked 'why did therapy not work for him?' and then I never did any therapy, so that was one case where we had to draw the line and say we're not allowed to do this. We can't lie. And then we also had to discipline that same learner.

RESEARCHER: Oh my goodness.

PARTICIPANT 5: And then we just withdrew, so when they took him and they were dealing with him we left, because we said we can't be in here with this whole situation.

RESEARCHER: You just mentioned that you were in a disciplinary hearing. Is that something that you also need to do?

PARTICIPANT 5: So, uhm, it depends on the case, so in the hearing for instance they'll ask what interventions do you have at the school? And they'll say we have therapists then we have to give our recommendation. So if we could recommend that or rather say something like, this is what he's presenting with and what the learner should be doing is rather going to a psychiatrist because behaviour is showing to be conduct disorder or something, but we can't confirm that without an assessment, but he should probably be going to a psychiatrist. Cause we do write a lot of referral letters for the learners as well.

RESEARCHER: And the referral or the people that you refer to for instance psychiatrists. Are they accessible?

PARTICIPANT 5: So, what we do is, depending on where the child lives, and most of our parents don't have cars or modes of transport, we refer them to the closest, so we say go to this hospital and this is the person you need to speak to. Go and sign in or put yourself on the waiting list. So that's basically...we don't have a specific person who we can send our kids to.

RESEARCHER: And say you were in a disciplinary hearing making recommendations for that learner do you then see that learner for counselling or is that learner referred to another therapist?

PARTICIPANT 5: Ja, we do that yes, refer to another person.

RESEARCHER: Okay, let's just see here, I have one more question, uhm, how do some of your experiences influence your role as a counsellor within this context? But I think we've actually covered a lot of that already. I want to end, or rather I have no more questions at this time, but I want to ask you. Is there anything I've not asked that you would like to mention that you feel is important about counsellors working in school contexts?

PARTICIPANT 5: I think counsellors need to be careful, because this job does wear on you and especially if you work in a school where there's a lot of discipline issues you end up becoming a disciplinarian of some form, which is not the correct way and because I come from a teachers background I already have that natural ability to discipline and get in line. So what I had to do was I had to change my whole mind set and remember that this child is actually coming to you for therapy and not for discipline. And I remember [colleague's name] saying to me once, you're not a teacher anymore. Cause I would have this kid who's on drugs and every time he goes to rehab he comes back in the same position and I would get angry at him. I would say 'you're supposed to be here and you didn't come etc.' and you end up fighting with the kids cause you're trying to give them therapy, but you're getting so frustrated and you end up taking it out on them in a disciplinary way. You end up fighting and saying 'why weren't you here at twelve?' Instead of asking 'what happened that they didn't come' and reminding them that they made a promise. I had to change my voice, my tone, my everything. So that's important in a school with mass discipline problems is that you have to remember or constantly be reminding yourself what your role is in a situation.

RESEARCHER: Do you then think this is a job that a counsellor can stay in for a very long time?

PARTICIPANT 5: I think it's much easier to stay as a counsellor than a teacher at this school. Because you still get to choose your time table, so you get to be off and close your door and focus on something else and prepare for the client that is coming in. So I think given the correct support, we have resources at this school. We have our own phones, offices, the internet, resources. But I'm thinking now of other schools where they don't have that and I can just imagine how much harder it will be to counsel when you don't even have toys to do therapy with or internet access to print things or just anything like that.

RESEARCHER: Alright, so resources are also important to assist the role of the counsellor
 in a school?

PARTICIPANT 5: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Anything else you would like to mention?

PARTICIPANT 5: No, I think that's basically it yes.

RESEARCHER: Okay, so I just want to thank you for participating in this study and yes,
 thank you very much.

PARTICIPANT 5: Thank you too.