

# **Job satisfaction and engagement of child protection social workers in Gauteng**

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## DECLARATION

I, Daniel Mutasa, declare that my mini dissertation entitled: *Job satisfaction and engagement of child protection social workers in Gauteng*, which I submitted to the North-West University in pursuit of the degree Master of Social Work in Child Protection, is my original work. The language was edited, the sources were all cited with full references, and it was not submitted to another university.



Signature

Date: 20 July 2021

## DECLARATION BY LANGUAGE EDITOR

I declare that I, Jennifer Stacey, have edited the MA Research Report entitled, *Job satisfaction and engagement of child protection social workers in Gauteng* which was written by Daniel Mutasa, student number 31117635. The edit was a general language edit that included grammatical accuracy, punctuation, spelling and fluency and clarity of expression, consistency of layout and compliance with selected Reference Guidelines.

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## SUMMARY

Child protection is one of the most critical fields in social work. It involves protecting children from any form of abuse and neglect in continuum levels of care: awareness, prevention, statutory and reintegration services. Although job satisfaction and engagement studies have been conducted across various sectors, limited studies in child protection services are available. The study aim was to quantitatively analyse job satisfaction and how it correlates with work engagement for social workers involved in child protection at the Gauteng Department of Social Development. An online survey questionnaire which constituted MSQ and UWES scales was distributed and 77 participants responded. Collected data were quantitatively analysed to understand the relationship between job satisfaction, work engagement and demographic characteristics. Correlation analysis showed several relationships between study variables. A favourable association between job satisfaction and work engagement ( $r = .714$ ,  $n=77$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was discovered using the Pearson correlation coefficient. A significant regression was discovered between job satisfaction and work engagement ( $F(1, 75) = 77,788$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .509. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) established a statistically significant difference between race and extrinsic satisfaction at the  $p < .05$  level in extrinsic satisfaction for the four age groups ( $F(3,73) = 2.205$ ,  $p = .09$ ). Job satisfaction was found to be related to work engagement. This study's social workers were engaged and satisfied at work, which is similar to the findings of prior studies.

### Key terms:

Job satisfaction, engagement, child protection, social worker, South Africa

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**ANOVA:** Analysis of Variance

**CASW:** Canadian Association of Social Workers

**DHHS:** Department of Health and Human Services

**DSD:** Department of Social Development

**HREC:** Human Research Ethics Committee

**IBM:** International Business Machines Corporations

**JD-RT:** Job Demands-Resource Theory

**MSQ:** Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire

**NGOs:** Non-Governmental Organisations

**NWU:** North-West University

**POS:** Perceived Organisation Supportiveness

**PSC:** Psychosocial safety

**PWB:** Psychological Well -Being

**SET:** Social Exchange Theory

**SHRM:** Society for Human Resource Management

**SPSS:** Statistical Package for Social Sciences

**SWB:** Subjective Well – Being

**TRREE:** Training and Resources in Research Ethics Evaluation

**USA:** United States of America

**UK:** United Kingdom

**UWES:** Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

## **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

This limited-scope study concentrated on job satisfaction and work engagement at the Gauteng Department of Social Development, South Africa, for social workers delivering child protection services. The following aspects will be discussed in this chapter: contextualization, problem statement, study relevance and description of main concepts. Furthermore, the objective of the research, aims, and design of the study will be discussed.

## **1.2. CONTEXTUALISATION**

Child protection is identified as “the crucible of social work practice” and the only field of practice consistently recognized as the domain of social work (Callan, cited by Gillingham, 2015:2). In South Africa, social workers are the mainstay of child welfare programs. Social workers hired by the Department of Social Development and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), such as Child Welfare, provide child protection services in South Africa (Save the Children, 2015). Several studies (Baldshun, 2018:526; Berlanda *et al.*, 2017:2; Calitz, 2014:1; Marmo & Berkman, 2018:9; Ravalier, 2018:403) demonstrated that work engagement, job satisfaction and turnover and presenteeism are positively correlated. One wonders if this applies to social workers in the Gauteng Department of Social Development in the field of child protection. This research focused on assessing the level of satisfaction of social workers in the context of child protection and how involved they are in the workplace. In addition, the study sought to ascertain the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement among social workers in child protection. Understanding social workers’ job satisfaction and engagement levels enables the identification of challenges and how to improve the work environment and can result in better service delivery and staff retention (Jones, 2018:1; Ravalier, 2018:9). Satisfied and engaged employees strengthen organisations and contribute to attaining organisational goals and objectives.

### 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The overall problem is that child protection social workers are often dissatisfied with their jobs and become disengaged, resulting in them leaving the profession. Thus, the child protection field struggles to attract and retain social workers. Social workers involved in child protection programs are known as child protection social workers (Dagan *et al.*, 2016:203). In Canada and the United States of America (USA), they are known as “child welfare social workers” (CASW, 2018:8). In Australia and New Zealand, child protection social workers are identified as child protection workers or practitioners (DHHS, 2018:15). In South Africa, social workers engaged in child protection services are identified as social workers and do not have a specific title or specialised identity as in other countries such as Australia and Canada. In this study, social workers engaged in child protection services were identified as child protection social workers.

In South Africa, 2017 population statistics indicated that there were 19,6 million children under the age of eighteen (Hall *et al.*, 2018:133). Statistics showed that 2,8 million are orphans, 416 000 are in foster care and 90 000 are living in child-headed households (Hall *et al.*, 2018:134). Looking at these statistics, there are major concerns for child protection services. Some of the major issues affecting the provision of appropriate and necessary child protection services include disjointed and ineffective services, inadequate resources, the poor standard of services, a critical shortage of staff, a high workload, inadequate training, and poor management (Save the Children, 2015; Sullivan, 2012:7).

Child protection workers face many challenges and complex tasks which make work satisfaction and constant engagement in the workplace relevant constructs to ensure work continuity (Ravalier, 2018:399). Studying job satisfaction and work engagement enables understanding of the employee's behaviour and attitude and can help to improve the work environment. Understanding job satisfaction and work engagement in child protection services is paramount to organisational success. It is argued that satisfied workers are highly productive, devoted and driven. Consequently, they render better and more effective services (Ravalier, 2018). There were few empirical studies conducted in South Africa on the job satisfaction and job engagement of social workers in child protection. Geisler *et al.* (2019:1) emphasized the importance of job satisfaction and work

engagement in the retention and well-being of social workers. Calitz (2014:3) further advances the need to gain insight and understanding of job satisfaction and work engagement and ways to increase these attributes in social work practice.

The rationale of the study is based on the fact that no studies could be found on job satisfaction and engagement for child protection social workers in South Africa. In an earlier work Sullivan (2012:25) noted that social work-related job satisfaction studies are inconclusive and inconsistent. This still seems to be true in 2021. Countries such as Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America have accessible literature on job satisfaction and engagement for social workers (Baldshun, 2018; Berlanda *et al*, 2017; Hussein, 2018; Sullivan, 2012). South African studies on job satisfaction and engagement do not focus on the child protection field (Calitz, 2014; Ntsoane, 2017). This research is of relevance to the field of social work as it offers insight and contributes to the literature about job satisfaction and involvement in child protection work.

The results and study recommendations will inform practices such as supervision to increase efficiency, performance, employee satisfaction, and child protection involvement. Research may lead to awareness of job satisfaction and social workers' interest in child protection services. Research can impact employee well-being and operational policies and the functioning of child protection social workers. The researcher hypothesised that there is no substantial link between job satisfaction and work engagement for child protection social workers and job satisfaction is not a predictor of work engagement. Lastly, it was predicted that demographic variables would influence job satisfaction and work engagement.

## **1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.4.1 Study Aim**

The purpose of the research was to quantitatively analyse job satisfaction and how it correlates with the work engagement of social workers in child protection services.

## **1.4.2 Objectives**

- To determine the connection between job satisfaction and the work engagement of social workers in child protection
- To determine whether work engagement is a predictor of job satisfaction for social workers in child protection
- To determine if any demographic variables (age, gender, race, level of employment, qualifications) influence job satisfaction and work engagement.

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive quantitative model was preferred for this study. Further discussion of the hypothesis, methodology process and model for the study will be discussed in chapter 3. The research method is suitable and has previously been used in related studies of job satisfaction, work engagement and other relevant variables (Baldushun, 2018; Jackson, 2018; Mutasa, 2016).

### **1.5.1 Review of literature**

An overview of literature focused on preceding studies and available literature concerning social workers' job satisfaction and work engagement. Journal articles, theses, dissertations, and books were consulted for the literature review. Various search engines, such as Boloka, Ebscohost, Google Scholar, NEXUS and ProQuest accessed on the North West University Library website, assisted in obtaining relevant literature.

### **1.5.2 Approach and Design**

A quantitative descriptive correlational design was used to recognize and explore the connection between job satisfaction and work engagement. This design was most suitable for this study as it enables testing of the study hypothesis, enables the examination of relationships between variables (job satisfaction and work engagement), gives conclusive findings and has been successfully used by other researchers (Geisler *et al.*, 2019; Hussein, 2018; Mutasa, 2016).

### 1.5.3 Research participants

The research population was social workers working in child protection services at the Gauteng Department of Social Development, South Africa. The Gauteng Department of Social Development is the main service provider of child protection services in the province. Conducting the study at the department was practical as it reduced the various costs involved when conducting this limited- scope study.

### 1.5.4 Collecting and analysing data

For data collection, a self-administered electronic survey questionnaire was utilized, consisting of three sections: the demographic profile, job satisfaction and work engagement. Statistical data analysis was done with SPSS software to find standard deviations and means tests, and enable organizing, summarizing, and the understanding of sample data. Data collected was prepared for entry and encoded. A spreadsheet was used for data entry before analysis with SPSS software.

## 1.6 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS:

**Job satisfaction** – In older work, Locke, (1976:1304) described job satisfaction as being "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" whilst more recently Fernández-Macias and Muñoz de Bustillo Llorente (2014:3451) define job satisfaction as "the degree to which people like their jobs and a subjective evaluation that the worker makes of her job."

**Engagement** – Engagement is linked to the concept, flow, with the latter a way in which engagement is expressed (Beard, 2015:357). Flow entails full involvement in an activity, which will often lead to completion of tasks. This would enhance a sense of well-being or "a positive, fulfilling, affective motivational state of work-related well-being that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption" (Bakker *et al.*, 2008:187).

**Child protection** – denotes steps and measures taken towards guarding children against any form of abuse and neglect and involves attending to child safety and well-being (Save the Children, 2015: 48)

**Social worker:** means a person who, under the Social Care Professions Act, 1978, “is registered or considered to be registered as a social worker” (Social Services Act 110 of 1978)

## **1.7 STUDY LIMITATIONS**

It is imperative to be cautious when interpreting the results due to various study limitations. A summary of study limitations is presented in this section and a detailed discussion is presented in chapter 5 of the study.

- The study was confined to child protection social workers in Gauteng province rather than all child protection social workers in South Africa.
- The outcomes can therefore not be generalized due to the low response rate, only 77 respondents participated in the study.
- Time limit constraints.
- Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.
- Because of financial constraints, the study sample was limited.
- NGOs were disqualified from participating in this study as their child protection social workers are not employed by the Gauteng Department of Social Development

## **1.8 REPORT STRUCTURE**

### **Chapter One: Orientation and background of the study**

The first chapter gives a brief synopsis of the study overview. Contextualization, problem statement, methods of analysis and study limitations are discussed.

### **Chapter Two: Literature review**

This section focuses on outlining job satisfaction and work engagement literature. Furthermore, ideas are raised that describe and further explore job satisfaction and work engagement

### **Chapter Three: Research methodology**

The research methodology focuses on the research approach and design, the respondents, the research process, ethical considerations and data collection, including instrumentation and data analysis.

### **Chapter Four: Data analysis, presentation, interpretation and discussion**

This chapter presents results and discussion.

### **Chapter Five: Conclusions and recommendations**

The final chapter presents conclusions, study limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## **1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provides some background information and a description of the project. In conclusion, the chapter summarizes the problem statement, research priorities, research methods, and limitations of the study. In the social work profession, child protection is respected and paramount, studies were found focusing on the job satisfaction and work engagement of child protection social workers in South Africa. It is envisaged that increasing job satisfaction and work engagement for child protection social workers would be the panacea for efficient and successful service delivery. There are many perceived advantages to the study of the job satisfaction and work engagement of social workers.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

Social workers operate in a very demanding and stressful environment and there is a need to research their well-being. Some of the most disturbing problems in the job are high demands, a low reputation, moderate pay, working under pressure, and the risk of emotional suffering (Baldschun, 2018:15; Sullivan, 2012:25). The functions of caring, safety and the well-being of clients are major challenges faced by child protection social workers. Social workers involved in child protection services are often faced with emotional issues exacerbated by dealing with insecure, traumatised, abused and neglected children (Baldschun, 2018:15).

In this context, it is imperative to explore if child protection social workers at the Department of Social Development in Gauteng are satisfied and engaged in their jobs. It seems as if there is little or no literature available on job satisfaction and work engagement for child protection social workers in South Africa. The available literature is mostly from Western countries and literature in South Africa focuses on professions or areas such as nursing, teaching, municipalities and the private sector. This chapter will focus on two concepts: job satisfaction and work engagement. Furthermore, the literature review will focus on and discuss preceding studies of job satisfaction and work engagement in social work and other professions. Scholarly resources which include academic journals, peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, theses and books were studied for the literature review.

### **2.2 MAIN THEORIES USED**

Diverse theoretical paradigms have been used in job satisfaction and work engagement studies. These include Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Sullivan, 2012:38), the Herzberg dual-factor theory, also known as the Herzberg motivation-hygiene theory (Park, 2018:8), Locke's range of affect theory (Jackson, 2018: 32), and the Conservation of Resources theory (Rigg, 2012:29). Although the literature covers a broad range of theories, this review concentrates on Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Edwards – Dandridge, 2019:27)

and Job Demands-Resource Theory (JD-RT) (Bakker & Demerouti,2014:8), which appear frequently in the reviewed literature.

### **2.2.1 Social Exchange Theory**

The relationship between an employer and an employee is focused on mutual support. The theory of social exchange (SET) is based on the notion that social activity can be explained in terms of costs, rewards, and exchanges (Redmond, 2015:15). Social Exchange theory was founded by Emerson in 1958 (Jones, 2018). An understanding of the relationship between workers and the employer (organisations, companies, agencies, etc.) and the "exchange" in their relationship is fundamental to understanding levels of job satisfaction and work engagement (Ariani, 2013:48). The relationship between child protection social workers (employees) and the Department of Social Development (employers) should clarify the levels of job satisfaction and work engagement of social workers in a social exchange context.

Employees work in anticipation of remuneration and compensation in the form of wages, allowances and benefits that affect their engagement, satisfaction, commitment, and trust in their employer (Slack *et al.*, 2015:1). Levels of employee satisfaction and engagement are influenced by "costs, rewards and exchanges" between the employer and the employee (Jones, 2018:13). Interactions between the three elements: costs, rewards and exchanges, affect job satisfaction and work engagement. SET has assumptions about "human nature" and "quality of relationships" (Holthausen, 2013:4). The assumption about the nature of human behaviour is that people search for rewards and benefits (salaries, bonuses, allowances) whilst avoiding penalties.

SET has been widely used in job satisfaction research, work engagement and behavioural studies (Burns, 2018; Jones, 2018; Rayton & Yalabik, 2014; Rigg, 2012). The value of SET is accentuated and confirmed by a study to examine the association between "perceived organisational support" and "affective organisational commitment" (Sungu *et al.*, 2019:1410). The research by Sungu *et al.* (2019) is about potential paths to unlock "micro-mechanisms that regulate reciprocity in social exchanges". One can advance the view that child protection social workers at the Gauteng Department of Social Development have a "reciprocal" relationship with the employer and there are factors that

regulate and guide that relationship as indicated by Sungu *et al.* (2019), which can explain the job satisfaction and work engagement of the employees.

Although SET is commonly used by academics, there are critiques of the theory. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005:875) showed that various analyses of SET exclude important theoretical variables. They further stated, "some formulations of SET are ambiguous, lending themselves to multiple interpretations" which makes it difficult to test such models (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005:875). Based on Cropanzano and Mitchell's (2005) arguments, there are gaps and challenges to SET, which can affect the theory's applicability when trying to understand the satisfaction and engagement of child protection social workers. Despite the view that the main ideas which encompass SET are not sufficiently "articulated and integrated" (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005:875) the theory has gradually evolved and has been tested in several studies. It is the researcher's opinion that the central principle of "Exchange, costs and rewards" in the employment relationship between the employer and employee immensely contributes to understanding the satisfaction and engagement of social workers involved in child protection services.

## **2.2.2 Job Demands-Resource theory**

Bakker and Demerouti are the founders of the Job Demands-Resource model which is widely applied in job satisfaction and work engagement studies (Jones, 2018; Park, 2018; Rigg, 2012). The theory (JD-RT) is premised on the understanding that job or working environments are characterised by two factors known as "job demands and resources" (Jones, 2018:14). Job demands are, "the physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort or skills and are, therefore, associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007:312). Work overload, interpersonal conflict, an adverse physical environment, emotional stress, unpredictable working hours and lack of job security are examples of job demands (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011:2; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014:45; Upadyaya *et al.*, 2016:102). High job expectations are counterproductive and result in poor job satisfaction and work engagement. Conversely, abundant levels of job resources have a positive effect on job satisfaction and work engagement.

Job resources are critical in the Job Demands–Resource Model. Job resources are the “physical, social, organisational aspects of the job that may do the following: (a) be functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce demands and associated physiological and psychological costs; (c) stimulate personal growth and development” (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001:501). Job resources include “feedback, job control and social support” (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014:45). Job resources are central to employee behaviour and attitudes in the workplace. Availability of resources in abundance or scarcity thereof can influence levels of employee satisfaction and engagement.

According to Demerouti and Bakker (2011:2) job resources operate at various levels, such as the organisational level, influenced by wages, career prospects and job security factors. Interpersonal level resources include relationships and interactions between managers, superiors, co-workers, and the team environment. Specific job positions include clarifying roles and engagement in decision-making (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011:2). The task level encompasses “skills diversity, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback on results” (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011:2). The interrelationship between job resources and job demands is key to understanding how workers are satisfied and engaged in their work.

The theoretical explanation of job satisfaction and employee engagement (using the JD – RT model) is that job satisfaction and employee engagement increase with high work resources and low job requirements (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). On the other hand, job satisfaction and employee engagement decline when work demands increase and resources become scarce or limited (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). A dichotomous relationship exists between job demands and job resources, which influences employee engagement positively or negatively. Rudimentary proposals of the JD – RT model are that the negative impact of job demands on job satisfaction and work engagement is mitigated by job resources. Job resources are alleged to play a constructive and motivating role, while job demands play a negative role in organisational performance (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011:2). Job demands have a detrimental impact on job satisfaction and engagement, which can be positively addressed by boosting job resources.

When studying the work engagement of public sector employees, Borst *et al.* (2019) applied the Job Demands-Resource Model. Results showed that "work and personal

resources are positively related to work engagement, including public service motivation” (Borst *et al.*, 2019:372). Increased employment resources have a positive impact on work engagement. These results support the Job Demands-Resource model. In conclusion, the Job Demands-Resource theory explains how job demands and job resources interconnect and affect job satisfaction and work engagement. In the context of child protection, it is a very demanding field and a balance is needed between job demands and resources as they have been reported to impact the satisfaction and engagement of child protection social workers (Tesi *et al.*, 2018:9).

### **2.3 JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK ENGAGEMENT CONCEPTS**

As the researcher explained, there is limited literature on job satisfaction and work engagement in child protection, especially in South Africa. Burns (2018:80) emphasized the importance of satisfaction and engagement in organisational success. Nimon *et al.* (2015:1) argue that there is conflicting evidence whether work engagement is a distinct construct that is dissimilar to job satisfaction. Study results for Cankir and Arikan (2019: 1333) showed that job satisfaction and work engagement were "interrelated but distinct constructs". Based on the findings of Cankir and Arikan (2019:1133), job satisfaction was a better predictor of intention to quit than work engagement.

Researchers have found that job satisfaction is an “antecedent to engagement as well as a consequence of engagement” (Rigg, 2012:60). Many executives believe that satisfied employees are likely to be involved and that engagement results in job satisfaction (Rigg, 2012:60). "Positive well-being" and a good working environment are associated with job satisfaction and work engagement (Warr & Inceoglu, 2012:9), whilst the influence of job satisfaction and work engagement are considered different. Being energetic and dedicated to work are engagement markers (Bakker *et al.*, 2011:5).

The commonality between job satisfaction and work engagement is that both terms have no accepted meanings. However, their significance in improving production, effectiveness and efficiency in the workplace is undoubted. Crawford *et al.* (2010:835) view engagement as a "motivational concept" whereas job satisfaction is associated with a sensation of what has been accomplished or likely to be achieved. McLeod and Clarke

(cited by Rigg, 2012:23) differentiate between job satisfaction and engagement based on how they influence outcomes. Job satisfaction does not explain how employees behave whilst engagement elucidates employee's behaviour (Rigg, 2012:23).

## **2.4 PREVIOUS RELATED STUDIES - JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK ENGAGEMENT**

There has been a significant amount of research done on job satisfaction and work engagement. This section concentrates on previous research that scrutinized the link between job satisfaction and work engagement. Several studies by Geisler *et al.* (2019); Hussein (2018); and Ravalier (2018) focused on job satisfaction, work engagement and other variables for child protection services. Job satisfaction and engagement are interrelated. Whilst work engagement has been studied across many fields, Ravalier (2018) contends that it has not been adequately researched in social work. The primary goal of this analysis is to assess if there is convincing evidence that work engagement predicts job satisfaction and whether demographic variables (age, level of education, race, employment level, sex) affect job satisfaction and work engagement. Additionally, it describes how different resources are interconnected with job satisfaction and work engagement, adding a new dimension to the gratification of social workers who provide child protection services.

### **2.4.1 Challenges that impact job satisfaction and work engagement**

Prior research has identified problems encountered by social workers in child protection that lead to job dissatisfaction and poor engagement. CASW (2018:7) reported high caseloads, insufficient funding and high staff turnover as challenges faced by child welfare social workers in Canada. Using qualitative methods with a sample of 3258 social workers, CASW (2018:7) reported that social worker's job satisfaction came from having a positive impact on vulnerable children's lives. Ravalier (2018) concurs with CASW (2018) that high caseloads, high staff turnover and lack of support impact the job satisfaction and engagement of child protection social workers. A study by Berlanda *et al.* (2017:4) of social workers from North East Italy recognized "lack of trust and mutual respect (49,62%), work overload (34,21%), contractual employment concerns (8,27%), and difficult cases (7,90%)" as four factors for the dissatisfaction of social workers. Quinn (2017:2) identified poor working conditions and problems with supervisors as reasons for

high staff turnover. The findings of Berlanda *et al.* (2017) were consistent with the results of CASW (2018), as work overload was stated to play a role in social workers' job satisfaction.

Challenges in supervision can impact job satisfaction. Griffiths and Royse (2017:1), in their analysis of "former" public child welfare staff with a sample size of 54 respondents aimed to consider job satisfaction and departure motives. Griffiths and Royse (2017:4) examined "sources of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction". They found that ex-child welfare employees were very pleased with the supervision they received, yet they left their positions highly dissatisfied. Schelbe *et al.* (2017:56) researched workplace stress and work satisfaction in newly appointed field child welfare workers using a qualitative method. Thirty-eight (38) newly appointed child protection workers participated in the study and the investigator collected data through interviews (Schelbe *et al.*, 2017:58). Stressors or identified factors that impact satisfaction were "administrative requirements; workload; unsupportive colleagues; and challenging parents and hurt children" (Schelbe *et al.*, 2017:59). This is consistent with the findings of Griffiths and Royse (2017), who reiterated the importance of supervision and encouragement from co-workers and managers in job satisfaction and work engagement.

#### **2.4.2 Role of Job demands and Job resources**

The role of job demands and job resources in determining job satisfaction and work engagement was demonstrated in the literature review. Bates (2013:1) identified accessibility of work resources as a risk factor for work engagement. Shortage of resources results in social workers feeling inadequately prepared to help their clients. Bates (2013:1) articulates that, "Dissatisfaction with resourcing both within a statutory child protection agency and within community-based organisations external to the agency affect child protection workers' job satisfaction". Thus, resources impact job satisfaction levels. Respondents in Bates' (2013) study believed that that a shortage of staff, internet, and other organisational resources impacts their efficacy as child protection workers. Bates (2013:1) expounded that effective allocation of resources positively affects service delivery. Thus, resources affect job satisfaction.

A literature analysis exposed interaction between job demands, work engagement and other variables. Tesi *et al.* (2018:1) "explore how specific job demands and psychological well-being are related to work engagement" involving 140 social workers from Italy, who mainly work with disabled persons. To assess work engagement, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was used (Tesi *et al.*, 2018:8). Like most studies of work engagement, Tesi *et al.* (2018) used a quantitative design and methods to analyse data and report on findings. The results showed that psychological wellbeing (PWB) of social workers had a positive impact on worker engagement (Tesi *et al.*, 2018:9). In the study of psychological job demands, emotional demand, and work engagement, PWB moderated the correlation (Tesi *et al.*, 2018:9). Data analysis proved that "social worker's psychological well-being was positively related to work engagement and job demands were associated to higher levels of work engagement" (Tesi *et al.*, 2018:1). Whereas Tesi *et al.* (2018) focused on social workers attending to disabled persons, this research focused on child protection social workers.

Job demands and resources have consistently been linked with job satisfaction. Research by Jessen (2010:10) to find Norwegian social workers' sources of job satisfaction and their understanding of incentives showed a negative correlation between job demands and job satisfaction. Jessen (2010:10) indicated that job demands did not influence extrinsic variables (adequate resources, time available) while intrinsic incentives compensated for alleged appreciation deficiency. Despite a lack of funding and incompatible demands, social workers indicated that they were pleased with their employment. Jessen (2010:6) employed quantitative research methods, with a sample of 445 social workers and he used demographic variables (age, sex, years of experience etc.) to analyse data. Jessen's (2010:7) results showed "a high level of overall satisfaction among social workers".

Geisler, Berthelsen and Muhonen (2019:1) investigated the relationship between work engagement, job satisfaction, job demands, job resources and other variables. Geisler *et al.* (2019:1) found a strong correlation between work engagement with the environment of psychosocial safety (PSC), job demands and job resources. In addition, a favourable relationship between PSC and job satisfaction was found in the analysis. The research included 831 Swedish social workers. Geisler *et al.* (2019) used quantitative methods, descriptive statistics, and Person correlations to understand the relationships between

variables. The results of Geisler *et al.* (2019:10) revealed job demands (role conflict and work-family conflict) were strongly linked with social workers' job satisfaction and had a positive relationship with work engagement.

### **2.4.3 Comparison within social work and other professions**

The essence of social work and the form of client group influenced job satisfaction and work engagement levels. In contrast with social workers who deal with other client groups, Hussein (2018:911) predicted that social workers who work with children had higher levels of stress and burnout. Baugerud *et al.* (2018:215) confirm that working with neglected and abused children is a risk factor for the mental well-being of child protection workers. The assessment of Baugerud *et al.* (2018) corresponds with that of Hussein (2018). Child protection social workers are likely to experience reduced job satisfaction due to the high demands of child protection programs and increased emotional interaction with clients (Baugerud *et al.*, 2018:216).

The reviewed literature has repeatedly shown that working environments determine job satisfaction and social worker engagement. Ravalier and Boichat (2018:14) investigated the "working conditions and well-being" of social workers hired in different fields. Ravalier and Boichat (2018:15) found that of all social work fields (adults, children and families, agency, other), child protection social workers were most dissatisfied by their job. This conclusion is in line with Graham *et al.* (2015:1), who found those child protection workers were dissatisfied with their jobs. Ravalier and Boichat (2018:5) conveyed that, "working conditions for social workers across the UK, irrespective of job role, are extremely poor". Ravalier and Boichat (2018:14) reported 48% of social workers involved in child protection as dissatisfied with their job.

Comparative studies of job satisfaction between social workers and other professionals are available. A total of 315 mental health practitioners consisting of Quebec social workers, nurses, and psychologists were researched in Canada by Fleury *et al.* (2017:1). For data collection, self-administered questionnaires were used (Fleury *et al.*, 2017:3). Study results showed that high participation among social workers and nurses in decision making and team processes was related to job satisfaction. The study by Fleury *et al.* (2017:1) demonstrated that sharing of knowledge (Team Processes) and attitude toward

the team (Team Emergent States) were associated with job satisfaction among social workers. Fleury *et al.* (2017:1) advocated for the inclusion of social workers in decision-making.

Park *et al.* (2012:85) found differences in job satisfaction among professionals, such as social workers, nurses, and teachers of elementary school. The study findings by Park *et al.* (2012:85) showed that "41.5% of nurses, 50.1% of allied hospital professionals, 58.2% of social workers and 89% of elementary school teachers were satisfied with their jobs". Social workers scored higher on job satisfaction than nurses and other health professionals. There appears to be a difference in job satisfaction among social workers and other professionals. A comparative study by Hussein (2018:915) focused on social workers working with adults and older people (ASW) and social workers specialized in children and families (CFSW). ASW and CFWS social workers registered different levels of satisfaction and commitment (Hussein, 2018:915).

Regarding job satisfaction, it appears child protection social workers are reported to be satisfied by their jobs just like other professionals. Kinjerski (2012:5) conducted a study with 1386 social workers employed in child protection programs in Canada. The study showed that 90% of participants were content with their work and 100% were dedicated to their organisation (Kinjerski, 2012:7). In contrast, Mache *et al.*'s (2014:181) study about surgeons' work engagement showed high levels of engagement whilst the levels of job satisfaction were moderate. A comparative study by Steel *et al.* (2017:380) involving civil servants from British Columbia, Oregon, and Washington indicated that most participants from British Columbia, Oregon and Washington were "highly satisfied" by their jobs. A multivariate analysis facilitated in analysing the relationship between study variables. Demographic variables (age, gender, education, salary) helped in understanding their relationship with job satisfaction (Steel *et al.*, 2017:386).

#### **2.4.4 Associations - job satisfaction, work engagement and other variables**

A review of the literature indicates that a variety of relationships exists between job satisfaction, work engagement, and other variables. Ravalier (2018:399) conducted a cross-sectional study involving 1049 social workers from England and concluded that a high number of social workers were satisfied with their jobs. Ravalier's (2018:401) results

showed significant variance between social workers who scored high on work engagement and those who scored low. Compared to social workers who rated low on engagement, individuals who scored high on engagement had lower reported stress. Ravalier (2018) appears to have targeted social professionals from many fields.

A number of studies have examined how job satisfaction, work engagement, and other factors relate in social work. Hussein *et al.* (2014:2) researched the job satisfaction of newly qualified social workers whilst establishing interrelationships with variables such as supervision and work engagement. By comparing job satisfaction with intention to leave, Hussein *et al.* (2014) found a statistically significant correlation. The study used a longitudinal survey based on work experience and job satisfaction with a sample of 280 newly trained social workers from England. Hussein *et al.* (2014:1), scrutinized a conceptual framework to understand how new social workers' educational qualifications equipped them for social work, their satisfaction and intentions to quit. Hussein *et al.* (2014:7) examined correlations between research variables using exploratory analysis and logistic regression models. Hussein *et al.* (2014:10) found three variables substantial in predicting if newly qualified social workers enjoyed their jobs. These variables are, "high levels of job engagement (F6: OR=1.58, p=0.015); feeling well prepared by degree programme (OR=4.54, p=0.005) and high ability to put values into practice (F4: OR=2.90, p=0.005)", (Hussein *et al.*, 2014:10). Social workers were relatively satisfied by their jobs and engaged and their qualifications somehow prepared them for their job.

A study by Marmo and Berkman (2018) analysed the connection between intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction with leadership and interdisciplinary collaboration. Marmo and Berkman (2018:8) used a quantitative cross-sectional design to investigate how job satisfaction was associated with employment retention among 203 social workers employed at hospices in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Work experience, leadership, hospice characteristics and intrinsic job satisfaction were variables used to establish a relationship between variables (Marmo & Berkman, 2018:1). Intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction variables (servant leadership scale, interdisciplinary collaboration and being valued at work) were positively significant.

Studies have suggested that job satisfaction is correlated with work engagement. A study by Vorina, *et al.* (2017:243) titled "An analysis of the relationship between job satisfaction

and employee engagement" yielded mixed results. According to Vorina *et al.* (2017:243), "the results confirm that the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction is positive and statistically significant". The findings found an important association between job satisfaction and commitment at work. A total of 594 Slovenian public and private sector workers from the Savinja region participated in the study. The UWES scale was used to assess employee engagement (Vorina *et al.*, 2017:250). Cronbach's Alpha score of 0,914 sanctions the tool's reliability. Demographic variables (gender, age, qualifications, salary scales, etc.) were employed in determining relationships with employee engagement and job satisfaction. It was found that gender did not affect the determination of work engagement (Vorina *et al.*, 2017:258). Regression coefficient ( $B=0,545$ ) displayed that when job satisfaction level increased, work engagement simultaneously increased (Vorina *et al.*, 2017:259). However, since this study focused on generic social workers, its findings cannot be attributed to social workers in child protection services.

The job satisfaction and work engagement research by Tepayakul and Rinthaisong (2018:68) showed a clear correlation between the two factors. The study aimed to "discover the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement" (Tepayakul & Rinthaisong (2018:68) of human resources workers from Thailand's private higher education institutions. Results showed a "positive direct effect of job satisfaction on employee engagement ( $B=0,89$ ,  $p <.001$ )" (Tepayakul & Rinthaisong, 2018:68). Consequently, a positive association was established between work engagement and job satisfaction. In Anwar and Qadir's study they, "investigated the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction"(2017:1102). Work engagement played a role in mediating the dynamics of the relationship.

Jackson (2018:3) observed "relationships between job satisfaction, organisational commitment and teacher engagement". Results indicated "no significant results" among the three study variables. One noticeable factor is Jackson's small sample size ( $N=26$ ) of which caused limitations, as the findings could not be generalized to the study population. Jackson (2018:3) recommended further research on the subject. Sokolov (2017:13) proclaimed that "engagement of teachers in their work is linked to increased job satisfaction and workplace productivity". Sokolov (2017:13), "found a significant

relationship between a teacher's engagement when measured as a static trait and when measured as a dynamic state".

Some studies explored causal associations between organisational components, employment prospects and the job satisfaction of social workers in child protection services. With a study of 193 social workers from the United Kingdom, Antonopolou *et al.* (2017:42) quantitatively studied the wellbeing and job satisfaction of social workers following organisational fundamentals. Social workers were generally satisfied with their working conditions and ability to use acquired skills. Antonopolou *et al.* (2017:47) reported that "satisfaction with support for assessment was found to be significant ( $\beta=-5.038$ ,  $t=6.894$ ,  $p<0.001$ )". Some organisational factors are important in job control, job satisfaction, and "perceived opportunities" at work (Antonopolou *et al.*, 2017:49).

Workplace support is often linked to employee satisfaction. Hombrados-Mendieta and Cosano-Rivas (2011: 239) discovered "workplace support has a direct positive impact on job satisfaction ( $B= .52$ ) and an indirect impact on life satisfaction through job satisfaction ( $B=.14$ )". Studies found a negative correlation between burnout and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction had positive relationships with various factors (workplace support, life satisfaction), confirming the critical role of job satisfaction in the workplace, especially in social work (Hombrados-Mendieta & Cosano-Rivas ,2011:240). Similarly, the research of Bilgin *et al.* (2011:1) involving 115 social workers showed no variances in job satisfaction amongst different Social Services Units. The findings of Bilgin *et al.* (2011) corroborated those of Hombrados-Mendieta and Cosano-Rivas (2011) that work satisfaction is adversely linked to burnout.

Available literature has shown a connection between job satisfaction and subjective well-being (SWB). Lewis (2019:6) sought to find if, "job satisfaction predicts the subjective well-being (SWB) among practising social workers in the United States" with a sample of 187 social workers. The results showed that "job satisfaction is significantly associated with SWB,  $p<.001$ ;  $R^2=0.312$ ", (Lewis, 2019:117). Amongst all the dimensions of job satisfaction under study, only 'advancement', which is the opportunity to be promoted in the workplace, had a significant relationship with subjective well-being ( $p<.015$ ), (Lewis, 2019:120).

Job satisfaction has often been found to link with intention to quit and public interest involvement. Chen and Scannapieco (2010:482) examined the influence of job satisfaction on the "willingness to stay" of child welfare workers by investigating the effects of variables such as "self-efficacy and support from the supervisor". The results of research (Chen & Scannapieco, 2010) showed a positive link between job satisfaction and "self-efficacy." The data show that job satisfaction has a favourable link with a variety of variables. In another study, job satisfaction was positively related to public interest involvement (Roh *et al.*, 2016:11). Higher degrees of commitment to public interests lead to greater job satisfaction.

A study by Barth *et al.* (2008:1) involving 1729 participants from 36 United States of America (USA) demonstrated a positive association between supervisory quality and job satisfaction, while differences were identified between the level of satisfaction of urban and rural social workers with their jobs (Barth *et al.*, 2008:1). A study by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), (2016:1), identified recruitment and retention, competitive pay and supportive workplace culture as significantly correlated with job satisfaction. Winterscheidt (2009:2) found a positive correlation between job satisfaction and organisational structure, salaries, supervision and work environment. Winterscheidt (2009) focused on the job satisfaction of social work alumni who graduated from Wisconsin University, United States, between 1990 and 2008.

#### **2.4.5 Role of demographic variables**

Demographic variables play both a positive and negative role in determining job satisfaction and work engagement. Sijuwade and White (2011:1), "analysed the determinants of job satisfaction among a sample of social workers". Demographic variables (age, salary, gender, years of employment etc.) were used to determine job satisfaction amongst social workers (Sijuwade & White, 2011:436). Some demographic characteristics had a beneficial impact on participants' job satisfaction. Males' job satisfaction was lower than females, salary, career tenure and working in private practice had a positive relationship with job satisfaction (Sijuwade & White, 2011:438). To understand the disparities in job satisfaction between older and younger social workers, Sijuwade and White (2011:436) used the theory of chronological age of Kalleberg and

Loscocco which states that, "old people tend to withdraw from society and limit emotional involvement in the activities which were once important to them in their earlier careers".

Some studies have used demographic variables (age, type of employer, race/ethnicity, qualifications) to determine job satisfaction levels amongst social workers. In findings by Graham *et al.* (2015:1), socio-demographic, job, and stress predictors explained more than 52% of the variance in general social worker satisfaction. Age and employer category (child protection, social services etc.) were significant in determining job satisfaction. Child protection employees' levels of satisfaction were lower when compared to other categories. The sample size for Graham *et al.* (2015:9) was 646 social workers. The results showed that social workers employed by NGOs had higher satisfaction than child protection employees of Child Welfare.

## **2.5 JOB SATISFACTION**

Job satisfaction studies began as early as the 1930s and Hoppock is one of the pioneers in studying the concept (Burns, 2018:100). Aziri (2011) and Burns (2018) have shown that there is an ongoing controversy about the misalignment of its context, constructs, and metrics amid comprehensive studies on job satisfaction. One of the scholars who contributed significantly to job satisfaction research and theories (Locke, 1976:1304) termed job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences." Spector's (1997:2) definition is the commonly used concept of work satisfaction, which outlines job satisfaction as "the extent to which people like their jobs (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction)." Arnold and Feldman (cited by Hombrados-Mendieta & Cosano-Rivas, 2011:232) describe job satisfaction as "the amount of overall positive effect that people have on their jobs with several aspects such as pay, opportunities for advancement, the job itself, style of management, working conditions and the working community". Calitz (2014:156) further identified job satisfaction as attitudes of individuals about their jobs.

Job satisfaction contributes to employee well-being, improves relationships between colleagues, supervisors/managers and reduces absenteeism and intentions to quit from work (Kašpárková *et al.*, 2018:52). Jackson (2015) accentuated the role of factors such

as job suitability, expertise, salary, and leadership in job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Weiss, (2002) and Jackson (2015:4) conceptualized job satisfaction as an indicator of “personal well-being”, perceptions and attitudes towards the employer. Understanding job satisfaction assists in evaluating work conditions and the assessment of organisational commitment by employees (Jackson, 2015:5). Sullivan (2012:25) indicated that some studies of job satisfaction for social workers were inconclusive and contradictory. This motivated the researcher to research the job satisfaction and engagement of social workers in child protection services.

## **2.5.1 Factors that influence job satisfaction**

Various factors influence job satisfaction. Ravalier and Boichat (2018:9) acknowledged seven aspects that impact social workers' well-being and job satisfaction. These are "demands, control, managerial support, peer support, relationships, role and change" (Ravalier & Boichat, 2018:9). "Prospects, teamwork, work environment, and supervisory behaviour" were described by Singh (2012:234) as the key factors inducing job satisfaction. Some researchers describe variables that affect work satisfaction in two distinctive groups, intrinsic and extrinsic. Baldshun (2014:75) suggested that organisational and individual factors such as supervision, work resources, a positive working atmosphere and social support for co-workers affect job satisfaction.

### **2.5.1.1 Intrinsic factors**

- **Employee recognition**

Recognition in the workplace comes from various sources such as managers, supervisors, the community, colleagues, and society (Moloantoa,2015:30). Recognition comes in the form of appreciation, positive comments, and praise from the above-mentioned sources. Quinn (2017:3) found that lack of recognition and not being valued by an organisation led to reduced staff morale. A main reason why retired child welfare workers left the sector, according to Griffiths and Royse (2017:1), was a need for "more recognition." Recognition in the workplace can involve giving performance certificates to social workers, verbal and written compliments to supervisors and management and

compliments from clients which result in job satisfaction. CASW (2018) reported that social workers were satisfied by knowing that their clients appreciated their work.

- **Career advancement / Opportunities**

Career advancement or upward mobility is very important in an organisation. When persons are employed, they expect to have career growth and upward mobility in an organisation. Career advancement results in a person taking more responsibilities, having a higher and better position and an improved status (Sijuwade & White, 2011). In social work, there are ranks such as junior social worker, senior social worker, supervisor, chief social worker and managers. Upward mobility and career advancement in social work can motivate employees to work harder and reward their employer by being loyal and devoted to their work. A study by Burns (2018:73) established a positive association between career advancement and job satisfaction. SHRM (2016:17) reported that 47% of employees in their study considered career advancement opportunities to be “very important to their job satisfaction”. Advancement can also result in improved job satisfaction for social workers in child protection.

- **Job responsibility**

An employer needs employees to properly complete assigned tasks and job responsibilities. It is expected that child protection social workers will finalize cases of child protection, remove children who are victims of child abuse or neglect, attend court as required, and write reports. If job responsibilities and tasks are not clearly outlined and vague, it can result in worker dissatisfaction (Burns, 2018:74). The social workers' job attendance and availability are required by the employer to fulfil organisational goals and be responsible when executing their normal duties. When a social worker fulfils all job responsibilities and expectations, it can result in job satisfaction and a sense of responsibility (Monica & Krishnaveni, 2018).

- **Employee relationships**

A good relationship with co-workers and management is critical for job satisfaction in a work environment. (Collins, 2018). In an organisation or a public entity, employees' communication with employees is vital and contributes towards sharing the vision and objectives of the organisation. Correlation analysis of job satisfaction as a dependent variable showed that confidence and mutual respect allow job satisfaction at work and promote it at work (Berlanda *et al.*, 2017:7). SHRM (2016:27) notes that it is anticipated that positive partnerships rooted in “mutual trust and understanding” would improve efficiency and organisational performance. Seventy-four per cent (74%) of respondents in the SHRM (2016) study reported being satisfied by their relationships with supervisors. Where there are constructive employee relationships, respect and trust, these result in a sense of belonging, togetherness, and sense of security. Good employee relationships among child protection social workers can result in high levels of job satisfaction (Farmer, 2012). How employees interact and relate with colleagues, supervisors and managers, influences job satisfaction.

#### **2.5.1.2 Extrinsic factors**

- **Resources and work environment**

Lack of resources can result in dissatisfaction in the workplace. Job resources involve the tools of the trade required to perform the job. The shortage of computers, offices and motor vehicles at the Gauteng Department of Social Development can result in a poor work environment and the dissatisfaction of social workers. Lizano and Mor Barak (2015:20) identified key services related to social support and advanced training for child welfare workers. If social workers do not have enough social support or adequate training, they are likely to struggle in fulfilling their duties/ responsibilities. A multi-group path model was used by Lizano and Mor Barak (2015:18) to decide if the type and level of job resources, “moderate the relationship between job demands, burnout and job satisfaction”. Among the participants who obtained education in child safety, "race/ethnicity and position within the organisation were found to be statistically significant predictors of job satisfaction", (Lizano & Mor Barak, 2015:24). Calitz (2014:8) reported that 70% of participants indicated that they had the necessary resources to work.

Job satisfaction and job resources are influenced by the work environment. According to Graham *et al.* (2015:1), “workplace and worker expectations on workloads, workplace values, and work environment increase job satisfaction”. When employees have all the resources they need and are not overworked owing to a staffing shortage (staff as a resource), the work environment can be good and have a favourable impact on job satisfaction.

- **Job Security**

Every employee desires to have security at work. Job security is defined as the likelihood that an employee will not lose his/her job due to whatever circumstances. SHRM (2016:32) reported that job security continuously plays a role in job satisfaction. Between 2008 and 2011, job security was the highest contributory factor for job satisfaction in the United States (SHRM. 2016:32). There is a high level of unemployment in South Africa and social workers are struggling to find jobs. Higher levels of job satisfaction can result when a person knows that he or she has job security (Berlanda *et al.*, 2017). One can argue that the Covid-19 pandemic which has wreaked havoc in the world have caused many workers including social workers to lose their jobs and has compromised job security.

- **Remuneration/ Benefits and packs**

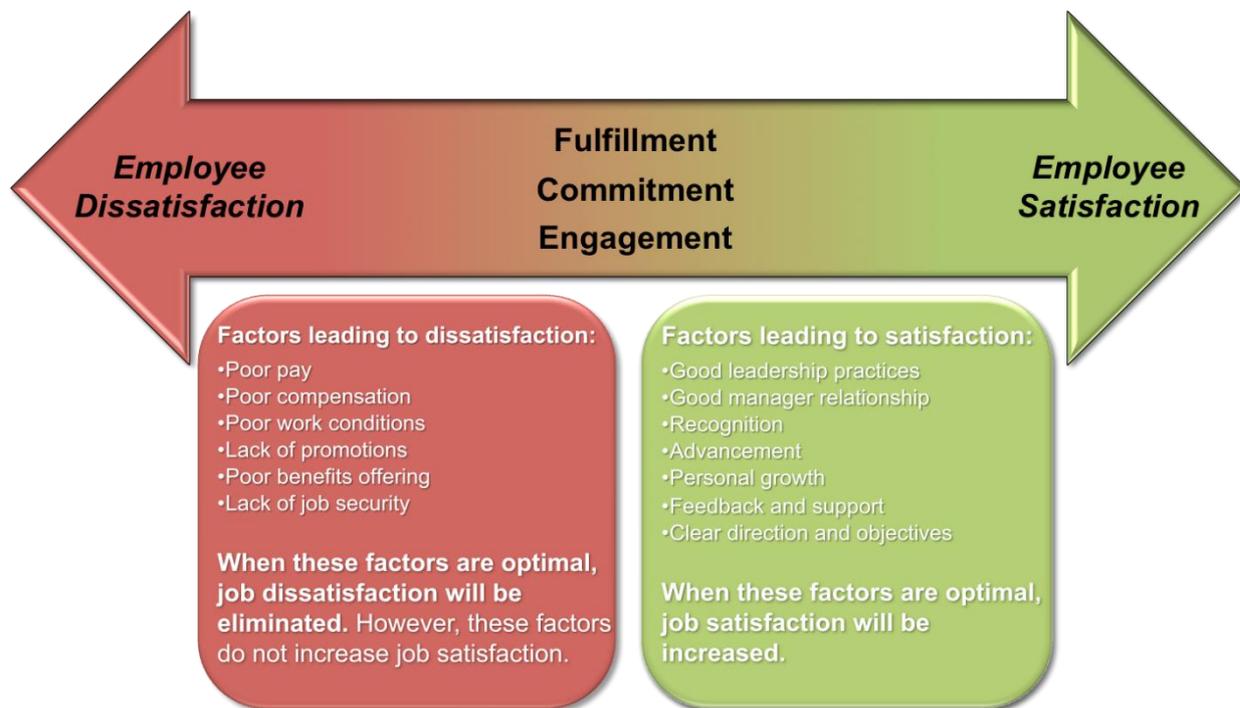
Salary/pay is identified as a determinant factor for job satisfaction (Calitz, 2014:9). In the modern world, employees are remunerated through payment by getting a salary (Baldschun, 2018). Employers do not just give a salary to their employees but other benefits such as cell phone allowances, vehicle allowance, housing allowances and danger allowances. These benefits mirror an employee's value to society, fellow workers and their families (Neog & Barua, 2014:306). The results of Calitz (2014:9) showed that “only 60 % of participants, “were less satisfied with their salary levels”. A study by SHRM (2016:21) found sixty-five (65%) of employees satisfied with their “overall compensation/ pay”. In subsequent research by SHRM (2016:21), remuneration has been one of the "top contributors" to work satisfaction since 2002. Displeasure with salary and other benefits can result in worker turnover. Other identified benefits which contribute to job satisfaction

are flexibility in the work schedule or time or allowing workers to work remotely (Burns, 2018:74) which has been witnessed by the researcher during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- **Supervision**

Supervision influences the satisfaction of social workers at work significantly. Social workers for child protection are actively employed under supervision. A synergetic relationship exists between an employee and a supervisor, and this relationship can result in either job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Quinn (2017:39) examined the impact of "quality supervision and a productive work climate on perceptions of self-value in the workplace". The quality of supervision was found to influence employee perceptions of self-value. Marmo and Berkman (2018) agree that employee perception of leadership/supervisors can affect satisfaction in the workplace. The selection of supervisors must not be taken lightly as it has an impact on job satisfaction (Burns, 2018:74).

More than half (53%) of participants in the SHRM (2016:28) research rated the supervisor relationship as "very important to their job satisfaction". Positive feedback during performance appraisals and constructive criticism can impact the supervisor/employee relationship and in turn affect job satisfaction levels. The nature of child protection services requires management and supervisors to be supportive as various studies found that poor supervisor and employee relationships result in dissatisfaction. Although the study of Dagan *et al.* (2016:5) focused on the traumatisation of child protection workers, the disparity in the effectiveness of supervision between social service social workers and supervision of child protection social workers was noticed. Calitz (2014:10) reported 81.7% of research participants in their study as satisfied with their relationships with their supervisors. Supervision plays a critical role in child protection services and undeniably impacts job satisfaction. The model by Field (2008) (Figure 1) illustrates factors leading to the dissatisfaction and satisfaction of workers resulting in fulfilment, commitment, and engagement.



**Figure 1: Job satisfaction model (Field, 2008)**

The figure shows factors which result in employee dissatisfaction. When these factors are attended to, employee dissatisfaction can be eradicated. On the other hand, a number of factors lead to job satisfaction. When these factors are maintained they result in increased job satisfaction. There is a spectrum of two parallel factors which can result in either dissatisfaction or satisfaction of employees.

## **2.6 WORK ENGAGEMENT**

The background to engagement, its dimensions and the factors leading to employee engagement will be discussed. No accepted description of work engagement is available. Bakker *et al.* (2008:187) defined work engagement as "an optimistic, satisfying, affective motivational state of work-related well-being characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption." Furthermore, Bakker *et al.* (2008:188) concentrated on denoting vigour as "characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest in one's job, and persistence even in the face of difficulties." Commitment refers "to being heavily involved in the work of one and experiencing a sense of meaning, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge," (Bakker *et al.*, 2008:188).

Absorption is classified in the workplace by high concentration and "engrossment" so that time passes quickly and a person cannot easily disengage from work (Bakker *et al.*, 2008:188). Vigour, dedication, and absorption simultaneously elucidate involvement. Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019:70) refer to employee engagement as "the physical, cognitive and emotional input of the employee at work."

Kahn is identified as the pioneer of work engagement (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2016:757; Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019: 64). According to Burns (2018:57), Kahn pioneered the concept of how a person's cognitive, emotional, and physical experiences at work influence how he/she chooses to engage or disengage in a task. Burns (2018:58) further indicates that Kahn described personal engagement as concurrent engagement and the demonstration of one's true self while encouraging relations with the job and co-workers by being fully present (mentally, physically, and emotionally), and thoroughly involved and active in the work role. Despite various definitions of engagement and positive agreement on its importance in the workplace Rigg, (2012:19) argues that the meaning of employee engagement and how it should be assessed remain a challenge. There are variations in the conceptualisation of work engagement.

Regardless of discrepancies in describing work engagement, researchers conclude that "engaged employees have high energy levels and are strongly identified with their job" (Bakker *et al.*, 2008:187). Job resources and personal resources are known as work engagement predictors and early research has shown that work engagement is a "predictor of job performance and customer satisfaction" (Bakker *et al.*, 2008:187). According to Vorina, Simonic, and Vlasova (2017:247), work engagement is also known as employee involvement. Kinjerski (2012:19) defines work engagement as "how we feel about our work, our ability to find meaning through work, and the extent we feel engaged in work that has a deeper purpose". Kinjerski (2012:19) further expounded that work engagement embraces, "the degree to which we feel grateful for our work, and the extent to which we see a match among the requirements of our work, and our values, beliefs and behaviours". Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019:63) acceded that, "there are still major differences in the concept, theory, influencing factors and outcomes of employee engagement, and still there is no authoritative standard". There is no agreement on the definition of work engagement.

### 2.6.1 Determinants of work engagement

Work engagement does not take place in a vacuum. There are various factors known as “determinants”, “predictors” or “drivers” which facilitate work engagement (Bakker *et al.*, 2008:191; Mutasa, 2016:24; Robinson *et al.*, 2004:21; Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019:70). Various scholars categorize these factors into different groups and they illustrate how these “determinants” lead to work engagement.

Recognized factors affecting work engagement are categorized into three groups, namely organisational factors, job factors and individual factors (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019:70). Factors identified by Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019:70) have various underlying elements and it seems "a source" describes each factor. For example, organisational factor elements are driven by the organisation, individual factors are linked to the individual and job factors are linked to the job itself. According to Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019:70), organisational factor elements which determine work engagement are, "leadership, superior support, job resources, fairness...". Individual factor elements are concomitantly driven by the persona, character, or behaviour of an individual employee. Individual factor elements identified by Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019:70) are "extraversion, resilience and self-consciousness". Some of the job factor elements explained by Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) were "work environment, job participation and job enrichment". It seems these factors identified by Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) are interlinked and operate in tandem to attain work engagement. Thus, one cannot fulfil one category of factors and hope to achieve work engagement but must strive to realize all aspects for work engagement to occur.

A special paper on "the drivers of work commitment" by Robinson *et al.* (2004) directs and illuminates "drivers" of work engagement. Robinson *et al.* (2004:11) argue that "It is clearly in the organisation's interests to understand the drivers of engagement". The most critical "driver" of engagement recognized in the study of Robinson *et al.* (2004:11) was "a sense of feeling valued and involved". This driver has more to do with the individual's perception of the organisation and falls into the individual factor grouping (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). By listing its main elements, Robinson *et al.* (2004:11) further clarified this "driver" in context. Employees deserve to be active in key decision-

making, to be listened to, to create resources and to invest in employee health and well-being (Robinson *et al.*, 2004:11).

Leadership and supervision, identified under organisational factors are paramount in determining work engagement. Managers and supervisors are involved in personnel performance, promotion, training, and communication which directly or indirectly influence work engagement (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019:71). "A positive feeling of appreciation" is frequently associated with organisational job components such as "training, growth and career, immediate leadership, performance assessment, communication, equal opportunities and fair treatment" (Robinson *et al.*, 2004:21).

Many studies have concentrated on defining "predictors" of work engagement. As predictors of work commitment, Bakker *et al.* (2008:187) identified two categories, which are job resources and personal resources. Autonomy, supervisory coaching, and performance feedback are examples of job tools identified by Bakker *et al.* (2008:187). "Optimism, self-efficacy and self-esteem are related to personal capital" (Bakker *et al.*, 2008:187). A comparison between Bakker *et al.* (2008) and Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) indicates that the category of personal capital is associated with individual variables. Personal resources and personal variables contribute to the positive/adverse view and emotions of the employee about the organisation.

Job resources have been proven to be predictive of work engagement in numerous studies. The concept of job resources denotes to "physical, social, or organisational components of a job that can help reduce job demands and the physiological costs they entail" (Bakker *et al.*, 2008:191). Additionally, Bakker *et al.* (2008:191) conclude that job resources are beneficial to organisations because they enable them to achieve their goals as well as supporting individual growth. Job resources such as "efficiency, supervision, autonomy, social support, career growth" have a positive association with work engagement (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019:71). The findings of Bakker *et al.* (2008:191) also indicate that job resources have an intrinsic or extrinsic motivational role in employees' engagement. Bakker *et al.* (2008) and Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) clarified specifically how work engagement is affected by various factors.

In contrast to Bakker *et al.* (2008) and Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019), Carnahan (2013:14) listed drivers of employee engagement as “functional and emotional”. According to Carnahan (2013:15), functional drivers involve "resources" and "rewards" and examples of functional drivers are bonuses and benefits. Emotional drivers comprise psychosocial facets that influence how individuals react and examples are "recognition, trust and purpose" (Carnahan, 2013:15). Carnahan (2013:14) suggests that functional drivers have a restricted influence on work engagement as compared to emotional drivers due to the nature of emotional drivers. Emotional drivers stimulate "how people feel about their work" and result in employees either being engaged or disengaged.

"The relationship between determinants of employee engagement towards the retention of Generation Y employees in the banking sector" was explored by Shahrudin and Daud (2017:315). Shahrudin and Daud (2017:318) analysed different determinants of employee engagement, such as “the work climate, leadership, training, compensation, career growth and well-being” in the workplace. Determinants by Shahrudin and Daud (2017) are like the various factors and elements identified by Bakker *et al.* (2008) and Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019). The distinction between Shahrudin and Daud (2017:318) and others is the categorization of work engagement variables.



Figure 2: Drivers of work engagement (source: <https://voiceproject.com/> employee engagement)

The above figure outlines drivers of work engagement classified into five elements which are purpose, people, peace, participation, and property. Naturally, these components fall into various categories defined by Bakker *et al.* (2008), Robinson *et al.* (2004) and Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019), which are work resources, personal resources, organisational, job and individual variables. The result would be work participation when job tools such as supervision and performance reviews are positively given. Personal assets such as “self-esteem and self-efficacy” are closely linked to the employee's perception and emotions and often result in employee engagement.

**2.6.2 Characteristics of engaged employees**

Studies of work engagement have identified characteristics or features of engaged employees. Engaged employees identify with an organisation, are reliable, positive and have great respect for colleagues and management (Robinson *et al.*, 2004:6). Employee confidence in an organisation, involvement in personal or professional development and active participation at work are features of engaged employees (Robinson, 2004:6).

Figure 3 below documents the characteristics of an engaged employee.



**Figure 3: Characteristics of engaged employees** (adapted from Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, (2004:6) The drivers of employee engagement)

## **2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Several ideas are used to characterize job satisfaction and work engagement. The researcher favours the Social Exchange and Job Demands-Resource Theory because several studies have shown that resources favourably influence job satisfaction and work engagement. The researcher is of the opinion that if the "Social Exchange" hypothesis is investigated further, it will certainly aid in understanding the job satisfaction and engagement of child protection social workers. The relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement was examined and explained using existing research on job satisfaction, work engagement, and related ideas. Most of the current literature does not focus on child protection, confirming the necessity of investigating job satisfaction and work engagement in child protection.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

A quantitative study was conducted to examine the association between job satisfaction and work engagement in the child protection field for the Gauteng Department of Social Development (DSD). Job satisfaction and the relationship between work engagement and demographic characteristics were also investigated. This chapter focuses on research methodology. Research design, methodology, study population and sample will be discussed. Ethical aspects, instrumentation, hypothesis, study questions, validity, and reliability are encompassed under research methodology.

### **3.2. STUDY QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

The following questions arise when conducting this research:

**Question 1:** Are job satisfaction and work engagement for child protection social workers positively correlated?

**Question 2:** Is work engagement a substantial predictor of job satisfaction for child protection social workers?

**Question 3:** Do demographic variables influence job satisfaction and work engagement (age, gender, race, level of employment, qualifications)?

#### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypothesis will result in answers to the research questions.

Ho1: For child protection social workers, there is no meaningful connection between job satisfaction and work engagement

Ho2: Job satisfaction for child protection social workers is not an indicator of work engagement.

Ho3: Demographic variables (age, gender, race, years of practice, qualifications) influence job satisfaction and work engagement

### **3.3 APPROACH AND DESIGN**

The study employed a quantitative methodology. A quantitative approach was chosen for the study due to reliability, objectivity, and suitability in studies of a similar nature. The quantitative approach enables the understanding of the variables and how they relate to one another. Kumar (2011:103) indicates that a quantitative study utilises numerical data in analysing human behaviour through a scientific process.

A descriptive correlational methodology was used because it is ideal for determining whether job satisfaction influences work engagement. The quantitative descriptive correlational design has been used in several studies of job satisfaction, work engagement and related variables (Burns, 2018; Jones, 2018; Mutasa, 2016; Park, 2018; Ravalier, 2018; Sullivan, 2012).

### **3.4 UNIVERSE AND STUDY POPULATION**

The population is identified as, "all people or items (unit of analysis) with the characteristics that one wishes to study" (Bhattacharjee, 2012:65). A distinction was drawn between the universe and population by Strydom (2021:228). The universe is the set of all experimental units from which a sample is to be drawn whilst a population is a set of all values of the variables to be studied from a certain data set. The population denotes persons in the universe who have explicit study features.

The research population consists of child protection social workers employed by the DSD in Gauteng. Child protection social workers conduct legislative duties/responsibilities in compliance with the South Africa's Children's Act 38 of 2005 to care for and protect children and primarily resolve child abuse and neglect. Because of complexity, time constraints and cost considerations, it was not possible to research all prospective

participants in the population chosen for the study. Targeting a particular demographic helps to collect reliable information that saves time, financial resources and leads to high-quality research output (Strydom, 2021:229).

The researcher visited the head office of the Gauteng DSD to assess the population size of the social workers employed by the DSD for child protection. Human resources data collected showed that as of November 2019, excluding various categories such as probation and canalization, intake, field and foster care in the Children and Families network, the research population of child protection social workers at the Gauteng DSD was 2332 (N=2332).

### **3.5 SAMPLE SIZE AND PROCESS**

Bhattacharjee (2012:65) rightly says that the inclusion of the entire population in a survey is impossible and not financially feasible. For the analysis to be successful, a sample is therefore needed. Strydom (2021:233) suggests that non-probability sampling and probability sampling based on randomisation are frequently used in quantitative research. In this analysis, convenience sampling was chosen in the broader grouping of non-probability sampling as it allows easy access to respondents. A research sample is supposed to consist of elements that resemble the population with distinctive characters (Strydom, 2021:228). The research sample was chosen from social workers in child protection working at the Gauteng DSD.

Different views exist on the required minimum number of respondents or sample size for research purposes (Strydom, 2021:230). Grinnel and Williams (cited by Strydom, 2011:225) suggested that a sample of 30 is adequate to complete a basic statistical analysis whilst other scholars recommend that a minimum sample of 100 is adequate. Sample size can be influenced by the desired degree of accuracy and the type of sample and the availability of resources (Strydom, 2021). Using the statistical application G\*Power version 3.1.9.2 sample size power analysis, it was established that the minimum sample size required for the inquiry was 181. The population size was 2332, and the degree of confidence was set at 95%, while the confidence interval was seven.

### **3.6 INITIAL PREPARATIONS**

The researcher obtained authorization from the Head of the DSD, Gauteng Province to carry out research. A letter of request containing copies of the study proposal and an ethics clearance certificate were sent to the DSD and legal authorisation was subsequently given to perform the research (see Appendix B). After approval by the North West University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and management of the Gauteng Department of Social Development, the researcher proceeded to collect data through an online survey questionnaire at allcounted.com.

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

When performing research, a researcher must examine a number of ethical considerations. North-West University's Human Research Ethics Committee granted ethical permission (Ethics number - NWU - 0 0 3 0 5 - 2 0 - A 1). The research was monitored by HREC with regular monitoring reports to ensure adherence to research ethics. This research considered the following ethical considerations.

#### **3.7.1 Informed consent**

Gaining informed consent involves ensuring that acceptable information on research goals, expected duration of involvement in the study, procedures to be followed, benefits of the study and possible dangers respondents are likely to be exposed to, are explained to potential participants (Strydom, 2021:122). For a participant to make an informed decision, he/she must have sufficient intellectual and emotional capacity (TRREE, 2019). Before taking an online survey, participants were informed about informed consent and given the choice to drop out of the study. Participants could opt out of an online survey at any time, and no coercion or force was used to get informed permission.

#### **3.7.2 Confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity**

As it is important for human integrity, personal information gathered during a study must be kept confidential (TRREE, 2019). The researcher put in place steps to protect the participants' privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. According to Coffelt (2017:227)

confidentiality denotes “separating or modifying any personal, identifying information provided by participants from the data”. On the contrary, Coffelt (2017:227) describes anonymity as “collecting data without obtaining any personal, identifying information”. For example, Coffelt (2017:227) claims that anonymity is typical in quantitative investigations, while confidentiality is typical in qualitative investigations. When anonymity is practised, collected data will not be able to be traced to an individual participant. Anonymity and confidentiality are critical in protecting the privacy of those who willingly participate in a study. Participant confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed by not collecting any personal data that might reveal their identity. Names, addresses, contact details and other personal information which could result in the identification of participants were excluded in data collection. The researcher had sole access to the printed questionnaires from the online survey, which were sealed in a cabinet to which only the researcher had access.

### **3.7.3 Incentives/reimbursement**

As participation was voluntary and electronic, there were no benefits or compensation given to study participants. In addition, there were no expenses for the participants as they spent a few minutes responding to the questionnaire at a suitable time for them.

## **3.8 INSTRUMENTATION**

For data collection purposes, the researcher combined existing questionnaires of job satisfaction: The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (see Appendix A). According to the MSQ, satisfaction is measured using a Likert scale on a five-point scale with 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire was perfect as it has been commonly used for quantitative studies on work satisfaction (Marmo & Berkman, 2018; Mutasa, 2016; Park, 2018). A tool created by Schaufeli (2002) known as the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was used to collect data for work engagement. Approximately seventeen (17) items were included in the UWES, each with a scoring range of 1 (never) to 7 (always). Here is an illustration of an item from UWES: “I am passionate about my job” (see Appendix A).

The online survey questionnaire merged MSQ and UWES questions and a section for biographical data was added. The questionnaire, therefore, had three parts. The participants' personal information, including their academic qualifications, job experience, age, and race, was collected in the first section (Section A). A biographical account was required to allow data analysis and discussion. Section B involved the scale of job satisfaction (MSQ) and the work engagement (UWES) scale was in Section C

The research instruments did not involve any psychometric testing, did not need a special qualification to do interpretation and were available in the public domain. An online questionnaire was created and distributed via the website allcount.com. The questionnaire was only available in English. Social workers do most of their work in English and are expected to be proficient in English and to write their reports in English. Thus, the use of English in the questionnaire did not present a challenge to respondents.

### **3.9 DATA CAPTURING AND ANALYSIS**

After collecting online questionnaire-responses, the researcher captured data into Microsoft Excel format to enable encoding and data analysis. When analysing data in descriptive form, the researcher focused on standard deviation (*SD*) and the mean which helped to organize, summarize, and interpret the gathered data. Cronbach alpha coefficient assisted in evaluating the internal consistency of the research instruments. Pearson statistical correlational coefficient analysis, simple and multiple linear regression helped to construct an association between job satisfaction and work engagement using correlation, variance, and regression analysis (Jones, 2018:47). The degree of variance through regression analysis concentrated on extrinsic factors such as employee dedication, vigour, and absorption in the workplace and how they relate to independent factors such as career growth, job security, acknowledgement, workload, and benefits (Mutasa, 2016:34).

Statistical analysis was facilitated using the International Business Machines Corporations (IBM) software known as the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS-27) as it provides the necessary tools to compile and analyse data gathered in the research. SPSS provides measurements of probability distribution, inferential analysis, graphs, and charts that visually show the information. This enabled the researcher to

analyse the collected data. The researcher previously used SPSS whilst studying at Witwatersrand University.

### **3.10 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Babbie (cited by Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011:172), delineates validity to be “the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration” whilst the reliability of an instrument refers to the dependability, stability and consistency of the instrument. The instruments used ensured content, construct, and face validity as they have been widely used in various studies (Jones, 2018:48).

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) have defined content validity based on judgments made on the instruments by other researchers and experts (Leavy, 2017:115), referred to as "jury opinion" by Monette *et al.* (cited by Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011:173). The factorial analysis enabled validation of the research instrument. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ranges between 0 and 1 when testing reliability and a score between 0,8 and 0,9 shows high reliability of the instrument (Roestenburg, 2021:206). MSQ and UWES instruments are reputable and reliable as they have been successfully used in many studies.

### **3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

An empirical study was conducted using a quantitative method. In this chapter, information is clarified about the nature of the study, the sample size, the population, the instruments, and the data analysis. The researcher identifies the ethical aspects that guided the research. The next chapter will concentrate on the outcomes of the study's analysis and results.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the research was to quantitatively analyse job satisfaction and how it correlates with the work engagement of social workers in child protection services. Furthermore, the study was designed to determine whether work engagement was a predictor of job satisfaction. Graphs, descriptive statistics, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, and simple and multi-regression analysis are used in this chapter to analyze the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement. Finally, demographic characteristics such as age, race, level of employment, and academic qualifications were investigated to see if they influenced job satisfaction and work engagement. Analysing the data helped determine whether the study hypothesis was to be accepted or rejected. For data analysis, SPSS 27 was used.

#### **4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC RESULTS**

The demographic data for participants in the study are outlined. A total of 90 respondents responded to the online survey and 13 were excluded for data analysis due to incomplete information. Respondents were requested to provide demographic information such as their age, gender, race, level of work, and educational qualifications. Table 1 provides demographic information for study participants.

The results indicated that most of the respondents 65(84,4 %) were female whilst a few 12 (15,6%) were male. The respondents were predominantly black 74 (96,1%), whereas there were a limited number of white 1 (1,3%), Indian 1 (1,3%), and coloured 1 (1,3%) respondents. Twenty-six (33,8%) of respondents were in the age range of between 20-30 years. Another group of 26 (33,8%) respondents ranged between 31-40 years. Only 17 (22,1%) respondents were in the age category between 41-50 years and the last group of 8 (10,4%) respondents ranged in age between 51 and 60. There were no respondents aged 61 years and above in the survey. A summary of the respondents' demographic characteristics can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1: Frequencies distribution of Demographic Variables (N=77)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	77	65	84,4
	Male	77	12	15,6
<b>Race</b>	Black	77	74	96,1
	White	77	1	1,3
	Coloured	77	1	1,3
	Indian	77	1	1,3
<b>Age Group</b>	20-30	77	26	33,8
	31-40	77	26	33,8
	41-50	77	17	22,1
	51-60	77	8	10,4
<b>Highest qualification</b>	Diploma/ Degree	77	57	74
	Postgraduate	77	20	26
<b>Level of Employment</b>	Junior	77	41	53,2
	Middle	77	23	29,9
	Senior	77	12	15,6
	Top	77	1	1,3

Data showed that most respondents 57 (74%) had either a diploma or degree qualification whilst 20 (26%) had a post-graduate qualification. Over half of respondents 41 (53,2%) were at a junior level of employment. Respondents at the middle level of employment consist of 23 (29,9%) respondents and only 12 (15,6%) of the respondents reported that they were at a senior level of employment. Only 1 (1,3%) respondent reported being employed at the top level of employment.

#### **4.2 RELIABILITY RESULTS**

A scale's internal consistency is determined by Cronbach's alpha. According to Mutasa (2016:32), the Minnesota Satisfaction Scale (MSQ) for job satisfaction has good internal consistency, with a reported Cronbach alpha of 0.76. The reported Cronbach alpha for job satisfaction was 0.89. Subscales for job satisfaction (intrinsic job satisfaction ( $\alpha = 0,895$ ), extrinsic job satisfaction ( $\alpha = 0,912$ )) were consistent and at an acceptable level of measurement. The obtained Cronbach alpha coefficients for work engagement ( $\alpha = 0,923$ ), vigour ( $\alpha = 0,894$ ), dedication ( $\alpha = 0,897$ ) and absorption ( $\alpha = 0,900$ ) were consistent as Mutasa

(2016:32) indicated that a Cronbach alpha above 0.70, "signifies internal consistency of the measuring instrument". The Cronbach alpha results for the research variables are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Cronbach Alpha for Job satisfaction and work engagement**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Job satisfaction</b>	<b>0,891</b>
Intrinsic job satisfaction subscale	0,895
Extrinsic job satisfaction subscale	0,912
<b>Work engagement</b>	<b>0,923</b>
Work engagement - Vigour subscale	0,894
Work engagement - Dedication subscale	0,897
Work engagement - Absorption subscale	0,900

**2b. Reliability statistics for study constructs**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
0,914	0,954	7

**4.3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

The mean was one of the statistical models that provided a summary of the data. The standard deviation, "which is a measure of how well the mean represents the data", and the variance which is "the average error between the mean and the observation" (Field, 2005:4) demonstrated how to measure the "goodness-of-fit" of a model.

In Field's view (2005:6), data points with small standard deviations (relative to the mean) are close to the average. In the case of a high standard deviation "relative to the mean", the data points are well outside of the mean. As a result, the mean does not represent the data accurately. This study included a total of 77 child protection social workers (N = 77). Job satisfaction and work engagement were the study's main variables. Overall job satisfaction was rated at 69,48 (SD =13.26, Min =31, Max = 97). Work engagement was rated at 84.42 (SD = 19.66, Min = 27, Max = 119). The results showed that intrinsic job

satisfaction had an average of 44.83 ( $SD = 8.23$ ,  $Min=12$ ,  $Max = 60$ ). Extrinsic job satisfaction average was 24.65 ( $SD=6.20$ ,  $Min=11$ ,  $Max=40$ ). The results for vigour showed a mean of 30.05 ( $SD=7.12$ ,  $Min=6$ ,  $Max=42$ ). On the other hand, dedication's average was 25,69 ( $SD=6.67$ ,  $Min=5$ ,  $Max=35$ ). Lastly absorption average was 28.68 ( $SD=6.81$ ,  $Min=5$ ,  $Max =42$ ). The summary of descriptive statistics for variables of job satisfaction and work engagement is displayed in table 3.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Intrinsic, Extrinsic, Absorption, Vigour, and Dedication**

Variable		Number of Items	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Job satisfaction	Intrinsic	12	77	44,83	8,23	12	60
Job satisfaction	Extrinsic	8	77	24,65	6,2	11	40
Work engagement	Vigour	6	77	30,05	7,12	6	42
Work engagement	Dedication	5	77	25,69	6,67	5	35
Work engagement	Absorption	6	77	28,68	6,81	6	42

## 4.4 CORRELATIONS

### 4.4.1 Pearson correlation

The power of the association between the study variables of intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, vigour, dedication, and absorption was investigated using Pearson correlation. This reflected the relationship's strength as well as its direction (positive or negative). Cronk (2018:52) defines a positive correlation as two variables rising at the same time. Negative correlation occurs when one variable rises and the other decreases. As Cohen (cited by Pallant (2003:120) noted, a positive/negative score between .10 and .29 is considered small, .30 to .49 is medium, and .50 to 1 represents a large Pearson correlation.

Work engagement and job satisfaction were evaluated using Pearson correlation coefficients. The assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity, and linearity were checked at the preliminary analysis stage. Job satisfaction and work engagement were shown to be highly correlated ( $r = .714$ ,  $n=77$ ,  $p.001$ ). An examination of intrinsic job satisfaction

and vigour found a strong positive association ( $r=.735$ ,  $n=77$ ,  $p.001$ ) between the two variables, with high levels of intrinsic satisfaction associated with high levels of vigour.

According to the Pearson correlation coefficient, intrinsic satisfaction correlated strongly with dedication ( $r=.709$ ;  $n=77$ ,  $p.001$ ); high levels of intrinsic satisfaction were associated with high levels of dedication ( $r=.709$ ;  $n=77$ ,  $p.001$ ). Table 4 summarizes the results of the Pearson correlation analysis for job satisfaction and work engagement.

**Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlations between Job satisfaction and work engagement**

	Variable	$\alpha$	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Intrinsic	0,90	77	30,05	7,12	-				
2	Extrinsic	0,93	77	25,69	6,67	.683**	-			
3	Vigour	0,88	77	28,68	6,81	.735**	.548**	-		
4	Dedication	0,88	77	44,83	8,23	.709**	.567**	.885**	-	
5	Absorption	0,90	77	24,65	6,20	.650**	.473**	.867**	.843**	-

**NB\*\*.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

These findings contradict Hypothesis 1, which stated that there is no meaningful relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement for child protection social workers; and Hypothesis 2, which stated that job satisfaction is not an indicator of work engagement for child protection social workers. In this study, the researcher discovered a strong relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement among child protection social workers. Thus, child protection social workers' job satisfaction is strongly correlated with their work engagement. Work engagement is an indicator of job satisfaction.

**4.5 SIMPLE LINEAR AND MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS**

**4.5.1 Simple regression**

The association between job satisfaction and work engagement was investigated using simple regression. Simple linear regression permits one variable to be predicted from another. The assumptions for simple linear regression were that “both variables are interval – or ratio scaled, the dependent variable was normally distributed around the prediction line” and the variables are related to each other linearly (Cronk, 2018:55).

Based on work engagement, the participants' job satisfaction was predicted using simple linear regression. There was a significant regression ( $F(1, 75) = 77,788, p.001$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .509. The corrected R square value of .509 indicates that work engagement can explain 50.9% of the variation in job satisfaction, which is highly significant. Another analysis employing simple linear regression was calculated to predict the respondent's intrinsic job satisfaction based on vigour. A significant equation was obtained with an  $R^2$  of .540 ( $F(1,75) = 87.938, p<.001$ ). The intrinsic satisfaction of respondents is  $19.324 + 0.849(\text{Vigour})$  when measured by the Minnesota Satisfaction Questions Questionnaire; (MSQ). The adjusted R square value of 0.540 suggests that differences in vigour account for 54% of the variation in intrinsic satisfaction. This implies that the remaining 46% in variation in intrinsic satisfaction can be explained by variables other than vigour. Table 5 presents a model summary of regression for vigour and intrinsic satisfaction.

**Table 5: Model Summary**

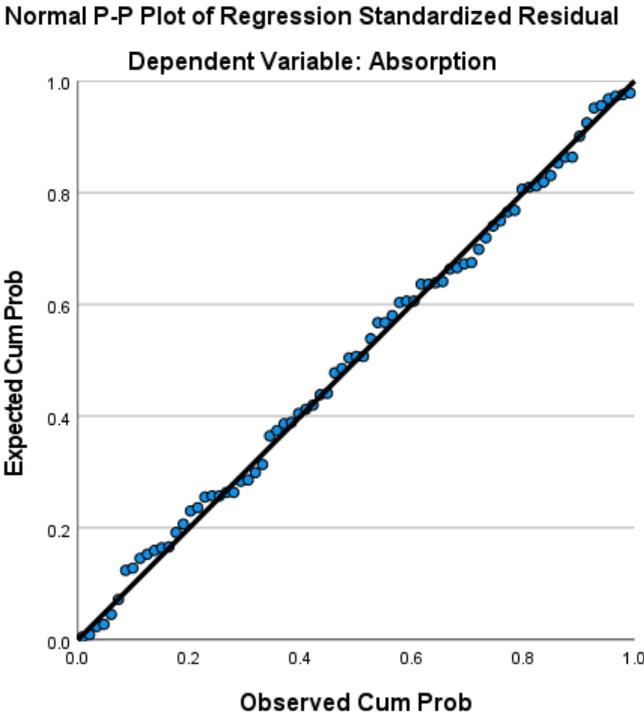
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.735 <sup>a</sup>	0,540	0,534	5,62027

a. Predictors: (Constant), Vigour  
 b. Dependent Variable: intrinsic

A significant correlation regression equation was established when estimating respondent dedication based on intrinsic satisfaction ( $F(1,75) =75.687, p.001$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .0502.

The anticipated intrinsic satisfaction of respondents is  $22.381 + 0.874 \cdot (\text{Dedication})$ . For each measure of dedication, respondents' intrinsic pleasure improved by 0.874.

Figure 4 depicts the linearity of the association between extrinsic job satisfaction and absorption. "It is typically believed that the mean values of the outcome variable for each increment of the predictor (s) lie along a straight line," writes Field (2005:170). The link between extrinsic job satisfaction and absorption is assumed to be linear in the model.



**Figure 4: Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual. Cum prob, cumulative probability.**

**4.5.2 Multiple regression analysis**

According to Bartley and Hashemi (2021:275), multiple regression is a “correlational technique” which aids the understanding of “the value of a dependant variable based on known (or assumed) values of two or more independent variables.” A variety of multiple regression methods, such as standard multiple (continuous), hierarchical multiple (sequential), and stepwise multiple are used to determine relationships between many

variables (Pallant, 2003:135). To scrutinize the correlation between dependent variables (job satisfaction, intrinsic and extrinsic) and independent/predictor variables (vigour, dedication, absorption), standard multiple regression was used. It is possible to more comprehensively explore a set of variables' associations by performing multiple regression analysis (Pallant, 2003: 134). Multiple regression analysis determines the number of factors such as, "how well a set of variables can predict a particular outcome" Pallant, (2003:134).

**4.5.3 Standard multiple regression**

An analysis of multiple regression was used to predict participant job satisfaction and other possible factors. Table 6 summarizes both descriptive and analytic data. As can be shown, job satisfaction is considerably and positively associated with vigour, dedication, and absorption. With an R2 of .535, a significant multiple regression equation was discovered (F (3,73) =27,950, p.001). As shown in Table 8, the vigour and dedication scales showed substantial positive regression weights, indicating that social workers with greater vigour and dedication scores were projected to have better job satisfaction after controlling for the other factors in the model. There was a significant negative-regression weight for absorption (opposite in sign to its association with the criterion), suggesting that participants with higher absorption scores would suffer lower job satisfaction (suppressor effect).

**Table 6: Summary statistics, correlations, and results from the regression analysis**

Variable	Mean	Std	Correlation with Job satisfaction	Multiple regression weights	
				<i>b</i>	$\beta$
Job satisfaction	69,48	13,26			
Vigour	30,05	7,12	0,712	0,847	0,455
Dedication	25,69	6,67	0,705	0,748	0,376
Absorption	28,68	6,81	0,624	-0,170	-0,087

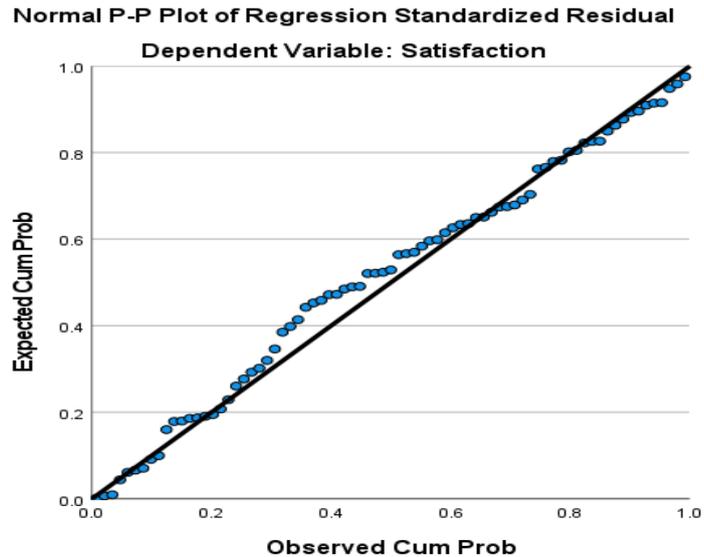
**Note: \*p < .05, \*\*p<0.1, \*\*\*p <.001**

A standard multiple regression model was used to analyse the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction (as dependent variables) and engagement (vigour, devotion, and absorption) as predictor variables. Significant and positive relationships were found between intrinsic satisfaction and vigour, dedication, and absorption. The multiple regression analysis models with all three predictors produced ( $F(3,73) = 30.464$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .556. Participants with higher intrinsic satisfaction were expected to have higher vigour and dedication, as evidenced by substantial positive regression weights on the vigour and dedication scales. The absorption scale has a considerable negative weight, yielding a similar result to the model for the association between job satisfaction and vigour, dedication, and absorption.

The regression equation between extrinsic satisfaction as a dependent variable and vigour, dedication, and absorption (as predictors) was significant ( $F(3,73) = 12.293$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .336. Both vigour and dedication were positive predictors. Absorption had a negative significant weight which was consistent with the other two models of job satisfaction and intrinsic satisfaction as dependent variables and vigour, dedication, and absorption as predictors.

#### **4.5.4 Test of normality of residuals**

A percentile–percentile plot (P-P Plot) or the cumulative probability plots of residuals (P-P plot) of the standardized data against the standard normal distribution was used to test the normality of residuals. According to Cronk (2018:56), for normal data, the distribution must fall on a straight line, as an indication of normal positive correlation. Figure 5 below indicates how the residuals deviated from the normal line. The graph demonstrates that the scatters of the residuals are fundamentally well distributed on the normal distribution line, signifying a normal scattering of residuals.



**Figure 5: Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual. Cum prob, cumulative probability**

#### **4.5.5 Hierarchical regression model**

To investigate the distinctive contribution of work engagement to the explanation of job satisfaction, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was done. In three steps, variables that explain work engagement were entered. In step 1, the dependent variable was job satisfaction, while the independent variable was vigour. In step 2, vigour and dedication were entered as predictors, and in step 3, the three engagement variables: vigour, dedication, and absorption were entered as predictors. Table 7 shows the correlations between variables in the hierarchical regression analysis model.

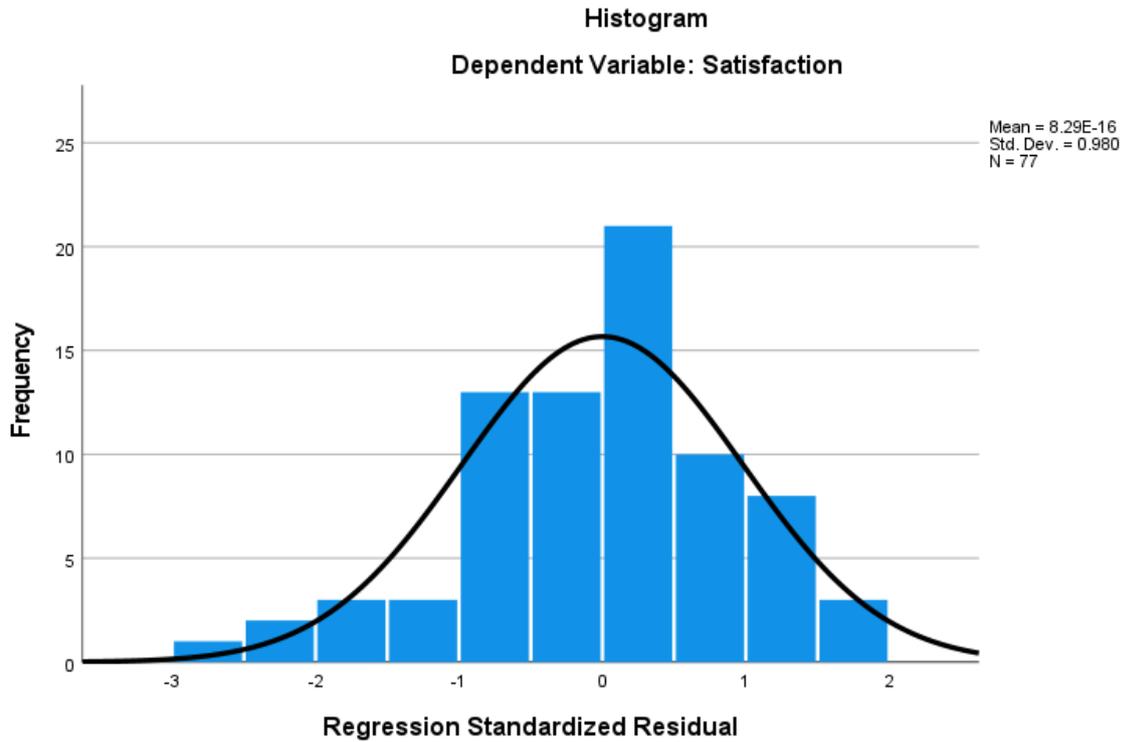
**Table 7: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for variables predicting Job satisfaction**

Variable	$\beta$	$t$	$\alpha$	R	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
				.712	.507	0,507
<b>Step 1</b>						
Vigour	0,712	8,780	0,000			
<b>Step 2</b>						
Vigour	0,406	2,385	0,020	.730	.533	0,026
Dedication	0,346	2,030	0,046			
<b>Step 3</b>						
Vigour	0,455	2,326	0,023	.731	0.535	0,002
Dedication	0,376	2,077	0,041			
Absorption	-0,087	-0,514	0,608			

**Note :  $N = 77$  ;  $p < .05$  ,  $**p < .01$  ,  $***p < .001$**

With an R<sup>2</sup> of .507, vigour had a positive significant contribution to the model in stage 1 of the hierarchical regression model ( $F(1,75) = 77.095, p < .05$ ). Adding dedication to engagement variables in model 2 explained 2,6 % of the variation in job satisfaction and the change was positively significant, ( $F(1,74) = 42.212, p < .05$ ), with an R<sup>2</sup> of .533. When all work engagement variables (vigour, dedication, and absorption) were included in model 3, absorption had no significant impact on the model's capacity to predict job satisfaction,  $t = -0.514, p > 0.5$ . Vigour was the most important predictor of job satisfaction, accounting for 50.7 percent of the variation in the model.

A histogram is shown in figure 6 to visualize residuals for variables such as satisfaction with job and engagement at work (vigour, dedication, and absorption). The histogram shows the distribution of the residuals which seem to be normally distributed as it is not skewed in either direction.



**Figure 6: Residual outcome for job satisfaction**

#### **4.6 DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ROLE IN JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK ENGAGEMENT**

According to Sijuwade and White (2011:436), compensation, career tenure, and working in private practice all have a positive link with job satisfaction. Based on this context, the researcher expected that demographic factors (age, gender, race, level of employment, qualifications) would influence job satisfaction and work engagement. For determining the statistical significance of demographic factors with job satisfaction, work engagement, intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction, vigour and dedication, and absorption, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. ANOVA was chosen because it aids in determining whether or not differences between sets of data are statistically significant (Bartley & Hashemi, 2021:283; Field, 2005:309).

A one-way between-group analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to look at the relationship between race and extrinsic satisfaction. Significant differences were found for each group at  $p.05$  ( $F(3,73) = 2,205, p = .09$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

This study used a chi-square test of independence to examine the relationship between race and job satisfaction. There was a significant association between these factors ( $X^2 (114) = 191.98, p.001$ ). Race and job satisfaction are significantly related. Race determined engagement levels, ( $X^2 (138) = 191.98, p<.001$ ). Furthermore, an independent chi-square test revealed a significant association between race and extrinsic job satisfaction ( $X^2 (72) =139,95, p.001$ ). Job satisfaction was found to have a significant connection with race ( $X^2 (114) = 191.98, p.001$ ).

No significant relationship between age group and job satisfaction was established using the chi-square test of independence ( $X^2 (114) =114.31, p = 0.474$ ). As a result, the level of job satisfaction was not determined by age group. Gender does not appear to have a significant impact on job satisfaction ( $X^2 (38) = 45.33, p = 0.193$ ).

According to one-way ANOVA ( $F (3,73) =1.039, p=0.69$ ), there were no statistically significant variations in participation between age groups of participants. There were no statistically significant variations in job satisfaction between males and females ( $F (1,75) =0.476, p =0.49$ ). Furthermore, no statistically significant variations in work engagement were detected between males and females ( $F (1,75) = 1.219, p=0.27$ ). Table 8 summarizes the chi-square test of independence results between demographic, job satisfaction, and work engagement variables.

**Table 8: Chi-square test of independence results - demographic variables**

	Intrinsic	Extrinsic	Vigour	Dedication	Absorption	Satisfaction	Engagement
	$\alpha$	$\alpha$	$\alpha$	$\alpha$	$\alpha$	$\alpha$	$\alpha$
<b>Demographic Variables</b>							
Age group	0.573	0.423	0.678	0.427	0.625	0.474	0.434
Highest qualification	0.577	0.452	0.344	0.357	0.187	0.169	0.360
Level of employment	0.947	0.668	0.723	0.442	0.597	0.845	0.881
Race	0.002	0.000	0.253	0.813	0.009	0.000	0.002
Gender	0.173	0.286	0.554	0.099	0.180	0.193	0.422

**Note:** \*  $p <.05$  \*\*  $p <.01$

## 4.7 DISCUSSION

The goal of the study was to look at job satisfaction and how it related to work engagement among child protection social workers at the Gauteng Department of Social Development. This study aids understanding of these variables (job satisfaction and work engagement) in the South African context. As a result, the study's discussion includes a close examination of the study's aims in light of the research findings. The discussion includes a comparison of the findings of this study with those of other studies.

According to the survey results, a large majority of social workers who participated in the study were content with their jobs and were highly involved in the workplace. Ravalier (2018:401) found that many social workers were satisfied with their jobs. The findings of this study corroborate those of Hussein *et al.* (2014:10), who found social workers to be relatively content with their careers and engaged at work. Antonopolou *et al.* (2017:42) reported social workers being generally satisfied in the workplace. A study by CASW (2018:5) also found Child Welfare social workers satisfied and engaged despite challenges such as high workloads and work demands impacting on levels of satisfaction. Equally, Baugerud, Vangbaek and Melinda (2018:229) reported that the majority of child protection social workers in their study were "moderately satisfied" whilst "14,4 per cent were highly satisfied". Therefore, results from this current study are consistent with various studies which found social workers generally satisfied and engaged. However, the size of the sample used in the current study was small in comparison to others which might have an impact on results.

It was one of the objectives of this study to establish the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement. Job satisfaction and work engagement were found to be closely associated in the study. This study parallels Vorina *et al.*'s (2017:243) study in which a statistically positive relationship was found between work engagement and job satisfaction. Comparable results were reported by Tepayakul and Rinthaisong (2018:68) who reported a positive relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement. The findings of this study agree with those of Tepayakul and Rinthaisong (2018).

Furthermore, one of the study's aims was to see if work engagement was a predictor of job satisfaction for child protection social workers. According to the findings, work

engagement is a positive predictor of job satisfaction. Work engagement and its subscales (vigour, dedication, and absorption) were found to be predictors of job satisfaction and its sub-variables in both simple and complex regression models (extrinsic and intrinsic satisfaction). These findings were consistent with results in a study by Vorina *et al.* (2017:243) which confirmed a positive and statistically significant relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement. Similar conclusions were reported by Tepayakul *et al.* (2018:68) who found a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement.

Further investigation revealed a favourable association between intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction and engagement factors such as vigour, dedication, and absorption. As a result of the findings, the study hypothesis is accepted, as work engagement was found to be a predictor of job satisfaction. As a result, the hypothesis that job satisfaction for child protection social workers is not a predictor of work engagement was rejected because the findings contradicted the study hypothesis. The findings are consistent with studies by Anwar and Kadir (2017), Hussein *et al.* (2014), Marmo and Berkman (2018), Tepayakul *et al.* (2018) and Ravalier (2018) who reported positive associations amongst job satisfaction and work engagement.

Another study goal was to see if any demographic factors (age, gender, race, qualifications, and level of employment) influenced job satisfaction and engagement among child protection social workers. Some demographic characteristics were shown to have statistically significant correlations with job satisfaction and work engagement. Job satisfaction and work engagement demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with race. Another substantial link between age group and extrinsic satisfaction was discovered. However, no statistically significant associations were discovered between job satisfaction and age, gender, highest qualification, or level of employment. Like other similar studies, demographic variables have produced mixed results as some demographic variables had significant relationships with job satisfaction and work engagement whilst others showed no statistically significant relationships. Consequently, in some instances, the study hypothesis was accepted whilst it was rejected for some demographic variables.

These findings are contrary to findings by Sijuwade and White (2011:1) whose results showed that gender influenced the level of job satisfaction. However, the departure between this study and Sijuwade and White (2011) results was the demographic variables used were different. For instance, this study used qualification level and level of employment, which was not the case for Sijuwade and White (2011). As a result, a comparison of some of the demographic characteristics employed in the two studies was not possible. However, the findings on the link between demographic characteristics and job satisfaction and work engagement were equivocal. Whilst this study found no relationship between the age category of employees with job satisfaction, it is in contrast to Graham *et al.* (2015:9) findings which showed that age determined the job satisfaction of participants. Graham *et al.* (2015:9) further reported the work category/level of the employee determined the level of job satisfaction. In terms of the relationship between age category with job satisfaction and work engagement, the results of this study are not consistent with findings by Sijuwade and White (2011) and Graham *et al.* (2015) who reported significant relationships between age category with job satisfaction and work engagement.

Despite findings of job satisfaction and engagement among social workers who participated in the survey, there was evident discontent with payment/ salary and the amount of labour undertaken by the social workers. Study participants were not satisfied by their "pay and amount of work they do" as shown by results with a mean of 2.06 ( $SD = 1.20$ ,  $Min = 1$ ,  $Max = 5$ ). In comparison, a study by Calitz (2014:158) for social workers from North West Province in South Africa reported a slightly above average score on "I am satisfied by my salary" with a mean of 2.84 ( $SD = 1.12$ ,  $Min = 1$ ,  $Max = 5$ ). This study differed from that of Calitz (2014) where social workers were from different fields whereas in the present study, social workers were only involved in child protective services.

#### **4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Results were the focus of the chapter, which concluded with a discussion of those results. In addition to understanding the relationships between study variables, data analysis using SPSS helped the researcher reach study objectives.

## **CHAPTER 5: LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The study's aim and objectives included assessing the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement, assessing whether work engagement is a predictor of job satisfaction, and establishing whether demographic characteristics influence job satisfaction and work engagement. The findings of the study, as well as their discussion, are presented in this report. Understanding job satisfaction and work engagement in the context of an organisation can affect recruitment, training, resource provision, and staff progress. This chapter will provide recommendations as well as the study's conclusion. First, some limitations will be outlined.

### **5.2 LIMITATIONS**

In any study, there might be limitations beyond the control of the researcher which impact on study outcome. There are several limitations that the researcher identified in this study which will be discussed. The study solely looked at social workers who worked in child protection services at the Gauteng Department of Social Development. As a result, the findings cannot be generalized and applied to social workers providing child protection services in other provinces or on a nationwide scale. The capacity to investigate on a bigger scale was hampered by time limitations and a lack of financial resources. This was only a limited-scope study which formed part of a module-directed Master's degree in Child Protection. Moreover, some studies utilized large sample sizes and a nationwide scope, allowing the results to be generalized to the entire country.

An outbreak of the Covid pandemic (Covid-19) had a huge impact as the researcher was forced to change the planned method of data collection from self-administered hand distributed questionnaires to an online survey. The research could not be finalized in 2020 as planned due to Covid-19 and the changes had to be submitted to the ethics committee for approval. Social workers at the Department of Social Development in Gauteng were working on a rotational basis. The social workers worked a full week in the office and were off the next week. This schedule negatively affected momentum and participation as all the social workers could not fully participate in the study. The link to the study was sent through the Communications unit of Social Development through official email

addresses. Social workers at home struggled to access work emails as they could only access them from work. The study sample was very small in comparison to other studies. An effort was made to resend the research to participants over a certain period to get increased participation. The researcher had no control over participation and sample size as participation was voluntary. Despite the request by the researcher for participants to answer all questions honestly, one cannot rule out possible bias as the results of the study are based on the social workers' opinions and views over which the researcher had no control.

### **5.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The research aim and objectives were established at the outset of this study. The researcher was able to elucidate the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement for social workers in child protection. One of the study objectives was to determine whether work engagement was a predictor of job satisfaction for social workers in child protection. The study results showed that work engagement is a predictor of job satisfaction for social workers involved in child protection services at the Gauteng Department of Social Development. Furthermore, the research intended to determine if any demographic variables (age, gender, race, level of employment, qualifications) influence job satisfaction and work engagement. It was established that significant and non-significant relationships exist between job satisfaction, work engagement and demographic variables. The study fulfilled all research objectives.

### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Using the literature and study findings, the researcher makes several recommendations for the practice of social work, for organisations, for policy implementation and review, and for further research.

#### **5.4.1 Recommendations for social work practice:**

- An understanding of the job satisfaction and work engagement of child protection social workers by managers, supervisors, organisations, educators, and policy makers can contribute to an improved positive work environment, productivity and staff retention.
- It is suggested that the Gauteng Department of Social Development further investigates why social workers are dissatisfied with their salaries and the quantity of work they are performing and finds solutions to resolve the problem as it can impact on social workers' satisfaction and engagement levels.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations for organisations:**

- Leadership and supervision, identified under organisational factors, are paramount in determining job satisfaction and work engagement. To enhance job satisfaction and work engagement, organisations should develop leadership and supervision skills.
- "A positive feeling of appreciation" is frequently associated with organisational job components such as "training, growth and career, immediate leadership, performance assessment, communication, equal opportunities and fair treatment" (Robinson *et al.*, 2004:21). It is recommended that organisations "appreciate" their employees by attending to the above components as they contribute to the job satisfaction and work engagement of child protection social workers.
- "Optimism, self-efficacy and self-esteem" are interrelated to personal capital (Bakker *et al.* (2008:187). Organisations are urged to develop programs which enhance the "optimism, self-efficacy and self-esteem" of child protection social workers which should have positive returns for the satisfaction and engagement of social workers.
- The Department of Social Development should consider the findings of this study and develop a strategy to increase job satisfaction and work engagement among

social workers involved in child protection services, as job satisfaction and work engagement have been shown to increase productivity boost employee morale, and improve the organisational performance.

#### **5.4.3 Recommendations for policy:**

- Research results can provide insight and understanding of job satisfaction and work engagement to policymakers, organisations and government departments and influence their policies towards the retention of staff, increasing job satisfaction and engagement in the workplace.

The Gauteng Department of Social Development can boost the standard of service delivery by developing and implementing policies to increase the job satisfaction and work engagement of child protection social workers. In this regard, programs and activities directed at well-being can be beneficial. If social workers flourish, they will be more able to focus and be engaged in their work, which will in turn lead to more job satisfaction and higher levels of well-being.

#### **5.4.4 Recommendations for further research**

- The findings of this study can be utilized as a foundation for larger-scale research on the job satisfaction and work engagement of social workers involved in child protection in South Africa. Further understanding of job satisfaction and work engagement in child protection services is needed as limited literature is available.
- Considering that private-sector social workers in South Africa (NGOs such as Child Welfare and SAVF) play a key role in providing services to children, researchers ought to do studies on the job satisfaction and work engagement of these staff members.
- The size of the sample can influence and affect study outcomes, and this study had a small sample size when compared to other research of a similar kind. As a result, while doing comparable studies in the future, researchers should consider increasing the sample size.

- If the "Social Exchange" hypothesis is investigated further, it will certainly aid in understanding the job satisfaction and engagement of child protection social workers.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

To summarize, the findings were similar to prior studies in that a correlation was found between job satisfaction and work engagement. Furthermore, the findings revealed that work engagement is a predictor of job satisfaction. The item "my compensation and the quantity of work I perform" gave a negative answer for the job satisfaction variable since most participants were dissatisfied with their income. Overall, the participants were pleased with their jobs and enthusiastic about their work. The findings were varied when it came to determining the role of demographic variables in impacting job satisfaction and work engagement. While some demographic characteristics exhibited a statistically significant link with job satisfaction and work engagement, others did not. The research adds to our understanding of the relationships between job satisfaction, work engagement, and demographic characteristics for social workers working in child protection in South Africa. The study was hampered by the Covid pandemic (Covid-19), and the sample size was modest in contrast to other research of this type. It is suggested that comparable research in the field of child protection be conducted in the future.

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## ANNEXURE A: QUESTIONNAIRE

### Dear Respondent

Thank you for sparing your precious time to complete this questionnaire. The questionnaire will assist the researcher in analysing the relationship between job satisfaction and engagement within the workplace. It would be greatly appreciated if you kindly complete the following questions frankly and honestly. Please note that the information being asked for is purely for academic purposes and will be kept strictly confidential. Hence your name and that of your department/organisation are not required.

Your participation in this survey is highly appreciated

### Section A: Biographical Information

Please complete the following by marking your choices with an X in the appropriate box

Age group:	1. 20-30	2. 31-40	3. 41-50	4. 51-60	5. 60+
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Gender:	1. Male	2. Female
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Current job	1. Social worker	2. Other
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Does your Department/ Unit directly work with children on a daily or regular basis in terms of the Children 's Act 38 of 2005 and do you regard yourself as a child protection social worker?	1. Yes	2. No
---	--------	-------

Years of Experience:	1. 0 - 5	2. 6-10	3. 11-15	4. 16-20	5. 21+
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Highest Qualification:	1. Matric	2. Diploma	3. Bachelor's	4. Honours	5. Masters	6. Doctorate
Level of Employment:	1. Junior	2. Middle	3. Senior	4. Top	5. Unsure	

### Section B

The purpose of these questions is to give you a chance to tell how you feel about your present job, what things you are satisfied with and what things you are not satisfied with. On the basis of your answers and those of people like you, the researcher hopes to get a better understanding of job satisfaction and engagement of child protection workers. Please rate the extent to which you feel satisfied with the following statements by making an "X' over the appropriate number on the 1 to 5-point scale next to the statement.

1 = Very dissatisfied	2 = Dissatisfied	3 = Neutral	4 = Satisfied	5 = Very satisfied
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	STATEMENT	SCALE				
		Very dissatisfi ed	dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied
1	Being able to keep busy all the time.	1	2	3	4	5
2	The chance to work alone on the job.	1	2	3	4	5
3	The chance to do different things from time to time.	1	2	3	4	5
4	The chance to be "somebody" in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
5	The way my boss handles his/her workers.	1	2	3	4	5
6	The competence of my supervisor in making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience.	1	2	3	4	5
8	The way my job provides for steady employment.	1	2	3	4	5
9	The chance to do things for other people.	1	2	3	4	5
10	The chances to tell people what to do.	1	2	3	4	5
11	The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
12	The way company policies are put into practice.	1	2	3	4	5
13	My pay and the amount of work I do.	1	2	3	4	5
14	The chances for advancement on the job.	1	2	3	4	5
15	The freedom to use my own judgement.	1	2	3	4	5
16	The chance to try my own methods of doing the job.	1	2	3	4	5
17	The working conditions.	1	2	3	4	5
18	The way my co-workers get along with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
19	The praise I get for doing a job.	1	2	3	4	5
20	The feeling of accomplishment I get from my job.	1	2	3	4	5

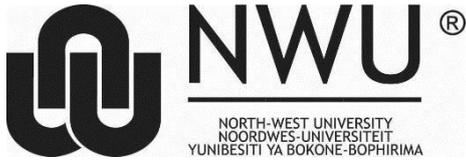
## **Section C**

The following 17 statements are about how you feel at work and how engaged you are when at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, cross the '0' (zero) in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by crossing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	A few times a year/less	Once a month/less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday

1	At my work, I feel bursting with energy	
2	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	
3	Time flies when I'm working	
4	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	
5	I am enthusiastic about my job	
6	When I am working, I forget everything else around me	
7	My job inspires me	
8	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	
9	I feel happy when I am working intensely	
10	I am proud on the work that I do	
11	I am immersed in my work	
12	I can continue working for very long periods at a time	
13	To me, my job is challenging	
14	I get carried away when I'm working	
15	At my job, I am very resilient, mentally	
16	It is difficult to detach myself from my job	
17	At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well	

**Thank you very much for your participation**



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**North-West University Health Research Ethics  
Committee (NWU-HREC)**

Tel: 018 299-1206  
Email: [Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za) (for human studies)

10 July 2020

## ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC) on 10/07/2020, the NWU-HREC hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU- HREC grants its permission that, provided the general and specific conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

**Study title: Job satisfaction and engagement of child protection social workers in Gauteng**

**Principal Investigator/Study Supervisor/Researcher: Prof M van der Merwe**

**Student: D Mutasa - 3117635**

N	W	U	-	0	0	3	0	5	-	2	0	-	A	1
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**Ethics number:**

Institution      Study Number      Year      Status

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

**Application Type: Single study**

**Commencement date: 10/07/2020**

**Expiry date: 31/07/2021**

**Risk:**

**Minimal**

**Approval of the study is provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of an annual monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation. A monitoring report is due at the end of July annually until completion.**

### General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The principal investigator/study supervisor/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-HREC:
  - annually on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided annually, and upon completion of the study; and
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the principal investigator/study supervisor/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the NWU-HREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for active monitoring.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-HREC reserves the right to:
  - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
  - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
    - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
    - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-HREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
    - submission of the annual monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and/or
    - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
  - NWU-HREC can be contacted for further information via [Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za) or 018 299

### Special conditions of the research approval due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

**Please note:** Due to the nature of this research study i.e. face-to-face completion of a paper questionnaire by social workers, *this study will have to be placed on hold until the appropriate alert level is reached for the study to proceed.* In order for it to proceed, the researcher will have to *apply to the appropriate REC using the appropriate template* to request that the **study can resume**, once the appropriate alert level is reached. If the researcher has not implemented a *COVID-19 research risk assessment and management analysis and amended the study accordingly*, they will first have to **amend** their study, before they can apply for their research to continue (as setup according to the attached document entitled "COVID-19 research risk assessment and management approach" (Prof Minrie Greeff, 29 June 2020)). Once the alert level is appropriate for the study to proceed, the researcher should:

- a. Send the completed template with the required amendments, as made as specified under 8.4 in the SOP for the research ethics approval application process (2.2.4\_SOP\_Ethics\_1.4) to [Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za).
- b. Name the email, to which you attach the document that you send, with a specific subject line indicating that it is a request to continue a research study e.g. "Continuation request (COVID-19): NWU-XXXXX- XX-XX".
- c. Contact the Head of the Ethics Office, Prof Wayne Towers at 072 149 2960 or [wayne.towers@nwu.ac.za](mailto:wayne.towers@nwu.ac.za) and the Chairperson, Prof Petra Bester at 082 298 3567 or [petra.bester@nwu.ac.za](mailto:petra.bester@nwu.ac.za), at least before you plan to submit the application for review, so that we can timeously appoint appropriate reviewers and proactively

manage the process of the review of your amendment.

The review of this request will be handled via the *expedited process*. If successful, the researcher will receive a letter indicating that amendments were approved and the study can proceed. Please note that if it is determined that the researcher has proceeded with the research, without first amending a study and obtaining the appropriate permission, they will be seen to have either have violated good research practice or been non-compliant and the necessary steps will be taken.

**Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):**

- a. Please provide the NWU-HREC with copies of the goodwill permission letters from the senior managers at the service points that are to be included in the study.

As the study progresses the aforementioned conditions should be submitted to [Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za](mailto: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 NWU-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

The NWU-HREC would like to remain at your service and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the NWU-HREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Digitally signed by Prof  
Petra Bester

Date: 2020.07.13

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Chairperson NWU-HREC

Current details:(23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.4  
Templates\9.1.5.4.2\_NWU-HREC\_EAL.docm20 August 2019  
File Reference: 9.1.5.4.2



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NWU- HREC Approval	Date: 2021.03.0 2 14:52:29 +02'00'
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**INFORMED CONSENT FOR CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS**

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:** Job satisfaction and engagement of child protection social workers in Gauteng

**ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBER:** NWU-00305-20-A1 PRINCIPAL

**INVESTIGATOR:** Daniel Mutasa

**POST GRADUATE STUDENT:** Daniel Mutasa **ADDRESS:**

17 Casaria Flats, Leslie street, Vereeniging

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 0731981886

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of a Social Work Master Degree (Child Protection). 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 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, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the **NWU-Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00305-20-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.

### **Purpose of the study**

- *To determine job satisfaction of child protection social workers*
- *To determine the engagement of child protection social workers*
- *To determine if any demographic variables (age, gender, race, years of experience, qualifications) contribute to the variance in job satisfaction and engagement*
- *This study will be conducted at the Department of Social Development in Gauteng between February 2021 and March 2021*

### **Why have you been invited to participate?**

- *You have been invited to be part of this research because you are currently involved in child protection services in the Department of Social Development in Gauteng Province*

### **What will be expected of you?**

- *You will be expected to complete an online questionnaire which will take about twenty minutes and upon completion electronically submit it to the researcher*

### **Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?**

- *Potential benefits include psychological and social benefits such as satisfaction of participating in the development of and gaining new knowledge about job satisfaction and engagement in social work. There will be no direct gains for you in the study.*

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

- *The anticipated potential risk level to the participants is minimal. There is no expected emotional, psychological and physical harm to be experienced by the participant. In the event that you need professional help, details of an EAP practitioner at Social Development will be provided. Due to Covid -19 pandemic there will not be a physical completion of the questionnaire and online completion ensures the safety of the researcher and participants*

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

- *Anonymity of your findings will be protected by removing any identifying information and details of participants. Your privacy will be respected by encoding personal details. Your results will be kept confidential by ensuring that only the researcher and supervisor will be able to look at your findings.*
- *Findings will be kept safe by keeping online collected electronic data protected by password/s. After completion of the research all electronic questionnaires and any hard copies with data will be stored in a safe at the offices of the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies, North-West University. It will be destroyed after 5 years*

**What will happen with the findings or samples?**

- *The findings of this study will only be used for this study.*

**How will you know about the results of this research?**

- *We will give you the findings of this research by submitting a copy of the article to the department of Social Development to distribute through emails and relevant communication channels. An infographic with a summary of information will be emailed to you.*

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

- *There will be no incentive or reimbursement offered to participants in the study as participation will be on voluntary basis. Any costs for the study are not funded by any organisation or agency and will be footed by the researcher. There should be no costs involved for participants*

**Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

- You can contact Daniel Mutasa at 0731981886 if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the NWU-Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs. Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206 or [carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za](mailto: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.

**Declaration by participant**

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in the research study titled: **Job satisfaction and engagement of child protection social workers in Gauteng**

I declare that:

I have read this information and understood its contents/ and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.

- The research was clearly explained to me.
- 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



Enquiries: Dr. Sello Mokoena  
Tel: 082 331 0786  
File no.: 01/06/20

Dear D Mutasa

**RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Thank you for your application to conduct research within the Gauteng Department of Social Development.

Your application to conduct research on ***"JOB SATISFACTION AND ENGAGEMENT OF CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS IN GAUTENG"*** has been considered and approved for support by the Department as it was found to be beneficial to the Department's vision and mission. The approval is subject to the Department's terms and conditions as stated on the GDSD application form.

You have permission to interview officials and beneficiaries within facilities regulated by the Department, conduct observations and access relevant documents where necessary.

May I take this opportunity to wish you well on the journey you are about to embark on.

We look forward to a value adding research and a fruitful co-operation.

With thanks

  
**Dr. Sello Mokoena**  
**Director: Research and Policy Coordination**  
**Date:** 03/6/2020