



**The views of SAPS officers about their role and
the role of designated social workers in child
abuse case management: A qualitative
description**

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Supervisor: Prof E Truter

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DECLARATION

Full Name Rinkie Mmalotja Seimela

I declare that the study titled: *The views of SAPS officers about their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative description*, is my original work; that it has not been submitted at another university for any degree or examination, and that all the sources I have used, or quoted, have been cited both in text and in separate complete reference lists.



Signature

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EDITING CERTIFICATE

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the dissertation with the title: *The view of SAPS officers about their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative description*. I am a qualified and registered language practitioner.

I acknowledge that the document has undergone a proper and professional language edit (including the checking of spelling, grammar, register). The onus rests on the client to work through the proposed changes after the edit and accept or reject these changes.

Yours sincerely



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DEDICATION

This mini dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Mmatsedi and Koenadi Seimela, who have always loved me unconditionally and whose good examples have taught me to work hard for the things I want to achieve.

PREFACE AND DECLARATION

The **article format** was chosen for the current study. The researcher, **Rinkie Seimela**, conducted the research and wrote the manuscript. Prof. Elmien Truter acted as her supervisor. For this **mini-dissertation**, **one manuscript** was written and will, following examination, be submitted for publication in the following journal:

MANUSCRIPT 1: BRITISH JOURNAL OF SOCIAL WORK

THE MINI-DISSERTATION CONSISTS OF THREE SECTIONS

SECTION A: Overview of the study

SECTION B:

- Literature review
- Manuscript 1: “The views of SAPS officers about their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative description”

SECTION C: Conclusions, recommendations, and a combined reference list

SUMMARY

Child abuse is a global catastrophe, a problem with wide-ranging, destructive consequences for the people who are directly and indirectly affected by it. It is a problem that requires a response from a larger child protection system that includes multiple role players such as designated social workers (DSWs), police officers, legal professionals, and health practitioners. Cooperation between the different role players is a prerequisite for successful investigation and overall management of child abuse cases. A few research studies, which explored the views of social workers and other professionals, highlight the apparent inadequacies of many police officers in executing their role when managing child abuse cases, which is said to lead to poor service delivery, often leaving children behind and negatively affect successful prosecution of such cases. There is, however, a gap in literature about how the SAPS view these different roles in the management of child abuse cases. Understanding their views will support efforts toward solution formulation. Therefore, in response to this gap, a qualitative study was executed to describe the views of some SAPS officers based in Hillbrow, Gauteng, on their role and the role of designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases. Participants were recruited through a self-referral process and snowball sampling. Thirteen participants took part in the study and data was collected by means of one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Data was transcribed and analysed through thematic analysis. In relation to the findings on SAPS officers' view of their role in the management of child abuse, six themes were identified: open a case, statutory intervention, interaction with other role players, investigate and arrest, participating in judicial process and police conduct/attitude vs. victim response. The role and duties of designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases included: initiation of investigations, statutory intervention, counselling services and police experiences when working with DSWs. Serendipitous findings are also reported. The findings of the study help us better understand, why there are problems in the larger child protection system in terms of professional collaboration and service delivery; and the study findings also help us formulate further research agendas toward solutions in this regard. Conclusions and recommendations follow.

Key words: South African Police Service Officers, Designated Social Workers

Child protection, Child abuse, Child protection social workers, Qualitative research

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DSD	Department of Social Development
DSW	Designated social worker
DSWs	Designated social workers
SA	South Africa
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAPS	South African Police Service

1. SECTION A: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This **overview** is a background document (originally the research proposal) for the current study, the manuscript in Section B serves as the research report, which contain specifics of the empirical research. Sections C offers a summary of the work done, and major conclusions and recommendations emanating from this research. It is therefore acceptable for some content duplication to occur between Sections A, B, and C.

Section B has 1 manuscript prepared in accordance with specific journal guidelines and follows the APA referencing style (which is also used throughout this mini dissertation).

Section C then contains the study's conclusions, recommendations and limitations. Even though each section has its own reference list, a combined reference list for Sections A through C is located at the end of Section C before the addenda.

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALISATION

1.1.1 Child abuse: A global pandemic

Violence against children is a recognised global public health issue (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). It is said that the study of child maltreatment is complex, and that it is difficult to estimate rates of child maltreatment because of how child maltreatment is defined in specific countries and the different types of reporting structures that are implemented (WHO, 2014). The WHO (1999, p. 8) states that child maltreatment constitutes the following:

... all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

The national Department of Social Development in South Africa uses the same definition (Department of Social Development [DSD] et al., 2012), and the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005, defines a child as any person under the age of 18 years. Child maltreatment, as seen from the definition of the WHO above, takes on several forms; each of these types of abuse will now be defined.

1.1.2 Child sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse refers to all acts engaging a child in a sexual activity that they do not completely understand, are unable to consent to because of their age, or are not yet developed enough to grasp the repercussions of the conduct (WHO, 1999). The *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act* 32 of 2007, expands on this definition and defines child sexual abuse as any act that includes:

sexual exploitation of children, sexual grooming of children, exposure or display of or causing exposure or display of child pornography or pornography to children, using children for or benefiting from child pornography and compelling or causing children to witness sexual offences, sexual acts or self-masturbation (p. 8).

The definition of sexual penetration considers not only penetration of genital organs but also penetration of the anus or mouth of a child (Fouché, 2012). Children are, in all likelihood, more at risk to be sexually abused by someone that they are familiar with, and this can happen anywhere (UNICEF, 2020).

1.1.3 Physical abuse

Physical abuse refers to the "non-accidental physical injury to the child and can include striking, kicking, burning, or biting the child, or any action that results in a physical impairment of the child" (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019, p. 2). Unlike child sexual abuse, which is widely prohibited, there is some ambiguity when it comes to certain types of physical abuse of children (DSD et al., 2012). The ambiguity is rooted in the fact that some forms of physical discipline, such as spanking/corporal punishment, are still widely used in most cultures and societies (DSD et al., 2012).

1.1.4 Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse happens in a relationship and involves persistent emotional mistreatment of a child that psychologically harms the child. Emotional abuse occurs in the absence of a supportive ecology that is needed by the child (WHO, 1999). It involves deliberately scaring, humiliating, rejecting, isolating, or ignoring a child. "Emotional abuse is often inherent in other forms of child abuse" (DSD et al., 2012, p. 17); this means that children who are sexually abused or physically abused may have also experienced emotional abuse (Madu et al., 2002).

1.1.5 Child neglect

Child neglect refers to a "lack of provision for a child's development and/or the failure to provide the child with basic needs such as health, nutrition, shelter, safe living conditions and education" (DSD et al., 2012, p. 17). These actions are characterised as neglect if the parent or caregiver has the means to cater for the needs of the child but does not do so. Neglect can also occur when the parent or caregiver's ability to care and provide for the child is impaired by their own personal challenges such as substance abuse or mental illness (DSD et al., 2012).

Worldwide, approximately 1 billion children have experienced some type of maltreatment (WHO, 2020). In 2010, Child Protective Services in the United States of America reported 684 649 children having endured some type of child abuse: "four-fifths (78.3%) of unique victims were neglected, 17.6 percent were physically abused, 9.2 percent were sexually abused, 8.1 percent were psychologically maltreated, and 2.4 percent were medically neglected" (US Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2011, p. 24). It was estimated that "1,560 children (compared with 1,750 children for FFY 2009) died from abuse and neglect" (USDHHS, 2011, p. 58). In 2019, "there are nationally 656,000 (rounded) victims of child abuse and neglect" (USDHHS, 2021, p. 20), "three-quarters (74.9%) of victims are neglected, 17.5 percent are physically abused, and 9.3 percent are sexually abused" (USDHHS, 2021, p. 22). Australia reported that 31 295 children suffered abuse in the period 2009/2010 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011). This number increased to 70 000 in 2019/2020. Emotional abuse was

the most prevalent type of abuse that accounted for 54% of the abuse and neglect cases, followed by neglect 22%, physical abuse 14%, and sexual abuse 9% (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021).

Children in SA experience disproportionally high levels of abuse (South African Police Service [SAPS], 2020). In 2016, children aged between 15 and 17 years participated in a study to explore their experiences of abuse (Artz et al., 2016). In this study, 4 068 participants were recruited from schools and 5 631 participants were recruited from households; findings showed that, “42.2% of respondents had experienced some form of maltreatment whether sexual, physical, emotional or neglect” (Artz et al., 2016, p. 11). Furthermore, 60,8% respondents reported experiencing some form of sexual abuse, while 16,1% respondents reported emotional abuse, and 20,8% reported to have been physically abused by an adult in their lives. Artz et al.’s (2016) findings indicated that levels of abuse in SA are higher when compared to the global average. Crimes against children in South Africa released by the SAPS in 2011 and 2020 show a rise in the number of murders and attempted murders, and a decrease across all other categories (see Table 1).

Table 1: Crimes against children as reported by the SAPS – 2011 vs 2020

Crime Category	2010/2011 # of cases	2019/2020 # of cases
Murder	906	943
Attempted murder	786	1 137
All sexual offences	28 128	22 070
Common Assault	13 387	10 692
Assault (grievous bodily harm)	11 018	7506

Although there is a decrease in cases of sexual offence, common assault and assault with grievous bodily harm, crime committed against children is at still very prevalent in SA. A decline in cases may be because of different reason such non-disclosure and lack of reporting. Definite and accurate explanations for the decrease would need to be researched and confirmed.

1.1.6 Impact of child abuse

Child abuse is frightening and causes stress long after the abuse has stopped (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019a). When children are abused, it is said to result in fear, guilt, and self-blame, which in turn, translates into anxiety, depression, and trouble maintaining relationships, among others (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019b). The effects of child abuse also led to the use and abuse of illicit drugs and risky sexual behaviour (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019b). Livingston et al. (2007) claim that adults who experienced sexual abuse are at greater risk of re-victimisation because they are socialised in a victim role and often

lack the assertiveness to reject sexual advances from others. Studies found that adults who endured child abuse are more likely to try to commit suicide than adults who did not endure child abuse (Choi et al., 2017). “The consensus from research is that individuals with a history of abuse in childhood are at increased risk of maltreating their own children and/or partners” (WHO, 2007, p. 8), therefore, perpetuating the cycle of abuse.

Chronic abuse negatively affects children’s brain development and sometimes leads to death (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015). Injuries from physical force or vigorously shaking a child by the shoulders may cause intracranial and intraocular bleeding with no sign of external head trauma (Paiva et al., 2011). Children who are victims of childhood sexual abuse can sustain internal damage and are also at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (Heger et al., 2002). Child maltreatment has been found to affect children’s educational performance (Altafim & Linhares, 2016). Some children who experience abuse or neglect are said to have lower cognitive functioning and academic achievement, decreased school attendance, and higher incidences of non-academic behavioural problems in the classroom such as aggression and poor social skills (Altafim & Linhares, 2016). The potential results of child abuse are extensive.

1.1.7 Child protection system

1.1.7.1 International legislation on responding to child abuse

Child abuse requires different types of intervention at different times and on different levels to ensure effective protection and healing of the child (World Vision, 2011). The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) comprehensively sets out the intercontinental and state obligations for eradicating all forms of child maltreatment (United Nations, 1989). Article 19 of the CRC requires that all countries signatory to the treaty take ...:

... all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms abuse of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. (United Nations, 1989, p. 5).

The government of a specific country has the role and responsibility to implement children’s rights to protection (United Nations, 1989). A child protection system is defined as “the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors – especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice – to support prevention and response to protection-related risks” (UNICEF, 2008, p. 4). The WHO (2020) states that 86% of countries reported to have multiple government sectors function to respond and attend to violence against children. The most frequently listed government sectors are education, health, justice, social affairs, and police (WHO, 2020).

1.1.7.2 South African legislation on responding to child abuse

The *Constitution of South Africa* (1996) states that all people have an intrinsic right to life and the respect for their dignity. Section 28 of the Bill of Rights in the *Constitution* (1996) makes special provision for children's rights "to family care or parental care, basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social service and to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation" (*Constitution of South Africa*, 1996, p. 11). Special provision was necessary because children are the most vulnerable members of the community, they are reliant on others for their survival, care, and protection, and therefore, need special protection when primary measures of care fail (Abrahams & Matthews, 2011). All forms of abuse and neglect committed against children are prohibited in South Africa, and three primary pieces of legislation, namely, the *Criminal Law [Sexual Offences and Related Matters] Amendment Act* 32 of 2007, the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 as amended by the *Amendment Act* 41 of 2007, and *Constitution of South Africa* (1996) are in place to govern crimes against children. These acts define child abuse and neglect and guide the conduct of role players involved in the management of child abuse cases. Within these statutes, key role players are identified to execute the legislation in response to child abuse. The role of designated social workers, globally better known as child protection social workers, and police officers, with specific reference to the management of child abuse cases in South Africa, will now be described within the context of South African legislation and literature.

1.1.7.3 South African Police Service (SAPS)

The role and powers of the SAPS are set out in section 205 of the *Constitution of South Africa* of 1996 and the *South African Police Service Act* of 1995. These laws govern the police's main tasks, which include upholding the law, preventing crime and disruption, and protecting citizens (*Constitution of South Africa* of 1996; *South African Police Service Act* of 1995). The *Criminal Procedure Acts* 51 of 1977 states that the role of a police officer is to accept criminal complaints, arrest perpetrators, investigate complaints, gather evidence to oppose bail application and for prosecution purposes, and keep victims "informed of any progress including when to attend the court hearings" (SAPS, n.d, para. 7). They investigate criminal offences such as physical assaults, sexual assaults, and maltreatment of children (South African Human Rights Commission [SAHRC], 2002). Once a complaint is lodged at the community service centre, a docket is opened by a SAPS officer in the charge office and is then assigned to an investigating officer (SAPS, n.d.). "It is the role of the investigating officer to take a statement from the child with sufficient detail to cover all the elements of the alleged offence" (SAHRC, 2002, p. 23).

The National Instruction for Sexual Offences 3 of 2008 states that the investigating SAPS officer is required to take the victim for a forensic medical examination and acquire the J88 report from a healthcare provider once statements have been obtained and the case has been lodged.

A medical examination refers to a “comprehensive physical examination and health intervention” (Mogale et al., 2015, p. 18), to record evidence of signs of abuse (Rowe et al., 2013). Police officers do not have the capacity or authority to decide to withdraw cases, such decisions can only be made by the National Prosecuting Authority (*National Prosecuting Authority Act 32 of 1998, Section 20*). The investigating officer must then submit a case docket with all the statements and collected evidence including the J88 report to the prosecutor who reviews the case and decides whether to prosecute or not (National Prosecuting Authority, 2013).

1.1.7.4 South African designated (child protection) social workers

Social work is defined as a profession that utilises values, knowledge, skills, and processes to work with clients at individual, group, and community levels (Teater, 2014), with the aim to “promote social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being” (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014, p. 1). Social work practice is governed by the code of professional ethics and conduct, and legislative requirements outlined in the *Constitution of South Africa* (1996), the *Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978*, and the *Children’s Act 38 of 2005*. Social workers work in different types of fields such as hospitals, child welfare, clinics, schools, mental health facilities, community development corporations, probation, correctional services, and private practices (Rogers, 2019; Zastrow, 2017). Kleijn (2004) explains that statutory social work is a specialized area that uses administrative practices outlined in law, legislation, or policy to enhance the social functioning of children and their families at the micro, meso, and macro levels. Governed by the respective laws of their countries, child protection social workers across the world, work to protect children from child abuse, exploitation, and deliberate neglect (Hope & Van Wyk, 2018; WHO, 2020).

In South Africa, child protection social workers are formally known as “designated social workers” and more casually known as statutory or child protection social workers. The *Children’s Act 38 of 2005* (p. 13) defines a designated social worker (DSW) as “a social worker in the service of the Department or a provincial Department of Social Development, a designated child protection organisation or a municipality” providing child protective services. DSWs are responsible for conducting investigations into allegations of all forms of child abuse and must determine whether a child requires protection, as stipulated in Section 150 of the *Children’s Act 38 of 2005*. In South Africa, only DSWs or SAPS officials are authorised (See Section 151 and Section 152 of the *Children’s Act 38 of 2005*) to remove children from the care of their caregivers when children are in danger (Section 150 of the *Children’s Act 38 of 2005*). DSWs are mandated to investigate cases of child maltreatment and ultimately make recommendations to the Children’s Court. DSWs or SAPS officers who are on the scene first need to decide whether to remove the child immediately with a Form 36 (Section 152) or once a court order has been issued by the Children’s Court (Section 151). At the heart of these sections is that children who are in possible

danger should be responded to by DSWs and the SAPS to ensure their safety. If a police officer facilitates and authorises such a removal, the matter should later be reported to a DSW so that an investigation can be conducted in line with Section 155(2) of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005. Once such a case is heard in Children's Court, a DSW's report and recommendations need to be supported by factual and collateral evidence.

Section 110 of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 and Section 54 of the *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act* 32 of 2007 state that allegations of child neglect or abuse, especially physical and sexual abuse, should be reported to the SAPS (by the victim or those supporting the victim, like a DSW); the SAPS must assist the victim by taking their statement and opening a case with an allocated case number; and then arrange and facilitate the process of obtaining a J88 report that will be crucial in the legal process (SAPS, 2008). Clearly, DSWs rely on the co-operation of SAPS officers to effectively do their job. The role of SAPS officers in these cases are, thus, equally important.

Two non-South African studies on the problems related to police involvement in child abuse cases could be sourced. A study conducted with 1 401 police officers across three countries (United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Italy) found that "there is a lack of police communication, resources, standardisation and adequate focused training" (Davidson et al., 2020, p. 8) for front line police officers who deal with child sexual offences. Social workers and police officers in the United Kingdom reported that there is often tension when working together (Garrett, 2004). Social workers reported that their role is often unclear when they work in joint specialist units with police, and that the police have a tendency of viewing themselves as the lead agency and expect social workers to service them (Garrett, 2004).

In my review of published work, I could only identify six South African studies that report on problems experienced with the SAPS in child abuse. South African social workers who participated in a study conducted by Sibanda and Lombard (2015) shared that they face challenges when working with SAPS officers as they reportedly lack the necessary knowledge to manage child abuse cases and are not aware of their role and responsibilities as outlined in the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005. Investigating officers who formed part of a study conducted by Ntlatleng (2011) also noted that many of the participants (SAPS officers) did not receive training to manage cases of child sexual abuse. Demeaning and insensitive remarks made by police officers to victims and "police's refusal to file the case saying it is not serious enough, or worse" (p. 85) were cited in a study conducted with social workers, prosecutors, and police officers (Smit, 2018). This is supported by Grunder (2014) in her study with social workers exploring their perceptions on the reasons why child sexual abuse cases are not finalised: participants shared that the attitudes of SAPS officers are a problem when they must report a case of child sexual abuse. It was said that the police do not see child sexual abuse cases as a real crime, which could be a possible myth that they may have regarding sexual abuse of children (Grunder, 2014). Such misconceptions

claim that sexual abuse is not damaging since children gradually outgrow its effects and that abused children will instantly disclose to their parents if they have experienced abuse (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Further to this, there is a misinformed belief that “children who are being abused will show physical evidence of abuse” (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010, p. 633). Jamieson et al. (2017) found that in many instances, SAPS officers do not recognise physical abuse as a serious offence and see it as an acceptable form of discipline even when the child presents with serious injuries. At times, police question what the victim was wearing when they were sexually assaulted as there is a belief that provocative or revealing clothing is the cause of the rape (Smit, 2018). Study participants further noted that the police have limited knowledge on the *Children’s Act* 38 of 2005 and the SAPS always refer cases involving children (even those of missing children) back to social workers (Grunder, 2014).

A study conducted by Liebenberg (2019) exploring the “experiences of designated social workers working with cases of alleged child sexual abuse in the South African context” (p. 1) found that the different roles and responsibilities of DSWs and police are often in conflict, and participants found that the involvement of the police often inhibits their role due to the police’s disregard and lack of insight into the DSW’s responsibility. Participants were also of the opinion that the lack of clarity on the process of child sexual abuse investigations creates boundaries and limitations in the fulfilment of the various roles and responsibilities of the DSW (Liebenberg, 2019). These are a few of the reported challenges related to the SAPS’ involvement in the mismanagement of child abuse cases. Globally, but also in SA, no single study that solely focused on the views of SAPS officials in terms of how they view their role, or the role of DSWs, could be sourced.

Since there are no available empirical studies that exclusively report on the perspectives of SAPS officers regarding their role and the role of DSWs in managing child abuse cases, with only a few studies conducted with DSWs about their views on this matter (of which some studies include the views of SAPS officers) (Grunder, 2018; Liebenberg, 2019; Ntlatleng, 2011; Schiller, 2017; Sibanda & Lombard, 2015; Smit, 2018), the gap in literature and the one-sided view becomes evident. To honour objectivity and to address this knowledge gap, the proposed study will explore the views of SAPS officers on how they view their role and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases. Better understanding the views of some of the SAPS officers in SA might start revealing why some problems are reportedly experienced in the management of child abuse cases and start offering direction for future research and problem resolutions. DSWs and police officials have roles and responsibilities within the larger child protection system to prevent and address child protection issues (World Vision, 2011); each role player successfully executing their respective roles is thus of utmost importance to ensure an overall effective system response to child abuse cases. Exploring the views of police officers is, therefore, important, as not enough is known about how they view their role and that of DSWs. Once a more

comprehensive understanding of ground level realities is established, reasons for why these reported challenges exist could be uncovered and addressed in terms of how they can be mitigated to ensure a more effective child protection system.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The relationships between police and social workers and the idea of "working together" (Garrett, 2004, p.1) to address child abuse is at the heart of child protection initiatives. However, there are reported failures to effectively work together to prevent and respond to child protection concerns which, at times, result in victims and their families not getting the support when faced with crisis (Garrett, 2004; Grunder, 2018; Liebenberg, 2019; Sibanda & Lombard, 2015; Smit, 2018). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to describe the views of 20 SAPS officers employed by the Hillbrow Police Station in Gauteng, by means of semi-structured interviews, about how they view their role and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases.

This is important to explore because the lack of cooperation between the two professionals often has a negative impact on victims and their families. It is alleged that child abuse cases are frequently mismanaged, and victims do not always get the necessary support and assistance because, at times, the police are not knowledgeable on their role and responsibilities as outlined in the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Grunder, 2014; Sibanda & Lombard, 2015). It is further alleged that police officers are not adequately trained to deal with child victims of abuse, and this often leaves children feeling intimidated (Smit, 2018); and to establish the validity of this allegation, more research that explores the views of SAPS must be done. Reported instances of humiliation, and insensitive remarks by police to victims of sexual abuse such as asking, "what kind of clothes he/she was wearing at the time of offence lead to secondary victimisation" has been documented (Smit, 2018, p. 85). Due to a reported lack of communication between the role players, social workers are not always aware of the status of the case and therefore insufficient support is provided to the child and family (Schiller, 2017). Empirical findings from two studies reveal that the lack of cooperation, delay in obtaining J88 reports, and inadequate training of SAPS officers negatively impact finalisation of child sexual abuse cases and successful prosecution (Grunder, 2014; Ntlatleng, 2011). This raises concern and it becomes necessary to explore, as "the best interest of the child", as stipulated in section 7 and 9 of the Children's Act, 38 of 2005, is of paramount importance (Children's Act 38 of 2005, p. 20-21). Considering this principle, reported problems on ground level and South African legislation outlining the duties of DSWs and SAPS members, it is important to explore SAPS members' views. Such exploration may improve our understanding of the possible factors that hinder teamwork within the larger child protection system or areas where further intervention is required. Eventually this may allow us to lobby for

and develop needed solutions, so that the child protection system in SA is more effective, and children in danger receive improved services.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is a set of concepts and premises that are logically developed and linked that give a researcher direction and a specific lens through which the researcher views the study aim and findings. This set of concepts is developed from a minimum of one theory to various theories that can be used. The researcher then creates these theoretical sets to support their study (Varpio et al., 2020). The theoretical framework for this proposed study will be informed by the systems theory.

Systems theory is an interdisciplinary study of how small systems are related within a larger system and how they interact with each other (Van Assche et al., 2019; Von Bertalanffy, 1968), the main assumption of the system's theory is that "the whole is more than the sum of its parts" (Von Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 18). A system approach to child protection holistically addresses child protection and places great focus on prevention and strengthening roles and resources of key actors responsible for providing services (World Vision, 2011). Child protection are the multi-levelled and multi-sectoral, formal components of the child protection system which is implemented by government authorities at different levels within different departments (Saunders, 2003). It is, therefore, imperative that all role players in the child protection system in charge of preventing and responding to child protection concerns need to be connected (World Vision, 2011). Given the reported problems with the conduct of the SAPS on ground level in the management of child abuse cases, the focus of this study will be on the views of SAPS officers (smaller system in larger system), because according to the systems theory then, different smaller systems (various role players in the child protection process) in the larger system (child protection system in SA), determines the outcome of how the larger system functions.

Based on the reviewed literature, the researcher argues that the actions and inactions of SAPS officers are a core issue in the larger system of managing child abuse cases and affects other smaller systems (clients, DSWs, and so forth), and that exploring and understanding their views might help explain why they are reportedly causing problems in the larger system (Grunder, 2018; Liebenberg, 2019; Ntlatleng, 2011; Schiller, 2017; Sibanda & Lombard, 2015; Smit, 2018). Because a government of a specific country has the role and responsibility to uphold children's' rights to protection (United Nations, 1989), and because child abuse requires intervention from different role players in a larger system at different times on different levels to ensure effective protection and healing of the child (World Vision, 2011), it becomes imperative for social work researchers to investigate the views that the SAPS have and to further explore what informs these views against the backdrop of clear legislative guidelines, which will help direct future research studies and solution formulation. Below is a discussion of the study's contribution; however, it is

important to first show the rationale underpinning the study - see Figure 1, which is a schematic representation of rationale of the study.

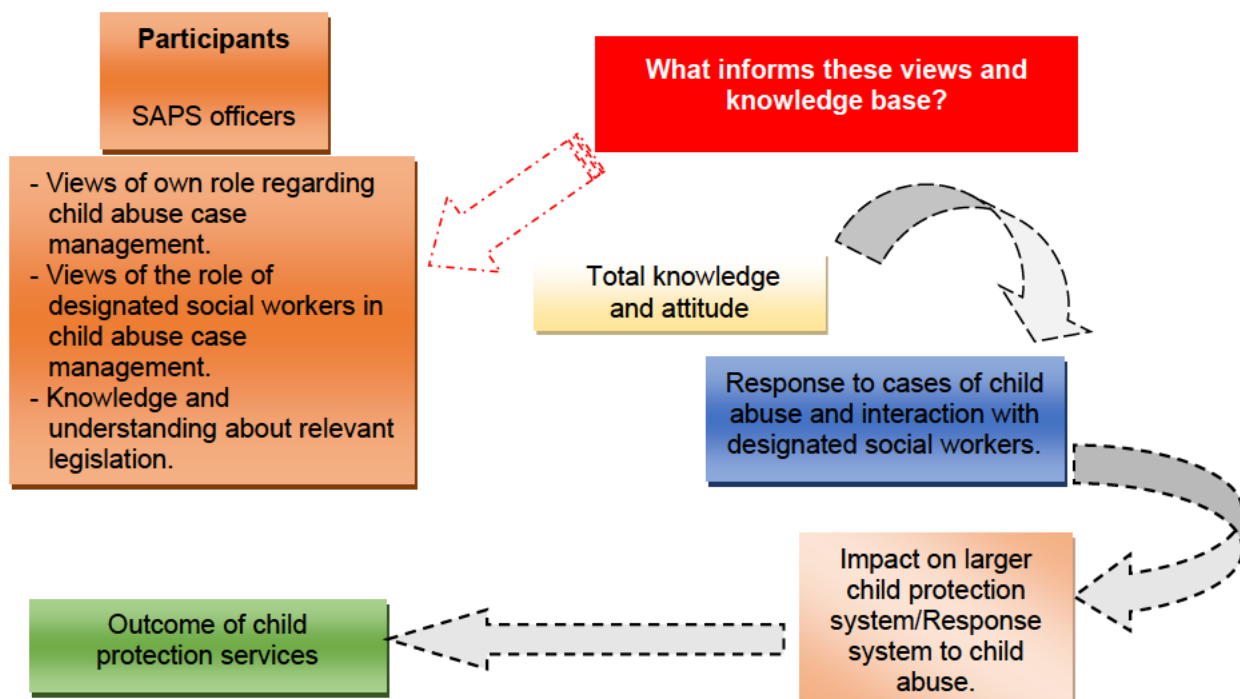


Figure 1: Schematic representation of study rationale

1.3.1 Contribution of the study

Evidently, child abuse is a relentless and an urgent issue that requires an effective and legally compliant child protection system that is responsive. It is also evident that there are reports of dissatisfaction with how some SAPS members fulfil their role when managing child abuse cases (Garrett, 2004; Grunder, 2018; Liebenberg, 2019; Sibanda & Lombard, 2015; Smit, 2018), which means that the system response might currently not be effective and/or legally compliant. In the end, social workers are responsible to act in the best interest of children, and since so many children are being abused in South Africa, the researcher, a qualified social worker, and a social work researcher, aims to explore the views of some SAPS officers whose voices have not yet been documented in terms of the alleged problems in child abuse management. It is expected that the study will start to yield some revelations about the views of SAPS officers regarding expected roles and responsibilities of police officers and DSWs.

Understanding how some SAPS officers view their role and the roles of DSWs might identify educational/training gaps, misconceptions, or any other facts about why there might be problems on ground level when the system is supposed to respond to child abuse cases. By doing this research, the researcher contributes to efforts that will start addressing this gap in literature and contribute to the wider child protection knowledge base, so that the researcher can formulate solutions toward a more efficient child protection system and response to child abuse management. It is anticipated that, in the end, this study will yield plausible and feasible

recommendations for the support and training for police officers based at Hillbrow Police Station to support them in fulfilling their role in the larger child protection system and thus serve their community well when working in collaborative teams with DSWs.

1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

The study was guided by one key research question and two related subordinate research questions.

1.4.1.1 Primary research question

What are the views of SAPS officers from the Hillbrow Police Station in Gauteng about their role and the role of designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases?

1.4.1.2 Secondary research questions

1. *What does the law of South Africa and empirical and grey literature say about the role of SAPS officers and designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases?*
2. *How do SAPS officers from Hillbrow Police Station view their role and the role of designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases?*

1.4.2 STUDY AIM

The aim of this qualitative descriptive study was to summarise legislation and literature on the roles of SAPS officers and DSWs in managing child abuse cases and to explore and describe the views of SAPS officers employed at the Hillbrow Police Station in Gauteng, about *their* role and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases.

1.4.2.1 Research objectives

1. To conduct a literature review of published empirical papers and South African legislation and policy to establish the role and duties of SAPS officers and DSWs in SA about the management of child abuse cases.
2. To explore the views of a few SAPS officers employed at the Hillbrow Police Station regarding their view on their role, and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases, through semi-structured, face-to-face, or online interviews.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm is an approach or a model to conduct research (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013). It refers to the ideas and values that influence how a researcher perceives the world, understands it, and behaves in it (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The research paradigm guides how the researcher thinks knowledge will develop (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). The three most common paradigms are positivism, constructivism or interpretivism, and pragmatism. In the constructivist paradigm, adopted in this study, there is the belief that “people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences” (Honebein as cited in Adom et al., 2016, p. 2). Within this paradigm, the researcher aims to understand the research topic from the perspectives of the participants (Adom et al., 2016). This paradigm is applicable to the current study as the researcher aimed to better understand why some anecdotal and empirical evidence suggested that some SAPS officers do not understand or fulfil their role in the child protection system (by describing the views that SAPS officers hold regarding their role and duties, and the role and duties of DSWs in managing child abuse cases) to see if there is something amiss with how they view their role and that of DSWs.

The views of these SAPS officers are believed to be informed by their education, their own ideas and experiences, which have an impact on how they execute their duties when responding to child abuse cases, thus, these views influence how they play their part in the larger child protection system that is responsible to respond to child abuse in South Africa, and therefore documenting and understanding their views is key in the process of improving child protection services in SA. The study was exploratory in nature as it sought to research issues that haven't been thoroughly investigated before (Stebbins, 2001).

1.5.2 Research design

Research design refers to a methodical strategy used by a researcher to give the broad framework for combining the various elements of the study to answer the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It outlines which methods and tools will be used to collect, interpret, and analyse data (Blaikie, 2010). The design of this study is qualitative descriptive (Sandelowski, 2000, 2010). A qualitative descriptive design seeks to provide a thorough and direct description of events and experiences, and to provide the most unbiased data possible (Sandelowski, 2000, 2010). This design is appropriate when the researcher wants to explore participants' knowledge on a particular phenomenon (Granger et al., 2009; Sandelowski, 2000, 2010). Researchers conducting qualitative descriptive studies provide “a comprehensive summary of an event in the everyday terms of those events” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336). This design is appropriate for this

study because the study aimed to describe the views of police officers regarding their role and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases (Sandelowski, 2010).

1.5.3 Population

A population is a clearly defined group of people or things that are known to share similar traits, and that the researcher wants to focus on during a research project (Rafeedali, 2021). The target population chosen for this study is SAPS officers employed in Hillbrow, Gauteng. Hillbrow is a populous inner-city neighbourhood located in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa, and is infamous for its high unemployment and crime levels, poverty, and prostitution (Richter, 2008). Hillbrow has a large migrant population of South African citizens and foreign nationals who have moved for socio-economic reasons (Landau, 2004). In a qualitative study conducted with adolescents living in Hillbrow to “document and understand the forms of interpersonal violence” (p. 51) the researchers found that home was largely a safe haven for the male participants, but the female participants reported that their homes were not safe spaces because of sexual violence, abuse, and neglect (Scorgie et al., 2017). As a result, these children run to the streets to escape the abuse they experience in their homes and are exposed to further abuse, drug use, violence, poverty, and often find themselves forced into prostitution to survive (Myburgh et al., 2015).

Hillbrow Police Station was named amongst the top-30 police stations for child sexual offences and kidnappings in the 2019/2020 crime statistics (SAPS, 2020). The sample drawn from this population will help answer the research question because the police officers work directly with the Hillbrow community and local social workers to combat crime committed against children. A sample refers to the specific group of individuals selected from a larger population that the researcher will collect data from (Strydom & Delport, 2011). The aim of using a representative sample in qualitative research is to gain a deep insight into the phenomenon until data saturation is reached (Strydom, 2021).

1.5.4 Sampling Method

Non-probability sampling was used to select participants. Non-probability refers to a sampling method where not all members of the population have an opportunity to be included; participants are selected based on non-random selection criteria (Strydom, 2021). This method of sampling is appropriate for qualitative studies that aim to comprehend complicated social issues (Strydom, 2021). Once scientific approval and ethical clearance for the study was granted, the researcher met with the mediator, Hillbrow Police-Management Information Centre (MIC) Commander, who was asked to distribute an advertisement via email to all SAPS members employed by the Hillbrow Police Station and distribute flyers across the police station to promote

the study and request participation by self-referral (Sharma, 2017). Self-referral, also referred to as self-selection, occurs when participants are given the choice to participate in research (Colman, 2008). The most important factor during self-referral is that research participants must voluntarily participate in the study rather than being contacted or solicited by the researcher (Sharma, 2017). Interested participants contacted an independent person (a qualified social worker responsible for obtaining informed consent from interested participants) via email and WhatsApp. The independent person provided interested participants with details regarding the research study and assisted with obtaining informed consent.

After the initial self-referral recruitment drive in which only two participants nominated themselves and contacted the independent person, snowball sampling was implemented to recruit more participants because the number of participants who volunteered their participation during the first round of recruitment was insufficient (Voicu, 2011). In other words, the two participants who nominated themselves were invited to provide multiple referrals of other SAPS officers who comply with inclusion criteria at the Hillbrow Police Station, and each new referral was invited to provide more referrals until the researcher reached data saturation (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Eleven additional participants were recruited through snowball, these participants were informed by existing participants to approach the researcher when she onsite to inform her of their interest to participate in the study. After confirming their eligibility, the researcher took all participants recruited (through snowball sampling) through the informed consent form (**Addendum 1**), they were made aware that participation was optional and that they could accept or decline the invitation at any time. Such sampling was advantageous as it mostly relied on existing study participants to recruit additional participants from among their colleagues, therefore, allowing the researcher access to the hidden population (Voicu, 2011). The researcher's target was to sample at least 20 participants, but data saturation was reached after 13 participants and thus recruitment stopped (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Neither the researcher nor independent person have since received any further calls from potential participants interested in participating.

1.5.5 Sample inclusion criteria

To be included in this study, SAPS officers had to:

1. Be a qualified and officially appointed SAPS member currently working at the Community Service Centre of the Hillbrow Police Station in Gauteng, who has dealt with child abuse cases.
2. Be able to engage in English, Sepedi, or Setswana.
3. Have at least two years' experience as a SAPS officer working with child abuse cases at any SAPS Community Service Centre in South Africa.

1.5.6 Sample size and motivation

The researcher aimed for a sample size of 20 participants, but the number of participants were determined by data saturation. Data saturation, often defined as “information redundancy” (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 201), refers to the collection of data to a point when the researcher obtains no new data (Strydom & Delport, 2011). The researcher conducted 13 one-on-one semi-structured interviews using the same interview schedule until a point where no new insights, themes, and categories were revealed through the interviewing process thereby achieving data saturation (Green & Thorogood, 2004). This was achieved through an iterative process; transcribing interviews as they were done, and immediately starting with open coding followed by axial and selective coding (Williams & Moser, 2019) before proceeding to the next interview. Below is Figure 2, which depicts a summary of the data gathering process:

1.5.7 Data gathering process

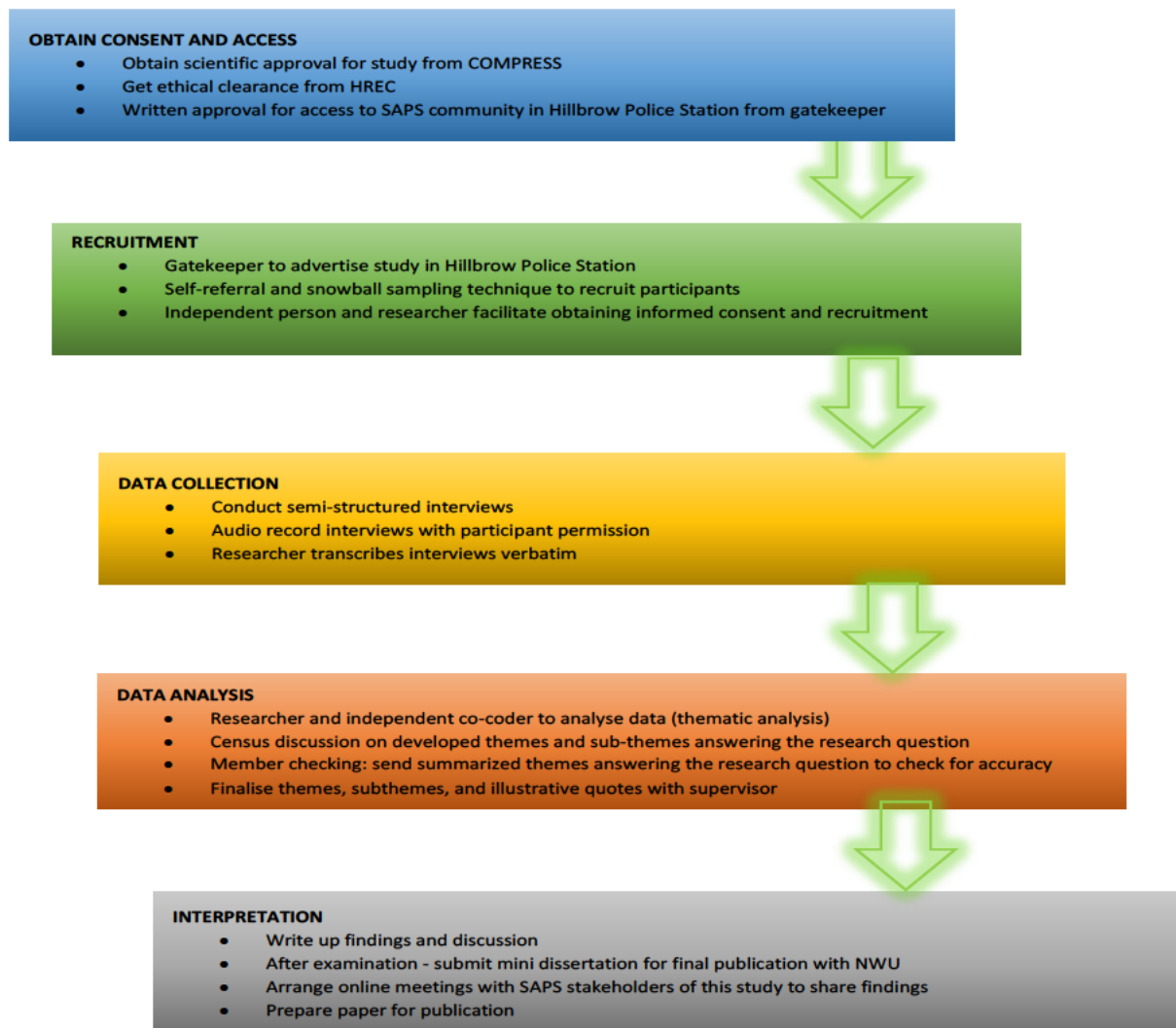


Figure 2: The research process

1.6 RECRUITMENT

The following steps were taken to recruit participants:

1. Permission for study: The researcher obtained approval from the COMPRES scientific committee (**Addendum 2**) and ethical clearance from NWU-HREC (**Addendum 3**). To enter the SAPS, the researcher obtained authorisation from the gatekeeper, namely the Provincial Strategic Management (Research) of the South African Police Service in Gauteng, the Gauteng Provincial Police Commissioner and MIC Commander at Hillbrow Police Station (**Addendum 4**) to finalise authorisation and obtained their final written goodwill permission before advertising the study and recruiting participants.

2. The research recruitment pamphlet (**Addendum 5**) was then emailed to the mediator: Hillbrow Police Station MIC. The mediator was asked to distribute the advertisement to the Hillbrow Police Station personnel via email and distribute flyers across the police station.
3. The independent person (Miss Mmathebe Mampane -a qualified social worker), was trained by the researcher and supervisor (who also signed a confidentiality agreement – see **Addendum 6**) on how to ethically obtain consent from participants and she signed a confidentiality agreement before commencing with her duties. Additionally, the independent person was well versed on the research study and able to answer questions regarding the study. Interested participants contacted the independent person, via email or WhatsApp who provided further details regarding the research study.
4. The independent person finalised the list of interested participants and emailed the informed consent forms (**Addendum 1**) and an information letter (**Addendum 7**) to the interested participants.
5. Participants were given adequate time to make a final decision if they wanted to participate in the study and send a photo of the signed informed consent form to the independent person via WhatsApp. The informed consent form included contact details of both the researcher and independent person, and participants were encouraged to contact the independent person, or the researcher should they have any questions regarding the study.
6. Participants signed their informed consent form in the physical presence of the independent person. A private office was booked at Hillbrow Police Station for this purpose. To reduce the risk of Covid19 infection, both the independent person and participant sanitised upon arrival, observed social distancing by sitting two meters apart and wore masks for the duration of the interview. The surfaces were wiped down with sanitiser and windows were kept open to allow ventilation.
7. The independent person handed over hard copies of signed informed consent forms to the researcher.
8. Once the researcher had the signed informed consent forms, she scheduled and conducted one-on-one semi structured interviews with participants. Participant were given an option of face-to-face interviews at the office of the SAPS office or online interviews via Microsoft Teams, all participants preferred face-to-face interviews.
9. Participants who volunteered to participate were asked to nominate people who complied with the criteria (i.e., snowball sampling – see Voicu, 2011) since the self-referral process only yielded two participants. Participants who were recruited through snowball sampling were invited by existing participants to approach the researcher

when she was onsite conducting interviews. Some of these participants (recruited through snowball sampling) who approached the researcher requested to be interviewed on the date and others different dates. Some participants indicated their preference for walk-in appointments when the researcher was onsite because they are unable to schedule appointments for interviews or communicate via email as they are not always at the police station and have limited access to emails when responding to emergency calls. All participants were taken through the informed consent form, and they were informed that participation is voluntary and that they could decline the invitation to participate or withdraw from study at any point should they participate.

1.7 DATA COLLECTION

Once interview dates and platforms were finalised, the researcher proceeded to conduct semi-structured interviews, a qualitative data collection strategy in which participants are invited to answer a series of pre-set, open-ended questions where the researcher is allowed flexibility to ask follow-up questions (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Semi-structured interviews were most suitable for this study because the researcher wanted to explore participants' views about their role and that of DSWs when managing child abuse cases. Conducting semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection allowed the researcher to collect rich and detailed descriptions from participants (Alder & Clark, 2014). Thirteen interviews were conducted over a seven-week period from 25 July 2022 to 10 September 2022. The interview schedule (**Addendum 8**) consisted of two key open-ended questions that invited participants to describe their views about their role and the role of DSWs in child abuse case management.

Although face-to-face interviews are preferential, the researcher respects the sensitivity and seriousness of the current global pandemic, namely the Covid-19-pandemic (WHO, 2021), and so as mentioned, participants were invited to voice their preference of either face-to-face or online interviews. No online interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams, but 13 face-to-face interviews were held at an office in the Hillbrow Police Station. All Covid-19-safety precautions, such as maintaining a two-meter distance between the researcher and the participant, always wearing masks, and having hand sanitiser present at the meeting were adhered to (WHO, 2021). The researcher obtained permission from the participants to record the interviews, and the recordings were later transcribed verbatim. Once data was transcribed and analysed, the researcher sent each participant a summary of their findings and invited them to provide their input to ensure that the researcher captured the correct essence of the interviews (Morse, 2012). The researcher did not receive any response or feedback from participants.

1.8 ETHICS

Ethics serve as guidelines, moral principles, and standards to govern a researcher's behaviour (Bless et al., 2006; Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021). Research ethics provide guidelines "for what can be considered acceptable behaviour regarding research" (Sefotho, 2021, p. 15) and are created and implemented to safeguard participants from being abused by researchers (Bless et al., 2006). The researcher and her supervisor completed and passed the HREC exam in 2021 (**Addendum 9**). HREC approval was granted for this study on 15 June 2022 with HREC number: NWU-00043-22-A1 (**Addendum 3**).

The researcher adhered to the following ethical principles:

1.8.1 Voluntary participation

Rubin and Babbie (2017) state that it is good ethical practice to give participants the ability to choose whether to participate in a research study. Participation in this study was entirely optional (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). Participants who volunteered their participation contacted the independent person to gain more information and to obtain and complete informed consent forms. Participants were afforded ample time to read through the form and determine whether they wanted to participate in the study. Every participant's choice was respected. If participants expressed a desire to exit the study mid-way, it would have been respected, but this did not happen.

1.8.2 Privacy

Privacy relates to the physical setting in which data will be collected. Interviews were held in a private office with a closed door at the police station so that bystanders (Morse, 2012) cannot overhear interviews. The researcher placed a notice on the door of the office to request privacy and for people who passed the closed office, to kindly remain silent to not hinder the interview. Participants were asked to switch their cell phones to silent mode.

1.8.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to how well the researcher protects the participant's private information, which speaks to how research data will be handled, stored, as well as shared to ensure that it is not improperly disclosed (Leary, 2012). The researcher obtained permission from each participant to record interviews. In compliance with the *Protection of Personal Information Act* of 2013 (POPIA) the researcher implemented appropriate measures to protect the identity and personal information of the participants (Law Society of South Africa, 2021). To protect the participants identities; no names were used in the research report or the data analysis thick and

the researcher made use of pseudonyms to protect the real identifying details of participants, for instance, P1 (participant 1).

Furthermore, signed informed consent forms were stored separately from transcripts so that participants cannot be associated with a specific transcript. All recordings were transferred to a flash drive, which is now stored in a locked cabinet separately from the transcripts and signed consent forms. No one, except the M student (who is a qualified social worker – see Addendum 10) and the study supervisor; both of whom have completed the HREC training and understand confidentiality in research, know the identity of participants.

1.8.4 Data storage

Electronic copies of the participant informed consent form, audio recordings, and transcripts were saved on a password-protected laptop during the data collection process. The audio recordings were transferred to a password-protected laptop at the end of each interview and permanently deleted from the recording device. Hard copies of participant informed consent forms are kept in a locked cabinet in the research supervisor's office (North-West University's Vanderbijlpark Campus [NWU VC]) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). All electronic and raw data is stored at the NWU VC's Department of Social Work in locked cabinets; data will be kept for five years and destroyed thereafter (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

1.8.5 Compensation

There was no remuneration or reimbursement offered to participants for participating in this study. This is because participants did not incur any out-of-pocket expenses to participate in the study (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021), because the researcher travelled to the participants' workplace to conduct face-to-face interviews. Provision for online interviews with one gig data was made available but was not necessary as all 13 participants chose to have face-to-face interviews. A R70 Nando's voucher was given to the participants as a token of appreciation for their time. Participants were informed of the token of appreciation during the process of obtaining informed consent. The token of appreciation was presented to the participant after each interview (Hardwick & Worsley, 2011). Participants were offered refreshments (1 x 500 ml bottle of still water) during face-to-face interviews. The water bottles were wiped down with sanitiser before being presented to participants.

1.8.6 Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest to be declared. The proposed research study is not externally funded nor does the researcher or supervisor have any contract obligation to any funder. The

researcher and supervisor do not have pre-existing relationships with the mediator or possible participants that may compromise the study.

1.8.7 Risk of study

The proposed study had minimal risk; the participants are professionals who described their perspective on what their role and the role of DSWs are in the management of child abuse cases. However, talking about the management of child abuse cases could cause participants to experience unpleasant emotions. Ms Boitumelo Makenete, a registered counsellor (**Addendum 11**) was available to provide a one-hour telephonic debriefing session if needed. No participants requested this support. The voluntary nature of participation also assisted in this regard as participants determined whether they wanted to participate and they could withdraw from the study if they felt that the study caused them distress (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021). Participants were also given a choice between online or face-to-face interviews, this was to ensure that they could choose an interview setting most comfortable for them (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021). To limit this risk of extreme tiredness and frustration during the interview sessions, the researcher gave participants body breaks at the request of the participant.

Face-to-face interviews could have presented the risk of coronavirus infection. The virus spreads primarily among people who are in close contact with each other, from the mouth or nose of an infected person to small particles of liquid when coughing, sneezing, speaking, singing, or breathing (WHO, 2021). The virus can also spread in poorly ventilated and crowded indoor spaces where people spend a lot of time (WHO, 2021).

The following precautions were put in place to reduce risk of infection (WHO, 2021):

1. Sanitiser was always made available.
2. All surfaces were wiped down with sanitiser before each participant arrived.
3. The researcher and participants sanitised their hands before the interview commenced.
4. The researcher and participants wore masks before entering the interview room and were required to keep it on for the duration of the interview.
5. Social distancing was adhered to with the researcher and participants remaining two meters apart.

Benefits of participation outweighed the risk; participation in the study had no direct benefit to participants but through the study they were able to share information that may lead to support and training, empowerment and further research that may eventually contribute to a more efficient child protection system in SA.

1.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Nowell et al. (2017) state that, “it is important that our research is recognized as familiar and understood as legitimate by researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and the public” (p. 3). Trustworthiness is a keyway to persuade readers that the research findings of this study will be worthy of attention (Nowell et al., 2017), and refers to strategies for reducing challenges to the integrity of qualitative research (Pilot & Beck, 2014). The concept of trustworthiness was refined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) “by introducing the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability parallel to the conventional quantitative assessment criteria of validity and reliability” (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 3), as strategies to promote trustworthiness in qualitative research. The researcher adhered to the strategies defined below to adhere to these constructs.

1.9.1 Credibility

Credibility addresses the “fit between respondents’ views and the researcher’s representation of them” (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 391). Member-checking is a technique used to enhance study credibility by sharing data interpretations with study participants affording them the opportunity to rectify any mistakes made by the researcher (Birt et al., 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher shared a summary of findings (**Addendum 12**) with each participant (via email) for their input to correct any incorrect interpretations of their interview (Truter & Fouché, 2019; Truter et al., 2018). This allowed participants to clarify their responses and provide additional information if necessary (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher did not receive any response or feedback from the participants.

Moreover, participants were encouraged to participate only if they wanted to, thus promoting more genuine responses. What Shenton (2004) refers to as the iterative process was employed, this means that the researcher transcribed the data and conducted thematic analysis after each interview to discover what data is emerging to establish when data saturation is reached (Shenton, 2004). As a student, the researcher had regular debriefing sessions with her supervisor. This strengthened the credibility of the study in that the supervisor brought in a different perspective from her experience. The use of literature and other previous studies assisted the researcher in learning about and comparing the findings of this study with those done previously.

1.9.2 Confirmability

Confirmability is the equivalent of objectivity as known in quantitative research (Shenton, 2004). It is concerned with establishing that, “the researcher’s interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data, requiring the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached” (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 3). An audit trail is a qualitative strategy a researcher uses to detail the process of data collection, data analysis, and attests to the

researcher's interpretations of the data, for instance, in a research journal (**Addendum 13**) (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher kept record of the participant recruitment process, the data collection process, and the process of data analysis in her research journal (Shenton, 2004).

1.9.3 Reflexivity

Shenton (2004, p. 121) describes reflexivity as “the process of critical self-reflection about oneself as researcher (own biases, preferences, preconceptions), and the research relationship (relationship to the respondent, and how the relationship affects participant's answers to questions)”. The recordings of interviews were made available to the supervisor, to check whether the researcher influenced participant responses during interviews.

1.9.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the generalisability of inquiry (Tobin & Begley, 2004), the challenge is frequently in proving that the findings of the current research can be extended to a larger population. (Shenton, 2004). Although the researcher cannot predict which sites may want to use the findings, it is still their job to give a clear explanation of the research environment so that individuals wishing to apply the findings to other contexts or studies can determine whether they are transferable. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher provided rich context of participants' experiences during data collection to help the reader understand the research setting and make transferability judgements themselves (Nowell et al., 2017). Shenton (2004) further states that it is important for the researcher to convey what the boundaries of the research are. In that regard, in the methodology section, the researcher clearly describes the organisation that took part in the study. The total number of participants and the data collection methods are also be detailed, including how long the data collection process was and its time.

1.9.5 Dependability

Dependability is concerned with the techniques employed by the researcher “to show that, if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained” (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). By making sure that the research method is rational, traceable, and well-documented, researchers may establish dependability and allow readers to analyse and evaluate the research's dependability. (Nowell et al., 2017). To promote dependability, the researcher documented data by use of descriptive field notes (**Addendum 13**) and audio recordings. The researcher used a co-coder (**Addendum 14**) and member checks to ensure the findings are supported by the data obtained and the accuracy of the findings' interpretation (Botma et al., 2010).

The research study was supervised by the research supervisor who is an experienced qualitative researcher, and an NRF-rated researcher employed as a senior lecturer in the Department of Social Work, NWU VC; and she provided advice and guidelines on participant recruitment, data collection, and the data analysis process (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007). To promote the dependability of this study, the researcher followed Shenton's (2004) steps and devotes sections to "the research design and its implementation" (p. 71), "operational detail of data gathering" (p. 72) and "reflective appraisal of the project" (p. 72). The researcher clearly described the research design of the study and how it was executed. The operational detail of the process of data collection was also included, whereby everything done in the field is addressed and detailed in the research report.

1.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Braun and Clarke's (2006) steps of thematic analysis were followed. Thematic analysis is technique for analysing qualitative data that entails closely studying the data to locate, classify, describe, and present the themes that were discovered in the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is described as "a translator for those speaking the languages of qualitative and quantitative analysis, enabling researchers who use different research methods to communicate with each other" (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2). As a qualitative descriptive study, analysis was inductive. Inductive coding and theme development involves working "bottom up" (p. 83), in other words, from the data and allowing the data to determine themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once data was analysed and themes finalised, it was presented within the framework of the Systems Theory (Van Assche et al., 2019) in the discussion section of the findings.

All gathered data was first transcribed by the researcher. The researcher then read the transcripts over and over, to become well-acquainted with the data. Following that, the researcher looked over the data to see if there are any similar themes — subjects, concepts, or patterns of meaning that appear frequently and answer the study question (Clarke et al., 2010). The researcher used a co-coder to ensure that data was coded correctly, and that data analysis was not governed by a single, biased view (Botma et al., 2010). The co-coder is a social worker who is educated on qualitative research processes (**Addendum 14 and 15**) (Botma et al., 2010). The co-coder signed a confidentiality agreement and committed to keeping all information private and safe.

Data was independently coded by the researcher and the co-coder. After interview recordings were transcribed, the researcher and co-coder individually did open coding and had a consensus discussion about initial open codes; the researcher and co-coder used the codes to describe the meanings of participants texts in detail, summarised and interpreted the data. Once the consensus discussion between the researcher and the co-coder was held; the researcher met with the study supervisor to review and refine axial and selective coding and then formulated

themes and sub themes (**see Addendum 16 for an example of how coding was done**). Thereafter, the researcher sent a summary of each participant's findings to each participant to invite the participants to correct any misinterpretations/incorrect transcriptions of their interview. The researcher did not receive any feedback or response from the participants. Finally, the data was written up (Terry et al., 2017).

1.11 DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

Dissemination is about communicating research findings with interested persons, target audiences, and stakeholders such as the SAPS police officers. The process of dissemination should be considerate of the target audience and the context in which the research findings will be received (Wilson et al., 2010). The researcher will hold a webinar to share the research findings with participants once the study is completed and examined and stakeholders will also be furnished with a research summary report. The research summary report will clearly and concisely summarise the key conclusions from this study.

This research report will be submitted to the NWU in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Social Work in Child Protection Degree. Once examination is concluded, the findings of this study will be submitted for publication at the following academic journal: *British Journal of Social Work* and be presented at an international social work conference, which will be identified closer to the time.

1.12 REPORT STRUCTURE

Section A:

- 1.1 Study overview
- 1.2 Reference list

Section B:

- 1.1 Literature review
- 1.2 Manuscript 1: *The views of SAPS officers about their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative description*
- 1.3 Reference list

Section C:

- 1.4 Conclusions and recommendations
- 1.5 Combined reference list

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SECTION B: LITERATURE REVIEW

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (1989)

The United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 20 November 1989, it is the most ratified human rights treaty globally. The CRC was unique in that it incorporated the economic, social, cultural, civil, and political human rights of children in one treaty (United Nations, 1989). South Africa signed the Convention on 29 January 1993 and ratified it on 16 June 1995 (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2019). The CRC recognises children as rights holders and provides them with individual rights (United Nations, 1989). Article 19 of the Convention recognises children as a vulnerable group and outlines actions to put in place to protect children from all forms of abuse; the preventative and protective measures must include methods to identify, report, refer, investigate, and respond to all forms of abuse against children (United Nations, 1989).

2.2 THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD (1990)

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) also asserts that children have a right to care and protection, emphasizing the importance of incorporating African cultural values and experiences while addressing children's rights. (Organization of African Unity [OAU], 1990). The ACRWC defines children as persons under the age of 18 (OAU, 1990). It states that all children have an inherent right to life and to have this right protected by law. Section 2 of Article 5 mandates that governments should ensure that maximum effort is made to provide for each child's survival, protection, and development (OAU, 1990). Article 16 states that the government of each country is obliged to create and implement "legislative, administrative, social and educational measures" (p.6) to protect children from all forms of abuse discrimination, neglect, and exploitation (OAU, 1990). Section 2 of Article 16 also mandates government to establish monitoring units to prevent and protect children from abuse and exploitation (OAU, 1990).

2.3 CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA (1996)

The South African government has established a comprehensive legal framework that defines what constitutes child abuse and the establishment of a child protection system to respond to and manage cases of child abuse (Jamieson et al., 2017). Section 28 of the Bill of Rights contained in the *Constitution of South Africa* (1996) speaks specifically to the rights of children. Among other rights, section 28 (1)(d) states that "every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse and degradation" (p.11). This section is of particular importance,

“since children and youths are seen as a vulnerable group and should thus receive more support and care than adults” (Roelf, 2020, p. 159). Section 28 (1)(c) further states that children have right to “basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services” (p.11). Social services refer to those services that are necessary to realise children’s right to care and protection, such as support programmes for parents, care for children who are removed from their families (Dutschke & Monson, 2008) and services that uphold the right to protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation (Dutschke & Monson, 2008).

To fully implement the right to social assistance, appropriate intervention by relevant role player must take place when victims and families encounter the system (Dutschke & Monson, 2008). Highly influenced by the CRC, Section 28 (2) states that “a child’s best interests are of paramount importance in all matters concerning the child” (p.12). This means that DSWs, police and others attending to matters concerning the care, protection and well-being should act in a way that does not compromise this principle. Despite the rights that children have, they are violated every day in every country.

2.4 CHILD ABUSE: A GLOBAL AND ONGOING PHENOMENON

Children are innocent, trusting, and full of hope; they must experience a happy and loving childhood (Bharti et al., 2021). Their lives should mature gradually, as they gain new experiences, but for many children across the world this is not a reality (Sandberg, 2018). Many children have been and continue to be abused and exploited (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). The WHO defines child abuse as “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power” (1999, p.8). Similarly, the South African *Children’s Act* 38 of 2005 defines child abuse as “a form of harm or ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child”, and includes physical, sexual, and/or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child. Child abuse includes actions or behaviour by a parent or other caregivers that results in actual or potential harm to the child and typically happens in the child’s home or neighbourhood (*Children’s Act* 38 of 2005; WHO, 1999).

Violence against children is a widespread issue that affects many children across the globe, including South Africa (Jamieson et al., 2017). Over one billion children worldwide are abused every year, with devastating short and long-term consequences (Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2021). Worldwide, approximately one billion children have experienced some type of maltreatment (WHO, 2020). A total of 29 921 child abuse cases were reported to the police department in England and Wales in the 2021/2022 cycle, which is an increase of 5 000 from the previous and the highest for the past ten years (Statista Research Department, 2022). In Spain, a study that used representative samples to determine the

prevalence of child sexual abuse found that there is a high prevalence of physical contact such as being fondled, kissed, and being told to touch the perpetrator's private parts (Ferragut et al., 2021). The 2017 Global Report to End Child Violence detailed that, eight of ten children aged 1–14 years in Africa experience “discipline in the form of psychological aggression or physical punishment at home” (p. 10) in the month preceding the study (African Partnership for Ending Violence Against Children [APEVAC], 2021). In Uganda, one in four girls and one in ten boys between the ages of 13 and 17 years reported having been sexually abused in the previous year (APEVAC, 2021).

Violence against children remains a critical challenge for South Africa too. In the latest crime statistics released by the South African Police Service (SAPS) (2021), 352 child murder cases were recorded for the period October–December 2021, 394 cases of attempted murder and 2 048 cases of assault with grievous bodily harm, wherein children were victims (SAPS, 2021). According to the first national prevalence study conducted in South Africa, between 20% and 34 % of children have experienced some form of contact violence before the age of 18 years (Jamieson et al., 2017). While these crimes can be perpetrated by strangers, in most cases it is perpetrated by individuals known to the child and who have frequent contact with the child, such as family members, neighbours, friends, or peers, teachers, and other people in positions of authority (Ferragut et al., 2021; SAPS, 2020). With the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown restrictions and school closures meant that millions of children across the globe spent more time at home; the APEVAC (2021) found that this increased the proportion of physical, sexual, and psychological violence often brought on by rising economic hardship and domestic strife.

2.5 CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD ABUSE

2.5.1 Impact on the child

Child abuse has repercussions beyond just physical harm and obvious scars. It affects a child's emotional, psychological, social, and cognitive growth, “and if experienced in the early years can even affect brain development” (Jamieson et al., 2017, p. 7). Children exposed to abuse and neglect in their early years are more likely to develop an insecure or disorganised attachment problems with their primary caregiver (Baer & Martinez, 2006; Child Welfare Information Gateway [CWIG], 2019). Insecure attachment interrupts a child's normal growth which impacts a child's capacity to communicate, engage, and build healthy relationships throughout their life (Bacon & Richardson, 2001). Research has identified a strong relation between child maltreatment and a range of mental health problems such attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant and conduct disorders, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (CWIG, 2019; Johnson et al., 1999; Kearney et al., 2010). It is said that children who have been maltreated are three times more likely to exhibit a depressive disorder than children who have not

been abused or neglected (Johnson et al., 1999; Kearney et al., 2010). Abuse can have a negative impact on academic achievement and is linked to later aggressive behaviour, especially in boys (Jamieson et al., 2017).

Research suggests that children exposed to abuse and neglect are more likely to develop aggressive behaviours and at greater risk of inflicting pain on other and maltreating their own children, therefore, creating a vicious cycle that spans generations (Gilbert et al., 2009; Jamieson et al., 2017).

2.5.2 Impact on the family system

Child abuse also affects the entire family (Schreier et al., 2017). The discovery of child abuse causes disruptions to the family unit. When non-offending parents and family members learn of the abuse, they endure terrible suffering and are also left traumatised (Thormaehlen & Bass-Feld, 1994). They sometimes do not fully comprehend the situation, do not know who to believe or what advice to take, and are typically terrified of the repercussions of disclosure for the child and the entire family (Malloy et. al., 2011; Moray Council, n.d.). Some cases of child abuse go unreported because the perpetrator is the breadwinner or a close family relative, and non-offending parent and family members are opposed to disclosure of the abuse because they don't want to ruin family ties (Chitereka, 2010). They experience intense feelings of guilt, fear, anger and anxiety, this leads to crisis mode type of functioning which hinders the family's ability to establish a stable and healthy home environment (Malloy et. al., 2011; Schreier et al., 2017).

Siblings of victims of child abuse are classified as secondary victims. Secondary victims are those who experience the emotions and effects of trauma without directly experiencing it (Thormaehlen & Bass-Feld, 1994). According to research on child abuse, victims' siblings lack attention, feel immense guilt for not disclosing the abuse and live in fear of being abused (Collier et al., 2019; Schreier et al., 2017). They also experience intense feelings of shock, helplessness, and anger towards the abuser (Schreier et al., 2017). Additionally, children who witness violence on a regular basis grow up believing that violence is an acceptable way of life, therefore, they continue to perpetuate violence when they start their own families and in other areas of their lives (Department of Social Development et al., 2012; Schreier et al., 2017).

2.5.3 Impact on society and the economy

It is no secret that child abuse ultimately affects all, since it has a direct impact on a country's economy (Boonzaaier et al., 2021). Exposure to abuse may socialise children into a lifestyle that perpetuates violence in society (Department of Social Development et al., 2012) and which "results in lowered social cohesion and impacts on the country's social and economic development" (p. 13). Victims of child abuse often turn to alcohol and substances to deal with the

trauma of their experience (CWIG, 2019). Delinquency and crimes committed under the influence of substances are more common among adolescents and adults with a history of child abuse (CWIG, 2019; Department of Social Development et al., 2012; Williams & Herrera, 2007). Myburgh et al. (2015) and Thrane et al. (2006) found that children run away from home to escape the abuse they experience and face homelessness which increases the risk of becoming involved in criminal behaviour to survive and further victimisation – which leads to more street children. This ultimately perpetuates more violence in society (Department of Social Development et al., 2012).

The legacy of child abuse has a substantial financial implication for governments, businesses, and non-governmental institutions (Collier et al., 2019). The direct cost incurred by government and non-governmental institutions involved in the investigation of child abuse cases include hospitalisations, provision of alternative care, and foster care payments (Collier et al., 2019; Department of Social Development et al., 2012). In the United States of America (USA), 206 812 children were placed in foster care in 2021 financial year (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2022), the United Kingdom recorded 80 780 child-foster care placements including adoptions in the year 2021 (UK Government, 2022). At the end of March 2021, 309 453 children in South Africa were receiving foster care grant (Orlandi, 2021). The burden of child abuse emphasizes the importance of prevention measures to address the high prevalence of child abuse in South Africa and around the world (Fang et al., 2012).

In South Africa, during the 2022 national budget speech, the Department of Social Development received the largest allocation of R 58,6 billion for the provision of social services which include access to social grants, welfare services to alleviate poverty, protect children, and empower women, youth, and people living with disabilities (Godongwana, 2022).

With the rights of children in mind, and the distressing statistics of child abuse and evidence of its widespread damaging impact, the role and work of certain professionals who are designated to protect children become increasingly important, and so, if efficient service delivery by such professionals are threatened, it becomes a real threat to the children of South Africa and abroad, and therefore the causes of possible inefficient child protection service delivery must be investigated so that it can eventually be addressed.

2.6 KEY ROLE PLAYERS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CHILD ABUSE

Child protection refers to the process of protecting children from all forms of abuse, and aims to prevent or respond to violence, exploitation, and abuse of children (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2014; UNICEF, 2006). A child protection system refers to the legal and informal institutions, roles, and capabilities used to prevent and address child abuse. (World Vision International, 2011).

In South Africa, the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 (primary legislation used to guide child protection services) is based on a "cooperative implementation model and explicitly requires government to adopt a comprehensive, inter-sectoral strategy aimed at securing a properly resourced and co-ordinated national child protection system" (Jamieson et al., 2017, p. 47). A child protection system, and the system in South Africa specifically, requires the coordination of services between several role players which include, but is not limited to, designated social workers (DSWs) also known as child protection or statutory social workers (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006; Lombard & Kleijn, 2006), police, health practitioners, education sector, and legal professionals (World Vision International, 2011).

The various role players and components of a child protection system function at various levels of the child's environment, from the micro to the macro (World Vision International, 2011). The role players come together to enhance and improve investigations and responses for children and families in need (Herbert & Bromfield, 2019). Each role player is responsible for different elements, and they all coordinate their services to diagnose, treat, and plan for children and families that require assistance (Herbert & Bromfield, 2019).

Given the interconnected nature of child protection system, it is important that the relationship between the child protection system and other formal or informal systems be established (World Vision International, 2011). To eliminate and minimise protection gaps in the child protection system, it is important that the functions, capacities, processes, governance, and accountability of each system are clearly defined (World Vision International, 2011). Unfortunately, this is not the case; there are reported issues of lack of professionalism, communication, and coordination among role players, which results in failure to respond to cases of child abuse in a timely and appropriate manner (Grunder, 2014; Ntlatleng, 2011; Schiller, 2017; Truter & Fouché, 2019). The study will explore the perspective of SAPS officers on their role and the role of designated social workers to gain some insight into why these problems exists.

For this study, the research focuses exclusively on two role players, namely the role of the police and DSWs in the management of child abuse cases in South Africa.

2.6.1 Designated social workers (DSWs)

Designated social workers is the formal name for social workers in South Africa who are specifically appointed in designated child protection organisations (non-government and government) with statutory authority and related duties which primarily relate to the protection of abused children. The role of the DSWs is to identify children in need of care and protection and intervene either on a prevention, early intervention, or statutory level, depending on the case details. Prevention services are aimed at stopping abuse before it begins (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005). Early intervention measures focus efforts and resources on families whose children are identified to be at high risk of abuse or neglect with the goal of strengthening the family's capacity

and skills, and promoting their knowledge, insight, and resilience, so that risk factors are reduced, protective factors are amplified, and families cope better (Childline, 2020; *Children's Act* 38 of 2005). Statutory services are rendered when prevention and early intervention failed, or when the case is so severe that there is no time or reason for early intervention or prevention services (Childline, 2020). Serious safety concerns often demand that children be removed from their caregivers and placed in alternative care, either immediately with a Form 36 in terms of Section 152 of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 or in less urgent cases by means of a 151 application (same Act), meaning that children's court inquiries are opened (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005; De Villiers, 2006).

Family reunification services are considered once it is in the best interest of the children concerned (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005). Suitable alternative care is arranged for children who cannot be reunited with their parents or family (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005). The decision to permanently remove a child from his/her parents' care should be informed and supported by evidence that the parents are unable to care for their children, and DSWs must be confident that the children would be best cared for in an alternative placement (De Villiers, 2008). During initial investigations when DSWs receive new intakes or reports of alleged child abuse, DSWs work with police, either for their protection given the risks of being violated by clients (Boonzaaier et al., 2021; Pretorius & Herbst, 2022), or because cases of physical or sexual abuse need to be formally registered with the SAPS (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005), or because police are on the scene of the case. Either way, police and DSWs often work together on certain child abuse cases.

2.6.2 The South African Police Service (SAPS)

In many cases, the SAPS is the first line of support for most persons who have been victims of crime. The powers and functions of the SAPS are outlined in Section 205 of the *Constitution of South Africa* (1996) and the *South African Police Service Act* 68 of 1995. The SAPS is a large organisation with many units and stations functioning within its national, provincial, and local divisions. A police member is a representative appointed under Section 33(1) of the *South African Police Service Act* 68 of 1995. Management or commanders at SAPS oversee strategic decisions for the organisation's adherence to national directives and policies (SAPS, 2011). A police officer can be regarded as a front-line worker who is involved in hands-on police work performing operational and functional duties (SAPS, 2011).

Essentially, the role of the police is to "prevent and combat crime that may threaten the safety and security of any community; investigate any crimes threatening the safety and security of any community; ensure that offenders are brought to justice; and participate in efforts to address the causes of crime" (South African Government, 2022, p. 2). SAPS officers manage criminal investigations of offences committed against children such as physical assaults, sexual assaults, and maltreatment (South African Human Rights Commission [SAHRC], 2002).

Police officers are, in most instances, first responders when there is a need for emergency action to protect a child; individuals contact the police via the 10111 system or by visiting their nearest police station (South African Police Service, n.d.). A police officer responding to the call will locate the complainant and take reasonable steps to protect them from any further danger (SAHRC, 2002). In addition to this, all police officers have a power under Section 152 of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 to remove a child from their parents or caregivers with a Form 36 and place them in a place of safety. This power is exercised when an officer has sufficient evidence to believe that a child would be likely to suffer significant harm if left in their home environment (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005).

Offences committed against children are sensitive and often require the police to work with other organisations and government departments, such as Department of Social Development, Department of Health, etc. when conducting investigations (South African Police Service, n.d.; World Vision International, 2011). Where possible, the assisting officer must help the victim access counselling services, shelter, and medical attention to ensure that a medical officer collects and records any medical evidence in support of a criminal charge (South African Police Service, n.d.). Legislation on the role of DSWs and SAPS police officers, with specific reference to the management of child abuse cases in South Africa, will now be discussed.

2.7 LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN RESPECT OF CHILD ABUSE AND THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS AND POLICE OFFICERS

2.7.1 The *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 as amended by the *Children's Amendment Act* 41 of 2007

The best interest of the child is highlighted in the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005. The *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 regulates the provision of various social welfare services to children and their families, it offers definitions of the various forms of child abuse, outlines children's rights as well as guiding principles for the care, contact and the protection of children (Department of Social Development, 2010). The *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 is the key legislation that outlines processes and procedures for managing child abuse cases, and specifically outlines designated social workers' intervention in child abuse cases. The purpose of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 is to support families by ensuring their well-being, preventing child abuse and neglect, and ensuring that children in need of care and protection are properly cared for (Department of Social Development, 2010). It further makes provisions for children who cannot be reunited with their families to be placed in long-term foster care, residential care or they may be adopted (Kleijn, 2004). The *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 establishes prevention and early intervention services with the goal of preventing child abuse or neglect before it occurs (Kleijn, 2004).

The *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 defines a designated social worker as “a social worker in the service of the Department or a provincial Department of Social Development, a designated child protection organisation or a municipality” (p. 13) providing child protective services. DSWs play an important role in the prevention, investigation, and intervention with alleged child abuse cases (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005). They have a professional and ethical responsibility when managing child abuse cases (Hope & Van Wyk, 2018). The professional and ethical responsibilities are fundamentally guided by professional values outlined in the ethical code of the South African Council of Social Service Professions (Hope & Van Wyk, 2018) and as well as “specific legislative requirements set out by the Constitution of South Africa, the Social Service Professions Act and the Children's Act” (Roelf, 2020, p. 157). DSWs provide prevention and early intervention services to strengthen and build the family's capacity and resilience to care for their children and protect them from all forms of abuse (De Villiers, 2006). Statutory intervention process is initiated when prevention and early intervention services have failed (De Villiers, 2006; Esau & Sauls, 2015).

DSWs investigate allegations of all forms of child abuse in line with Section 155(2) of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 and furnish the Children's Court with a comprehensive report to help the court determine whether the child needs care and protection and provide recommendations regarding the kind of care suitable for the child to protect him/her from further abuse (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005). During these investigations, DSWs have permission to enter any premises to investigate the circumstances concerning the child and parent's functioning, record any information and carry out any specific instruction of the Court (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005). Collateral information is collected from the child, family members, school, and all other institution that the family interacts with and may be able to provide information to help in the investigation (September, 2006). “Designated social workers in SA may initiate statutory processes of removing children from abusive or threatening households to be placed in alternative households (Jamieson et al., 2017) without a court order in terms of Section 152 of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 by submitting a Form 36, a court report, screening report of alternative household and a Form 39 issued by the DSD, this decision must then be reviewed by the presiding officer of the relevant Children's Court (Jamieson et al., 2017).

Section 152 of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 makes provisions for DSWs and SAPS officers responding to suspected cases of child abuse to remove the child immediately by way of a Form 36 without a court order or wait for the Children's Court to issue a court order in terms of Section 151 (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005). DSWs and SAPS officers are the only designated professionals authorised by law, in SA, to remove a child from the care of their caregiver (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005).

Regulation 37 states that victims of sexual abuse must be referred for medical treatment within 72 hours and where necessary be accompanied to lay a complaint at the police station (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005). Regulation 38(2) states that a child must provide verbal or written

consent to be assessed to establish whether they were abused or neglected, an assessment can only be conducted without the child's consent if it is deemed to be in the child's best interest and the reason be clearly explained to the child and caregiver and noted in writing (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005). To further support victims, DSWs provide therapeutic counselling support to children who have been abused to help them assume a sense of mastery to cope with the trauma (Childline, 2010). Their caregivers are also provided with support, if they have coping mechanisms to address the trauma, they are better able to provide support to the child (Hendricks & Tanga, 2019).

Section 110 of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 states that DSWs, SAPS officers and a host of other professionals have statutory obligation to report cases of child abuse that come to his/her attention to the SAPS by means of submitting a form 22 to DSD and/or SAPS. A complaint of any form of child abuse can be lodged at any police station or by contacting 10111 which is the SAPS toll-free emergency number (SAPS, n.d.), and the police will be "called to where the child is, to take the complaint from him/her" (SAHRC, 2002, p. 22). The way the criminal inquiry is handled affects the child's safety and well-being. (Jamieson et al., 2017). Part of the police's responsibility is to ensure that the alleged perpetrator does not endanger the victim or other children (SAHRC, 2002), and ensure that the criminal investigations are managed in a way that does not lead to further trauma (Jamieson et al., 2017).

2.7.2 Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007

The *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act* 32 of 2007 is a South African act that reformed and codified the law relating to sexual offences. The *Sexual Offences Act* (2007) defines what constitutes sexual assault, the rights of victims of sexual crimes and provides guidelines on the conduct of role players dealing with all reported cases of sexual crimes. Section 54 of the *Sexual Offences Act* 32 of 2007 states that any person who has knowledge of a sexual crime against a child must report it to the police. The SAPS must accept the complaint and follow appropriate processes to obtain statements and investigate (SAPS, n.d.). Police officers must create a conducive environment to obtain statements from the complainant and witnesses (SAHRC, 2002). Further to this, police must assist victims to obtain a J88 report which will form part of evidence in the legal process, this is especially important in cases of physical or sexual abuse (SAHRC, 2002). The J88 is the official incident reporting form to be completed by a medical practitioner and used exclusively in criminal proceedings (Rowe et al. 2013). The medical practitioner records his observation of the victims' physical and emotional state, documents all bodily injuries sustained by the victim, and the injuries to the anogenital area (Duma & Ogunbanjo, 2004; Jewkes et al., 2009).

2.7.3 National Instructions for Sexual Offences 3 of 2008

The *National Instructions for Sexual Offences 3 of 2008* outlines guidelines on dealing with the investigation of sexual assault cases and providing support for victims. It is stated in the guidelines that police officers must respect victims and their families when taking statements and investigating cases, provide them with information about their cases and the criminal justice system, and refer victims to additional community support (*National Instructions for Sexual Offences 3 of 2008*; SAHRC, 2002). If the victim is a child, it is stated that the SAPS official should ensure the child's safety and determine "whether the child is in need of care and protection and, if so, taking appropriate steps to ensure the safety and protection of the child" (National Instruction 3/2008 Sexual Offences, 2008, p. 9). If the official believes that ...

... the child is at risk they can arrest the perpetrator in terms of the criminal law, remove the perpetrator in terms of the Children's Act, or as a last resort remove the child, and any other children that may be at risk, to temporary safe care (Jamieson et al., 2017, p. 27).

This is in line with Section 152 of the *Children's Act 38 of 2005* that authorises SAPS officials to "remove a child and place the child in temporary safe care without a court order" (p. 65) if there is reason to believe that waiting for a court order will place the child's safety and well-being at a greater risk (*Children's Act 38 of 2005*). The SAPS officer who facilitates such a removal should report the case to the nearest child welfare office of the Department of Social Development within 24 hours and a DSW must investigate to determine whether the child is in need of care and protection (*Children's Act 38 of 2005*).

South African DSWs, who were interviewed by Truter and Fouché (2019), reported that there is a lack of professional interdisciplinary work between DSWs in the child protection system. The lack of cooperation between DSWs and the SAPS has a negative impact on victims and their families as they do not get the necessary support and assistance (Grunder, 2014; Ntlatleng, 2011; Schiller, 2017).

2.8 THE REALITY OF INTER-SECTORAL COLLABORATION IN CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

2.8.1 Global scenario

Interviews conducted with police officers and social workers in a study in the United Kingdom, revealed that the role of social workers is unclear, and that the working relationship was tense because the police "perceive themselves as the lead agency" (Garrett, 2004, p. 77) disregarding the expertise of the social worker. In their study exploring the interagency experiences of police and social worker working with looked after children, Kaip et al. (2022)

highlighted significant challenges in inter-agency working between police and social workers. Participants (police officers and social workers) were of the notion that there is no shared inter-agency understanding about their respective roles; each professional believed that their approach to cases of child abuse was most appropriate (Kaip et al., 2022). A social worker was quoted as saying “they’re (Police) looking at beyond reasonable doubt, for evidence and we look at the balance of probability” (Kaip et al., p.8).

A study conducted by Gonzales and Quiñonez (2008) in California (USA) with police and social workers exploring “The relationship between law enforcement officers and child welfare social workers” found that police have a negative perception of social workers and do not respect their role. It was revealed that the police often do not respond to their calls to attend to child abuse cases; social workers are left to wait outside a residence for hours on end, incapable of ensuring the safety of children until the police arrive (Gonzales & Quiñonez, 2008). A study conducted with 1 401 police officers across three countries (United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Italy) found that “there is a lack of police communication, resources, standardisation and adequate focused training” (p. 8) for front line police officers who deal with child sexual offences (Davidson et al., 2020). Clearly the reported problem is observed in more than one country.

2.8.2 South African scenario

Several studies conducted in South Africa have highlighted multiple challenges faced by DSWs when working with SAPS officers (Grunder, 2014; Sibanda & Lombard, 2015). Internationally and in South Africa, physical abuse is regarded as a punishable criminal offence. A study conducted in five sites in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal by Jamieson et al, (2017) investigating the practices of child protection workers in relation to case management found that physical abuse cases are underreported and that cases reported to the police were not taken seriously and ultimately withdrawn because of the “negative attitudes towards children who reported physical abuse – professionals dismissed their cases as not serious or viewed the perpetrators’ actions as justifiable discipline” (p. 53). Most DSWs who participated in a study conducted by Sibanda and Lombard (2015) which explored the “Challenges faced by social workers working in child protection services in implementing the Children’s Act 38 of 2005” (p. 332) reported that the police are untrained and uncooperative (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015). Participants stated that the “police don’t even know what to do when they get to an abused child. You find that when children or parents go to the police to report child abuse, they are dismissed from the police station” (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015, p. 343). It was further stated that police officers remove children without conducting a risk assessment (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015). This is supported by Grunder (2014), who found that SAPS officers lacked knowledge of the *Children’s Act 38 of 2005* and they failed to perform their duties which leads to cases being thrown out of court (Grunder, 2014). Liebenberg (2019) found that DSWs’ various roles and responsibilities

frequently conflict with the role functioning of other role players, DSWs report that the involvement of police and legal system often hinder them from performing their duties because they do not understand the role of the DSWs in the investigation and management of child abuse cases (Liebenberg, 2019). This not only compromises the working relationship between DSWs and SAPS officers, but it also means that the services of DSWs are suboptimal.

Section 110 of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 requires that DSWs and SAPS officers refer cases to each other. DSWs must report cases of physical abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse to the police to investigate the allegations to determine if a criminal act has occurred, identify, and apprehend the alleged offender, and file appropriate criminal charges. (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005; SAPS, n.d.; SAHRC, 2002). Similarly, SAPS officials are to bring reported cases of alleged child abuse or neglect to attention of the provincial Department of Social Department or a registered designated child protection organisation within 24 hours for investigation by a DSW to determine if the child is need of care and protection (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005). It is also stated in Section 19 of the *National Instructions for Sexual Offences* 3 of 2008 that SAPS officers should assist victims to access counselling services and get an impact statement from a parent, guardian, psychologist, DSW or forensic social worker to prove how the crime has affected the child.

As part of the multi-professional team, DSWs and SAPS police officers play a very important part in the care and protection of children and in the finalisation of the criminal case against the perpetrator. It is therefore essential that they understand their specific roles and responsibilities to ensure that efficient service delivery to victims and their families. A lack of cooperation between the two role players undermines the child protection system and prevents children and their families receiving appropriate services in their time of need (Jamieson et al., 2017). Children continue to suffer when role players do not work together; they do not receive therapeutic and appropriate support services while perpetrators continue to abuse children without being prosecuted (World Vision International, 2011). Children who do not receive appropriate support are at risk of experiencing continued traumatic anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms, which can lead to “revictimization and perpetration that continue the cycle of violence long into the future” (Jamieson et al., 2017, p. 56).

There is mounting evidence that DSWs across the globe and in South Africa face several challenges whilst trying to protect children, as is their statutory mandate (Garret, 2004, Grunder, 2014; Liebenberg, 2019; Sibanda & Lombard, 2015). One of the challenges relates to unsupportive colleagues or dysfunctional engagements with other role players, one of which is the police (Garret, 2004, Grunder, 2014; Liebenberg, 2019; Sibanda & Lombard, 2015; Truter & Fouché, 2019). More studies that examine these risks *in detail*, as recommended by Truter and Fouché (2019) and Boonzaaier et al. (2021), are needed.

There are possible reasons why DSWs and others in South Africa continuously experience difficulties when working with SAPS officers. Continual research to get to the root of potential

explanations for these poor engagements could possibly help researchers and practitioners to devise solutions, with the aim to foster positive and productive working relationships, for the sake of South African children in need of *efficient* care and protection. It is, therefore, necessary to start exploring the views of SAPS officers, about how *they* view *their* role and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases, to possibly find explanations for poor working relationships and to devise new research agendas and questions towards solutions for these problems.

2.9 Systems Theory

The systems theory, a common theory used in the social work profession, states that a system is a collection of elements with various non-linear interactions that come together to form a more substantial structure that is dynamic while maintaining coherence across time (Jenkins, 2017). Van Assche et al. (2019) and Von Bertalanffy (1968), who emphasise that the systems theory is an interdisciplinary study of how tiny systems are related within a larger system and how they interact with one another, provide more support for this. A systems theory-based analysis is a technique for understanding systems holistically and modelling complexity to understand how components connect to one another, according to Jenkins (2017), who references Cilliers (2005) in support of this claim.

By definition, a child protection system is seen as having multiple components that are supposed to work in synergy, with related child protection objectives (Wulczyn, et al., 2010). Using a system theory in child protection allows one to view the child protection system as it is: a multi layered system with several role players. This theory further allows one to view the child protection system holistically and lays a strong emphasis on prevention as well as reinforcing the responsibilities and capabilities of key players who are responsible for providing services (World Vision, 2011). Saunders (2003) defines child protection as the formal, multi-levelled, and multi-sectoral elements of the child protection system that are put into place by government authorities at various levels and within various departments.

Having said that, systems perform best when their objectives, structures, functions, and capacities are symmetrical with the normative framework in which they operate (Wulczyn, et al., 2010). Hence, it is essential that all participants in the child protection system who are responsible for preventing and addressing child protection concerns be connected (World Vision, 2011). The focus of this study was on the perspectives of SAPS officers (one system in the larger child protection system) because, in accordance with the systems theory, the behaviour of different smaller systems (various role players in the child protection process) in the larger system (the child protection system in SA) determines how the larger system functions. When the system and the normative environment in which it is entrenched give the highest priority on ensuring children are free from violence, abuse, exploitation, and other types of maltreatment, children are effectively safeguarded by such systems (Wulczyn, et al., 2010).

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SECTION B: MANUSCRIPT 1

3. MANUSCRIPT 1

Title:

The views of SAPS regarding their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative exploration

Prepared for submission to:

This manuscript was written in preparation for submission to the journal: *British Journal of Social Work*¹

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ABSTRACT

Child abuse is a global crisis with far-reaching and devastating consequences for those who are affected by it, both directly and indirectly. This is an issue that requires a response from the larger child protection system, which includes multiple role players such as designated social workers (DSWs), police officers, legal professionals, and public health professionals. Cooperation between the different role players is a prerequisite for the successful management of child abuse cases. A few recent South African studies reported that some social workers in SA experience workplace adversity and struggle to do their work, among others, because of poor service delivery from SAPS. There is no available studies to date that exclusively report on the perceptions of SAPS members about their role and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases, there is therefore a gap in literature, and it becomes important for us to explore and understand the views of SAPS members in SA because it might help us understand reported problems within the multi-sectoral working relationship in the child protection system. In response to this reported problem and literature gap, a qualitative descriptive study was executed to explore the views of some SAPS officers based in Hillbrow, Gauteng, on their role and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases. Non-probability sampling was used to recruit participants and data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Themes in relation to the perspective of SAPS members on their own role and duties in the management of child abuse cases were: (1) opening a case, (2) statutory intervention, (3) interaction with other role players, (4) investigate and arrest, (5) participating in judicial process, and (5) police conduct/attitude vs. victim response. Themes in relation to the perception of SAPS members on the role and duties of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases included: (1) the initiation of investigations, (2) statutory intervention, (3) counselling services, and (4) police experiences when working with DSWs. Some unanticipated, important findings that do not directly answer the two key research questions are also shared. Findings of this study are novel as no similar studies have been reported in SA to date. Findings are compared to what South African policy and law say SAPS and DSWs roles should be, as well as reported complaints by other professionals. Recommendations for future research are offered.

Key words: South African Police Service officers, designated social workers
child protection, child abuse, child protection social workers, qualitative descriptive

3.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

3.1.1 Child abuse and role players

Globally, the epidemic of child abuse has consequences that are wide-ranging and catastrophic on individuals who are both directly and indirectly impacted by it (Kobulsky et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2014; WHO, 2020). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2020), violence against children is recognised as a global public health problem. Studies and investigations into child abuse are complex – how it is defined in certain countries, and the different types of reporting structures in place, make it difficult to estimate the incidence of child abuse (WHO, 2020). Child maltreatment ...

constitutes all forms physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power (WHO, 1999, p. 8).

In South Africa, the national Department of Social Development uses the same definition (Department of Social Development [DSD] et al., 2012) and the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 defines a child as anyone under 18 years of age. There are several forms of child abuse, as indicated by the WHO in the definition above, and each of these types of abuse are defined.

In South Africa, all forms of abuse and neglect committed against children are prohibited. The *Criminal Law [Sexual Offences and Related Matters] Amendment Act* 32 of 2007, the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 as amended by the *Amendment Act* 41 of 2007, and *Constitution of the of South Africa* (1996) are three primary pieces of legislation that are in place to govern crimes against children. Child abuse and neglect are defined in these Acts and guide the conduct of role players involved in managing cases of child abuse.

The broader child protection system, which includes various actors from different professions, must respond to this issue. Common role players within the system of responding to child abuse in South Africa, typically involve designated social workers (DSWs), police officers, and health care providers like nurses and doctors. It is essential that all role players work together for successful investigation and general management of child abuse situations. Each role player has a scope of practice and a directive and know what to do, as set out in law and some studies (Boonzaaier et al., 2021; Pretorius & Herbst, 2022). When there is poor co-operation, the system fails a child in need of care and protection (ref any of the studies that have said children are failed when cops and DSWs don't work well together); which is unethical and illegal.

3.1.2 Problems working with the SAPS

In terms of the problems related to police involvement in child abuse cases, two non-South African studies could be sourced (Davidson et al., 2020; Garrett, 2004), and six South African studies, to date, that report on the issue of the services provided by South African Police Service (SAPS) in child abuse cases (Cromer et al., 2010; Grunder, 2014; Liebenberg, 2019; Ntlatleng, 2011; Sibanda et al., 2015; Smit, 2018). From these studies, reported difficulties working with the SAPS included their lack of knowledge on their role in child abuse case management, abusive conduct and attitudes from SAPS members during the management of these cases, a refusal to open child abuse cases, and so forth.

The problem of poor collaboration between social workers and the SAPS is not one that can be ignored, since child abuse is escalating, and vulnerable children are dependent on professional service delivery to be safe. The empirical findings from two studies by Grunder (2014) and Ntlatleng (2011) revealed the negative impact in the finalisation of child sexual abuse cases and successful prosecution, for example, because of a lack of professional cooperation, delay in obtaining J88 reports, as well as inadequate training of SAPS officers. Further detail about reported challenges experienced by other professionals working with SAPS is discussed later.

3.2 SUMMARY OF THE ROLES OF DSWs AND SAPS IN CHILD PROTECTION

3.2.1 Police Officers

3.2.1.1 Globally

One of the key professions involved in the system of child protection is law enforcement. It is stated that a multidisciplinary response is crucial for wide-ranging management and it includes different forms of support from various disciplines (Seth & Srivastava, 2017). The child protection system involves multidisciplinary teams, and each involved discipline has its particular role and upholds its own determination, expertise, theoretical foundation, and methods of how to intervene in a case of child abuse and neglect (MacLeod, 2016). Law enforcement is responsible for ensuring that physical evidence such as clothing, photographs and videos, medical records, etc., is collected (Seth & Srivastava, 2017). Another role or mission of the law enforcement involves the investigation of crimes (*Constitution of South Africa* of 1996; *South African Police Service Act* of 1995). It is further point out that in addition to the collection of evidence, law enforcement is responsible for referring alleged perpetrators for criminal prosecution. It is added that the organisation of the police agency is a quasi-military structure, with lines of authority being clear for all. However, situations when judgment is crucial are common in policing and officers do not

always have to formally consult supervisors (Buvik, 2016). Given the focus on the South African situation, we will now have a closer look at the legal mandate of SAPS officers in SA.

3.2.1.2 South Africa

Section 205 of the *Constitution of South Africa* of 1996, as well as the *South African Police Service Act* of 1995, clearly stipulate the role and authority of the SAPS. These laws are what direct the main tasks of police officers, which include keeping the law, stopping crime and disruption, and ensuring that citizens are protected (*Constitution of South Africa* of 1996; *South African Police Service Act* of 1995). It is stated by the *Criminal Procedure Acts* 51 of 1977 that the role of a police officer is to accept criminal complaints, arrest perpetrators, investigate complaints, gather evidence to oppose bail application and for prosecution purposes, and keep victims “informed of any progress including when to attend the court hearings” (South African Police Service, n.d, para. 7). Also, section 152(3) of the *Children’s Act* 38 of 2005 states the role of a SAPS officer in child abuse cases involves removing a child if there is reason that the child might be exposed to further abuse. Section 153 (1) also states that if a SAPS officer is confident that removing the alleged offender from the home where the child resides will be in the child’s best interest, that SAPS officer may give the alleged offender written notice to do so (leave the premises). The SAPS officer is then required to immediately send a duplicate original of the written notice to the children’s court’s clerk (Section 153 of the *Children’s Act* 38 of 2005)

Moreover, children's rights to family care or parental care, adequate nutrition, shelter, basic health care services, social assistance, and protection from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, or degradation are specifically addressed in Section 28 of the Constitution's Bill of Rights (1996). In this light, officers in child protection investigate criminal offences such as physical assaults, sexual assaults, and maltreatment of children (South African Human Rights Commission [SAHRC], 2002). Once a complaint is lodged at the Community Service Centre, a docket is opened by a SAPS officer in the Charge Office and is then assigned to an investigating officer (South African Police Service, n.d.). The role of the investigating officer is to obtain detailed statement of the alleged offence (SAHRC, 2002). The assisting SAPS officer must accompany victims to obtain medical attention and shelter to ensure that a medical practitioner gathers and documents any medical evidence in relation to the alleged child abuse case (South African Police Service, n.d.).

It is further stated by the *National Instructions for Sexual Offences* 3 of 2008 that once the case has been registered and statements have been taken, the SAPS officer investigating the case is required to take the child for a forensic medical examination and obtain the J88 report from a health care professional. A medical examination refers to a “comprehensive physical examination and health intervention” (Mogale et al., 2015, p. 18), to record evidence of signs of abuse (Rowe et al., 2013). Police officers do not have the capacity or authority to decide to

withdraw cases, such decisions can only be made by the National Prosecuting Authority (*National Prosecuting Authority Act 32 of 1998, Section 20*). After all that is done, the investigating officer should then submit a case docket which includes all the statements and evidence collected including the J88 report to the prosecutor who will then review the case and make the decision of whether there will be prosecution or not (National Prosecuting Authority, 2013).

3.2.2 Designated Social Workers

3.2.2.1 Globally

According to Toros et al. (2021), any public organisation within local government, as well as child protection system and its child protection workers, are responsible for securing the rights of children in need and ensuring that they are protected and assisted, whenever there is a need. They point out to assist children in need of care and protection and the ability to make decisions that are in the best interests of the child, there needs to be effective collaboration between child protection workers within the system (Toros et al., 2021).

Teater (2014) defines social work as a profession that makes use of ethics, facts, skills, and particular procedures to work with clients at individual, group, and community levels. The overall aim of social work is to “promote social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being” (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014, p. 1). Social workers can work in different types of fields such as hospitals, child welfare, clinics, schools, mental health facilities, community development corporations, probation, correctional services, and private practices (Rogers, 2019; Zastrow, 2017). Kleijn (2004) explains that statutory social work is a specialised field that applies administrative procedures prescribed by law, legislation or policy to improve the social functioning of children and their families at micro, mezzo, and macro level. According to Hope and Van Wyk (2018) and WHO (2020), child protection social workers across the world are directed by the laws and regulations of their respective countries, to work to ensure the protection of children from child abuse, exploitation, and deliberate neglect.

3.2.2.2 South Africa

In South Africa, social work practice is administered by the code of professional ethics and conduct, and legislative requirements outlined in the *Constitution of South Africa* (1996), the *Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978*, and the *Children’s Act 38 of 2005*. Professional registration and the regulation of professional or unprofessional conduct is overseen by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). In SA, it is mandatory for a social worker to be registered annually with the SACSSP, to practice. Child protection social workers in South Africa are formally known as “designated social workers” (DSWs) and more casually known

as statutory or child protection social workers. According to the *Children's Act 38 of 2005* (p. 13) a DSW is defined as “a social worker in the service of the Department or a provincial Department of Social Development, a designated child protection organisation or a municipality” who provides child protective services. DSWs deliver services on all levels of service delivery, from preventative work to early intervention, statutory intervention and after care services. In SA, DSWs (and SAPS) are the only social workers authorised to remove children with (Section 151 of the *Children's Act 38 of 2005*) or without (section 152 of the *Children's Act 38 of 2005*) a court order. Furthermore, these social workers investigate all child maltreatment cases (Section 155 of the *Children's Act 38 of 2005*), make recommendations to the presiding officer of the children's court about what is in the best interest of the child (Section 7 of the *Children's Act 38 of 2005*) and facilitate reunification services.

3.2.3 The perception of police officers on their role and the role of DSWs

The researcher was unable to locate a study that exclusively focused on how SAPS officials view their own roles or those of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases. One study that could be cited is the study by Garrett (2004) who explored the working relationship between social workers and police officers in the United Kingdom. The findings of the study revealed that there were tensions between the two professions, and that the police had a tendency of perceiving themselves as the “lead agency” (Garrett, 2004). There is an apparent gap in literature due to the lack of available empirical studies that exclusively report on the perspectives of SAPS officers regarding their role and the role of DSWs in managing child abuse cases. Thus, what is on record is the views of others working with SAPS when managing child abuse, with a list of complaints that is cited for some of the core reasons for poor child abuse management; but no studies that have started exploring the views of SAPS, thus an objective view is missing. It is important to start exploring the perspective of SAPS officers as this may reveal any misconceptions and other information to help us understand why these reported problems (Grunder, 2018; Liebenberg, 2019; Ntlatleng, 2011; Schiller, 2017; Sibanda et al., 2014; Smit, 2018) exist on ground level when the system is supposed to respond to child abuse cases adequately.

3.2.4 Reported challenges with DSWs and SAPS involvement in child abuse cases

There is legislation that guides and regulates the roles and duties of both DSWs and the SAPS in child protection. However, the available studies illustrate a potential gap in SAPS training or knowledge regarding their roles and the roles of other professionals. Various studies have described the relationship between police officers and DSWs as hostile. Cowley et al. (2018) cites Newman et al. (2005) who point out that the hostile relationship between the two professions is caused by them not agreeing on what needs to be done, assumptions and perceptions regarding

the other's role, as well as time delays. A study conducted by Liebenberg (2019) explored the "experiences of designated social workers working with cases of alleged child sexual abuse in the South African context" (p. 1). Liebenberg (2019) found that there is often conflict on the different roles and responsibilities of DSWs and police officials. The participants (DSWs) reported that the involvement of the police often becomes an impediment on their role as the police show indifference and limited understanding of DSWs' roles and duties. Liebenberg (2019) further pointed out that participants believed that the lack of clarity on the process of child sexual abuse investigations creates restrictions and boundaries for DSWs when they perform their different roles and duties.

In addition, there are other reported challenges by other role players regarding police involvement when it comes to child protection. Further challenges on police involvement can be seen in a survey conducted among social workers, prosecutors, and police officers that found that some police officers would have remarks to victims that are demeaning and insensitive, and "police officers would at times refuse to file a case arguing that it is not serious enough, or worse" (Smit, 2018, p. 85). Grunder (2014) also supports this finding in her study with social workers exploring their perceptions on the reasons why child sexual abuse cases are not finalised. It was stated that the attitudes of SAPS officers are a problem when they must report a case of child sexual abuse. They also shared that police officers do not see child sexual abuse cases as a real crime, which, according to Grunder (2014), could be a possible myth that police officers may have regarding children who are sexually abused.

Moreover, it is argued that such myths point that sexual abuse is not harmful because a child naturally outgrows the effects of sexual abuse or neglect (Cromer et al., 2010). Such myths also reason that children will immediately tell their parents about the abuse when it occurs. Further to this, another misinformed belief exists, stating that "children who are being abused will show physical evidence of abuse" (Cromer et al., 2010, p. 633). Jamieson et al. (2017) found that in many instances, police officers do not view physical abuse as a serious offence as it is believed that it is as an acceptable form of discipline even when the child may have serious injuries. Regarding child sexual abuse, Smit (2018) points out that at times, police officers question what the victim was wearing when they were sexually assaulted. This is due to a belief that provocative or tightfitting clothing is the cause of the rape. In a study by Grunder (2014), participants further noted that the police have limited knowledge of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005. Due to this, they always refer cases that involve children (even those of missing children) back to social workers.

Based on the available information, it was also argued that exploring and comprehending the perspectives of police officers might help explain why they are allegedly causing problems in the larger system (Grunder, 2018; Liebenberg, 2019; Ntlatleng, 2011; Schiller, 2017; Sibanda et al., 2015; Smit, 2018).

The lack of available empirical studies that *exclusively* report on the perspectives of SAPS officers regarding their role and the role of DSWs in managing child abuse cases shows a gap in literature and thus in understanding why these problems are surfacing. Enjoying a better understanding of the views of some of the SAPS officers in SA will potentially reveal why some problems are reportedly experienced in the management of child abuse cases. This will also start to offer direction for future research and problem resolutions. DSWs and police officials have roles and responsibilities within the larger child protection system to prevent and respond to child protection concerns (World Vision International, 2011).

Furthermore, by obtaining an objective and holistic view from all role players on ground level, a truer picture can be formed, thus a more accurate understanding of the problem which will help to design more appropriate solutions. This will further positively contribute to the effectiveness of the child protection system in SA and help ensure that children in danger are able to receive appropriate services. To properly understand the situation to devise solutions, the views of SAPS members must also be explored. To honour objectivity and to address this knowledge gap, we explored the views of 13 SAPS officers in Hillbrow, Gauteng, on how they view their role and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases.

3.3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The study was underpinned by the system's theory. The main assumption of the system's theory is that "the whole is more than the sum of its parts" (Von Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 18). Considering child abuse through a systemic "lens", positions one to consider child protection holistically, with a strong emphasis on prevention and strengthening the roles and resources of key actors responsible for providing services (World Vision International, 2011). Child protection systems refer to the multi-levelled and multi-sectoral formal components that are implemented by government authorities at various levels and departments to prevent or intervene legally when child abuse is suspected (Saunders, 2003). Accordingly, it is critical that all role players in the child protection system who are responsible for preventing and responding to child abuse, co-operate (World Vision International, 2011).

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical clearance (NWU-00043-22-A1) for this study was obtained from the HREC of the North-West University (**Addendum 3**) and the South African Police Service (**Addendum 4**) before conducting any activity relating to the current research. Participation was voluntary; participants who agreed to participate contacted the independent person to gain more information and to obtain and complete informed consent forms (Rubin et al., 2017). The researcher obtained permission from all 13 participants to record interviews before the interview process started. To

protect the participants' identity; no names were used in the research report or data analysis as the researcher made use of pseudonyms to protect the real identifying details of participants, for instance, P1 (participant 1). Moreover, data storage of electronic copies of the participant consent form, audio recordings, and transcripts have been saved on a password-protected laptop. A one-hour telephone debriefing session with a registered counsellor was offered to all participants (**Addendum 11**), though none of the participants requested this support.

3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

To ensure credibility, each participant was emailed a summary of their unique findings, and they were asked to provide feedback to correct any inaccurate interpretations of their data (Truter et al., 2018; Truter et al., 2019). However, the researcher did not receive any feedback from participants. The researcher transcribed the data after each interview to determine what data were emerging over time and determine when data saturation was reached (Shenton, 2004).

To increase confirmability, the researcher made use of an audit trail to describe the process for gathering and analysing data as well as to attest to the interpretations of the data in a research journal (Korstjens et al., 2018). In her research journal, the researcher documented how participants were selected, and how data were collected and analysed (**Addendum 13**).

To achieve reflexivity, the supervisor had access to the interview recordings so that she could check to see whether the researcher had affected the participants' answers and take appropriate countermeasures. The researcher and her supervisor had a meeting with the co-coder before data collection, to ensure that the co-coder was aware of their roles and how their role had a significant impact on the study's trustworthiness.

To help the reader comprehend the research environment and make their own determinations about the transferability of the findings, the researcher supplied a comprehensive backdrop of the experiences of the participants during data collection (Nowell et al., 2017). This was done to ensure that all required information (including limitations) was clearly described to the reader so that they fully understand the boundaries of the research. The total number of participants and the data collection methods are described in the methodology section, including how long the data collection process took.

The researcher used audio recordings and descriptive field notes to record data to enhance dependability and invited a co-coder to analyse data and member checks from participants to ensure that the conclusions were supported by the data gathered and that the findings were correctly interpreted (Botma et al., 2010).

3.6 METHODOLOGY

3.6.1 Research aim

The aim of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the views of SAPS officers employed at the Hillbrow Police Station in Gauteng, about their role and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases.

The study was guided by two research questions: (1) *What does the law of South Africa and empirical and grey literature say about the role of SAPS officers and designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases?* (2) *How do SAPS officers from Hillbrow Police Station view their role and the role of designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases?*

3.6.1.1 Design

The study was based on the qualitative descriptive design. The qualitative descriptive design gave the researcher an opportunity to obtain thorough and direct descriptions of the participants' experiences during the one-on-one interviews (Sandelowski, 2000, 2010). This design was appropriate for this study as the aim was to investigate SAPS officers' knowledge on a particular phenomenon, i.e., their views on their roles and the roles of DSWs when it comes to managing cases of child maltreatment (Granger et al., 2009; Sandelowski, 2000, 2010).

3.6.1.2 Recruitment and Sampling

Non-probability sampling was used to select participants (Strydom, 2021). Participants were recruited through a self-referral process, which means that the study was advertised (Addendum 5), and prospective participants were given the option to volunteer their participation if they met the desired criteria (Colman, 2008). Interested participants who complied and informed the independent person via email or WhatsApp, then signed informed consent forms and were subsequently requested to identify other potential participants who complied with inclusion criteria - thus by means of snowball sampling (Voicu, 2011). Once scientific approval and ethical clearance for the study was granted, the researcher sent an email with the advertisement of the study to the mediator, a Hillbrow Police Station Commander. Thirteen participants were interviewed for the study and data collection stopped when the researcher reached data saturation (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

3.6.1.3 Data collection

Once interview dates and platforms were finalised, the researcher proceeded to conduct semi-structured interviews (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Semi-structured interviews were deemed to

be most effective for this study because the researcher wanted to explore participants' views about their role and that of DSWs when managing child abuse cases.

Participants were thus invited to voice their preference of either face-to-face or online interviews. All participants preferred face-to-face interviews that were held at a private office at Hillbrow Police Station. Participants allowed the researcher to record interviews to transcribe later.

3.6.1.4 Sample

The South African Police Service Annual Report 2020/21 shows that there was a total of 54 530 Black female police officers and 87 325 Black male police officers employed in the country. There was a total of 9 510 and 6 427 White males and females respectively, 3 077 Indian males, 1 383 Indian female officers, 12 592 Coloured males, and 7 282 Coloured female officers. The specific statistics about the participants' rank, race, gender age and total number of years in SAPS is depicted in Table 2:

Table 2: Demographic information of participants

Participant	Rank	Race	Gender	Age	Total years of experience in SAPS
Participant 1	Constable	Black	Female	38 years	13 years
Participant 2	Warrant Officer	Black	Female	48 years	21 years
Participant 3	Sergeant	Black	Female	35 years	11 years
Participant 4	Captain	Black	Female	47 years	23 years
Participant 5	Captain	Black	Male	56 years	36 years
Participant 6	Sergeant	Black	Male	37 years	12 years
Participant 7	Sergeant	Black	Female	40 years	19 years
Participant 8	Sergeant	Black	Male	42 years	15 years
Participant 9	Sergeant	Black	Female	43 years	16 years
Participant 10	Captain	White	Male	56 years	38 years
Participant 11	Constable	Black	Male	31 years	7 years
Participant 12	Constable	Black	Male	29 years	4 years
Participant 13	Captain	Black	Male	59 years	36 years

Table 2 provides a detailed summary of the demographic information of participants. Most participants were male, with six of the 13 participants being female. Their rank in the force varied, and this can be argued to have allowed the study to gain perspectives from different levels within the force, with varying experiences in the field. SAPS officers in the Community Service Centre

respond to emergency calls that come through 10111, obtain statements from victims and witnesses, assist community members to register criminal cases and generate a case number (South African Police Services, n.d.). Which means that in most cases they are the first officials victims and families come into contact to when seeking protection and support. Almost all participants had over ten years of working experience, with only two having been in the police force for four and seven years respectively. The average years of work experience in SAPS among participants for this study are 19 years. This is argued to have benefited the study in that the researcher was able to obtain views from individuals who were new in the force, as well as seasoned SAPS members; the longest years of service being 38 years.

3.6.1.5 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using Braun et al.'s (2006) steps of thematic analysis. Data was independently coded by the researcher and the co-coder. The researcher and co-coder colour-coded sections of the transcripts that answered the two research questions; colour-codes were used to describe the meanings of interview segments in detail, summarise and interpret the data, and finally, develop themes that answer the research questions. They both identified these colour-codes independently and then later shared and compared what they each identified. This was to ensure that there was no bias and influence from each other as they coded the transcripts. Once a consensus discussion between the researcher and the co-coder was concluded and themes and sub-themes were finalised with supportive quotes, the researcher met with the study supervisor to refine formulation of themes and sub themes. Thereafter, the researcher sent a summary of each participant's findings to each participant to invite them to correct any misinterpretations/incorrect transcriptions of their interview (Birt, et al., 2016). Finally, the data was then written up (Terry et al., 2017). In presenting and analysing themes responses were quantified which is acceptable in qualitative studies (Neale et al., 2014) and is said to improve the transparency of data analysis.

3.7 FINDINGS

The researcher described the views of 13 SAPS officers from the Hillbrow Police Station in Gauteng on their perceptions about their role and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases. Findings are presented in two sections. The first section is a summary of findings in response to the first research question, namely: *"What does the law of South Africa and empirical and grey literature say about the role of SAPS officers and designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases?"*. The second section is a summary of findings answering the second research question: *"How do SAPS officers from Hillbrow Police Station view their role and the role of designated social workers in the management of child abuse*

cases?” Themes and sub themes are described with illustrative quotes from transcribed interviews to support developed themes.

3.7.1 Section 1: The perspective of 13 Hillbrow SAPS members on their role and duties in the management of child abuse cases

The first question sought to understand the perception of SAPS members on their role and duties on the management of child abuse cases.

A total of six themes were identified for this question, all of which had sub-themes. All themes depict perception of police officers on their role and duties regarding the management of child protection cases. Each theme has been discussed in detail with illustrative quotes from transcribed interviews in support of developed themes.



Each theme and sub theme will now be presented in table format, with illustrative quotes in the final column of each table.

Figure 3: Summary of themes regarding research question 1: Perception of Hillbrow SAPS members on their role and duties in the management of child abuse cases

Theme 1: Open Case

Description of theme	Opening a case came up in all 13 interviews; however, it was not shared in the same order or defined in the same way. Some participants mentioned the importance of protecting and honouring the rights of children, while others spoke about taking a statement or conducting interviews in a private room, all of which contribute to opening a case of child abuse.	Description of sub theme	Illustrative quotes
Sub themes	Subtheme 1: Protect and honour child's rights	In response to the question about their duties as SAPS officers in child abuse case management, five participants mentioned their duty to protect a child and/or ensure that their rights are honoured.	"Make sure that the child's rights are protected" (P2). "Like to protect the victim of domestic violence... so you as the police officer you must protect them" (P3). "To protect the child. To see that what's the best interest for the child, prevailing at that moment" (P10). "My role is to make sure the child eh... feel safe under my care and I'm also going to give the child the assurance that he is safe at the police station" (P7). "We are a people that will protect these children with everyone around our areas" (P8).
	Subtheme 2: Secure immediate needs of the child	Only two of the 13 participants referred to ensuring the urgent needs of a child when opening a case.	"So, as a person who is working with the children, I will make sure that is well dressed, is in a warm place, I have to feed the child. Take care of everything, whether I need to change the diaper or bathing the child, I do all those things" (P1). "You have to pop out money out of your pocket, but other things like Pampers, there are children that comes with ... they are using Pampers..." (P7).
	Sub-theme 3: Taking a statement	Not all, but most (11) of the participants also alluded to taking statement to open a case. About ten agreed that the statement must be taken from the parent or guardian and not the child.	"Take a statement from that person that's when I open a case" (P1). "I can take the statement ... if the minor says the parent is far away, he or she is not staying with the parents, then I will be the complainant on behalf of the child ... But if there's no one, I will open it,

			ja, I will act as a guardian of that child..." (P2). "... the child is a minor, she cannot talk ... Then you'll ask the questions, but you must ask the parents because the minor, because according to the law, the minor [does not have] ... that capacity to answer questions or to open a case ..." (P3). "We're engaging with the parent. The parent must open a case on behalf of the child" (P5). "Yes, I have to open the case as the complainant" (P6). ".. then I will take the statement. Either I will take the statement from the child, and I will be the one opening the case. But most of the time you start with the parent ...if maybe... the mother is the one who's assaulting, normally the father will come in and help with the opening of case" (P7). "No, that's impossible because of the child is a minor remember, so anything that can be said by the child, it might be changed tomorrow. So, you have to take the statement from the guardian" (P8). "...we prefer a lady to take a statement from a lady when she was raped, that's why we have a lady at the trauma room. But, if she's not there or a lady is not available, then we take statement" (P10). "... both the statement of the child and the mother will be taken" (P11). "I had to go and assist the lady, ja. So just to take a statement" (P12). "And the complainant will tell me the story ... Then I interview the child" (P13).
	Subtheme 4: Conduct interview in private room	Only four participants talked about conducting interviews in private offices.	"You have to take her to a private place, then its whereby you can start the conversation..." (P6).

			"Here we've got a friendly room where we take a child and the parent ... eh... there first ... for interviewing them regarding to what kind of situation are they in or what kind of help do they need from us" (P1). "We take her from this side, cause there's a room for kids and so forth, so you see" (P12). "Like as I'm saying, we take them to a trauma office wherever we interview the child and the guardian" (P8).
	Subtheme 5: Make the child feel safe and comfortable	Other participants mentioned the importance of making the child feel safe and comfortable. This alluded to creating an environment that would make it easy to take a statement and open a case, and at times, this would mean a female officer attending a female victim and vice versa. This subtheme was noted from four responses.	"Ja, you create an environment that they are feeling comfortable to say everything ..." (P11). "Then you must make sure that the child is comfortable to speak to you as a police officer and then you take it from there" (P2). "Both male and female can do, but most of the time what happens is that we prefer it to be done female officers so that the complainant can be calm to be able to give a statement on what happened and how" (11). "You see? So, it's easy if maybe it happens that the complain that has to be attended, its maybe a wise decision to do to take maybe female police officer, ja. If it's a man then it's okay me being a man to attend such complaints ... As I stated before, maybe it would be gender. If maybe I'm a boy and the guy ... it's a girl, that would be the other thing. Also, the language. The language. I think it's very important. And if you know that guy ... that girl is a Tsonga girl, you have to get someone who can" (P12). "Remember, we ... we policemen we only open a case of rape. A case of rape is supposed to be opened by the woman" (P13).

3.7.1.1 Theme 2: Statutory Intervention

Description of theme	Statutory intervention for these participants relates to the laws and legislation or policies about SAPS involvement in child protection. Two subthemes, namely, remove child and place in shelter, and administration or completion of forms, informed this theme	Description of sub theme	Illustrative quotes
Sub themes	Subtheme 1: Remove child and place in shelter.	The participants had opposing views when it came to removing children. Most of the participants (11) shared the importance of removing an abused child and placing them in a place of safety. One participant believed that removing children and finding a place of safety was not their role while but that of FCS, on the other hand another participant stated that only DSW can remove a child.	"Whether it's a rape case or a child abuse, we need to remove a child. Maybe from the flat..." (P1). "... and I will take the child to the place of safety ... Ja. I'm removing the child from the abuse..." (P7). "You can't remove, only the social worker can remove the child" (P3). "We also do the removal but then when they're supposed to take over ..." (P4). "Ja, no, that one we take the victim to place of safety, ja. We have places here in Hillbrow and Berea, where they kept that people for shelter, ja" (P5). "I can be, but since there is an FCS unit, that's whereby they are the ones who are responsible for everything" (P6). "I have to seek for the place for the safety of the child, yes" (P8). "Meaning you have to remove that child and put him somewhere. Until all the ... until the case is settled because they will go to the court" (P9). "Ja, if there's no one that can take ... another parent, a substitute or any ... a grandparent, then we take the child for safe keeping, through the ChildLine, ja ... Then I get a car and go fetch the child, because it remains my responsibility" (P10). "So that we can remove them so that they cannot hear us when we return words, cause it might end up damaging their minds ... Cause some of the time you cannot leave the child behind because of the situation" (P11). "... to take the child in a safe place ... I will take the child straight away and bring the child here ... So, for instance, if you see it's not safe, we

			just move you. We take her from this side, cause there's a room for kids and so forth, so you see" (P12).
	Subtheme 2: Administrative duties	Administrative duties in relation to statutory intervention involves the completion of certain forms to finalise statutory tasks which was mentioned by nine participants.	"After that you do the paperwork" (P3). "Then we compile everything if there's a case opened and investigation will flow" (P4). "you register the docket, the case number, they take the victim and the docket, then they're the ones who proceed with everything" (P6). "Yes ... in ... eh... the form that is being completed is going to be SAP7? No, Form 7... Form 7 the one that is being completed by the doctor. And then on my side I'm completing the SAP36 ... And there is another form that is SAP308 that if ... before the child is being attended to, I have to complete to request the doctor to check eh... the injuries ... or to check that injured child ... I will attach those forms ... the form from the doctor eh... I will attach the Form 7 and 36, will be attached in the docket and also the place of safety they will need that, ja" (P7). "Yeah, whenever you reach the places, they give us the forms wherever we fill up the forms, and with the case numbers, and then with the case numbers, everything it will went well ... There if it is, there's 508. SAP508 ... for ... actually its fall under domestic violence isn't it. Eh... the vulnerable children ... uhhmm ... the other form what is it? Eh... 508a and b, I think so, but there's an OB that we write inside the trauma, so that it can have a reference number ... J88 for everyone, I can provide them with. I can give them that J88, so that we can fill wherever the child, there's been marked or maybe like ... if he was being assaulted" (P8). "... there are forms that the doctor have to fill, they have to check to assess the child, the age, to check the health of the child ... Ja, there is a form that is called the Form 36, that is supposed to be completed, and Form 7. Form 7 is the one the doctor must be completed. And 36 is the form that the ... like the home, they have to complete" (P9).

			"We have the forms, ja. It's Form 4 and a form for the district surgeon to complete ehhe ... There's a form ... they call it Form 7, ja, ehhe ... Form 7 ... there are many other forms on the child care protection act, but we, we use this to place the child uhmm ... (P10). "No, we don't have forms, but we are only having a book where we report everything ... Or maybe I don't know them since I didn't attend any training" (P11). "... together with the J88 ... We do give them that J88 for medical attentions and so forth" (P12). Participant 7 and 11 shared in the frustration about the ignorance of some of their colleagues when it comes to administrative duties. Participant 7 further explained the kind of situation the children are left in when police officers fail to perform their duties diligently: "They leave the child there. If they left the child, there is nothing. There's no handing over; cause if you just leave the child, there is no paperwork, there's nothing, there's no case opened; then there is no way if I come in the morning, I will know about the child" (P11). "But I still remember the ... last month something like that happened. I came for my first day and I found the child and these people were going for four days" (with the child in the overnight shelter) (P7).
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3.7.1.2 Theme 3: Interaction with other Role Players

Description of theme	Description of sub theme	Illustrative quotes
Interacting with other role players is unavoidable when it comes to managing child abuse cases and this constitutes theme 3. Theme 3 shows the role and duties of police officers in relation to their interaction with other role players, to successfully protect children. Two subthemes were developed, namely: refer to volunteers, DSWs, social auxiliary workers, and Family Violence, Child Protection (FCS) as well as transport the child to a clinic for the completion of the J88.	Subtheme 1: Refer to volunteers, DSWs, social auxiliary workers and FCS.	This subtheme showed the role of police officers in relation to other professionals. The importance of interdisciplinary work was cited by only five participants. “And then as police officers here at the station, there’s nothing much that we do, except that after opening a case then you call the other role players, who will take the child maybe to the clinic to see to it, to go for medical attention, or if the child needs shelter” (P2). “Like the victim, firstly, maybe the victim came to the police station, as a police officer if you can see that this matter doesn’t need me as a police officer, you refer them to the volunteers... as a police officer you take those matters to the volunteers” (P3). “Social development. Even here in my office I’m having the social auxiliaries, who are offering trauma and counselling services to all the victims ... Within my office, but they are sponsored by Lifeline some are coming from department of community safety, so they’re in the next office. They are here, ja, they are working with me every day” (P4). “Immediately after opening a case, you call those people, they come here ... and then there are referral letters there, then we have to write the letters, the reference number that this person visited the police station, then she was looking for this help, 1, 2, 3. Then you refer the person” (P6). “So, ja, we are working closely with the Department of Social Development, so when we come across those cases and they also having a unit called FCS, the family and children unit, so when there’s kind of cases like that, whereby maybe a child is being abused, we inform them immediately ... If a child needs to be referred for counselling, we refer a child for counselling ...” (P4).

			"Cause we call FCS immediately, they come; they do the rest" (P12). "We call ... we phone the child ... the lady ... the gender-based violence phone the child protection unit ... "come, we've got a victim of rape; she's under-age ... That's the procedure ... You will find she's been raped for two days; she report it the third day, is that not a delay for her? ... But out delay... It's a procedure ... it's a right delay" (P13).
	Subtheme 2: Transport child to clinic for J88	Another role of SAPS members as perceived by 13 participants included the transportation of the child victim to a clinic for the J88. The subtheme was evident in majority of the responses.	"First, I take the child first to the clinic for exam ... medical examination as a whole ..." (P1). "... medical we do take them and FCS do take them" (P4). "And then after opening the case, we transport them to a medical practitioner" (P5). "Then the necessary steps will be taken, the person must be taken to clinic, for all those things, examinations..." (P6). "I will take the child with me to the clinic, and I will be opening the case, where ... whilst waiting for the doctor to attend the child" (P7). "I as an officer, I took the children to be assessed by the doctor, at the clinic, the nurses" (P8). "... there are forms that the doctor has to fill, they have to check to assess the child, the age, to check the health of the child" (P9). "Take the child to the district surgeon for assessment" (P10). "Once we are called, the person from victim empowerment or someone, let's say, a few men ... eh hh ... police officer, will take the child to hospital" (P11). "Then, there's another kid that is supposed to be submitted to clinic, for check-ups and so forth, ja ... so, they just fill it, or else we accompany them to fill those medical what-what then we open the case, if maybe the scenario pushes us to open case, then we do that" (P12). "... then I call FCS, then they take the child to the medical ..." (P2).

			“We call the child protection unit; they come and take her to the doctor. Examine ... the doctor will examine her, filling in the forms” (P13).
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3.7.1.3 Theme 4: Investigate and Arrest

Description of theme	This theme is about conducting investigations and arrests and is informed by two sub themes. There were 9 participants who referred to their duty of investigating the allegations and arresting alleged perpetrators.		Description of sub theme	Illustrative quotes
Sub themes	Subtheme 1: Talk to neighbours	According to three of the 13 participants, their duty in managing child abuse cases include investigations that involve, for instance, interviewing neighbours of the relevant family.	"I will go and find out from the neighbours ... Then I had to find the witnesses, families ..." (P1). "... you yourself you must go and verify the address, where that child is staying, and the parents, so after that, if you can see that maybe that child is abused" (P3). "The most important thing is to collect information as much as you can, so that we can know how to investigate this thing further, or maybe to help next time, how to prevent this kind of thing" (P11).	
	Subtheme 2: Arrest alleged perpetrator	Another important role of police officers, according to seven of the 13 participants, related to this theme was the detention of alleged perpetrators.	"... then the suspect if is known, we go and arrest immediately" (P4). "... the FCS will look for the suspect and arrest ..." (P5). "The suspect, they must definitely ... if ... like they are saying the same things. Open the case and arrest the perpetrator" (P6). "So, some other times whenever we open a case, we arrest the perpetrator" (P8). "Then if it's a rape case, so what we do, we open a case, we... even the abuser, they get arrested" (P9). "... to arrest that person, to ensure that this person end up being in jail" (P11). "Arrest the step-father" (P13).	

3.7.1.4 Theme 5: Participating in judicial process

Description of theme	A few participants mentioned participating in the judicial processes, like being part of the court case	Illustrative quotes
		Five participants were aware that their role may involve taking part in court proceedings, however, this was a reportedly rare occurrence. "No, maybe they can call you at the court if they want you. They can call you; you can come to court, but usually, no" (P9). "Our case when we open it will end up in court. So, in court they will need information from the social worker, from our side, so after doing everything you must go to the social worker and find that information so that when you take your docket to court, there must be everything which the magistrate will need from that case" (P1). "... the FCS will look for the suspect and arrest ... Until it goes to court" (P5). "... the criminal court will be the one taking that decision to say whether the child... this one is not the child court now, the one that will be ehhe ..." (P7). "I open a case... the decision will come from court" (P13).

3.7.1.5 Theme 6: Police conduct/attitude vs. victim response

Description of theme	The sixth and last theme is the police's conduct and attitude vs. victim's response. This theme was important in answering the research question in that some studies pointed out the impact of police conduct on the effective management of child abuse cases. There were four participants who referred to their duty regarding their conduct or how they present themselves.	Illustrative quotes
		The roles of police officers may not always be overt, in that their conduct or how they behave when approaching victims of child abuse may either be helpful or not in the management of child abuse cases. "No, it's the behaviour that they received from us as the police officer. You know, let's say someone is entering charge office crying, and then (speaks in vernac): "wena" Translation: "You" you start to be harsh to him or her, is that person ... he feel like there is no one to help him or her" (P6). According to P7, some police officials are oblivious: "Police officers are very ignorant when it comes to such cases; they don't pay attention or just let things slide" (P7). "So, as police officers we have to mind our approach and everything, the way we speak, it will help. Because the way you get there, and you present yourself. ... it might end up helping that the child can be open to tell everything" (P11). "... but if he can present himself well, it's okay, ja. He mustn't be harsh. I think ehhe ... they have to be patient, ja" (P12).

3.7.2 Section 2: The perspective of SAPS members on the role and duties of designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases

It was important for the researcher to describe how police officers view the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases, because this would shed light on what their expectation of DSWs are. Understanding how SAPS officers perceive the role of DSWs might help resolve

the reported interdisciplinary conflict between the two professions regarding the effective management of child abuse cases. There was a total of four themes that answered this research question. Figure 4 summarises the themes and subthemes identified in this section.



Figure 4: Summary of themes in response to the second research question: Perception of 13 Hillbrow SAPS members on the role and duties of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases.

There are different role players when it comes to the management of child abuse cases, and social workers are a crucial component in the bigger system. As they work closely with SAPS members, exploring and understanding the views of SAPS members on the roles and duties of DSWs may help explain any inconsistencies that exists. Moreover, police officers understanding the role of social workers may help in ensuring that they know why and when they would need DSWs to step in, and where their roles as police officers become crucial. There were different themes that were developed. SAPS members, in this study, were of the view that *initiating investigations* and *statutory intervention* were DSWs' duties. Providing *counselling services* was also seen as one of the roles and duties of DSWs. However, some officers had unpleasant experiences with DSWs, and some were not even aware of DSWs.

Each theme and sub theme will now be presented in table format, with illustrative quotes in the final column of each table.

3.7.2.1 Theme 1: Initiate investigations

Description of theme	This theme depicts the perception of participating SAPS members regarding the role and duty of DSWs in the management of child abuse. From their responses, four participants mentioned that they think social workers should initiate investigations of child abuse cases. Two subthemes informed this theme, which were opening a case and investigating allegations.	Description of sub theme	Illustrative quotes
Sub themes	Subtheme 1: Call police to open case	Only one participant mentioned that the role of DSWs involved calling the police to open a case of child abuse. Initiating investigations of child abuse cases was not mentioned by all the participants.	"... like let me say, at Charlotte Maxeke, which is the nearest hospital, if they find that kind of children that the social worker, they say that this child was being abused, they call us, we go and open a case for the child via the social worker" (P8).
	Subtheme 2: Investigate Allegations	Eight of the participants believed part of DSWs duties is to help with the investigation of child abuse cases, by doing home visits, interviewing teachers at the child's school and finding a place of safety for the child.	"The social worker they will go to the family and check the environmental... the child was raised... how they're handling the situation at home" (P9). "...they must go and verify the address and even the neighbours, they must ask the neighbours what's going on, cause they neighbours are the ones who saw everything. So, after that if they can find that maybe that child is abused, like sort of, so they can even place the child for the place of safety" (P3). "Even at school, the social workers are the ones who go to school to find out if the children were abused or not ... physically, spiritually, emotionally ... in court they will need information from the social worker, from our side, so after doing everything you must go to the social worker and find that information so that when you take your docket to court, there must be everything which the magistrate will need from that case" (P1). "Then to investigate the main cause. Why is the mother chasing the child away" (P2). "...if there is a case whereby maybe there is a suspicion that the child or children are being abused at home, we refer the case to them, so they do the visits, then they start opening the files and continue with the cases ..." (P4).

			"But what I know is, they don't just hand over the child they make thorough investigation to say the child ... okay even if they bring the child back, even those ones they see they lie, they lie because they were going to be beaten obviously, but they don't just say, "okay fine, hand over the child" ... They make sure that even if they give the child back to the biological parents, or maybe the biological grandparents, they go check the places" (P7). "Ja, that's why I say that a social worker can then take that child and investigate" (P10). "The social workers can play a big role because according to my understanding, they're just getting to the root of the problem" (P13).
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3.7.2.2 Theme 2: Statutory Intervention

Description of theme	Like the roles and duties of police officers, DSWs were also understood by most participants to be responsible for removing children and placing them in places of safety (statutory intervention) when necessary, but also appearing in court for legal proceedings following the removal. Two subthemes informed this theme.	Description of sub theme	Illustrative quotes
Sub themes	Subtheme 1: Removal and placement	Most (nine) participants shared that an important role of DSWs was removing children and finding a place of safety for them.	"To remove and place them to the place of safety" (P3). "Removing the child, placing the child, taking the child for medical check-ups, looking for a shelter for the child, yes" (P4). "I think their role is to ... they're taking over from us and after that they make sure that the child get the right place ... they also do this placement of children, that's what they say they do (P7). "Social workers, so that, I've got this kind of children, that have got no place to stay, can you just look for the place for this child, so that he can have a place to stay" (P8). "... the child welfare will look for a place of safety for the child, where the child will be ... to place them at the place of safety" (P9). "... it's very important that designated social worker, if we confront the parent or the guardian, she will take over, to get the child to Orlando house, where it's a place of safety" (P10). "Then maybe that's when they will take her to place of safety and 1, 2, 3" (P11). "To provide with accommodation" (P5). "You can't remove, only the social worker can remove the child" (P3).
	Subtheme 2: Present matter in court	Only two police officers mentioned the role of designated social workers in the court proceedings.	"The process of court and everything, all these things I know that I have to go to the social workers ..." (P7). "Assess home circumstance, write report, and present matter in court" (P9).

3.7.2.3 Theme 3: Counselling Services

Description of theme	There was a shared sentiment among five of the 13 participants that DSWs need to provide counselling to those affected by child abuse.	Illustrative quotes
		"We don't counsel. We are not here to counsel. So, them they are trained how to counsel a victim" (P5). "Whenever I open the case, now its whenever I can refer the child to them so that they can get that kind of counselling whatsoever or that kind of procedures that I don't know..." (P8). "They do also offer the counselling" (P4) "MES is social workers; they say they give counselling there" (P7). "As I said, it's just ... its counselling. Social worker will counsel and ehhe ... that's all. All I know about social worker. Counselling" (P13).

3.7.2.4 Theme 4: SAPS members' experience working with DSWs

Description of theme	When asking participants about their views on DSWs' duties, some expressed dissatisfaction. Two subthemes informed this theme. Subtheme 1 shows that some participating police officers were dissatisfied with the service provided by DSWs and the second subtheme referred to absent DSWs.	Description of sub theme	Illustrative quotes
Sub themes	Subtheme 1: Dissatisfied	Three participants did not have positive experiences to share about their interactions with DSWs, with some DSWs being experienced as uninformed and others not willing to take responsibility for a case.	"I don't know, maybe those people they are not trained enough, or they are just ignorant, I'm not sure ... And they will be asking, where is the birth certificate of the child. At that time, you don't have the birth certificate of the child. Like for instance, if the child is being abandoned, there is no way that I can get the birth certificate" (P7). "Because some of the cases they like to shift responsibilities to us, like when coming to placement we as police we don't do placement" (P4). "... the chain broke because the social worker is not available or there's no ... no-one answers their phones ..." (P10).
	Subtheme 2: Absent DSWs	For two other SAPS members, they were unable to share their views on the roles and duties of DSWs; as they have reportedly never worked with DSWs before.	"I would say they're ... they're not known. They're not known. According to myself they're not really known We're not used to those who are working at maybe police stations, municipalities, 1, 2, 3 ..." (P11). "That one I don't have so much information about that. I have never met anyone of them, I don't even know how they work (P6).

3.7.2.5 Unanticipated findings

Description of theme	Illustrative quotes
This theme is a description of unanticipated findings that were not direct responses to the research questions, but the researcher deemed it important to report, since it has been mentioned in various studies that there is conflict between the different role players in the management of child abuse cases, reporting these unexpected findings might start contributing to a better understanding of how and why there is a lack of harmonious collaboration in the child protection system. Four of the participants describe their training to deal with child abuse cases, which seems unsatisfactory, which, if true for many other SAPS officers, might explain why there seems to be a lack of knowledge on roles and duties of DSWs and SAPS in child abuse case management.	"Not really child abuse, child abuse. Not really. No specifically on child abuse but like victim empowerment, ja" (P2). "Yes, we did. From the college first thing, we did ... attended the course which relates with the ... it's domestic violence as a whole" (P1). "Not really. No specifically on child abuse but like victim empowerment ...I did attend it, maybe it was 20- somewhere 2007" (P2). "I didn't receive any training yet" (P6).

3.8 DISCUSSION

Several publications point to the unsatisfactory collaboration that some professionals, including social workers, experience when working with SAPS members on child abuse cases (Grunder, 2018; Liebenberg, 2019; Ntlatleng, 2011; Schiller, 2017; Sibanda et al., 2015; Smit, 2018), yet no publications are available, to date, that explored the views of SAPS members regarding this matter. In honour of objectivity and to address this gap and understand why problems are experienced in this crucial working relationship, the researcher conducted a qualitative descriptive study with 13 SAPS officers based in Hillbrow Police Station, Gauteng, on how they perceive their role and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases, to identify any possible factors that might contribute to the reported problems. The two research questions that guided this study were: (a) "What does the law of South Africa and empirical and grey literature say about the role of SAPS officers and designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases?" and (b) "How do SAPS officers from Hillbrow Police Station view their role and the role of designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases?"

Data was analysed and for the first research question six themes were identified: (1) open a case, (2) statutory intervention, (3) interaction with other role players, (4) investigate and arrest, (5) participating in judicial process, and (6) police conduct/attitude vs. victim response. The themes revealed that most participating police officers generally seemed aware of their roles and duties in respect of child abuse case management. These themes mostly align with the *Constitution of South Africa* (1996) and the *South African Police Service Act* (1995) which state that the role of SAPS is to protect citizens within the Republic of South Africa. Further to this, the findings demonstrate that the best interest of the child principle stipulated in Sections 7 and 9 of

the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 which is of utmost importance in all actions taken on behalf of the child is known and reportedly honoured by some participants.

Regarding the first theme (open case), the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 and the *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act* 32 of 2007 both confirm that the SAPS have the responsibility of assisting victims by taking their statement and opening a case with an allocated case number. Opening a case came up in all 13 interviews; however, it was not shared in the same order or defined in the same way. There were participants who emphasised the importance of protecting and honouring the rights of children, while other participants spoke about taking a statement or conducting interviews privately, all of which contribute to opening a case of child abuse. Only nine participants explicitly mentioned "opening a case" or "open a docket". This seems to be a basic duty of a SAPS member, and it is positive to note that most participants were aware of this duty, but worrisome that still a few are seemingly unaware of such a basic duty. In terms of securing the immediate needs of the child, it is concerning that only two of the 13, however, a possible explanation could be that not all of them faced the same child abuse cases in which the child needed food or clothing.

With reference to theme 1 (open case, taking a statement) there were ten participants who alluded to taking the child's statement to open a case. There seemed to be consensus on their responses that the statement must be taken from the parent or guardian and not the child. However, according to Regulation 38(1)(b) of *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 the statement must be taken from the child with the child's consent, unless the child is not old enough, has the maturity and mental capacity to understand. Therefore, SAPS officers in this study seem not to follow correct protocol in this regard. Regarding theme 1 (open case), one could argue that affording the child and parent a private space to engage, honours and protects the child's rights since taking a statement in a private office protects the child's right to privacy as outlined in Chapter 2, Section 14 of the *Constitution of South Africa* (1996). The right to privacy is an important right in its own and as a support for a variety of other fundamental rights which include dignity, equality, and non-discrimination (Singh et al., 2021). Only four participants mentioned conducting interviews in a private room, which is alarming as this is a prerequisite outlined in Regulation 38(1)(c) of *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 that "a child who is suspected of having been abused or neglected must, upon the examination or assessment of such child be treated with empathy, care and understanding, with due regard to the child's right to privacy and confidentiality". Moreover, this is in alignment to Regulation 38(1)(d) of *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 which states that "a child who is suspected of having been abused or neglected must, upon the examination or assessment of such child, as far as possible be examined or assessed in a child-friendly environment". The fact that only four participants made reference to seeing a child in a private room, could also explain why some social workers have reported that police officers do not always know what the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 says about these matters or why some authors have reported that police

officials do not believe children when they say they were abused or even accuse children themselves for being abused in the first place (Grunder, 2014; Liebenberg, 2019)

Only four participants referred to their duty to make the child feel safe and comfortable (subtheme 5 of theme 1 – open case), and three participants explained that this should be done by not allowing male officers to help victims in cases of sexual abuse. Participant 13 firmly stated that the law does not allow male police officers to assist victims of sexual abuse. Yet, *National Instructions for Sexual Offences 3* of 2008 does not explicitly state that a male officer cannot assist in matters of sexual child abuse. The *National Instructions for Sexual Offences 3* of 2008 only states that a male police officer may not be present in the examination room, and that the victim has a right to make a statement to a female police officer if they wish so and the female officer is available (*National Instructions for Sexual Offences 3* of 2008; Rape Crisis Helderberg, 2022). This is in alignment with Regulation 38(1)(e) of the *Children's Act 38* of 2005, which states that:

a child who is suspected of having been abused or neglected must, upon the examination or assessment of such child, not be subjected to the presence of any other person who is not required to be present at the examination or assessment.

Moreover, one participant mentioned language as a form of making the child feel safe and comfortable. This correlates with Regulation 38(1)(a) of the *Children's Act 38* of 2005 which stipulates that “a child who is suspected of having been abused or neglected must be addressed, in a language which he or she can understand”. Therefore, it could be argued that police officers seem to be aware of most of their roles about the management of child abuse cases. However, it simultaneously begs the question: are police officers aware of what guides their roles and duties in legislature? Where do they acquire information that guides their practice?

The second main theme in response to the first research question was statutory intervention, which relates to the laws and legislation or policies with regard to SAPS involvement in child protection. There were 11 participants who reported on the removal and placement of children in places of safety. This shows an awareness of police officers with regard to their roles and duties as it is stipulated in Section 152 of the *Children's Act 38* of 2005, that police officers have the power to remove a child from the care of their caregivers with a Form 36, and to place them in a place of safety. Two participants shared, in frustration, the ignorance of some of their colleagues when it comes to administrative duties relating to the removal of children. Participant 6 reflected on a time a child who had been removed from parental care and placed in an overnight shelter stayed there for four days because the assisting police officer at the time did not complete the necessary forms which made it difficult for the child to be tracked in the system and handed over to DSWs for further support (see theme 2 of statutory intervention). Such conduct undermines Section 155(2) of the *Children's Act 38* of 2005, which states that a police officer who removes a child by means of Form 36 with a court order must notify the provincial DSD of the

removal of the child and address of the where the child has been within 24 hours (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005).

Moreover, for officers to exercise their authority in the removal and placement of children in need of care and protection, a police officer must have sufficient evidence to believe that a child is likely to suffer significant harm if left in that environment (*Children's Act* 38 of 2005). However, although participants correctly articulate the statutory duty of removal, what raises concerns is that only two of them (P7 and P9) were aware of the Form 36, with only one of them sharing the purpose of this form. This form is important in that the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 stipulates that DSWs or SAPS officers who are on the scene first need to decide whether to remove the child immediately with a Form 36 (Section 152) or once a court order has been issued by the Children's Court (Section 151). Although only one participant seemed unaware of her duty to remove a child, it remains worrying, as this one SAPS officer might not intervene in a case, when necessary, when the services of a DSW might be difficult to recruit, thus, it is imperative to ensure that every single SAPS officer know their duties in this regard. It is however, good news that most of the study participants were in fact aware of their legal mandate to remove children. This could also point to why some problems in collaboration exist; as this means that a SAPS officer will perhaps not intervene on a statutory level when needed, in the absence of a social worker, which place vulnerable children at greater risk. In such a case, if a child is left in an abusive situation a minute longer than what they could bare because a SAPS official is unaware of his or her duty to remove, the child's right to be protected from abuse (Section 15 of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005; Section 28(1)(d) of the *Constitution of South Africa* of 1996) is undermined. Should this be true for more SAPS officials in different towns and provinces, it points to the possible discrepancy between the work done among police officers and highlights the lack of knowledge on how they respond to children in need of immediate care and protection as previously reported as confirmed in other studies (Grunder, 2018; Liebenberg, 2019; Ntlatleng, 2011; Schiller, 2017; Sibanda et al., 2015; Smit, 2018).

Regulation 36(e) of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 states that

a person is suitable to conduct investigations into cases of alleged child abuse or neglect as contemplated in section 142(d) of the Act if such person is able to work in a multi-disciplinary team with the objective of securing the best protection plan based on a child's developmental needs.

Having said that, other roles and duties of SAPS members mentioned by participants included interacting with other role players. It can be argued that interacting with other role players is one of the most important roles and duties of police officers when it comes to managing child abuse cases. It should also be noted that successful interaction between different role players

requires good communication. Schiller (2017) reported that a lack of communication between role players resulted in social workers not being informed on the progress of a case and thus providing insufficient support to a child and their family. Another role that was pointed out by five participants was the referral of cases to other role players such as volunteers, DSWs, social auxiliary workers, and Family Violence, Child Protection (FCS). One participant even mentioned that volunteers are not trained social workers and they offer trauma counselling to victims (see subtheme 1 of theme 3). This calls for attention and intervention in that it does not align with the regulations set out by the SACSSP, stating that “the social auxiliary worker does not provide therapeutic services, but provides supportive services”. Moreover, Grunder’s (2014) study pointed out that police officers having limited knowledge on the *Children’s Act* 38 of 2005 meant that they always referred cases that involve children back to DSWs. However, in this study, some police officers mentioned (refer to subtheme 1 and 2 of theme 3) that FCS was responsible for everything.

Since not all participants mentioned the referral of cases for the purpose of statutory intervention, the different reasons for referral seem to be dependent on the discretion of the police officer attending that case. It can be argued that children may not be given the same service. This, to a large extent, could be disadvantageous for many children. This can then raise questions about uniformity and structure within the police department and quality service offered to victims of child abuse. For example, ten participants stated that part of their role as first responder to the scene is to ensure that the child gets medical attention immediately to collect evidence in the form of a J88, but more importantly to ensure that the child’s medical needs are attended to. However, participant 13 stated that this is the sole mandate of the child protection unit; he stated that he refers cases to the child protection unit and wait for a response. He elaborated that any further delays in the process are appropriate because it is delays that are result from following procedures that they cannot bypass (See subtheme 1 of theme 1). This contradicts the *National Instructions for Sexual Offences* 3 of 2008 which stipulates that the SAPS officer “determines whether the victim requires medical assistance and if so, make arrangements for the victim to obtain medical assistance as soon as possible”.

This also speaks to Grunder (2014) and Ntlatleng’s (2011) findings that the delay in obtaining J88 reports negatively impact of the finalisation of child sexual abuse cases and successful prosecution. Participant 13 further stated that the victim would have caused the delay because they are reporting the case three days after the incident. A lack of urgent response in assisting the victim undermines the guidelines stipulated in the *National Instructions for Sexual Offences* 3 of 2008 to protect and support the victim. The *National Instructions for Sexual Offences* 3 of 2008 clearly states that any SAPS officer who receives a report that a sexual offence has been allegedly committed against any person must always take the report very seriously and must respond immediately, regardless of when (prior to the complaint) the alleged offense occurred or in which jurisdiction it allegedly occurred.

Putting what is stipulated in the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 into perspective, it can be argued that the lack of uniformity undermines the Act in that child victims and their families do not receive the appropriate support and assistance. Therefore, these questions should be considered: why is there inconsistency in the way child abuse cases are managed by these participants and is this true for other SAPS officers too? What type of training do SAPS officers receive to prepare them to respond to and manage cases of child abuse? What type of training or qualifications do the volunteers who are involved in these cases possess?

Other roles of police officers that were noted to be significant in the management of child abuse cases included their conduct and attitude when dealing with victims and their families. This is consistent with Regulation 38(1)(c) of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 which emphasises the importance of treating children with empathy, care and understanding as this relates to a child's right to confidentiality and privacy. Four participants referred to this. The approach and behaviour of police officers may have a direct or indirect impact on the case and how the child perceives police officers and the judicial system all together. This corresponds with Grunder (2014) who did research with registered social workers who had dealt with a case of child abuse in the past from five different areas in Mpumalanga (South Africa) who disclosed how the attitudes (not knowing how to talk to children and them not seeing child abuse as a real crime) of SAPS officers were a problem (because in many situations, the police are said to have the greatest impact on slowing down child sexual abuse cases) when they reported a case of child sexual abuse. Likewise, Smit (2018) revealed that some officers in George, Western Cape, made demeaning and insensitive remarks to victims and would also refuse "to file the case saying it is not serious enough, or worse" (p. 85). Therefore, it is safe to argue that the attitudes and behaviour of police officers have a direct impact on the effective management of child abuse cases. This is further supported by Regulation 38(1)(c) of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005, as children need to be treated with empathy, care and understanding. Moreover, this is also in alignment with Section 10 of the *Constitution of South Africa* (1996) as it states that "everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected". Therefore, it can be argued that respecting another person's dignity may relate to how they are being treated, as well as honouring their rights.

Based on the findings of this study, it was interesting to note that one of the roles that participants did not mention was their communication with social workers and providing feedback and details regarding the child's changed residential address after a removal (Regulation 53(2) of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005). What participants emphasised, was the referral of cases to FCS, as they seemed to be of the belief that FCS will conclude the case. However, with the visible inconsistencies and a lack of uniformity, it seemed that participants may not be aware of their role with regard to providing DSWs with feedback and details on the child's change of address.

In the second section, the researcher sought to explore the perspective of police officers on the role and duties of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases. For this question, four

themes were formulated, namely: (1) initiate investigations (call police to open case and investigate allegations), (2) statutory intervention (removal and placement, as well as presenting matter in court), (3) counselling services, and (4) experience working with DSWs (dissatisfaction, and absent DSWs). Theme 1 of initiate investigation is in line with Regulations 36 and 37 of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 which speak about individuals who are suitable in terms of regulation 36 to conduct investigations into alleged cases of neglect or child abuse, as well as those who have received a report with allegations of child abuse or neglect.

Eight participants seemed to understand the role of DSWs in the investigation of child abuse cases. DSWs are responsible for conducting investigations into allegations of all forms of child abuse and must determine whether a child requires protection, as stipulated in Section 150 of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005. Participants further elaborated on this; stating that DSWs help with the investigation of child abuse cases by conducting home visits and interviewing teachers at the child's school (theme 1 – initiate investigations). As seen from the responses, obtaining evidence from different environments that children can be found, helps in building a case and ensuring the protection of children. This role of DSWs is clearly stated in Regulation 36(a) of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005.

However, even with a clear understanding of the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases shared by most, there were two police officers who mentioned that they had never dealt with DSWs in their years of service. This is concerning since participants all have several years of experience in managing child abuse cases, and thus the expectation is that they would have had some encounters with DSWs [Regulation 36(e); Section 50(3)]. This might speak to poor communication or collaboration as revealed in a study by Liebenberg (2019). Alternatively, it might speak to the staff shortages among DSWs (News24, 2022; Truter et al., 2019; Truter et al., 2018)

This is the first study in a South African context attempting to explain the views of some SAPS officers regarding their perception on their roles and duties and those of DSWs in terms of child abuse case management. Most participating police officers were aware of most of their roles and duties, while some seemed to not have adequate knowledge.

Theme 2 relates to statutory intervention which involves participation in the judicial processes. This refers to the report writing of social workers as well as court appearances (Section 65 of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005). Only two participants alluded to this role.

In theme 3 (counselling services), five participants reported it to be the duty of DSWs to counsel children and this aligns with Regulation 37 (d) and Section 150 of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 According to Childline South Africa (2010)., It is stated that to further support victims, DSWs are required to offer therapeutic counselling to children who have been abused to assist them in assuming a sense of mastery. Perhaps when there is a uniform understandings of each role players tasks and duty, it may reduce conflict (Grunder, 2018; Liebenberg, 2019; Ntlatleng,

2011; Schiller, 2017; Sibanda et al., 2015; Smit, 2018) and further contribute to effective management of child abuse cases.

During the analysis of data, some unanticipated findings emerged and were grouped under *serendipitous findings*, with the theme name: *unanticipated findings*. Four participating police officers mentioned not being adequately trained specifically on child abuse case management, which aligns with findings of other researchers like Ntlatleng (2011), who reported that SAPS officers did not receive training to manage cases of child sexual abuse. None of the participants mentioned having attended training that was specifically on child abuse, and of all those who had training (gender-based violence), only two of them attended such training in the past five years.

The findings of the study also showed the necessity of different parts of a system working together. It is clear from the reviewed literature and the findings of the study that child protection is the multi-levelled and multi-sectoral (Von Bertalanffy, 1968; Van Assche et al., 2019; World Vision International, 2011), formal components of the child protection system which is implemented by government authorities at different levels within different departments (Saunders, 2003, World Vision International, 2011). With regard to the systems theory, it can be argued that these disparities may be detrimental to the successful functioning of the larger child protection system but can also be mitigated by comprehensive and continuous training and improved communication between parts of the system.

Section 28(1)(d) of the *Constitution of South Africa* (1996) states that “every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation”. It is also important to highlight the fact that Section 28(2) states that “a child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child” and that best interest of a child must be honoured. Therefore, considering these mandates, continued research to explore gaps in training, causes of poor collaboration, and subsequent interventions is critical. It can be argued that should these not be adhered to; child protection cannot be successful. Social workers have raised their concerns in some studies regarding their working relationship with police officers (Grunder, 2018; Liebenberg, 2019; Ntlatleng, 2011; Schiller, 2017; Sibanda et al., 2015; Smit, 2018) which seem to hold true when considering some of our study findings. Now there seems to be complaints raised by participants (police officers) regarding social work intervention in child protection cases. However, participants have also revealed that not all of them properly comprehend the role or the roles of DSWs. This is a red flag that cannot be ignored by academics in social work and leaders in the SAPS.

In summary, the study’s theoretical foundation was the systems theory, which is an interdisciplinary study of how small systems are related within a larger system and how they interact with each other (Van Assche et al., 2019; Von Bertalanffy, 1968). As seen from the study, a system approach to child protection holistically addresses child protection and places great focus on prevention and strengthening roles and resources of key actors responsible for providing

services (World Vision, 2011). This was seen from how challenges between DSW and police officers often affected the children. An example would be on the responses of participants who stated that DSWs help with the investigation of child abuse cases by conducting home visits and interviewing teachers at the child's school (theme 1 – initiate investigations). One may argue that the smooth operation of what others could be seen as a “basic role of DSWs” has an atomic impact on the overall child protection system. In addition, as a functioning system with multiple disciplines, obtaining evidence from different environments, helps in building a case and ensuring the protection of children. This role of DSWs is clearly stated in Regulation 36(a) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. This further cements the application of the systems theory for this study in that, according to Jenkins (2017), a systems theory-based analysis helps in understanding systems holistically (i.e., DSWs and SAPS roles in child protection) and modelling complexity to understand how components connect to one another (e.g., how a home visit by a DSW contributes to a SAPS case and court proceedings).

Moreover, with reference to the findings, it was noted that some of the roles of SAPS members that could have a significant impact in the management of child abuse cases included their conduct and attitude when dealing with victims and their families. This can be argued to have a significant on the overall system of child protection. For example, Regulation 38(1)(c) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 underlines the importance of treating children with empathy, care and understanding. Social workers may not be able to perform their role effectively if a child does not even want to report a case to the police due to their perception of police officers. Therefore, applying a system approach to child protection tackles child protection holistically and lays a strong emphasis on prevention as (SAPS treating victims with empathy increases community's trust on the whole child protection system, which also allows DSWs to effectively perform their role).

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SECTION C

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This qualitative descriptive study set out to summarise the relevant legislation and literature about the roles of SAPS officers and DSWs in handling child abuse cases. The study was conducted to explore and describe the perspectives of SAPS officers working at the Hillbrow Police Station in Gauteng regarding their and DSWs' roles when managing child abuse cases. The rationale behind this study was to shed light on any gaps in SAPS members' knowledge or training regarding child abuse cases. This was thought to provide more context for some of the difficulties DSWs and other professionals reported while interacting with police officers. This section discusses the conclusions emanating from the findings of this study as well as the researcher's personal reflection. The limitations, contributions and recommendations are also discussed in this section. Figure 5 summarises the two research questions that guided the study, and how the researcher sought to answer them.

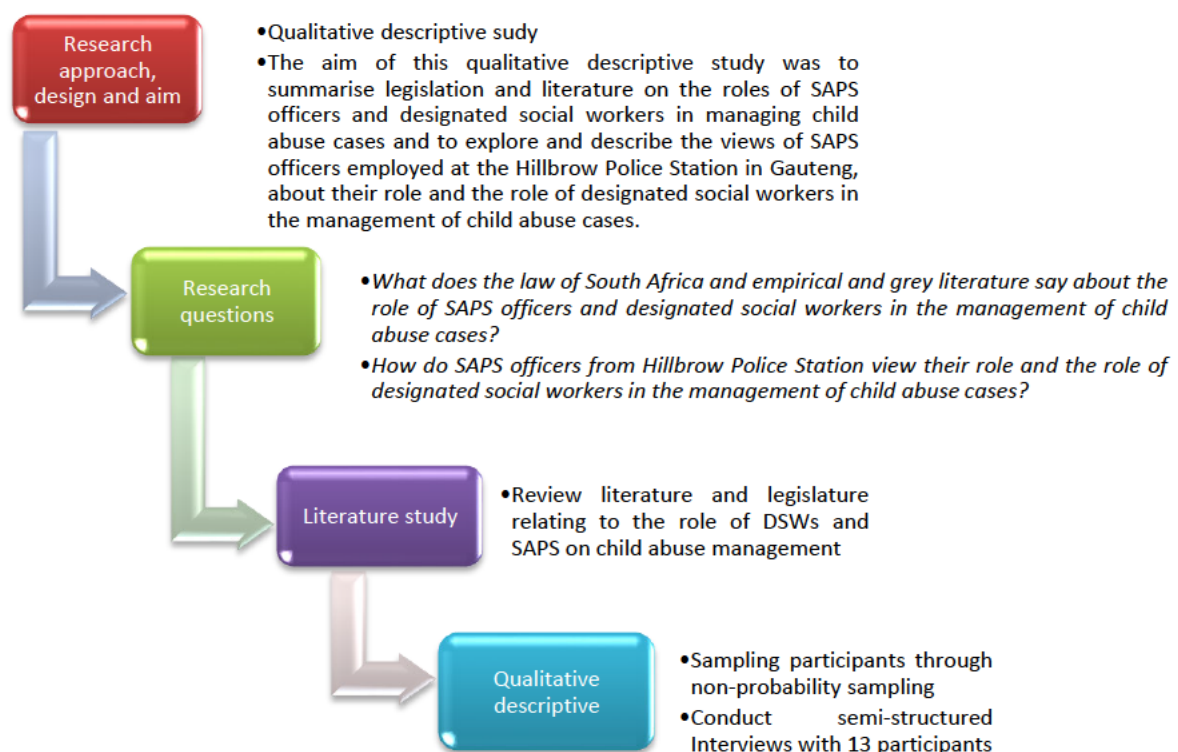


Figure 5:Summary of research questions and how they were answered

4.2 CONCLUSIONS EMANATING FROM MANUSCRIPT 1

The researcher conducted a qualitative study to explore the views of SAPS officers on their role and the role of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases. In doing so, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with 13 SAPS members from Hillbrow Police Station in the Gauteng Province. The aim was to answer two questions: (1) *What are the perspective of SAPS members on their role and duties in the management of child abuse cases?* (2) *What are the perceptions of SAPS members on the role and duties of designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases?*

The perspective of SAPS members on their role and duties in the management of child abuse cases included knowing that they were responsible for opening a case, statutory intervention, interacting with other role players through referrals, conducting investigations and making arrests, participating in judicial processes as well as understanding how their conduct/attitude affects the victim's response. There seemed to be a lack of uniformity on how they understood their roles and it was thus noted that the lack of uniformity from police officers may have a negative impact on the overall management of the case, working relationship with other role players in the child protection system and ultimate service rendered to citizens. Some participants were of the understanding that a statement should only be taken from the parent/s; however, this was found to be in contradiction with Regulation 38(1)(b) and (e). One participant also stated that male police officers are not permitted to assist victims of sexual abuse under any circumstance, and they have no authority to remove a child from an abusive situation, this can only be done by DSWs. This does not correlate with what is stipulated in the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 and the *National Instructions for Sexual Offences* 3 of 2008. Although only one participant shared this view, it remains important to be addressed. More studies like the current one is needed to determine if the lack of knowledge is shared by more SPAS colleagues. A single SAPS officer who lacks knowledge might present dangerous consequences for a child served by him or her, hence the need for this to be addressed. Therefore, in conclusion, participants will benefit from additional training on the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 and the Regulations of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005, and more studies like this must be replicated in other SAPS offices to establish if this is a nationwide trend or not – and to promote uniformity on terms of SAPS responses to child abuse across SA, that align with their legal mandates.

With regard to the perception of SAPS members on the role and duties of DSWs, some participants indicated that one function of DSWs is to investigate allegations of abuse, find suitable alternative care for those who cannot be returned to their families and provide therapeutic support. This is in line with literature as well as the roles and responsibilities of DSWs as outlined in the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005. Moreover, the responses received from some of the participants indicated that the police officers are not entirely familiar or knowledgeable on what the role and

duty of DSWs are. Some participants also reported having faced difficulties and resistance from DSWs who seemed to not be knowledgeable on their roles and administrative process outlined in the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005. In conclusion, participants seemed to generally know what DSWs need to do in child abuse case management, but there is still a gap in their knowledge especially in relation to the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 and the roles and duties of DSWs in the management of child abuse cases, which is problematic and need to be addressed in future research studies and training sessions, to ensure that they are not only informed, but they also practice what is being stipulated in legislature for the successful protection of children.

4.3 OVERALL CONCLUSION

The study was a qualitative descriptive study, and it allowed the researcher an opportunity to explore and provide a thorough and direct description of the views of 13 SAPS members on their roles and duties in the management of child abuse cases. The study answered the posed research questions through data collection in relation to the reviewed literature. The study was able to make conclusions and recommendations with regards to policy and future research. It was also highlighted that training for both SAPS members and DSWs was important in ensuring the smooth and effective operation of the South African child protection system.

4.4 PERSONAL REFLECTION

As a social worker with intentions of specialising in child protection, conducting this study brought about different emotions. Personally, I believe that child protection should be a priority, especially because children are vulnerable, and they rely on those around them to protect them. However, what was a challenge for me was observing how to some police officers, child protection was seen and treated as “not a big deal”. It was also interesting for me to have some of my assumptions being challenged. For me, seeing that all police officers had at least four years of experience made it easy to assume that they were aware and knowledgeable about child protection, their roles and the Children's Act. However, conducting the research made me see that regular training is important and that one's years of service in a profession does not necessarily mean that they are an expert in the field, especially when regular training is not provided.

4.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings are based on the views of 13 SAPS officers from one police station in Gauteng, South Africa. The sample was homogenous and not representative of the multi-cultural population of SA with only one White participant and 12 Black participants (with no Coloured or Indian participants), and therefore cannot be generalised. The aim of the study though, was not to

generalise. And so, although the data is not useable for the purpose of generalisations, it did start a conversation that is important when considering earlier publications about interdisciplinary conflict in the child protection system (Grunder, 2018; Liebenberg, 2019; Ntlatleng, 2011; Schiller, 2017; Sibanda & Lombard, 2015; Smit, 2018), which may lead to further studies toward ultimately developing solutions for what seems to be serious problems in the collaborative management of child protection cases of SA.

Another limitation of the study was exclusion of other stakeholder sin the larger system such as SAPS officers stationed in the FCS unit which is a specialized unit within SAPS that deals exclusively with victims of family violence and crimes against children and their role in child protection. This limitation could be addressed in follow up studies by including FCS staff, but the focus on standard SAPS officials remains crucial, as they are often the first point of contact with a DSW or a child victim, and thus the way they engage in this process, remains imperative. Also, FCS units or staff are not always available in every town of SA which means it remains important that every day SPAS staff know how to deal with child abuse maters and engage constructively with DSWs. Further to above limits, more probing questions regarding internal processes and working relationship with FCS unit to yield different findings could have been asked and should be considered in follow up studies.

To address these limitations and continue exploring this risk to the child protection system, similar studies should be done in other parts of South Africa and efforts should be made to recruit participants from other cultural backgrounds and levels within the system (for instance FCS officers, and attorneys to explore their views on the role of SAPS and DSWs in child abuse case management, and perhaps identify specific problems arising from these multi professional working relationships to protect children in SA), and multiple data collection methods should also be employed (triangulation) to promote credibility of findings (Patton, 1999). The interview schedule should also be tweaked when used in future, according to the current study findings.

4.6 CONTRIBUTION

This study is believed to contribute to our understanding of how different systems involved and the successful operation of the whole system depends on the various smaller systems involved in the bigger whole (World Vision International, 2011). The study highlighted the role and duties of police officers in relation to their interaction with other role players, specifically DSWs. The theoretical contributions of this study can be seen from its findings suggesting the need for mutual understanding, respect and knowledge of different roles and duties played by the different professions in the management of child abuse cases. The study supported the systems theory in showing that for the overall child protection system to operate smoothly and benefit children, each role player needs to effectively perform their duties. This then sheds light on the understanding and application of the systems theory in the management of child abuse cases.

The methodological contribution lies in the experience gained in employing the interpretive/constructivist paradigm and applying the methods and techniques of a qualitative descriptive study when collecting data. This experience is believed to be useful for other studies on the perception of SAPS members and other professionals involved in each profession's role and duty when it comes to managing child abuse cases. Furthermore, the methodological contribution of this study relates to the study's trustworthiness. Its trustworthiness contributes towards providing a context for other researchers wishing to conduct a similar study in other contexts.

Moreover, one of the practical contributions of this study is the thorough and realistic insight provided by the interviewed participants. The interviewed SAPS members shared their perceptions and experiences in working with DSWs and their responses were able to shed light on the reported challenges in the management of child abuse cases. The responses also showed the importance of a smooth working relationship between the different professions involved, and how this is beneficial for the effective management of child abuse cases, which ultimately protects the child and their rights.

4.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations.

4.7.1 Recommendations for further research

In terms of future research, it is recommended that more qualitative studies be conducted to explore the gap in literature on the role of police officers in child protection, and their perspectives in this regard. Continuous research on this matter will help shed light on various misconceptions about the different role players in child protection and lead to the development of training programmes and intervention research to evaluate the effectiveness of the training. In addition, further research will result in more recommendations being made and more improvements and progress being seen as a result.

It is also recommended that more research studies be conducted to replicate this study in various police stations in different provinces around South Africa using a modified interview schedule.

From the findings of the study, it was noted that conducting interviews in a private room was not mentioned by most participants and that this could possibly be because not all South African police stations are equipped with such rooms. However, it could perhaps be because the participants were not directly asked by the researcher. Therefore, this could be something that may be probed in future studies since as it is a prerequisite outlined in Regulation 38(1)(c) of the

Children's Act 38 of 2005 that “a child who is suspected of having been abused or neglected must, upon the examination or assessment of such child be treated with empathy, care and understanding, with due regard to the child’s right to privacy and confidentiality”.

What was also noted from the findings is that one police officer seemed to strongly believe that taking a child’s statement *must* be in the presence of their parent/guardian. This was seen to be in contradiction of Regulation 38(1)(b) and (e) of the *Children's Act* 38 of 2005 and it can be argued that although it was only one participants’ view from this sample, it is concerning and should be further explored in future studies, especially when one considers the fact that many children are abused by their own parents.

4.7.2 Recommendations for policy

More studies must be conducted and from these studies, the SAPS and the Department Social Development (DSD) can then develop a policy brief and training for SAPS officers and DSWs to mitigate the reported problems. It is believed that adequate training of police officers on their role and that of DSWs, will contribute to the successful functioning of the South African child protection system. The qualifications of the volunteers providing trauma counselling to victims of child abuse should be investigated. The DSD must employ more DSWs to ensure more visibility and availability, this could increase utilisation of their services.

4.7.3 Recommendations for the training of SAPS in child protection

There is a reported lack of uniformity and ignorance among some SAPS officers when it comes to the regulations surrounding the protection of children. Having SAPS officers who were concerned about the ignorance of some of their colleagues, speaks to the urgent need for revision of training. The SAPS and DSD should take on the responsibility of providing mandatory training to SAPS officers and DSWs on child abuse case management. This training should stipulate clear roles of both SAPS members and DSWs, how their roles relate and where each department’s role ends. Provision of training or revision of training for SAPS officers may positively contribute to the effectiveness of the child protection system, resulting in children’s constitutional rights to be protected from harm and to receive optimal social service delivery, being respected.

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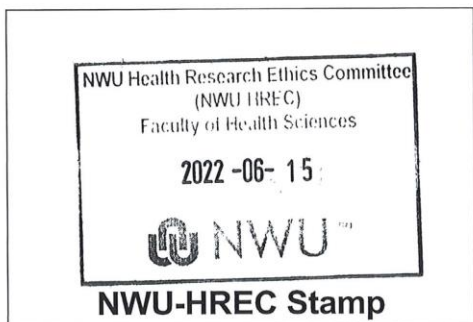
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Addendum 1: NWU HREC stamped and approved informed consent form



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INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE OFFICERS PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH STUDY

Title of the research study

The views of SAPS officers on their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative description

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU-00043-22-A1

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Prof. Elmien Truter

POST GRADUATE STUDENT: Miss Rinkie Seimela

ADDRESS: North-West University
Faculty of Health Sciences
Private Bag X6001
Potchefstroom
2522

CONTACT NUMBER: elmien.truter@nwu.ac.za / 082 464 4192
seimelarinkie1@gmail.com / 065 910 3279

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of my Master's research degree. 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-00043-22-A1)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

- *This study will be conducted at Hillbrow police station in the Gauteng Province and will involve semi-structured interviews with SAPS officers to explore their views on the role of SAPS and designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases.*

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been invited to participate in this research study because you are a member of the South African Police Service employed at the Hillbrow police station with at least 2 years of experience working with child abuse cases.*

What will be expected of you?

- *You will be invited to have a one-on-one semi-structured interview with the researcher, either online or face to face.*
- *You will decide whether you want to do it face-to-face or online via MS Teams.*
- *The researcher will provide you with 1gig of data for online interviews.*
- *The duration of the interview should not be longer than an hour.*
- *Your participation is voluntary; therefore, you will be invited to give written informed consent before being interviewed.*
- *Participation in study is not obligatory and you can withdraw from the study at any time.*
- *You will be expected to answer two questions, namely:*
 - *How do you perceive the role and duties of SAPS members in the management of child abuse cases? (Probing questions to follow if necessary)*

- *How do you perceive the role and duties of designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases? (Probing questions to follow if necessary)*

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

- *Participation in the study will hold no direct benefit to you but through the study you will be able to share information that may lead to support and training, empowerment and further research in effectively managing child abuse cases.*
-

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

- *Participating in the study holds no direct risks for you but it will cost you time and effort to engage in the interview and talking about the management of child abuse cases might cause you to experience unpleasant emotions.*
- *Should you experience any unpleasant emotions, the researcher will refer you to Ms Boitumelo Makenete, (Registered Counsellor) for counselling support.*
- *You may become tired during the interview; therefore, to limit this risk the researcher will give body breaks at your request.*

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

- *Anonymity in the study will be ensured. To protect your identity, no names will be used in the research report or the data analysis. You will be given a code name, like P1 or P2. P stands for Participant.*
- *Should you wish to participate in the study, you will be invited to contact the independent person, Miss Mmathebe Mampane via email or WhatsApp, who will answer all the questions you may have regarding the study. She will also email you the informed consent form.*
- *You will be given two weeks to make a final decision if you want to participate in the study. Once the signed informed consent forms have been obtained, interviews will be scheduled by the researcher.*
- *You will choose between a face-to-face or an online interview (via MS Teams).*
- *Face-to-face interviews will be held in a private room at the Hillbrow police station to ensure that bystanders do not hear any of the interview content.*
- *Only the researcher, study leader and co-coder will have access to the data (in other words, the interview recordings and transcripts). Electronic data will be saved on a password protected laptop. As soon as data has been transcribed by the researcher, all recordings and electronic data will be transferred to a flash drive and deleted from the laptop. Hard copies of transcripts and the flash drive will be kept in locked cabinet in the supervisor's office of the NWU. The signed informed consent forms will be stored separately from audio recordings and transcripts so no one can link a participant's true identity with their recording or transcript.*

- *Data (your recorded interview, your transcript and signed informed consent form) will be stored for 5 years at the North-West University Vaal Triangle Campus and destroyed once this period lapses.*

What will happen with the findings?

- *Findings will be used for the purpose of this study only.*
- *Data will be interpreted and written up, after which it will be submitted for examination at the North-West University; hereafter the work will be submitted for possible publication in the British Journal of Social Work.*
- *Your identity will remain anonymous during data interpretation and publications.*

How will you know about the findings of this research?

- *Each participant will receive a summary of the preliminary findings for critical feedback once data is analysed, via email.*
- *The researcher will then invite all participants as well as management of SAPS Hillbrow to attend a live webinar during which time final findings will be shared.*

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

- *We have received permission from SAPS Provincial Strategic Management (Research) to invite you to participate in this study.*
- *This study is fully funded by the researcher herself.*
- *You will not be compensated for participating in this study.*
- *There will be no financial implications for participating in the study. Face-to-face interviews will be held at Hillbrow police station. The researcher will travel to Hillbrow police station to conduct the interviews. A private office will be booked prior to the interview taking place.*
- *Should you prefer to have an online interview via MS Teams, the researcher will provide you with 1gig of data that will be sent to you via text message. You are encouraged to find a private room so that you are not disturbed when the online interview is conducted.*
- *Interviews will be held at a time and date convenient for you and will not interfere with your official duties*
- *Once the interview is concluded, you will receive a token of appreciation to thank you for your time. The token of appreciation will be in the form of a R70 Nandos voucher.*
- *Should you elect to have an online interview, the voucher will be sent to you via email or SMS.*
- *There will thus be no costs involved for you if you do choose to participate in this study, except time.*

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- *You can contact the researcher Miss Rinkie Seimela on 065 910 3279 or seimelarinkie1@gmail.com if you have any further questions or have any problems.*

- *You can contact the study leader Prof. Elmien Truter from the School of Psychosocial Behavioural Sciences (Social Work) at the North- West University on 082 464 4192 or Elmien.Truter@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.*
- *You can also contact the NWU-Health Research Ethics Committee via Ms Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206 or carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.*
- *You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.*

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to participate in the research study titled: *The views of SAPS officers in Hillbrow regarding the role of SAPS and designated social workers in child abuse cases: A qualitative exploration*

I declare that:

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

Please indicate how (face-to-face/virtual) and which time of day (morning/afternoon) - would be more suitable to you to take part in our study.

Face to face at Hillbrow police station ☐

Online via MS TEAMS ☐

Preferred timeslot: _____ or _____

Mobile Number _____

E-mail address _____

Name and Surname _____

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

.....
Signature of participant

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (name) Mmathebe Mampane declare that:

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

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

.....
Signature of person obtaining consent

Declaration by researcher

I Rinkie Mmalotja Seimela declare that:

- The information in this document was explained to by Miss Mmathebe Mampane, an independent person who my supervisor and I trained for this purpose.
- I encouraged the independent person to avail herself to answer all questions that the participants may have.
- The informed consent was obtained by the independent person.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that the participant was given time to discuss it with others if they wished to do so.

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

.....
Signature of researcher Current details: (23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.6 Forms\HREC\9.1.5.6_NWU-HREC_ICF_Template_Feb2019.docm
7 February 2019 File reference: 9.1.5.6

Addendum 2: COMPRES Approval Letter



Scientific Committee Approval for a Research Application Research using human participants, health or health-related studies

Scientific Committee Information			
Name of the scientific committee	COMPRES	Discipline(s)	MSW Child Protection
Research Entity	COMPRES	Contact Person for the committee	Jessica Daniel
Faculty	Health Sciences	E-mail address for the committee contact person	26159600@nwu.ac.za

Study & Scientific Review Information			
Title of the study:	The views of SAPS officers about their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative description		
Researcher/Study Supervisor Initials, Name and Surname:	Prof Elmien Truter	NWU Number:	21293236
Student Initials, Name & Surname:	Rinkie Mmalotja Seimela	NWU Number:	28434854
Other Researchers involved in the study (Initials, Names and Surnames):	None indicated.		
Potential risk level for human participants:	No risk	☐	Motivate: Click here to motivate the risk level
	Minimal risk	☒	
	Medium risk	☐	
	High risk	☐	
Potential risk level for children and incapacitated adults:	No risk	☒	Motivate: Click here to motivate the risk level
	No more than minimal risk of harm	☐	
	Greater than minimal risk with the prospect of direct benefit	☐	
	Greater than minimal risk with no direct benefit	☐	
Recommendation for the REC:	Review by the research ethics committee required	☒	Motivate: Proposed study would directly impact on human participants.

Any additional comments	Motivate: Click here to enter any additional comments
Chairperson of the committee	Prof CHM Bloem
Committee members present during the review (NB, please ensure no conflict of interest)	Prof Elma Ryke Dr Erika Hitge
Date of review	2022/05/17

Interim
Scientific
Committee
COMPRES

Digitally signed by
Interim Scientific
Committee COMPRES
Date: 2022.05.18
08:49:51 +02'00'



Signature of Chairperson

Date: 2022/05/18

Signature of Research Director

Date: 2022/05/18

Form developed by Prof Minnie Greeff, 1 March 2017
Form updated by Prof Minnie Greeff, 31 January 2019
Form updated by Prof Minnie Greeff, 8 May 2019
Form updated by Prof Minnie Greeff, 23 July 2019
Form updated by Prof Minnie Greeff, 10 August 2019

Original details: (23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.6 Forms\9.1.5.6_SC Approval_Human Participants.docm
10 August 2019
File Reference: 9.1.5.6

Addendum 3: HREC Approval Letter



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

Tel: 018 299-1206
Email: Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za (for human
studies)

15 June 2022

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC) on 15/06/2022, 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: The views of SAPS officers about their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative description.																														
Principal Investigator/Study Supervisor/Researcher: Prof E Truter																														
Student: RM Seimela - 28434854																														
Ethics number:	<table><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>4</td><td>3</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td colspan="4">Institution</td><td colspan="4">Study Number</td><td colspan="2">Year</td><td colspan="3">Status</td></tr></table>			N	W	U	-	0	0	4	3	-	2	2	-	A	1	Institution				Study Number				Year		Status		
N	W	U	-	0	0	4	3	-	2	2	-	A	1																	
Institution				Study Number				Year		Status																				
Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation																														
Application Type: Single study		Risk: <table><tr><td>Minimal</td></tr></table>		Minimal																										
Minimal																														
Commencement date: 15/06/2022																														
Expiry date: 30/06/2023																														
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 June annually until completion.																														

General conditions:
<i>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:</i>
• 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-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za or 018 299 1206

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

Please note: Due to the nature of the study i.e. (face-to-face collection of qualitative data via semi-structured interviews with South African Police Services (SAPS) officers), this study will be able to proceed during the current alert level, following receipt of the approval letter. No additional COVID-19 restrictions have been placed on the study other than that indicated under the COVID-19 risk mitigation strategy as indicated in the application. The researcher must, however, ensure that before proceeding with the study, all research team members have reviewed the North-West University COVID-19 Occupational Health and Safety Standard Operating Procedure.

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

- a. Please provide the NWU-HREC with a copy of the goodwill permission letter from the Station Commander, granting access to the facilities.

As the study progresses the aforementioned conditions should be submitted to Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za with a cover letter with a specific subject title indicating "Outstanding documents for approval: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX." The letter should include the title of the approved study, the names of the researchers involved, that the documents are being submitted as part of the conditions of the approval set by the 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,



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.docm
20 August 2019
File Reference: 9.1.5.4.2

Addendum 4: SAPS Approval Letter



Privaatsak/Private Bag X 94

Verwysing/Reference:	3/34/2
Navrae/Enquiries:	Lt Col Joubert AC Thenga
Telefoon/Telephone:	(012) 393 3118
Email Address:	JoubertG@saps.gov.za

THE HEAD: RESEARCH
SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE
PRETORIA
0001

The Provincial Commissioner
GAUTENG

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SAPS: THE VIEWS OF SAPS OFFICERS ABOUT THEIR ROLE AND THE ROLE OF DESIGNATED SOCIAL WORKERS IN CHILD ABUSE CASE MANAGEMENT: A QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION: NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY: MASTERS DEGREE: RESEARCHER: RM SEIMELA

1. The above subject matter refers.
2. The researcher, RM Seimela, is conducting a study titled: The views of SAPS officers about their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative description, with the aim *to summarise legislation and literature on the roles of SAPS officers and designated social workers in child abuse cases, and to explore the views of SAPS officers employed in Hillbrow police station in Gauteng, about how they view their role of designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases.*
3. The researcher is requesting permission to interview 20 police members with at least two years experience working with child abuse cases at Hillbrow police station.
4. The proposal was perused according to National Instruction 1 of 2006. This office recommends that permission be granted for the research study, subject to the final approval and further arrangements by the office of the Provincial Commissioner: Gauteng.
5. We hereby request the final approval by your office if you concur with our recommendation. Your office is also at liberty to set terms and conditions to the researcher to ensure that compliance standards are adhered to during the research process and that research has impact to the organisation.

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SAPS: THE VIEWS OF SAPS OFFICERS
ABOUT THEIR ROLE AND THE ROLE OF DESIGNATED SOCIAL WORKERS IN CHILD
ABUSE CASE MANAGEMENT: A QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION: NORTH WEST
UNIVERSITY: MASTERS DEGREE: RESEARCHER: RM SEIMELA**

6. If approval is granted by your office, this office will obtain a signed undertaking from researcher prior to the commencement of the research which will include your terms and conditions if there are any and the following:
 - 6.1. The research will be conducted at his/her exclusive cost.
 - 6.2. The researcher will conduct the research without the disruption of the duties of members of the Service and where it is necessary for the research goals, research procedures or research instruments to disrupt the duties of a member, prior arrangements must be made with the commander of such member.
 - 6.3. The researcher should bear in mind that participation in the interviews must be on a voluntary basis.
 - 6.4. The information will at all times be treated as strictly confidential.
 - 6.5. The researcher will provide an annotated copy of the research work to the Service.
 - 6.6. The researcher will ensure that research report / publication complies with all conditions for the approval of research.
7. If approval is granted by your office, for smooth coordination of research process between your office and the researcher, the following information is kindly requested to be forwarded to our office:
 - **Contact person:** Rank, Initials and Surname.
 - **Contact details:** Office telephone number and email address.
8. A copy of the approval (if granted) and signed undertaking as per paragraph 6 supra to be provided to this office within 21 days after receipt of this letter.
9. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.


MAJOR GENERAL
THE HEAD: RESEARCH
DR PR VUMA

DATE: 2021-11-23

South African Police Service



Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie

Privaatsak
Private Bag X94

Pretoria
0001

Faks No.
Fax No.

(012) 393 2128

Your reference/U verwysing:

My reference/My verwysing: **3/34/2**

Enquiries/Navrae:

**Lt Col Joubert
AC SJ Thenga
(012) 393 3118
JoubertG@saps.gov.za**

Tel:

Email:

THE HEAD: RESEARCH
SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE
PRETORIA
0001

**RM Seimela
NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY**

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SAPS: THE VIEWS OF SAPS OFFICERS ABOUT THEIR ROLE AND THE ROLE OF DESIGNATED SOCIAL WORKERS IN CHILD ABUSE CASE MANAGEMENT: A QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION: NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY: MASTERS DEGREE: RESEARCHER: RM SEIMELA

The above subject matter refers.

You are hereby granted approval for your research study on the above mentioned topic in terms of National Instruction 1 of 2006.

Further arrangements regarding the research study may be made with the following office:

The Provincial Commissioner: Gauteng:

- **Contact Person:** Colonel NS Peters
- **Contact Details:** (011) 547 9129
- **Email Address :** PetersNS@saps.gov.za

- **Contact Person:** Captain VJ Nevumbani
- **Contact Details:** (011) 547 9129
- **Email Address :** Nevumbanivj@saps.gov.za

Kindly adhere to paragraph 6 of our attached letter signed on the **2021-11-23** with the same above reference number.

MAJOR GENERAL

**THE HEAD: RESEARCH
DR PR VUMA**

DATE: 2021-02-01

Addendum 5: Research recruitment pamphlet

WE NEED POLICE OFFICERS FOR RESEARCH ON CHILD ABUSE

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are an officially appointed SAPS member working at the Hillbrow police station and have at least 2 years' experience with child abuse cases.

WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?

The study is about exploring the views of SAPS officers employed at the Hillbrow police station regarding the role of SAPS and designated (child protection) social workers in the management of child abuse cases.

WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED OF YOU?

To completed and sign an informed consent form and talk to the researcher for about an hour - YOU CAN CHOOSE between a FACE-TO-FACE (at an office in the Hillbrow station) OR an online INTERVIEW via MS Teams, on a date and time that suits YOU.

INTERESTED?

Please contact Miss Mmathebe Mampane via WhatsApp on 061 443 2513 or email her on mampanem8@gmail.

You will receive a R70 Nandos voucher as a token of appreciation for your time if you choose to participate.



Addendum 6: Independent Person Confidentiality Agreement



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

CONFIDENTIALITY UNDERTAKING

entered into between:

This agreement is between:

Rinkie Mmalotja Seimela

and

Mmathebe Mampane

for

The views of SAPS officers on their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative description I, the undersigned

Prof/ Dr / Mr / Ms Ms Mmathebe Mampane

Identity Number 940709 0247 089

Address 4657 Buttercup Cresc. Etwatwa Ext.1

hereby undertake in favor of the research study conducted by Rinkie Mmalotja Seimela in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Social Work in Child Protection at North-West University.

(Hereinafter the "Researcher")

1. Interpretation and definitions

1.1. In this undertaking, unless inconsistent with, or otherwise indicated by the context:

1.1.1. "Confidential Information" shall include all information that is confidential in its nature or marked as confidential and shall include any existing and new information obtained by me after the Commencement Date, including but not be limited in its interpretation to, research data, information concerning research participants, all secret knowledge, technical information and specifications, manufacturing techniques, designs, diagrams, instruction manuals, blueprints, electronic artwork, samples, devices, demonstrations, formulae, know-how, intellectual property, information concerning materials, marketing and business information generally, financial information that may include remuneration detail, pay slips, information relating to human capital and employment contract, employment conditions, ledgers, income and expenditures and other

materials of whatever description in which the researcher has an interest in being kept confidential; and

1.1.2. Commencement Date* means the date of signature of this undertaking by myself.

1.2. The headings of clauses are intended for convenience only and shall not affect the interpretation of this undertaking.

2. Preamble

2.1. In performing certain duties requested by the researcher, I will have access to certain Confidential Information to perform the said duties and I agree that it must be kept confidential.

2.2. The researcher has agreed to disclose Confidential Information and other information to me subject to me agreeing to the terms of confidentiality set out herein.

3. Title to the Confidential Information

I hereby acknowledge that all right, title and interest in and to the Confidential Information vests in the Researcher and that I will have no claim of any nature in and to the Confidential Information.

4. Period of confidentiality

The provisions of this undertaking shall begin on the commencement date and remain in force indefinitely.

5. Non-disclosure and undertakings

I undertake:

5.1. to maintain the confidentiality of any Confidential Information to which I shall be allowed access by the researcher, whether before or after the Commencement Date of this undertaking. I will not divulge or permit to be divulged to any person any aspect of such Confidential Information otherwise than may be allowed in terms of this undertaking;

5.2. to take all such steps as may be necessary to prevent the Confidential Information falling into the hands of an unauthorised third party;

5.3. not to make use of any of the Confidential Information in the development, manufacture, marketing and/or sale of any goods;

5.4. not to use any research data for publication purposes;

5.5. not to use or disclose or attempt to use or disclose the Confidential Information for any purpose other than performing research purposes only and includes

questionnaires, interviews with participants, data gathering, data analysis and personal information of participants/research subjects;

5.6. not to use or attempt to use the Confidential Information in any manner which will cause or be likely to cause injury or loss to a research participant or the researcher; and

5.7. that all documentation furnished to me by the researcher pursuant to this undertaking will remain the property of the Researcher and upon the request of the Researcher will be returned to the Researcher. I shall not make copies of any such documentation without the prior written consent of the Researcher.

6. Exception

The above undertakings by myself shall not apply to Confidential Information which I am compelled to disclose in terms of a court order.

7. Jurisdiction

This undertaking shall be governed by South African law be subject to the jurisdiction of South African courts in respect of any dispute flowing from this undertaking.

8. Whole agreement

8.1. This document constitutes the whole of this undertaking to the exclusion of all else.

8.2. No amendment, alteration, addition, variation, or consensual cancellation of this undertaking will be valid unless in writing and signed by me and the Researcher.

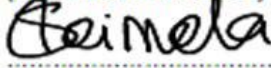
Dated at Daveyton on this 10th day of May 2022

Witnesses:

1 

2 

(Signatures of witnesses)



(Signature- Researcher)


(Signature)

Addendum 7: Information Letter

INFORMATION LETTER ABOUT RESEARCH STUDY

Dear SAPS official

My name is Rinkie Seimela, I am a Master's student at North-West University pursuing a MSW in Child Protection. I am doing research under the supervision of Prof. Elmien Truter, a senior lecturer at the North-West University in the Department of Social Work.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study titled: ***The views of SAPS officers on their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative description.*** This study has been approved by the COMPRES scientific committee of NWU as well as the HREC (ethics) committee of NWU (NWU-00043-22-A1). **The aim of the study** is to describe your views on how you understand your role and duty as SAPS officer and the role and duty of social workers when managing or dealing with child abuse cases.

Who may participate?

You may participate in this study if:

- You are an officially appointed SAPS member working at the Hillbrow police station at the time of the study
- You have at least 2 years' experience as a SAPS officer working with child abuse cases
- Please note that your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

How will you participate if you want to participate?

- Once you have agreed to participate in this study and completed the signed informed consent form, you will be invited to talk to me during an interview
- You will talk to me (the researcher), either online (MS TEAMS) or face to face in a private space at your workplace in Hillbrow police station
- We will talk for an hour or less about your views on the role of SAPS officers and designated social workers in child abuse cases.
- You can decide on a date and time to have this conversation

How will you benefit from participating?

You will not get anything for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to our research and findings could lead to greater understanding of the multi-professional teamwork involved when managing child abuse cases in SA. A bottle of water will be provided during the Face-to-Face interviews. You will also receive a R70 Nando's voucher as a token of appreciation for your time and participation.

What will happen to the research?

Your interview will be recorded and transcribed, but only myself and my study leader will have access to this recording and transcript. I will analyse the content of your conversation and write it up in a research report which will be submitted to NWU in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Social Work in Child Protection. Once examination is concluded, the findings for this study will be submitted to the British Journal of Social Work for publication. Your identity will be protected at all times and not disclosed in the report – when I refer to what you say in my research report you will get a fake name, for example: P1 or P2.

If you comply with the above-mentioned criteria and you would like to participate, please contact Miss Mmathebe Mampane via WhatsApp at 061 443 2513 or email her on mampanem8@gmail.com before 30 September 2022.

Once contact has been made, she will email you an informed consent form that you will be invited to complete and sign in the presence of a witness. Once you have done so you will be asked to email the signed informed consent letter to Ms Mampane; who will also arrange to collect the originally signed consent form via courier so that interviews can then be arranged.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards

Ms Rinkie Seimela
Qualified Social Worker
SACSSP registration nr: 1043698
NWU Student number: 28434854
Email: seimelarinkie1@gmail.com

Addendum 8: Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STUDY TITLED: The views of SAPS officers on their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative description

YEAR OF DATA COLLECTION : 2022

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY : RINKIE MMALOTJA SEIMELA

RAPPORT BUILDING

MS Teams interview

- Make sure the interview is recorded from the start
- "Hi, my name is Rinkie Seimela. I am the master's student who will be conducting the interview with you." "How are you doing today?" "I'm just going to confirm your identifying details with you, please let me know if anything isn't correct." "And just to also confirm, you are currently working as a police officer at Hillbrow Police Station? – how long have you worked as a SAPS official?"
- "This interview will be recorded but that is in order to be able to transcribe the interview at a later stage in order to do my data analysis. Are you comfortable with this interview being recorded?" "You don't have to worry, your interview and your true identity will remain anonymous as well as confidential at all times, your code name will be"
- "Lastly before we begin with the interview, I just want to confirm that you have read and understood the informed consent forms which you signed?" "Any further questions before we start? Feel free to ask."
- ✓ *Explain technicalities around Ms Teams, and how privacy and confidentiality will be ensured.*
- ✓ *Document basic demographics of participant*

Face-to-face interview

- The participant will be greeted upon arrival. "Hi, my name is Rinkie Seimela. I am the master's student who will be conducting the interview with you." "How are you doing today?"
- To comply with all COVID-19 safety precautions, the seats will be placed two meters apart. The researcher will sanitise her hands and the hands of the participant. The participant will be asked to wear a mask (as will the researcher) and keep it on for the duration of the interview.

- The participant will be invited to have a seat and will be asked if he/she/they is comfortable. The door will be closed to ensure privacy.
- "I'm just going to confirm your identifying details with you, please let me know if anything isn't correct." "And just to also confirm, you are currently working as a police officer at Hillbrow Police Station? – how long have you worked as a SAPS official?"
- "This interview will be recorded but that is in order to be able to transcribe the interview at a later stage in order to do my data analysis. Are you comfortable with this interview being recorded?" "You don't have to worry, your interview and your true identity will remain anonymous as well as confidential at all times, your code name will be"
- "Lastly before we begin with the interview, I just want to confirm that you have read and understood the informed consent forms which you signed?" "Any further questions before we start? Feel free to ask."
- The researcher will explain the audio recorder and the purpose of audio recording the interview. After this, the researcher will ask the participant if he/she has any objections to this.
- Document basic demographics of participant

Purpose of interview and purpose of research

Determine understanding of participant regarding the purpose of interview:

- "Would you please tell me why you think I am interviewing you today?"
- The reason I am interviewing you right now is because you responded to an advertisement stating your interest in participating in this study, which explores the views of SAPS officers in Gauteng regarding their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management.
Your interview will contribute to my findings of this study and any further studies on the topic of management of child abuse cases."

✓ *Remind participant that they can withdraw at any stage.*

Interview questions

- How would you say you perceive the role and duties of SAPS members in the management of child abuse cases? (Probing questions to follow if necessary)

Possible probing questions:

- Did you receive any training on child abuse and the role that SAPS plays in managing child abuse cases?
- If so, when and how often has it occurred?

- Please share details of the training.
 - How do you perceive the role and duties of designated social workers in the management of child abuse cases? (Probing questions to follow if necessary)
 - Where did you acquire information regarding the previous question
 - What is your opinion on how designated social worker can assist with the investigation of child abuse cases?

Conclusion

"I thank you for taking the time to sit through this interview. Your time and input is much appreciated." "Before I draw the interview to a close, is there anything you would like to ask or add?"

✓ Ask participant if they would like a summary of the findings.

Observational/Factual notes during interview	Reflective notes about interview	P _____
		Name and surname: Date of interview: Nature of interview: Email: Contact details: Years' experience as SAPS member: Years' experience as SAPS member at Hilbrow: Race: Qualifications: Age:

Addendum 9: HREC Certificate – Researcher



Miss Rinkie Seimela

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222

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

**Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics
Office for Research, Training
and Support**

Tel: 018 299 2092

Email: Wayne.Towers@nwu.ac.za

28 July 2021

Dear Miss Seimela

PROOF OF ATTENDANCE AND ASSESSMENT

This letter certifies that you have completed the online health ethics training course entitled:

The Basics of Research Integrity and Health Research Ethics

Presenter: Prof M Greeff (Emeritus Professor: Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research)

Prof GW Towers (Head of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support)

This letter of attendance serves as proof of ethics training and assessment and is valid for three (3) years, which means it expires on 30 November 2024.

Yours sincerely

Digitally signed
by Gordon Wayne
Towers
Date: 2021.09.13
11:12:30 +02'00'

Head of Health Sciences Ethics
Office for Research, Training and Support

Jeanetta
du Plessis

Digitally signed by
Jeanetta du Plessis
Date: 2021.09.15
14:13:36 +02'00'

Deputy Dean: Research and Innovation
Faculty of Health Sciences

Current details: (24355305) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.7 Training\9.1.5.7.6_LOA_BRIARE_28434854.docm
28 July 2021

File reference: 9.1.5.7.6

Addendum 10: SACSSP Registration – M student

FILE COPY



RECEIPT

S.A. COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL SERVICE
PROFESSIONS (SACSSP)
PRIVATE BAG X12
GEZINA 0031
TEL: (012) 356-8333 FAX: (012) 356-8400
mail@sacssp.co.za www.sacssp.co.za

Registration No. 1043698

MS R M SEIMELA
P.O.BOX 3803
POLOKWANE
LIMPOPO
0700

Registered

THIS RECEIPT IS VALID UNTIL

31 March 2023

This receipt serves as proof of payment received. It is not proof of registration with Council. NO duplicates will be issued.

RECEIPT NUMBER	CG75159
REGISTRATION NUMBER	1043698
DATE RECEIVED	28-Mar-2022

DETAILS	AMOUNT
ANNUAL FEE	466,00
VAT AMOUNT	57,23
TOTAL	466,00
INC VAT	

VAT NUMBER 4770100112

FILE COPY



RECEIPT

S.A. COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL SERVICE
PROFESSIONS (SACSSP)
PRIVATE BAG X12
GEZINA 0031
TEL: (012) 356-8333 FAX: (012) 356-8400
mail@sacssp.co.za www.sacssp.co.za

Registration No. 1043698

MS R M SEIMELA
P.O.BOX 3803
POLOKWANE
LIMPOPO
0700

Registered

THIS RECEIPT IS VALID UNTIL

31 March 2023

This receipt serves as proof of payment received. It is not proof of registration with Council. NO duplicates will be issued.

RECEIPT NUMBER	CG75159
REGISTRATION NUMBER	1043698
DATE RECEIVED	28-Mar-2022

DETAILS	AMOUNT
ANNUAL FEE	466,00
VAT AMOUNT	57,23
TOTAL	466,00
INC VAT	

VAT NUMBER 4770100112

REGISTERED TO

PRACTISE

press out along perforated line

This is to certify that the following person is registered by the Council to practise as indicated:

Name: MS R M SEIMELA

Reg. No.: 1043698 SOCIAL WORKER

Period: 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

L Malamba (Registrar)

fold over

Addendum 11: Letter – Registered Counsellor

16 May 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter serves as confirmation that I, Boitumelo Makenete Registered Counsellor, will provide counselling support to participants on Rinkie Mmalotja Seimela's research study titled "The views of SAPS officers on their role and the role of designated social workers in child abuse case management: A qualitative description".

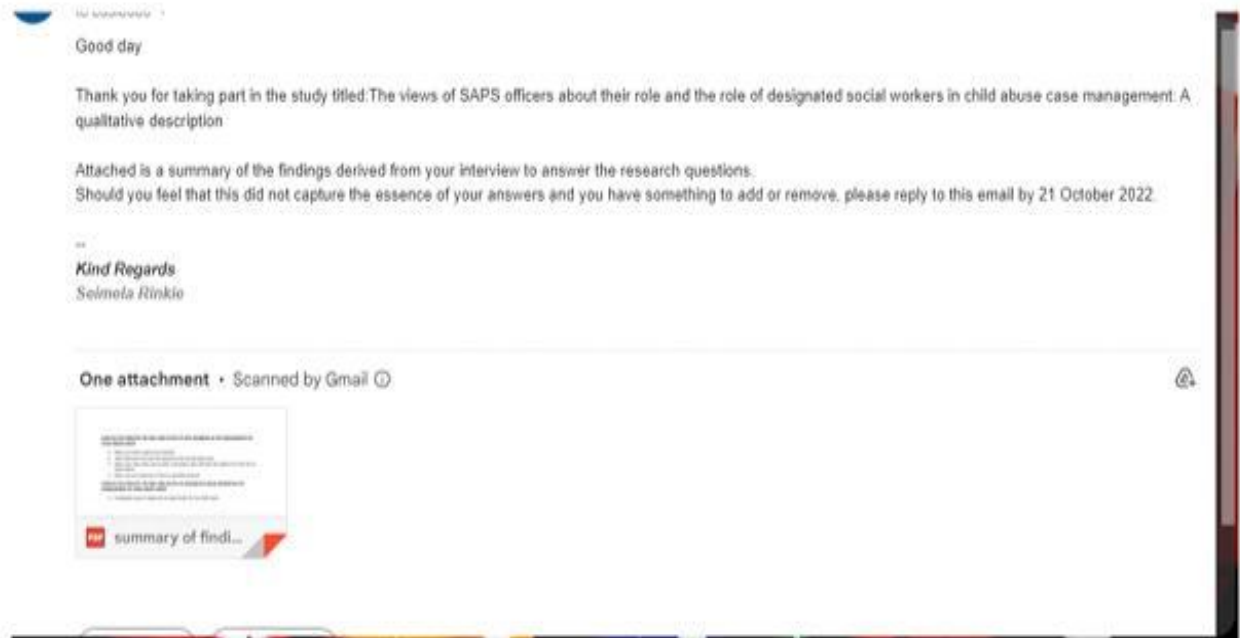
My contact details are:

Email address boitumelo.makenete@kaelo.co.za

Phone Number 078 658 5704


.....

Addendum 12: Example of Member Checking Email



Addendum 13: Research Journal Extract

RESEARCH JOURNAL

6 July 2022

Meeting with Lt Col Buthelezi (MIC Commander) rescheduled, she was in KZN attending a funeral.

13 July 2022

Met with Lt Col Buthelezi (MIC Commander) at 11:00. Provided information regarding the research, qualifying criteria and recruitment process.

Distributed flyers and posters. She advised that she would request that Shift Commanders also announce study during the morning parade.

Informed independent person that study has been advertised, must be ready to respond to potential participants.

Updated Supervisor.

25 July 2022

Boardroom was booked. People ignored sign, would come in knocking some to look for their colleagues, others to inform researcher of their interest to partake in the study.

Obtained informed consent and eligibility check conducted before interview can commence. Participants were given Nandos voucher once interview was concluded.

Interviews transcribed. Probing questions revised to draw rich data (*Enquired about working relationship with DSW, administrative responsibilities, what forms do they complete when removing a child, working relationship with DSW and their other SAPS officers*).

Supervisor updated on progress.

26 July 2022

Enquired with contact person re-diversity and equity. Reported that their station is has mostly Africans, other individuals of races are less than 10.

14 Aug 2022

First coding training (online via MS Teams).

Re-worked research time frame. Received updated timeframe via email.

7 Sep 2022

Second coding training with co- coder.

10 Sep 2022

Interviewed two people, two people recruited via snowball sampling changed their mind about participating. The prospective participants were coerced to change their mind, their choice to withdraw was respected.

24 September 2022

Consensus meeting with co-coder.

01 October 2022

Vaal campus to meet with Supervisor.

Went through open codes. Did axial coding and selective coding. Finalized themes.

Confirmed consensus with co-coder. Advised to get email confirmation that she has deleted all material.

Addendum 14: Letter – Co-coder

15 October 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter serves as confirmation that I, **Reitumetse Lehlihl** NWU postgraduate student, will be the co-coder on Rinkie Mmalotja Seimela study titled "The views of SAPS officers in Hillbrow regarding the role of SAPS and designated social workers in child abuse cases: A qualitative exploration".

My contact details are:

Email address : reitumetse.lehlihl@gmail.com

Phone number : 079 615 9264

Regards



Signature



Witness

Addendum 15: Co-coder HREC certificate



Miss Reitumetse Lehihi

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**Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics
Office for Research, Training
and Support**

Tel: 018 299 2092
Email: Wayne.Towers@nwu.ac.za

28 July 2021

Dear Miss Lehihi

PROOF OF ATTENDANCE AND ASSESSMENT

This letter certifies that you have completed the online health ethics training course entitled:

The Basics of Research Integrity and Health Research Ethics

Presenter: Prof M Greeff (Emeritus Professor; Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research)
Prof GW Towers (Head of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support)

This letter of attendance serves as proof of ethics training and assessment and is valid for three (3) years, which means it expires on 30 November 2024.

Yours sincerely

Digitally signed
by Gordon
Wayne Towers
Date: 2021.09.13
10:37:39 +02'00'

Head of Health Sciences Ethics
Office for Research, Training and Support

Jeanetta
du Plessis

Digitally signed by
Jeanetta du Plessis
Date: 2021.09.15
14:15:26 +02'00'

Deputy Dean: Research and Innovation
Faculty of Health Sciences

Current details: (24355305) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.7 Training\9.1.5.7.6_1_OA_BRIARE_28722000.docm
28 July 2021
File reference: 9.1.5.7.6

Addendum 16: Coding Table – Example of How Data Was Coded

Extracted data from interview transcript - Participant 1	Open Codes	Connections between the open codes (Axial Coding)	Themes
R: So now the questions that I'm going to ask you they're going to form part of the research that I'm doing. So, these will help us answer the research question. So, the first question that I have is how would you perceive the role and duties of SAPS members in the management of child abuse cases? P1: Child abuse cases? R: Hmm... the role of the police... the police officer, or SAPS as a whole P1: First thing I think what they ^{speaks in groups} is the child abuse one? (Translation: You said child abuse, isn't it?) R: (in agreement) Ja... P1: First thing a child must be taken to a safe place where you will interview the child as a victim. You don't have to interview a child in a public place or at the CSC. Here we've got a friendly room where we take a child and the parent... ehth... there first... for interviewing them regarding to what kind of situation are they in or what kind of help do they need from us R: Hmm okay... so that's when a member of the community comes and wants to open a child abuse case? P1: Child abuse case, yes. There's a child... we even have child protection unit where they are only dealing with children only... and in each and every police station there's that office where we called it... ehth... victim empowerment room where we take a child first and we first look at the needs of a child first. Whatever the child needs food, shelter sth... make hospital... any hospitality needs. Ja health... then... think is the first thing which we look at R: Okay... so, when a case is reported the needs of the child is the first priority?	Don't interview victim in public space Attend to child's needs: food, clothing, shelter Take child to victim empowerment room	Open case (Interview in private room) (Secure immediate needs)	

P1: (interjects) first priority. Whether it's a rape case or a child abuse, we need to remove a child. Maybe from the flat... (inaudible)

R: Oh, so when eh... like you were saying, if a member of the community comes in, you ensure the needs of the child. So, what would be... let's say, give me an example of what those needs would be in a normal or a typical case that you've worked on

P1: Rape case most. I worked most on rape cases. Maybe you'll find that eh... the person... the community member outside **only**, they found a child being dumped at the street. Then the person is just a stranger, doesn't know a child, so that child will be brought to us here at the police station. So, as a person who is working with the children, I will **make sure that it was removed, it is in a warm place, I have to feed the child, take care of everything, whether I need to change the diaper or bathing the child, I do all those things.** Then **before I arrange a shelter, I take the child to this police station. And I take the child to go to the clinic for exam, to check the health of the child if any's there or not.** she was raped or not, anything...

R: So, a medical examination?

P1: **Medical examination** is a whole, the other **...**

R: And how would that go about? The shelter... do you travel to the shelter? How...?

P1: (interjects) Yes, we are traveling, then- I forgot, **we open a case** also, of child abandonment then... you said what? (in low tone referring to the outside noise) Those people they're disturbing...

R: Is it very distracting... the shelter, how do we go about that?

P1: It depends. Shelter **...**
...
... But we do have

Task Network:

- Remove child from danger
- Remove child and place in place of safety
- Open case
- Secure immediate needs
- Obtain J88
- Make sure that child is clean, warmly dressed and fed
- Take child for medical assistance
- Open case

Interactions:

- Statutory intervention (green arrow from 'Remove child and place in place of safety')
- Open case (blue arrow from 'Open case' node)
- Secure immediate needs (blue arrow from 'Secure immediate needs' node)
- Obtain J88 (purple arrow from 'Obtain J88' node)
- Interaction with other Role Players (purple arrow from 'Obtain J88' node)

other shelter here around Hillbrow. It depends if they have a space, then they will... if they have, they will take a child and it depends on the age. There are shelters for small children and shelter for sixteen and above. It depends on the age of the victim. R: Okay... so, at the... you decide... you look around for shelters and decide where they have space that's where place the child P1: Then that's where I place the child R: Then they... taking the statement... cos you did mentioned that you also open a case P1: A case and I open... shhh... I take the statement from the person who brought the child. If it's like... I did an example of an abandoned child, I will first take a statement from that person that's when I open a case, register it and then it's having a case number. Then we'd take it from there R: Okay... and then did you receive any training regarding managing child abuse cases? P1: Yes, we did. from the college first thing, we did shhh... attended the course which relates with the... it's domestic violence as a whole. Ja as a whole, including that one, I mentioned it. Then even here there's a... there's a training here in Parktown where we attend courses. First responder to a scene of a child... a neglected child or domestic as a whole. Ja, that's where we've learnt so many things about taking care of the domestic violence cases R: And when last did you attend training on child abuse? P1: Hhmm... for me I think it was 5 years back R: Five years back. So, that was the last time here in Parktown? P1: Hhmm... in Parktown R: So, what were the contents of the training in Parktown?	Take statement from child and open case Register case [Open case] Open case		
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P1: Hhmm... child abuse as a whole. I did, ja, domestic violence, first responder to a scene, where there's maybe a child abandoned. Sometimes they don't bring the child, they phone us to come and attend, where maybe the mother left the children in the flats, so we need to go there. How do we respond first thing when we get there to remove that child? That is the course that I have attended. R: Okay. So, how do you perceive the role and duties of designated social worker in the management of child abuse cases? P1: Social worker in the police? R: No. Designated social workers would be those employed by DSD - department of social development, and child welfare organisations. P1: Oh... those child welfare... like child welfare... we normally work with child welfare. Cause sometimes when we look for shelter you find that there's no shelter. We will have to take the child to child welfare in town. Ja, Fox street. R: Oh... that's the welfare that you normally work with? P1: Yes, yes... Cause sometimes you'll find that there's no shelter around which will accommodate maybe 13-year-old child or a small baby. Then that's where you will take the baby to. R: Oh... so now we're discussing designated... child welfare social workers P1: Social workers... they are... R: So, what cases do you normally refer to them? P1: Most abandoned child... child abandoned... then rape... rape cases but normally rape cases... not sure exactly FCS stand for what... whether about family. R: Family and child.	Seeking help of social workers to find shelter [Refer case to designated social workers to place child in shelter] [Refer case to FCS] Interaction with other Role Players		
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P1: ja, child unit... protection, ja... ja... that where the social workers intervene. But must we only work with those child welfare social workers R: So, you refer cases (speaks in <i>gogo</i>) <i>ija</i>, neglect, abuse and you also said rape? (translation: "cases of") P1: Hhmm... and domestic violence where you'll need to remove eh... one of the partner... ja... maybe they're fighting you need to remove a woman or a husband, ja... it depends on the situation that you're in, then you can take eh... one of them to social workers R: And if they refuse? Let's say you want to remove the wife or the husband and they refuse, what happens from there? P1: Normally we will ask one of them to phone the relatives, if they don't want to go to the shelter <i>gogo</i> or social workers, we normally ask for an assistance with the family member, where maybe the wife can go there just for time being so that we see the situation. Cause mostly when you put the partner back, you don't know what will happen after... R: (interjects) if you leave them at the same... P1: Hhmm... same house, ja. R: And if their kid is involved... kids that are being abused, what happens then? P1: <i>We remove the children</i> R: You remove the children and take them to...? P1: To shelter... <i>[redacted]</i> <i>[redacted]</i> <i>[redacted]</i> ja... R: And where did you acquire this information regarding child welfare social workers... designated social workers?	<i>Remove child</i> <i>[redacted]</i>	(Remove child and place in place of safety) (Refer case to designated social workers)	Statutory intervention Interaction with other Role Players
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P1: The information? R: ja... on what they do or what cases to refer to them, how to... the working relationship... what services that they provide, how did you get this information? P1: Hhmm... from our commanders... I don't know exactly but from... as we have a unit of child protection unit <i>gogo</i> we have our commanders who are attending the workshop with the other social workers, that's where they get the information. Yes, they will find that okay, we are assisting with this kind of eh... eh... with only kids, the babies. We can assist you with the babies. Then our commander will take the contact with them then... it depends ja... R: So, what is your opinion on how designated social workers, child welfare social workers can assist with the investigation of child abuse cases? P1: Social worker as they have... they went to school like you, to vardies, they've learned on how to examine a child, whether the child is... sometimes children can form stories <i>gogo</i> then the social worker, they will find out if the child is lying or not, ja. So, they are well trained so they know how to find out if there was an abuse or maybe the wife is just forming a story so that they may separate with the husband, you see, they are well trained us we don't know, we're police officers R: So, in that instance do you refer a case to... now it forms part of the investigation, am I right in saying so? So, do you go back and get a report from them or how does that work? How do you keep in contact with them? P1: <i>[redacted]</i> <i>[redacted]</i> <i>[redacted]</i>	<i>[redacted]</i>	(referred to court)	Participating in judicial process
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