

Competencies of social workers regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area

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24002623

Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Magister of Social Work in Forensic Practice* at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

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LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

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This is to certify that the English language editing of this dissertation by Ms N Lupondo titled *Competencies of social workers regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area* was done by Ms Cecilia van der Walt.

Ms C van der Walt completed editing and translation at Honours level at NWU (Potchefstroom Campus) cum laude and is registered with SATI (registration number 1000228), taught English at primary and secondary level and has been an editor of theses, dissertations and journal articles since 1987.



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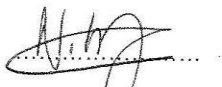
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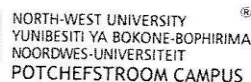

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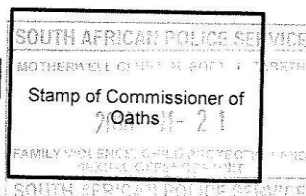
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SUMMARY

Title: Competencies of social workers regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area

Key words: Child, Competency, Forensic assessment, rural area, sexual abuse and social worker

As a social worker working for the South African Police Service the researcher is rendering services to the sexually abused children in the Eastern Cape rural areas. While doing forensic assessments to the sexually abused children the researcher observed that specialized training is efficient.

With this research the researcher aims at describing and exploring the own views of social workers in rural areas regarding competencies social workers need in performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children.

This study also reveals that social workers performing forensic assessments need to be trained in the field of forensic practice, since they need to follow guidelines and rules during the forensic assessment process with sexually abused children. The concern is that the social workers in rural areas are expected to perform forensic assessments while they are not trained in this specific field and functioning with limited resources.

In this study it became evident that most social workers performing assessments of sexually abused children lack knowledge on performing forensic assessment of sexually abused children. These social workers need training because they do not follow any protocol. According to most of the participants social workers only ask the child about sexual abuse. They do not have resources, such as assessment tools for assessing children, suitable cars to drive on gravel roads and most of their offices are overcrowded and not child friendly. The social workers doing forensic assessments need to be trained in the field of sexual abuse and forensic assessments of sexually abused children to prevent further trauma to the child.

FOREWORD

The article format was chosen in accordance with regulations A.11.2.5 for the degree MA in Social Work: Forensic Practice. **The article in Section B will comply with the requirements of the journal, *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*.**

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE AUTHORS

Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk

The journal publishes articles, book reviews and commentary on articles already published from the field of Social Work. Contributions may be written in English or Afrikaans. All articles should include an abstract in English of not more than 100 words. All contributions will be critically reviewed by at least two referees on whose advice contributions will be accepted or rejected by the editorial committee. All refereeing is strictly confidential. Manuscripts may be returned to the authors if extensive revision is required or if the style of presentation does not conform to the Journal practice. Articles of less than 2 000 words or more than 10 000 words are normally not considered for publication. Submit the article as a Microsoft Word document in 14 pt Times New Roman, double line spacing. Use font Arial charts and diagrams. The manuscript should be sent electronically to hsu@sun.ac.za. Use the Harvard system for references. Short references in the text: When word-for-word quotations, facts or arguments from other sources are cited, the surname(s) of the author(s), year of publication and page number(s) must appear in parenthesis in the text, e.g. '...' (Berger, 1976:12). More details about sources referred to in the text should appear at the end of the manuscript under the caption 'References'. The sources must be arranged alphabetically according to the surnames of the authors. Note the use of capitals and punctuation marks.

In terms of SANSO-014, the Journal is classified as an approved research journal for the purpose of subsidy by the State. The Editorial Board has therefore decided that an amount of R150 per page is to be paid for published articles by authors who are lecturing or doing research in the RSA.

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SECTION A:

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

Title: Competencies of social workers regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area

1. INTRODUCTION

Sexual abuse against women and children is a tremendous problem in South Africa and also the Eastern Cape Province where the researcher works as a social worker as part of the South African Police Service (SAPS) (Calitz, 2011:66; Jiya, 2015:1-2; South Africa, 2013). According to the South African National Statistics (South Africa, 2012/2013), 66 196 incidents of sexual offences were reported between 2011 and 2012, while only 4 501 of these cases resulted in convictions. In an interview with Mr Z Malahla (Malahla, 2016) from the Provincial office, Forensic Social Work Services, Family Violence Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit on 03 November 2016, he reported that 348 cases of children who have been sexually assaulted were reported in 2016 and 152 cases of children reported for attempted rape in the Eastern Cape Province. Numerous Government Departments as well as nongovernment organisations (NGO's) play a role in the investigation of cases such as child sexual abuse. Social workers, as part of the professional team in child sexual abuse cases, play an exceptionally important part in the assessment and finalisation of these cases (Eastwood, 2006:1; Galloway, 2013:1; Mogole, 2008:2).

Forensic assessments in South Africa are usually performed by either social workers in private practice, or social workers in the South African Police Service (SAPS) Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences (FCS) units. Although the trend and preference is to have these assessments performed by social workers with a specialised Master's degree in Forensic Practice, the realities of practice indicate that these tasks are performed by social workers who do not possess specialized qualification in Forensic Social Work. This is also true for social workers at nongovernment organisations and the Department of Social Development. Most of

these social workers are required to conduct forensic assessments that involve acting as expert witnesses during court proceedings without any specialised training in performing forensic assessments (Cussons, 2011:22-23; Jiya, 2015:29; Ntlatleng, 2011:21).

2. ORIENTATION

Forensic Social Work as a specialized field of Social Work is focused on promoting the best interest of the child in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 Section 28(1) (d) (Scheepers, 2008:154). In view of their task descriptions, social workers appointed by the Departments of Social Development, SAPS and Child Welfare in rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province have to conduct forensic assessments with sexually abused children. Given the challenges of performing social work roles in rural contexts it is argued that if these social workers do not possess basic skills in forensic assessment they are most likely to experience difficulties doing these assessments effectively and acting as expert witnesses in court. Knowing the competencies of social workers as well as knowing the impact of the contextual factors influencing their levels of practice, the researcher can make and develop specific recommendations in respect of the focus and content of minimum skill requirements for effective management of forensic cases by social workers in rural contexts.

The Eastern Cape Province, where the researcher works as a social worker at the South African Police Service (SAPS) is characterized by a particularly high incidence of child sexual abuse (Calitz, 2011:66; Jiya, 2015; Nqaphi, 2013; South Africa, 2013). In an attempt to address the issue of child sexual abuse, several Government Departments as well as nongovernment organisations (NGOs) play a role in the investigation of cases of child sexual abuse. Social workers, as role-players of these multi-professional teams, play a key role in the assessment and finalisation of these cases. Ideally these assessments should be performed by social workers with a specialised Master's degree in Social Work (MSW) in Forensic Practice. Expert witnessing is a key competency derived from the term 'forensic' which means 'belonging to the courts' or 'to be used in legal proceedings', implying the performance of forensic roles within a criminal justice system, according to Faller

(2007:4). Specialization in forensic social work has increasingly become essential as a key requirement in cases where a social worker, before appearing in court, has to convince the court regarding the competence of her knowledge, skills, experience, training and education to qualify as an 'expert' of the court (Myers, 2011:386). An expert witness in child sexual abuse cases, as indicated by Carstens (2006:188), is someone who has specialised experience, has superior knowledge regarding the subject, can deduce correct conclusions, can formulate an accurate opinion and also has the ability to successfully communicate his or her superior knowledge, specialised experience, conclusions and opinions in a court of law in a manner that assists the court in understanding the evidence.

Hence this study is based on the following premise: Knowledge regarding social workers' views on their own competencies in performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children in rural contexts will enable the researcher to make recommendations to managers of the Department of Social Development, of the South African Police Service, and of Child Welfare, in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province, about how to improve the competencies of social workers regarding these assessments. The study then specifically contributes towards improved rural social work practice in forensic context.

From the discussions above, the following research question arises:

What are the current views of social workers in rural areas regarding the competencies *in performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children*?

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The main aim of this research project is to describe and explore the current views of social workers in rural areas regarding the competencies in performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children.

The objectives of this research are:

- To gain an understanding of social workers' views in rural practice conditions regarding the competencies needed in performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children.

- To discuss the key findings and recommendations with managers of the Department of Social Development, the South African Police Service, and of Child Welfare in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province about how to improve the competencies of social workers in rural areas regarding forensic assessments on sexually abused children. (This was done in March 2017 after receiving a letter from the North-West University Potchefstroom Campus, informing the researcher that she has complied with the requirements for the Master degree).

4. RESEARCH CONTEXT

The research was done in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The Eastern Cape is located on the east coast of South Africa between the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces and can be described as a rural practice context. Inland it borders the Northern Cape and Free State provinces, as well as Lesotho. It covers an area of 168 966 kilometres and has a population of 6 562 053. It is the second largest province in South Africa by surface area and has the third largest population.

The Eastern Cape is divided into seven district municipalities. The majority of the people speak isiXhosa (78.8%), followed by Afrikaans (10.6%) and English (5.6%). Large parts of the Eastern Cape are made up of former homelands, Transkei and Ciskei. Current high-poverty and unemployment rates in this province may be linked directly to the historical economic neglect of these areas. Most of the province is characterised by hilly to mountainous rural areas which have a negative influence on service delivery associated with rural social work, such as a lack of community support, inadequate resources, decisions being made by urban organizations on behalf of rural social workers, long travelling distances and time lapses.

This research was conducted in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape which includes the following areas: Mthatha, Mqanduli, Ngqeleni and Port St Johns. All of these are small rural towns. In this area 22 social workers are active, with experience in forensic assessments with sexually abused children.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the process involving application of a variety of standardized methods and techniques in the pursuit of knowledge (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:323). The researcher used a qualitative approach in an attempt to understand social workers' views regarding the competencies needed in performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi & Wright, 2010:210; Fouché & Schurink, 2011:307).

5.1 Research purpose

For purposes of this study, the researcher used a descriptive design with an exploratory objective in an attempt to answer the 'what' question for this study. Descriptive studies 'present a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship, and focuses on the "how" and "why" questions (Fouché & de Vos, 2011:95). Rubin and Babbie (2005:125) maintain that description is more likely to refer to a more intensive examination of phenomena and their deeper meanings; thus leading to thicker description.

The question is: 'what are social workers' views regarding the competencies needed in performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children in rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province?' Fouché and de Vos (2011:95) mention that exploratory studies endeavour to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or individual. Exploratory studies serve as a mechanism to learn more about the meanings people attach to their actions. Although research has been conducted on social workers in forensic practice, nothing else than this research has yet been done on social workers' competencies regarding forensic assessments in rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province.

5.2 Research approach

For this research a qualitative approach was implemented for collecting data in a natural setting – sensitive to the social workers under study (Creswell, 2007:37). This study thus utilised the qualitative research method, including having one-on-one semi-structured interviews with social workers in a rural area of the Eastern Cape Province. In this qualitative study an inductive process was followed in which themes

and sub-themes emerged through analysis of data collected by conducting interviews with the social workers. The sample was small and purposively selected (Thyer, 2001:258). The qualitative approach is most suited for studying the phenomenon of social workers' competencies regarding forensic assessment in rural areas with sexually abused children because the information gathered in qualitative studies are in the form of narrative descriptions, which may help to gain a deeper insight into the social workers' competencies (Botma *et al.*, 2010:288). The qualitative approach enabled participants to describe their views regarding the competencies in real terms and in greater detail.

5.3 Research design

Grinnell (2001:231) defines research design as a plan which includes every aspect of a proposed research study from conceptualization of the problem to the dissemination of findings. A descriptive design was used to describe and explore the contextually relevant descriptions in their own terms and therefore provide a description of human experience as reported by the subjects (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:28; Botma *et al.*, 2010:194). Botma *et al.*'s (2010:110) explanation of a descriptive design is that it is 'used when little is known about a topic'. The research objective was exploratory in nature (Fouché & Vos, 2011:95). With this project the researcher aimed at describing and exploring an overall picture of the competencies of social workers regarding the forensic assessment of sexually abused children in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province. Qualitative research that describes and explores characteristics of a group is useful for improving or developing services (Thyer, 2001:132). Since the participating social workers were questioned regarding the competencies social workers needed in assessing children that have been sexually abused, it could be expected that sensitive content might be shared. Although the researcher works in the same context as the participants, conflict of interest was not a problem. The participants would rather discuss their own competencies in forensic assessments with sexually abused children with the researcher than with someone they do not know. The participants knew that the researcher would not judge them because she also experienced problems regarding forensic assessments with sexually abused children.

The research strategy was inductive in nature. With this, the researcher embarked on the study without an explicit conceptual framework and without using a central theoretical argument in guiding the research (Botma *et al.*, 2010:195).

5.4 Participants and sampling

The participants were all registered social workers employed by the Departments of Social Development, SAPS and Child Welfare (also named Child and Family Welfare a nongovernment organisation. For this research the term Child Welfare will be used), practising forensic assessments in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape which included the rural areas of Mthatha, Mqanduli, Ngqeleni and Port St Johns. These participants were considered to be information-rich sources. They were selected for their practice experience regarding forensic assessments with sexually abused children. The participants could best answer questions regarding their own competencies in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children as they were all working for the Departments of Social Development, SAPS and Child Welfare.

For the proposed study, the researcher utilised a purposive sampling technique. Participants were selected on the basis of their knowledge and experiences relative to the topic (Strydom & Delport, 2011:392). The sample comprised male and female social workers who have experience in forensic assessments with sexually abused children. Strydom (2011a:223) defines sampling as a means of taking a portion or a smaller number of units of a population as representative or having particular characteristics of that population. The research sample was 22 social workers or until data saturation was reached. Data saturation in this study is the collection of data to the point where a sense of closure is attained, because new data yield redundant information (Polit & Beck, 2004:308, cited in Botma *et al.*, 2010:290). After 17 interviews the researcher could no longer find any new categories of data from the semi-structured interviews and at this point saturation was reached. The decision regarding saturation was thus reached when the researcher had continuously conducted a preliminary analysis of newly gathered data and had found repetition in the responses of participants.

Inclusion criteria

- Those included in this research were registered male and female social workers of the Departments of Social Development, SAPS and Child Welfare and known to practise forensic assessments with sexually abused children for one year or more and working in the rural areas of Mthatha, Mqanduli, Ngqeleni and Port Port St Johns of the Eastern Cape Province, with experience in forensic assessment of sexually abused children.
- Social workers who should be able to converse in English – all the mentioned participants were able to speak English in their work environment.

Exclusion criteria

- Registered male and female social workers not working in rural areas and who have no experience with forensic assessments with the sexually abused child and who can't answer questions regarding their competencies in performing forensic assessments with the sexually abused child in rural areas.

5.5 Data Collection

For the proposed study, the researcher utilised a purposive sampling technique. The researcher used semi-structured one-on-one interviews to collect the richest data possible until data saturation was achieved (Greeff, 2011:351). The aim of individual semi-structured interviews was to compose a detailed picture of the theme of the study with the help of the participants, and the researcher had a set of six predetermined questions on an interview schedule. The interview was rather guided than dictated by the questions and schedule (Greeff, 2011:351-352). The interview schedule (**annexure 6**) provided the participants with an opportunity to explain how they see their competencies with regard to conducting forensic assessments in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province.

The participants were all registered social workers employed by the Departments of Social Development, SAPS and Child Welfare (a nongovernment organisation) practising forensic assessments in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape which include those of Mthatha, Mqanduli, Ngqeleni and Port St Johns. These participants were

considered information-rich sources. They were selected for their practice experience regarding forensic assessments with sexually abused children.

The interview schedule was evaluated by experts in the Social Work Division of North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus), the Ethics Committee of the School for Psycho-Social Behavioural Sciences (COMPRES/Community Psychosocial Research) as well as the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of North-West University (HREC) to ensure quality control. The interview schedule was also pre-tested by five social workers in the field who were knowledgeable of child sexual abuse forensic assessments and who did not form part of the research. After having pre-tested the schedule with the five social workers, adjustments were made to the schedule, specifically to clarify some questions. During each interview, audio tape recordings were made with the consent of the social workers and thereafter the researcher verbally transcribed each interview herself. The transcribed data were reviewed and checked by a registered experienced social worker with a Master's Degree and who acted as the co-coder (Botma *et al.*, 2010:214). The co-coder signed an agreement of confidentiality.

5.6 Research procedures

- Written permission was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences (HREC) of North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) to conduct the research. **Annexure 1**
- The researcher wrote a letter to the Departments of Social Development, SAPS and Child Welfare in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province explaining the aim of the research and the procedures and ethical aspects and requesting permission to conduct this current research with social workers in their departments and organisation who have experience in forensic assessments with sexually abused children. The researcher received permission from the two departments and Child Welfare to conduct the research. **Annexures 2, 3 and 4.**
- Once permission had been received from the Departments of Social Development and SAPS as well as Child Welfare and permission to contact the managers of the Departments and Child Welfare, the researcher

contacted the managers of the mentioned Departments and the NGO as mediators. The researcher also informed the managers about the aim of the study, the benefits and risks of participating as well as the ethical aspects regarding the research explained on the consent form. **Annexure 5**

- The managers contacted the social workers and discussed the aim of the study, the benefits and risks of taking part as well as the ethical aspects regarding the research. The managers then gained consent from the social workers regarding their participation in the research study.
- Once the researcher had received the names and details from the managers concerning the social workers who were willing to form part of the study, the researcher compiled a list containing the details of the social workers.
- Once the social workers had been identified, recruitment started. The researcher arranged individual appointments with the social workers whose names were listed, to inform them once again about the aim of the study, the benefits and risks of taking part as well as the ethical aspects regarding the research explained on the consent form (**Annexure 5**). The appointments were arranged in the offices of the social workers.
- Enough time (a week) was given to the participants to go through the details on the informed consent form before deciding to sign the consent form. An independent person, Ms Emma Steyn (a registered social worker), was present who also signed the informed consent form. This ensured that the participants had made an informed choice as to whether or not to continue their participation.
- The place and time of each interview was scheduled with the participants well in advance.
- The interviews with the social workers were conducted in their own offices after hours at the various organisations. This assured that nobody could enter the office of the participant during the interview. If the interviews could not be conducted in the social worker's office, interviews took place in the researcher's office or a place agreed upon with the participant where confidentiality could be assured.

- The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with each social worker individually. The duration of an interview with each social worker was approximately 60 minutes.
- Written consent was obtained from the participants for conducting and tape-recording the interviews.
- All tape-recorded materials and completed interview reports were safely stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office, to which no one has access. These reports were password protected and tape recordings were destroyed following transcription.
- The researcher wrote reports and verbally transcribed the tape recordings after each interview.
- The researcher determined the accuracy of the findings with the participants by a follow-up interview to discuss the data received from them (member checking). The aim of member checking is to determine the accuracy of the findings by taking the final results back to the participants. All the participants except the accuracy of the findings of this research.
- After having analysed the data the researcher asked another registered social worker, who had already completed her Master's Degree, to check the transcribed data. This social worker has experience in the coding process and was trained to do coding. The social worker signed a confidentiality form. This ensured credibility after she had signed a form to assure confidentiality.

Annexure 7

- The researcher discussed the key findings and recommendations with managers of the Department of Social Development, the South African Police Service, and of Child Welfare in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province about how to improve the competencies of social workers in rural areas regarding forensic assessments on sexually abused children without identifying the name of any social worker. This was done in March 2017 after receiving a letter from the North-West University Potchefstroom Campus, informing the researcher that she has complied with the requirements for the Master degree. The managers were to discuss the report with the social workers in their Departments and NGO.

- The data were written down in a mini-dissertation with recommendations regarding the experiences of social workers performing forensic assessments in a rural area.
- The data were compared with other literature.
- The researcher and study leaders will present the research results in an accredited Social Work journal.

5.7 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (de Vos, 2005:333). Schurink, Fouché and de Vos (2011:397) describe qualitative data analysis as reducing the volume of data, identifying the significant information, recognizing important patterns and developing a structure for communicating the essence of what all the data reveal.

Babbie (2007:378) defines qualitative data analysis as a 'non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns in relationships.' All the audio tape-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. Themes derived from the questions posed to participants during the semi-structured interviews conducted with the research participants were used to group raw data. The researcher employed Creswell's (2009) qualitative analysis approach. The researcher transcribed the data herself. Creswell's (2009) method of data analysis cited in Botma *et al.* (2010:223-227) was applied during this research. The steps for analysing the data according to Creswell (2009, cited in Botma *et al.* (2010:223-227), were:

Step 1: Organise and prepare the data by transcribing the interviews and typing the field notes.

Step 2: Obtain a general sense of the information received and reflect on its overall meaning. Write notes in the margins as well as general thoughts regarding the data.

Step 3: Code the data by cataloguing text data gathered during data collection into categories and label these categories with a term based on the language of the participants. Use colour-code schemes.

Step 4: Describe and identify themes from the coding process. Generate a number of themes to create headings in the report findings.

Step 5: Represent the findings by means of a detailed discussion of the themes.

Step 6: Interpret the data. This will be the researcher's personal interpretation combined with the literature and theories.

6. ETHICAL ASPECTS

Research ethics deals with how we treat those who participate in our studies and how we deal with the data after collection (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009:12). They added that regardless of someone's specific area of study, it is essential for them to be familiar with ethical issues. Working with human participants in research always raises ethical issues about how participants are treated. The researcher considered the following ethical aspects in her study.

- **Ethical Approval**

Botma *et al.* (2010:12) and Somekh and Kathy (2005:57) state that ethical committees exist to ensure that researchers have considered the ethical issues likely to arise and have developed protocols to protect participants from harm. In any cases such committees also act as the guardians of what is to be considered research methodology. The research proposal was submitted to the Health Research Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Health Sciences of North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) for ethical approval.

- **Permission**

According to Denscombe (2002:294-295) much real-world research takes place in settings where one is required to obtain formal agreement from someone to gain access. In a letter, employees were assured that the information obtained would be treated as confidential and that the results obtained would be used for research purposes only. The researcher asked permission from the Departments of Social Development, SAPS and Child Welfare to conduct her study. Once permission had been obtained from the Departments of Social Development and SAPS as well as from Child Welfare, the researcher contacted the managers of the mentioned Departments and NGO as mediators via telephone as well as by sending a letter

asking them to contact the social workers and ask their consent to form part of the research. The researcher informed the managers about the aim of the study, the benefits and risks of participation as well as the ethical aspects regarding the research explained on the consent form.

- **Voluntary Participation**

The participation in this study was completely voluntarily. The researcher forced no one to participate in the study, which was mentioned in the introduction to the questionnaire and in the letter written to the managers of the Departments of Social Development, SAPS and Child Welfare. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:14) state that participants who volunteer for a study must also be allowed to discontinue participation at any stage. If research participants do not wish to complete the questionnaire, there should be no implied or stated threat of penalty for their withdrawal.

- **Written Informed Consent**

Somekh and Kathy (2005:56) state that written informed consent is needed from each person interviewed or observed. Grinnell and Unrau (2008:37) point out that participants must be legally and psychologically competent to give consent and they must be aware that they will be treated with respect during the entire research process and that their identities will remain anonymous. When recruiting the prospective participants as well as during the introduction to the questionnaire, the researcher informed the participants telephonically concerning their rights as research participants. They all had to complete a written informed consent form before they were allowed to participate in the research. **Annexure 5**

- **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Due to the sensitive nature of the research the participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality (Strydom, 2011b:119-120). It was made clear to participants when recruiting them as well as in the informed consent sheet that it is their right to decide when, where, to whom, and to what extent they disclose their views regarding their competencies (Strydom, 2011b:119). Each participant was allocated a letter of the alphabet beforehand, for instance participant A, participant B etcetera instead of using their names. The researcher conducted a semi-structured

interview with each participating social worker individually. The interviews with the social workers were conducted in their own offices after hours at the various organisations. This assured that nobody could enter the office of the participant during the interview. Where interviews could not be in a social worker's office, the interviewing took place in the researcher's office. Written informed consent was obtained from the prospective participants for conducting the interviews with them and for tape recording the interviews. All tape-recorded materials and completed interview reports were safely stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office, to which no one had access. These reports were password protected on the computers of the researcher and the study leader and tape recordings were destroyed following transcription. After analysing the data the researcher asked another registered social worker, who had already completed her Master's degree, to check the transcribed data. The social worker signed a confidentiality form. This ensured credibility after she had signed it to assure confidentiality. After having analysed the data the researcher asked another registered social worker who had already completed her Master's degree, to review and check the data as peer reviewer. This social worker signed a confidentiality form. Audio tape recordings were destroyed after transcription and coding. All analysed data were sent to the Social Work Division of North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, to be sent to the HREC office. The data will be kept safe for five years.

- **Avoidance of harm**

Creswell (2003:64) maintains that the researcher has an ethical obligation to protect the participant from any harm or form of physical discomfort that may emerge from participation in the research project. The researcher did not take advantage of the fact that she is working with social workers as participants. The information gained was used for research purposes only. The participants were asked numerous questions which were not posed in an annoying and/or insulting manner. Participants suffered no career liabilities or other kinds of economic harm.

- **Benefits**

The participants received no tangible benefits. The social workers as well as the social work field will indirectly benefit from this study because managers will understand social workers' lack regarding their own competencies in dealing with

forensic assessments with sexually abused children. Managers may then be in a position to contribute to the enhancement of social workers' competencies regarding forensic assessments in rural areas by means of specialized training in forensic assessments with sexually abused children. This can lead to social workers in rural areas being enabled to act as expert witnesses in court which in turn could lead to successful prosecutions of alleged perpetrators.

- **Risks**

This research was of minimal to moderate risk. Risk 'equates to harm or injury and implies it is something detrimental that will occur in the future' (Botma *et al.*, 2010:22). Emotional harm may occur due to the social workers' experiences of forensic assessments with sexually abused children. Throughout the research study, risks were limited by evaluating the participants' emotional well-being. Any participants experiencing any harm or emotional consequence due to their participation in the research study were offered free debriefing sessions by an appropriate therapist (Strydom, 2011b:122). No participant needed debriefing sessions. The service was free of charge as long as it was related to the participant's involvement in the research (Strydom, 2011b:122). The benefits outweighed the risks by far.

- **Professional competency**

Both the researcher and the co-coder are trained in conducting interviews to determine people's needs, not only in social work practice, but also during her training in the Master's degree of Social Work: Forensic Practice. The researcher and co-coder received extra training in qualitative research which included aspects such as research interviews as well as the coding process from Professor C Wessels by means of a programme at the Social Work Division of the Potchefstroom Campus of North-West University. After finalising the interview schedule, the researcher, the study leader and co-study leader discussed the interview schedule to prepare the researcher for the interviews by means of a scheduled telephone conversation. The researcher continued to keep abreast of knowledge pertaining to aspects of research. The participants were experienced in giving their views during interviews as well as with research studies conducted, especially by the different Departments. As registered social workers, the researcher and the participants were obliged to

obey the codes of ethics and rules for social workers of the South African Council for Social Service Profession.

The researcher maintained contact with the study leader on a weekly basis, either via phone or e-mail, to monitor the research process. Regular reports were sent to the study leader as part of the monitoring process.

- **Costs and remuneration**

There were no costs to participants resulting from their participation in this study. Participants received refreshments after the interviews for the inconvenience of participating in the study. The participants received no form of payment whatsoever for their participation, except for travelling expenses in cases where participants could not have the interviews conducted in their offices.

- **Release and publication of the findings**

Once data analyses were accepted by the study leader and co-study leader as correct, the researcher wrote a report to the managers of the Department of Social Development and SAPS and of Child Welfare, without identifying the names of any of the social workers. This once again assured confidentiality. The report was then also sent to each social worker. The managers will discuss the report with the social workers in their Departments and in the NGO.

The research results were introduced to the reading public in writing by means of a mini-dissertation. The researcher and study leaders will present the research results in an accredited Social Work Journal.

7. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness results from the correct manner in which researchers have set to work in an attempt to meet the criteria for validity, credibility, and believability of their research (Thyer, 2001:315-316). Botma *et al.* (2010:232) explain that trustworthiness has four epistemological standards attached to it, namely truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

Figure 1: Standards, strategies and applied criteria for assuring trustworthiness

Epistemo-logical standards	Strategies	Application
Truth Value	Credibility	Credibility refers to internal validity. The researcher must have confidence in the truth of the findings in regard to the participants as well as the context in which the research will be undertaken. For purposes of the study the researcher ensured credibility through prolonged engagement, member checking, rich and thick description of the research themes and spending enough time in the field to understand the social workers under study. The researcher described and interpreted her experiences during each interview by means of writing detail reports.
Consistency	Depend-ability	Consistency refers to the replication of the study in the same context; making use of the same methods and with the same participants, the findings will remain consistent. To enable consistency the researcher will include the following: ○ The researcher provided a detailed description on how data was collected. ○ Included in the research design the researcher indicated what was planned and executed during the study. ○ The researcher gave a thick description of the methodology. ○ The researcher ensured that data was correctly coded by using an experienced social worker as a co-coder. ● The study was peer examined.

Applicability	Transfer-ability	Transferability will be determined by the degree to which findings can be generalized to the larger population. The findings in regard to this qualitative study will pertain specifically to a small number of individuals in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province. The researcher improved transferability by means of: purposive sampling; data collection until saturation of data was reached; thick and detailed description of the data to ensure a report of good quality.
Epistemo-logical standards	Strategies	Application
Neutrality	Conform-ability	Conformability entails that the research process and results are free from prejudice. The researcher must ensure that as far as possible the study's results are objective and are not based on biases, motives and perspectives of the researcher. For purposes of the study field, notes were made available for conformability audit and data triangulation by using a peer reviewer.

(Botma *et al.*, 2010:232-235).

8. DEFINITIONS

Child

The Children's Act No 38 of 2005 (South Africa, 2005) defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years. The New Dictionary of Social work (1995) also defines a child in terms of the child care Act (74 of 1983) as a person under the age of 18 years. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 2007 (Act No 32 of 2007) defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years, or with reference to section 15 and 16, a person 12 years or older but under the age of 16 years, and 'children' has a corresponding meaning (South Africa, 2007).

Competency

The Oxford Dictionary (2015) describes the term 'competent' as 'having the necessary ability, knowledge, or skill to do something successfully'. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2015b) adds that the term competent implies: 'having the necessary ability or skills and be able to do something well or well enough to meet a certain standard'. Competencies of social workers regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children thus means that social workers have the necessary ability or skills to do forensic assessments with sexually abused children in order to meet the necessary standards as expert witnesses in court.

Forensic assessment

The term 'forensic' means 'belonging to the courts' or 'to be used in legal proceedings'; thus implying the performance of forensic roles within a criminal justice context according to Faller (2007:4). Assessment in its general form according to the New Dictionary of Social Work (1995:4) is a process of analysing the factors that influence or determine the social functioning of the individual, family, group or community. Faller (2007:3-4) explains that forensic and clinical assessments need to be clearly differentiated from each other. Forensic assessment according to the regulations relating to the registration of a speciality in Forensic Social Work (South Africa, 2016), forensic assessment means 'an investigation of a specific matter by application of scientific assessment methods or processes designed to answer a question or a set of questions to establish the fact of the matter'.

Barker (2003:166), Barker and Branson (2000:1) and the South African Council for Service Professions (2010:1) describe forensic social work as a specialised field of social work that focuses mainly on the law and legal issues and on the interface between society's legal and human systems. It includes activities such as providing expert testimony in courts of law, investigating cases of possible criminal conduct, and assisting the legal system in such issues as child custody disputes, divorce, non-support, delinquency, spousal or child abuse mental hospital commitment and relatives' responsibility. Faller (2007:6-7) and Fouché (2006:206) describe clinical assessments with sexually abused children as focused upon the child as the client and involve the use of deliberate problem-solving strategies to understand the child's

functioning, more likely based on a diagnosis. The child's family may in most cases also be part of the client system.

Rural area

A rural area, according to the Free Dictionary (2014), is an area outside cities and towns. Rural communities comprise a group of inhabitants that live a rustic or country lifestyle. The National Geographic Education's definition (2015) is that a 'rural area is an open swath of land that has few homes or other buildings, and not very many people. A rural areas' population density is very low. Many people live in a city, or urban area. Their homes and businesses are located very close to one another. In a rural area, there are fewer people, and their homes and businesses are located far away from one another'.

Sexual abuse

The Children's Act, Act No 38 of 2005 (South Africa, 2005) defines sexual abuse as:

- sexually molesting or assaulting a child or allowing a child to be sexually molested or assaulted;
- encouraging, inducing or forcing a child to be used for sexual gratification of another person;
- using a child in or deliberately exposing a child to sexual activities or pornography; or
- procuring or allowing a child to be procured for commercial sexual exploitation or in any way participating or assisting in the commercial sexual exploitation of a child.

Social worker

The New Dictionary of Social Work (1995:60) defines a social worker as a person registered and authorized in accordance with the Social Work Act, 110 of 1978 (South Africa, 1978) to practise Social Work. For purposes of this research, a social worker refers to a probation officer who does the assessments of children who have committed sexual offences.

9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher struggled to initiate data collection as planned, due to the fact that the Department of Social Development in Port St Johns and Ngqeleni experienced unforeseen circumstances. As a result appointments were postponed. The other social workers, although having consented to participate in the study, continued to postpone appointments to the end and some did not pitch up on the place as arranged with them and would switch off their cell phones when researcher tried to trace them.

10. CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The researcher included the following sections in the research report (Strydom, 2011:

Section A1: Introduction and orientation to the research.

Section A2: Literature review.

Section B: Article.

Section C: Evaluations, conclusions and recommendations.

Section D: Annexures

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SECTION A

PART 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

From the first step in the research process (after the selection of a research topic), the researcher locates the research problem, in this case being social workers' views regarding their own competencies to perform forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi, & Wright, 2010:196-199; Delport, Fouché and Schurink, 2011:302). The role of the literature study is to place the research problem in theoretical perspective with studies that have been conducted by other researchers concerning the problem – internationally and nationally. Thomas and Hodges (2010:105) point out that a literature review in qualitative studies can be used to identify key information relevant to the topic and it 'shows that the researcher has identified some gaps in previous research and that the proposed study will therefore fill a demonstrated need' (Delport, *et al*, 2011:302).

The central focus of the subsequent literature study in this research will be on competencies regarding forensic assessment in social work and how social workers deal with challenges or barriers regarding their own competencies in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in rural areas such as the Eastern Cape Province. The researcher will also refer to the different acts such as the Children's Act, no 38 of 2005 (South Africa, 2005), Films and publications Act, no 65 of 1996 (South Africa 1996) and the Sexual Offences Amendment Act, no 32 of 2007 (South Africa, 2007). These acts describe the protection of children from abuse – also sexual abuse.

2. CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse is a world-wide problem. It is experienced in various countries such as America, Europe and Africa, and also in various provinces of South Africa including the Eastern Cape Province (Fouché, 2015:1; Galloway, 2013:1; Jiya, 2015:1; Nqaphi, 2013:4; Meel, 2008; van der Schyff & Strydom, 2011:176; Zantsi, 2014:1). According to the South African Police National Statistics, 2012/2013 (South

Africa, 2013) 66 196 incidents of sexual offences were reported between 2012 and 2013. It is also estimated that 1 in 3 children in South Africa will be abused some time during their childhood (Dunn, 2008:37).

The sexual abuse of children in the rural areas of South Africa is a serious issue in Provinces such as the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Limpopo (Banwari, 2011:117; Fouché, 2015:6; Jiya, 2015:1; Nqaphi, 2013:4; Rapholo, 2014:6). To do forensic assessments with the sexually abused child in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province, social workers need to be competent and also to act as expert witnesses in court. Only then one can honour the best interest of the child.

2.1 Legislation regarding child sexual abuse

A number of laws serve either to assure the right to protection or to prevention of sexual abuse of children in South Africa. Attention will be given to the following three Acts as discussed also in Grunder (2014:3-4):

Films and publications Act 65 of 1996 (South Africa, 1996) which protects children from exploitation in pornography.

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 along with the Amendment Act 41 (South Africa, 2005) which makes provision for the protection of children against sexual abuse which includes: sexual molestation/assault; encouraging/inducing or forcing a child to be used for the sexual gratification of another person; using a child in or deliberately exposing a child to sexual activities or pornography; procuring or allowing a child to be procured for commercial sexual exploitation, or participating or assisting in the commercial sexual exploitation of a child and trafficking (Grunder, 2014:3).

The Criminal Law (Sexual offences and Related Matters) Amendment Bill 2007 (South Africa, 2007) which makes provision for the protection of children in terms of: sexual consent; statutory sexual assault; sexual exploitation and grooming; exposure or display of pornography to children and/or using children for pornography purposes or benefiting from child pornography; compelling or causing children to witness sexual offences; establishing a national register for sexual offenders; prohibiting certain types of employment; and the obligation to report (South Africa, 2007). 'The criminal law exists for prosecution, but in practice the intervention of the social worker stops as soon as the child is safeguarded. Social workers do not routinely

follow the route of criminal court and safeguarding the child appears to be the only priority, while the alleged sexual offender is not prosecuted' (Grunder, 2014:4).

3. FORENSIC SOCIAL WORK

Forensic social work is, as Barker and Branson (1993:1-2) put it, a speciality that focuses on the interface between society's legal and human service systems and emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, largely to fulfil many legal functions. With such a foundation it was natural for social work to have close ties with the legal justice system and therefore most social work schools included law courses (Faller 1993:2). This is also the situation in South Africa.

Assessment, according to Brandon *et al.* (2009), cited in Welbourne (2012:37), is based on the systematic collection of information and evidence including making systematic observations. Vieth (2010) proposes that the historic purpose of a forensic interview is to take a child's statement in a legally defensible manner and the word 'forensic' means 'pertaining to', 'connected with', or used in courts of law. To fulfil these historic and essential purposes the forensic interviewer must be well trained. Forensic assessments should be recognized as a specialized field of assessment and social workers need to take notice of the developmental issues during the forensic assessment process (Fouché, 2006:213).

3.1 Difference between forensic social work and clinical social work regarding child sexual abuse

Assessment in its general counselling form is a process of analysing those factors influencing or determining the social functioning of the individual, family, group or community (The New Dictionary of Social Work, 1995:4). Faller (2007:3-4) maintains that forensic assessments and clinical assessments should be clearly differentiated from each other. Barker (2003:166), Barker and Branson (2000:1) and the South African Council for Service Professions (2010:1) describe forensic social work as a specialised field of social work that focuses on legal issues and the interface between society's legal and human systems. It includes activities such as providing expert testimony in courts of law, investigating cases of possible criminal conduct, and assisting the legal system in issues such as child custody disputes, divorce,

non-support, delinquency, spousal or child abuse mental hospital commitment and relatives' responsibilities.

Forensic social workers understand the importance of employing a seven-step forensic interview guideline when children disclose sexual abuse during assessment to protect the integrity of the unfolding evidence (Faller 2007:67). Familiarity with best practice guidelines regarding interviewing children about possible sexual abuse becomes a key function in the initial stage where the safety of the child is of paramount importance (DePanfilis, 2011:47; Faller, 2007:3). Social workers as expert witnesses have 'a difficult job to do because their client, their instructing attorney (defence and prosecution) and the court all intend to expect different and conflicting aspects from them' (Carstens, 2006:191).

Faller (2007:6-7) and Fouché (2006:206) describe clinical assessments with sexually abused children as focused on the child as the client and involve the use of deliberate problem-solving strategies to understand the child's functioning, more likely based on a diagnosis. Clinical assessments 'involve the use of deliberate problem-solving strategies to understand children with disturbances and their environment of family, school and peer relationships' (Fouché, 2006:206). The child's family may in most cases also form part of the client system. Clinicians according Faller (2007:5) 'do not know how to do forensic work, because their training does not prepare them for it'. Clinicians should be cognizant of research and best practice about interviewing sexually abused children and aware that their interview and assessment techniques may be scrutinized and held to forensic standards (Faller, 2007:9).

3.2 Forensic social work in South Africa

3.2.1 Specialised training in South Africa

Jonkers (2013:3) mentions that forensic social work can play a formidable role in providing a much needed service within the field of sexual abuse to assist social workers in organisations such as the South African Police Service and nongovernment organisations in reaching its goal of providing an effective and efficient specialized service to child victims of sexual crimes. Jiya (2015:33)

accentuates that there is a desperate need for more specialised training of social workers in the field of child sexual abuse to contribute to the best interest of the child. Jonkers further states that forensic practice calls for superior knowledge, skills and specific expertise and knowledge of the legal process and child development. She also strongly stated that no social worker should be allowed to do forensic assessments without specialist training.

Such specialization is currently considered by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (2010) and the Department of Social Development (South Africa, 2016) in their endeavour to register Forensic Social Work as a specialist degree, although this has not yet been formally implemented. A Master's degree specialising in forensic social work (MA in Social Work: Forensic Practice) is currently offered by the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) in an effort to emphasize the importance of specialization, specifically in forensic work with sexually abused children (Jiya, 2015:32; Scheepers, 2008:11).

3.2.2 Circumstances of social workers in rural areas of South Africa

Research done by Alpaslan and Schenck (2012:400) and Schenk (2004:165) regarding challenges experienced by social workers in rural areas of South Africa indicates that rural social workers often feel unsupported by the communities they work in, occasionally due to traditional/cultural factors overriding their duties; receive little support from their supervisors; and generally are under-resourced and therefore unable to attend to problems adequately. These tendencies are confirmed in research done by Calitz (Calitz, Roux & Strydom, 2014:159-162) involving 90 rural social workers in the North-West Province. In addition, these social workers also experienced minimal opportunities for attending job-related seminars and participation in continued education regarding practice issues. One can conclude that in strong contrast to the specialization requirement associated with forensic social work, social workers, especially those working in rural practice contexts, are not equipped to perform specialized forensic duties, yet are frequently required to perform forensic assessments and act as expert witnesses in the absence of specialized forensic workers.

The practice conditions of and demands on rural social workers should not be underestimated. Several authors (Beimers, Warner & Mackie, 2013; Graham, 2013;

Lewis, Scott & Calfee, 2013; Mackie, 2012; Turbett, 2009) discussed the challenges rural social workers face, with lack of community support, low levels of change in rural circumstances, inadequate resources, decisions being made by urban organizations on behalf of rural social workers, long travelling distances and time lapses being some of the problems associated with rural social work. Although the problems indicated above emphasize potential deficits in rural social worker skills, there is sufficient evidence indicating the value-add of rural social workers. Rural social workers as 'insiders' have more access to and understanding of contextual information than their urban counterparts; are frequently more resourceful and innovative in finding solutions to complex problems; have more access to unique and valuable community supportive resources and are frequently better able to adapt non-suitable urban intervention models to local contexts. It is, however, recognized that rural social workers, in view of their poor resource base, have to be able to perform more specialized tasks, without them not necessarily possessing the skills associated with these tasks (Alpaslan and Schenck, 2012; Beimers, Warner & Mackie, 2013; Calitz, 2013; Graham, 2013; Jiya, 2016; Lewis, Scott & Calfee, 2013; Mackie, 2012).

Given the contextual challenges of rural social work, the problems associated with fulfilling forensic specialization roles in these rural contexts and the risks associated with social workers performing forensic assessments, specific research is required for determining how rural social workers, employed by the Department of Social Development, SAPS and by Child Welfare, view their own competencies regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children. Research done by Cussons (2011:21-23), Jiya (2015:29), Meüter (2011:33-34), Ntlatleng (2011:14) and Scheepers (2008:11) confirms that social workers in rural areas of South Africa regard themselves as not competent enough to conduct forensic assessments.

4. COMPETENCIES REQUIRED FOR FORENSIC ASSESSMENTS

If one compares the definition of the Oxford Dictionary (2015) regarding the word competency and the views of Carstens (2006:185-188) and Fouché (2006:206) regarding the competencies of social workers who perform forensic assessments of sexually abused children, they need to possess the necessary abilities, knowledge, skills and specialised training to be competent to conduct the forensic assessments.

These social workers are thus specifically able to compete with other professions as expert witnesses in the court of law. The roles of professionals such as social workers take on in cases of child sexual abuse have according to Kuehnle and Connell (2009:75-76) both ethical and technical demands. The need to maintain integrity of purpose and objectivity and avoid conflicts of interest has been emphasised in professional ethics codes such as the South African Council for Social Service Professions.

➤ **Forensic assessment of the child**

A forensic assessment is conducted as part of a larger investigative process and is intended to elicit, as stated by Goodyear-Brown (2012:100), 'information that is uniquely the child's, which can be used to further law enforcement and child protection investigations'. The forensic interviewer is considered to be a fact-finder for purposes of obtaining legally sound, reliable and credible information to be utilized in a court process by him/her, the expert witness (Fouché, 2006:206).

Some of the guidelines and rules during the forensic assessment process with sexually abused children are listed by Fouché (2006:208-209), Goodyear-Brown (2012:108) and Kuehnle and Connell (2009:260-262) as being the following:

- Structured forensic assessments elicit more accurate and more detailed information from sexually abused children than unstructured assessments.
- Children should not be interviewed more than three times.
- The interviewer should be the same person interviewing one specific child during each occasion.
- Where possible, all forensic interviews should be electronically recorded.
- Practitioners should be familiar with the latest research literature relevant to conducting forensic assessments with the sexually abused child.
- Try to formulate as many hypotheses as possible and test them during the assessment interviews. Test the hypotheses and do not prove them.
- Openness and honesty with the child is very important.
- The interviewer must not form an opinion before the interviewing and validation process is finalised.
- The professional must focus on his/her ultimate client, the court.
- Explain the difference between confidentiality versus secrecy.

- There is no winning recipe. Be prepared to say you could not determine what actually happened.
- Displays of empathy must be limited to non-verbal gestures. Reflection of emotions should only take place after the child has explicitly verbalised an emotion.
- Bear in mind the child's frame of reference.
- The interviewer should utilise forensic interviewing techniques constantly throughout the interviews.
- The interviewer should never take on a case in which he/she is personally involved.

➤ **Expert witness in court**

Carstens (2006:188) defines an expert witness in child sexual abuse cases as someone who:

- Has education and specialised experience.
- Has superior knowledge regarding the subject.
- Can deduce correct conclusions.
- Can formulate an accurate opinion.
- Has the ability to successfully communicate his or her superior knowledge, specialised experience, conclusions and opinions in a court of law in such a manner that it will assist the court in understanding the evidence.

Many social workers who work with sexually abused children are called to testify in court regarding the child's disclosure of sexual abuse. The expert witness 'should always maintain a calm, professional demeanour, refusing to be cajoled, tricked, or bullied into losing composure' (Goodyear-Brown, 2012:95).

➤ **Collateral investigation**

Weiner (2003:294) advances that 'collateral interviewing' is the developing standard in forensic interviewing. Collateral interviewing refers to interviewing people who know the child or perpetrator in some significant way. A corroborating witness can make a huge difference between a guilty conviction and a non-conviction (Lewis & Klettke, 2012:142). According to Brits (2015:42-43) and Austin (2005), collateral information is very important when trying to assess the validity and credibility of the information obtained. Information from neutral parties or parties that have access to

key information plays an especially important role. When a neutral collateral source agrees with the information from the victim, credibility is enhanced (Brits, 2015:42-43). According to Brits (2015:43) the child's family members, neighbours and religious groups can all be seen as useful sources of information and these interviews offer additional perspectives on information given by the child and other records. The evaluators such as the social worker needs to explore and understand the family system and evaluate the validity and complaints and according to Bow, Quinnell, and Assemany (2002:566) the alleged perpetrator and other relevant parties are typical part of the collateral investigation. Assessment of the alleged perpetrator is particular difficult due to the high degree of denial among offenders, lack of an offender profile and absence of a typical test profile of for offenders (Becker & Murphy cited in Bow et al., 2002:566).

Daly (1991) argues that once the interview is concluded, the investigator may receive additional information about the allegation, which should be documented and placed on the action plan. Daly (1991) further adds that the witness (es) who has/have been mentioned and/may have information should then be contacted and their statements be taken. According to Daly (1991) properly interviewed children who have been abused or have witnessed a violent crime can become excellent witnesses in a court of law. Faller (2007:229) has addressed criteria for decision making in several writings. Faller's protocol includes interview data and corroborating information. Corroborating evidence includes the following; confessions, medical findings, physical evidence, and eye witnesses. Occasionally the eyewitnesses to sexual abuse may be other children who were also abused or who had observed the abuse.

➤ **The forensic documentation**

The conviction rates for sexual abuse cases in South-Africa and in the rest of the world are very low (Barret, 2014:1; Collings, 2007:14). One factor that influences this is incomplete documentation which makes it extremely difficult to analyse documents on sexual abuse cases (Brits, 2015:50; Cussons, 2011:33; Faller, 2007:58; Ntlatleng, 2011:2-3; Stern & Walsh, 1997:10).

While analysing the documents, Brits (2015:47) in her research once again recognised the importance of detailed process notes. Occasionally process notes

contain important information that can be used in a case. According to the Columbia University, School of Social Work (2015:3), process notes allow for close oversight by the organisation and social worker him/herself. According to Nanton (2015), the court can occasionally request the documents of the social worker. When preparing these documentations of findings or providing testimony in court, social workers according to Kuehnle and Connell (2009:94) should ask themselves the following questions of ethical significance:

- Have I collected, in a thorough manner, data necessary to explore all relevant hypotheses applicable to the referral questions?
- Have I included and addressed all the data relevant to the evaluation and referral questions?
- Have I clearly linked my findings, and if any, recommendations to the data?
- Do my findings comport fully and consistently with the data and if not, did I discuss any inconsistency in the data and explain my interpretations in light of the discrepancies?
- In a large body of data have I explained which components have the greatest significance?

It is important to realise that forensic reports are used in court as an expert opinion, since expert opinion can take the form of a written report (Faller, Cordisco-Steele, & Nelson-Gardell, 2010:572).

➤ **Specialised training and supervision**

Forensic Social Work is a specialised part of social work and is recognised by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (South Africa, 2010:1) as a special field of social work which ‘focuses on the interface between society’s legal and human systems and is characterized by the social worker’s primary function of providing expert testimonies in courts of law with the primary client being the judiciary system’. Specialization in forensic social work is increasingly demanded as a key requirement in cases where a social worker, before appearing in court, has to convince the court of the sufficiency of her knowledge, skills, experience, training and education to qualify as an ‘expert’ of the court (Myers, 2011:386). The Messiah College, a private Christian college in Pennsylvania (United States of America), has

since 2008 adopted a competency approach to social work training (Seitz, 2014:334).

Clinicians and other professionals such as social workers who work in the field of child sexual abuse require, as Goodyear-Brown (2012:523) puts it, adequate specialised training in order to perform their duties responsibly and to maintain longevity in the field, yet few perceive they are receiving enough. South Africa, like other countries, urgently needs social workers with specialized training in forensic social work (Grunder, 2014:52; Jiya, 2015:29; Ntlatleng, 2011:28; Vizard, 2013:511). More training is needed, not only for social workers, but also for the other role-players in the field of child sexual abuse. Inadequate training of the role-players has an effect on dealing with these cases (Jiya, 2015:29; Ntlatleng, 2011:29).

Goodyear-Brown (2012:523) maintains that a supportive work environment and access to education throughout a helper's career are important, therefore professional supervision and peer consultation form integral parts of a supportive environment. Welbourne (2012:17) and Goodyear-Brown (2012:523) believe that all social workers working with children such as sexually abused children are entitled to supervision that addresses distressing and stressful aspects of the work. Supervision needs to be geared towards identifying those aspects of the workers' skills that need to be developed in order to promote the provision of continuously improving service.

Access to supervision is important for social workers dealing with high levels of distress but according to Welbourne (2012:16) social work management structures are generally not orientated to the provision of support and personal development, nor to engage with the emotional labour of social work. In research studies done by Grunder (2014:53) and Jiya (2015:32) in rural areas they came to the conclusion that social workers performing forensic assessments in South Africa do not receive the necessary support from the established systems to assist them and they need extra specialised training in performing forensic assessments with the sexually abused children.

5. SUMMARY

It is subsequently concluded that the lack of specialised training may negatively impact the quality of forensic assessments in rural areas and may not be in the best interest of the child. A further limiting factor concerns practising social work in rural areas, considering the benchmark practice guidelines for forensic assessment of 'The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children' (APSAC), forensic interviews should be conducted as close to the incident as possible and that the impact of any delays in the interview process must be cautiously considered (Laraque, de Mattia, & Low, 2006:1142). It is crucial for the justice process to be concluded in the shortest possible time to protect the rights of the child (Ewing, 2007:291; Meissner, 2012:1). It is realised that these objectives frequently remain unfulfilled in rural practice contexts where long distances play a role in the application of the immediacy principle and may contribute to delays in the conviction process (Cussons, 2011:17).

From the literature review regarding the requirements needed to do forensic assessments with the sexually abused children in the rural areas of South Africa the following research question arises: What are the current views of social workers in rural areas regarding the competencies social workers need in performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children? One of the objectives of this study is thus to discuss the key findings and recommendations with managers of the Department of Social Development, the South African Police Service, and of Child Welfare in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province about how to improve the competencies of social workers in rural areas with regard to performing forensic assessments on sexually abused children in order to serve the best interest of the child.

The researcher did one-on-one interviews with social workers regarding their views of the competencies social workers need in performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children. Section B consists of an article on the views of social workers regarding the competencies social workers need in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children.

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SECTION B

ARTICLE

(The layout of this article follows the Author Guidelines of the *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* journal as indicated on the CD)

Title: Competencies of social workers regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area

Key words: Competency, forensic assessment, rural area, sexual abused children, social worker

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COMPETENCIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING FORENSIC ASSESSMENTS OF SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN IN A RURAL AREA

Lupondo, N. & Roux, AA

Key words: Competency, forensic assessment, rural area, sexual abused children, social worker

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the competencies of social workers regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children in rural areas. The descriptive design was used in this qualitative study. Data were collected by means of in-depth interviews with each participant individually as well as field notes made by the researcher. It was clear from the research that most social workers in the rural areas of Mthatha, Mqanduli, Ngqeleni and Port St Johns in the Eastern Cape Province do not feel that they are competent to do forensic assessments with the sexually abused child. The necessity for further research on this phenomenon clearly came to the fore.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual abuse against children is a tremendous problem in South Africa and also the Eastern Cape Province where the researcher works as a social worker as part of the South African Police Service (SAPS) (Calitz, 2011:66; Dondolo, 2013:1;

South Africa, 2013). Numerous Government Departments, nongovernment organisations (NGOs) and social workers, as part of the professional team, play a very important role in the investigation of cases such as child sexual abuse. (Eastwood, Kift, & Grace 2006:1; Galloway, 2013:1; Mogole, 2008:2).

Forensic assessments in South Africa are usually performed by either social workers in private practice, or social workers in the South African Police Service (SAPS) Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences (FCS) units. Although the trend and preference is to have these assessments performed by social workers with a specialised Master Social Work degree in Forensic Practice, the realities of practice indicates that these tasks are also performed by social workers at nongovernment organisations and the Department of Social Development. Several social workers appointed by SAPS for instance do not possess specialized qualifications in Forensic Social Work, but have to conduct forensic assessments that involve acting as expert witnesses during court proceedings (Cussons, 2011:22-23; Ntlatleng, 2011:21).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The preceding introduction confirmed the importance of specialisation and advanced competency in forensic assessment required of social workers performing forensic assessments in a criminal justice context. In spite of attempts to improve competency levels of social workers by offering specialized training such as a postgraduate degree in forensic social work offered by the

North-West University, it appears that forensic assessments are still largely conducted by non-specialized social workers, specifically within rural contexts where specialized forensic social workers are frequently not available. Thus, the focus of discussion now shifts to the realities of practising social work in rural conditions. Research done by Cussons (2011:21-23), Meüter (2011:33-34), Ntlatleng (2011:14) and Scheepers (2008:11) confirms that social workers in rural areas regard themselves as not competent enough to conduct forensic assessments.

Besides a lack of competency it appears that the specific demands on and characteristics of forensic practice may be compromised by rural conditions, considering the benchmark practice guidelines for forensic assessment of 'The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children' (APSAC). According to these guidelines forensic interviews should be conducted as close to the incident as possible whilst the impact on any delays in the interview process on the outcome must be cautiously considered (Laraque, De Mattia, & Low, 2006:1142). It is crucial for the justice process to be concluded in the shortest possible time to protect the rights of the child (Ewing, 2007:291; Meissner, 2012:1; Ewing, 2007:291). It is realized that these objectives frequently remain unfulfilled in rural practice contexts where factors such as long distances and unavailability of adequately trained social workers play a role in the effective

application of the immediacy principle and consequently may contribute to delays in the conviction process (Cussons, 2011:17).

Research done by Alpaslan and Schenck (2012:400) and Schenk (2004:165) regarding challenges experienced by social workers in rural areas in South Africa indicates that rural social workers often feel unsupported by the communities they work in, occasionally due to traditional/cultural factors overriding their duties; they receive little support from their supervisors; and are generally under-resourced; therefore they are unable to attend to problems adequately. The same problems were experienced in research done by Calitz (Calitz, Roux & Strydom: 2014:159-162) involving 90 rural social workers in the North-West Province. In addition, these social workers also experienced minimal opportunities to attend job-related seminars and participate in continued education regarding practice issues. The research of Alpaslan and Schenck (2012), Calitz et al. (2014) as well as Schenk (2004), was with social workers in general but with this research the researcher aimed at exploring how competent social workers in rural areas, doing forensic assessments with the sexually abused child, are. One can conclude that in strong contrast to the specialization requirement associated with forensic social work, social workers, especially those working in rural practice contexts, are not adequately equipped and skilled to perform specialized forensic assessments, yet are frequently

required to do so and act as expert witnesses in the absence of specialized forensic workers.

Practice conditions and demands of rural social workers should not be underestimated. Several authors such as Alpaslan and Schenck (2012), Calitz, et al. (2014) and Schenk (2004) discussed the challenges of rural social work in South Africa such as the lack of community support, low levels of client change in rural circumstances, inadequate resources, and decisions being made by urban organizations on behalf of rural social workers, long travelling distances and time lapses. These are some of the problems associated with rural social work. Although the above-listed problems emphasize potential deficits in the skills of rural social workers there is sufficient evidence indicating the value-add of rural social workers. Rural social workers as ‘insiders’ have more access to and understanding of contextual information than their urban counterparts; are frequently more resourceful and innovative in finding solutions to complex problems; have more access to unique and valuable community supportive resources and are frequently better able to adapt non-suitable urban intervention models to local contexts. It is, however, recognized that rural social workers, in view of their poor resource base have to be able to perform more specialized tasks without necessarily possessing the skills associated with these tasks (Beimers, Warner, & Mackie, 2013; Calitz, 2013; Graham, 2013; Jiya, 2015; Lewis, Scott, & Calfee, 2013; Mackie, 2012; Turbett, 2007).

Given the contextual challenges associated with rural social work, the problems associated with fulfilling forensic specialization roles in rural contexts and the risks associated with social workers performing forensic assessments without the necessary specialization knowledge, specific research is required to determine what the competencies are of rural social workers specifically employed by the Department of Social Development, South African Police services and by Child Welfare.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to describe and explore the current views of social workers in rural areas regarding their own competencies in performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children. This study thus made use of the qualitative research method, including having one-on-one semi-structured interviews with social workers in the rural areas Mthatha, Mqanduli, Ngqeleni and Port St Johns of the Eastern Cape Province. In this qualitative study an inductive process was followed in which themes and sub-themes emerged through analysis of data collected with the social workers by means of one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The sample will be small and purposively selected (Thyer, 2010:258). A descriptive design was used to describe and explore the contextually relevant descriptions in their own terms and therefore provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the subjects (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:28; Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi & Wright, 2010:190).

Botma et al. (2010:110) explain that descriptive ‘designs are used when little is known about a topic. With this project the researcher aimed to describe and explore an overall picture of the social workers’ views regarding their competencies in performing forensic assessment of abused children in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The researcher will discuss the results of the study based on the aim of the study. The aim of the study was to describe and explore the current views of social workers in rural areas regarding the competencies social workers need in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area. After 17 interviews the researcher could no longer find any new categories of data from the semi-structured interviews and at this point saturation was reached. Among these social workers, seven were from the Department of Social Development in Port St Johns and Ngqeleni, six from the South African Police Service servicing Mthatha and Mqanduli and four from Child Welfare. The findings of this study also reflect the gender and qualification categories of the respondents.

PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Age of participants

Table 1: Age of participants N=17

AGE	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
20-30	6	35.29	0	0
31-40	3	17.65	3	17.65
41-50	4	23.53	0	0
51-60	0	0	1	5.88
TOTAL	13	76.47	4	23.53

As indicated in the table above (table 1), 35,29% of the participants were females aged between 20 and 30 years, 17.65% were males and 17,64% females aged between 31 and 40 years with 23,52% females aged between 41 and 50 years and one (5,88%), a male, aged between 51 and 60 years. Most of the participants were thus females with 7 (41.18%) between ages 20 and 40 years. Only 17.65% were males aged between 31 and 40 years and only 1 (5.88%) participant was a male between ages 51 and 60 years. These results correlate with research done by Gogela (2013:16) in the Eastern Cape Province that most of the social workers in these organisations were also between 20 and 50 years of age.

Highest qualifications of participants

Table 2: Qualification of participants N=17

QUALIFICATION	FEMALES	MALES	F	%
BA Social Work	10	3	13	76.47
MA in Social Work: Forensic Practice	3	1	4	23.53
TOTAL	13	4	17	100

Most of the social workers (76.47%) have a BA degree in social work and only four (23.52%) a Master's degree in Forensic Social Work Practice. These results correlate with those of research done by Gogela (2013:16-17), Jiya (2015:19) and Zantsi (2014:21-22) who also did their research in the Eastern Cape Province with social workers who deliver services to sexually abused children, in which it was found that there are not enough social workers with specialized training in forensic assessments. Social workers who have no specialised training in forensic assessments mostly find it difficult to act as an expert witness in court (Grunder, 2014:43-44). Social workers doing assessments with sexually abused children need to have a postgraduate degree or specialized training in forensic social work. It is also stated in the APSAC guidelines (1997:2) that specialized knowledge is especially important when young children are interviewed.

Experience as a social worker in forensic assessments with sexually abused children

Table 3: Experience N=17

Years	Female	Male	F	%
0-3 years	6	1	7	41.18
4-7 years	4	3	7	41.18
8-11 years	3	0	3	17.64
TOTAL	13	4	17	100

From the data in table 3, 41.18% of the social workers have 3 years and less experience in child sexual abuse cases, while 58.82% have between 4 and 11 years of experience. When one compares the data in table 2 with those in table 3, it is obvious that most of the participants (58.82%) were experienced social workers regarding child sexual abuse cases but only 23.54% had a specialised MA in Social Work: Forensic Practice degree. One therefore has to agree with Myers (2011:386) that specialisation in forensic social work has increasingly become a key requirement in cases where a social worker, appearing in court, has to convince the court regarding the competence of his or her knowledge, skills, experience, training and education to qualify as an 'expert' in the court. Only with specialised training in Forensic social work, can one serve the best interest of the sexually abused child (Carstens, 2006:185-195; Jiya, 2015:33; Scheepers, 2006:154).

THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Semi structured one-on-one interviews were guided by an interview schedule of pre-test questions in the interest of gathering data. After completion of the interviews the researcher identified five themes and 16 subthemes regarding the

views of social workers regarding the competencies needed in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children. The themes and subthemes can be summarised as follows:

Table 4: Themes and subthemes

THEME NUMBER	THEME NAME	SUBTHEMES
1	Views regarding a competent social worker in performing forensic assessments	• Specialised knowledge and training in performing forensic assessments • Knowing the difference between clinical and forensic roles of social workers • Knowing the environment and culture of sexually abused children

2	Skills competent social workers need in performing forensic assessments	• Communication and listening skills • Conflict managing skills • Interviewing skills • Skills regarding the knowledge of child development stages • Documentation skills
3	Protocols social workers followed to be competent in performing forensic assessments	
4	Obstacles social workers experience being competent in performing forensic assessments	• Unavailability of resources • Knowledge regarding participants' culture • Training in

		performing forensic assessments • High caseloads
5	Assistance social workers needed to be competent in performing forensic assessments	• Training and specialisation of social workers performing forensic assessments in child sexual abuse cases • Better resources • Awareness campaigns • Co-operation between stakeholders

THEME 1: VIEWS REGARDING A COMPETENT SOCIAL WORKER IN PERFORMING FORENSIC ASSESSMENTS

The participants were asked an open-ended question on what their views are regarding a competent social worker performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area. The participants' reactions towards this

question were not very good. Most of the participants were not sure about the competencies social workers needed in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area. The answers received from the participants were:

➤ **Subtheme 1: Specialised knowledge and training in performing forensic assessments**

According to only six participants a social worker performing forensic assessments should have specialised training and knowledge. The remarks received from some of them were:

‘The social worker needs to have knowledge such as to know the terminology in which the child is using to name genital organs as they have their own terminology.’

‘Working with sexually abused children is a field on its own. The social worker needs to be trained on how to deal with such a kind of children and be able to provide a scientifically report.’

‘A competent social worker performing forensic assessments must have undergone training on how to conduct such cases be a person who has been trained in forensic assessment.’

‘Forensic social worker has to have at least two years’ experience or more forensic social work. Also be able to have knowledge of the terms that is used by children in rural areas.’’

According to two participants, anyone can be competent in performing forensic assessments if he or she *‘deals with right information, networking, attending seminars and workshops’*. Two participants mentioned that a social worker needs training regarding the disclosure process. *‘A competent social worker needs training to be in the disclosing process with the child in what happened to her or him.’* In research done by Jiya (2015:32) she also recommended that more workshops need to be presented to gain knowledge, and discussions regarding forensic assessments, and new research in the field of child sexual abuse in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape.

From the answers received it is of great concern that, although most of the participants are experienced social workers, only a few mentioned that social workers performing forensic assessments need specialised training and knowledge. South Africa, according to Grunder (2014:52), Ntlatleng (2013:37) and Vizard (2013:511), *‘urgently needs social workers with specialised training in Forensic Social Work as also recommended by Jiya (2015:29) in research she did in the Eastern Cape. This is also recommended by APSAC Guidelines (1995:2) that investigative interviewing in cases of alleged abuse requires specialized knowledge (Laraque et al., 2006).*

Four participants defined a competent social worker a person who is an expert in guiding the child through the forensic process to disclose. *‘A competent social worker is an expert whereby a child will be able to disclose what happened to her or him.’* Most of child sexual abuse cases, also in South Africa, are neither revealed immediately nor reported to authorities such as the police or social workers subsequent to disclosure (Berliner & Elliot, 2002:58; Motshegoa, 2011:16). Du Bois and Miley (2005:374-376), Motshegoa (2011:4) and Müller (2001:8) mentioned that the ‘competent’ social worker performing forensic interviews has to perform, during the early stages of the abuse and through the post-disclosure process, a central role together with other role-players in the management and coordination of services to children who have been sexually abused.

➤ **Subtheme 2: Know the difference between clinical and forensic roles of social workers**

Only one participant mentioned that social workers need to know the difference between forensic and clinical roles when performing assessments with sexually abused children.

‘There is a vast shortage of competent social workers performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in rural areas. My view is that a number of social workers are still struggling to draw distinction between forensic and clinical roles when performing forensic assessments with sexually

abused children. This impacts on the quality of data collected during assessments.'

Although the trend and preference is to have these assessments performed by social workers with a specialised MSW degree in Forensic Practice, the realities of practice in South Africa indicate that these tasks are also performed by social workers at nongovernment organisations and the Department of Social Development. Several social workers appointed by SAPS, for instance, do not possess specialized qualification in Forensic Social Work, but have to conduct forensic assessments that involve acting as expert witnesses during court proceedings (Cussons, 2011:22-23; Ntlatleng, 2011:21). Inexperienced social workers and social workers with no training in forensic assessments and other factors such as incomplete documentation makes it difficult to analyse documents on child sexual abuse cases and mostly lead to the unsuccessful conviction of the perpetrator (Brits, 2015: 50-51; Cussons, 2011:33; Faller, 2007:58; Ntlatleng, 2011:2-3). The successful conviction of perpetrators in child sexual abuse cases 'can provide the child with a sense of safety, move the perpetrators out of the community, and assure that perpetrators are accountable for their crimes' (Brits, 2015:51).

It seems that the participants still are not sure about the differences between the clinical and forensic roles of a social worker. Faller (2007:3-4) points out that a clear distinction should be drawn between forensic assessments and clinical

assessments. 'Forensic', according to Faller (2007:4), means 'belonging to the courts or to be used in legal proceedings, a term derived from the adversarial nature of the court and legal proceedings.' Barker (2003:166), Barker and Branson (2000:1) and the South African Council for Service Professions (2010:1) describe forensic social work as a specialised field of social work that focuses on legal issues and the interface between society's legal and human systems. It includes activities such as providing expert testimony in courts of law, investigating cases of possible criminal conduct, and assisting the legal system in issues such as child custody disputes, divorce, non-support, delinquency, spousal or child abuse, mental hospital commitment and relatives' responsibilities.

'Clinical', as Faller (2007:4) defines it, 'is a term often employed to connote mental health or therapeutic intervention, for example, relating to or connected with a clinical setting.' Faller (2007:6-7) and Fouché (2006:206) describe clinical assessments with sexually abused children as focused on the child as the client and involve the use of deliberate problem-solving strategies to understand the child's functioning, more likely based on a diagnosis. Clinical assessments 'involve the use of deliberate problem-solving strategies to understand children with disturbances and their environment of family, school and peer-relationships' (Fouché, 2006:206). The child's family may in most cases also form part of the client system.

➤ **Subtheme 3: Knowing the environment and culture of sexually abused children**

Three participants mentioned the importance for social workers to have knowledge of the environment and culture in which they perform the forensic assessments.

‘It must be someone familiar with the area, exposed in such environment and understanding of its culture. My view is that a competent social worker must be humble because most people in rural areas are uneducated.’

‘My view is that a competent social worker must be humble because most people in rural areas are uneducated. Competent social worker need to understand the diverse cultures of particular society /rural areas to avoid cultural fights. Sometimes even though it’s still Transkei there are differences, need to be prepared-terminology or language.’ One participant mentioned that *‘a social worker needs to be humble because most people in rural areas are uneducated’*.

Kruger and Spies (2006:160) maintain that the individual plays an active role in influencing the environment in that the environment has an influence on the individual. This is a combined cycle of influence between the individual and the environment, therefore it is important for the social worker to possess sufficient

knowledge regarding the environment, especially the rural environment, in which he or she performs forensic assessments.

According to Dawes and Higson-Smith (2005:98), Ngubane (2010:27) and Rapholo (2014:4, 26) the notion of child sexual abuse occasionally depends on what an ethnic group or culture validates as sexual abuse. Perspectives and meanings regarding child sexual abuse thus vary from one ethnic group to another (Rapholo, 2014:3). These perceptions set guidelines individuals inherit as a member of a particular ethnic group and that informs them how to experience and interpret their world (Dawes & Higson-Smith, 2005:98). In research done by Rapholo (2014:4) it was found that the perceptions of Pedi-speaking people, in most cases, are that only rape is perceived as sexual abuse. What Pedi-speaking caregivers validate as child sexual abuse can be the reason why they do not want to disclose the sexual abuse of the children. It is therefore important that professionals such as social workers performing forensic assessments ‘need to educate themselves about ethnic and racial groups who are different from themselves and who are represented in their client population’ (Faller, 2007:172).

THEME 2: SKILLS COMPETENT SOCIAL WORKERS NEED IN PERFORMING FORENSIC ASSESSMENTS

During the interviews with the participants the researcher asked what skills they think are needed to be competent in performing forensic assessments with

sexually abused children in a rural area. The responses received from the participants were as follows:

➤ **Subtheme 1: Communication and listening skills**

Ten participants mentioned communication skills and four listening skills as being important to be competent in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area. Some of the views of participants regarding communication were:

‘The social worker must be able to build a relationship with children (rapport building). Be able to identify the children’s needs and to able to communicate with children.

‘I think communication skills and assessment skills to assess the sexual abused child without given information about that child’.

‘According to communication skill you must know how to communicate with the children, understand language of children.’

‘A social worker must be able to communicate with the child’s mother tongue if not the forensic social worker should transfer the case to a person of her language. For example the forensic social worker should referring Afrikaans speaking children to Afrikaans speaking Forensic Social Worker.’

‘The social worker must have good communication skills.’

'You should be creative, be able to listen to the victim attentively, to be observant during the interview process so that you can be able to read the facial expression and other non-verbal communication from the child. Creative in the way you should understand that children are unique due to their upbringing and schools where they learn. Therefore you should be creative in probing them.'

'The listening skills are important because as you are assessing the child you need to listen carefully to what is said by the child so that you can ask follow up questions.'

Faller (2007:73) explains that the interviewer in forensic assessment should determine the level of the child's communication such as full sentences or two-to three-word phrases, and the extent of the child's vocabulary. The interviewer, according to the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children 2002 (cited in Faller, 2007:73), should tailor their verbal communication to that of the child. Welbourne (2012:27) recommends that in supporting children, especially young children, to express themselves, non-verbal techniques such as making drawings can help them in expressing their situation and views. It is important from the outset of the conversation that the interviewer such as the forensic social worker, should discuss with the child what is going to happen to the information they give to the social worker.

Social workers who do forensic assessments in South Africa may have difficulties in speaking the child's language (Truter, 2010:1). Faller (2007:171)

mentions that the lack of language competency can impede disclosure. Wherever possible, a bilingual interviewer or a professional interpreter (social worker) who is familiar with issues such as child sexual abuse should be called in when difficulties are experienced in speaking the child's language.

Listening skills is a matter of hearing what someone has to say, or paying attention to communication that may be non-verbal, such as thoughts expressed through specialist communication systems (Welbourne, 2012:7-8). For the trained social worker active listening has the specialist meaning of demonstrating that the other person (speaking) has been heard. Verbal behaviours of the interviewer that communicate social support and provide scaffolding for the child's statements include encounters such as 'uh', 'hmm', 'I see', paraphrasing, summarising, follow-up questions and silence. Strong responses such as gasps or 'how awful' are to be avoided (Goodyear-Brown, 2012:106). Body language on the part of the listener is also important as it helps to show that one has understood what has been said (Welbourne, 2012:8).

➤ **Subtheme 2: Conflict managing skills**

Some of the participants are of the opinion that a social worker needs to possess conflict managing skills during child sexual abuse cases because most of their cases are of incest nature. Two of responses were:

‘The skills of handling conflict are most vital ones because most of the cases are committed within the family by family members and that causes conflict within the family and that divides the community in rural areas. Most of the families are extended family members in rural areas.’

‘Interpersonal skills particularly with children such as conflict management are needed.’

The social workers’ role is to resolve conflicts and tensions between people and to create harmony between people and their social environment through their mutual adaptation (DuBois & Miley, 2005:22). According to the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (2005:8), the majority of perpetrators of child sexual abuse live in the child’s household or close neighbourhood. Most of the perpetrators are known to the child, are trusted and are usually in a position of authority over the child. Even Spies (2006:3) stated that incest is considered to be a restitutive attempt to maintain family integrity while addressing anxieties and conflicts about abandonment and sexuality. Sexual abuse of a child by a trusted adult such as a family member puts tremendous strain on relationships within the family. Some family members may find it hard to believe the perpetrator could do such a thing, and take sides (or feel pressured to take sides over who is telling the truth (National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2009:2). Family members may also struggle with how to manage their divided loyalties towards the perpetrator and the victim. Even in families that accept

that the abuse had occurred, reactions to the perpetrator may run the gamut from ‘lock him up and throw away the key’ to ‘hate the sin but love the sinner’.

Conflicts may arise when different family members have different opinions about loyalty, fairness, justice, forgiveness, and responsibility and in all these cases social workers play a very important role in the management of these conflict situations.

➤ **Subtheme 3: Interviewing skills**

Seven participants mentioned interviewing skills as being essential for social workers performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area. Some of the responses were:

‘The social worker must have good interviewing techniques.’

‘Interviewing skills, you need training on how to assess children and not avoid leading questions. Trained on how to do pre-forensic and forensic assessment. You also need to be objective, you have to be neutral.’

‘Interviewing skill, you need training on how to assess children.’

‘The dynamics of child sexual abuse differ significantly from those of adult sexual abuse. Conducting forensic assessments with sexually abused children requires special skills in history taking and forensic interviewing.’

The interview environment during forensic assessments should be as friendly as possible and the media used during the interviewing process should be age appropriate for the child (Fouché, 2006:215). The use of media in child interviewing has declined but it may allow the interviewer to collect detailed information using fewer questions because questions could potentially lead or contaminate the child's information (Faller, 2007:111). Faller further argues that 'when gathering details about an abusive incident, the interviewer can ask the child to show with an appropriate medium what happened, rather than ask a series of closed-ended questions' (Faller, 2007:111).

Cronch, Viljoen and Hansen (2005:198) state that while personal characteristics of the child and the interviewer may impact disclosure rates, specific interviewing techniques often play a stronger role in disclosure. It is also stated by Wilson and Powell (2001:92) that the structure of the interview, the type of questions and the rapport between the interviewer and the child should be considered when evaluating an interview. It has been noted by Wilson and Powell (2001:70) that if initial interactions with a child suggest that there are numerous potential barriers to communication it may be fruitful to spend more time getting to know her/him before conducting the main interview. Wilson and Powell (2001:70) added that there is no value in conducting an interview if one cannot understand what the child is saying. Everson (1997:139) contends that some of the miscommunications in interviews with children occur not because

of developmental limitations on their part, but because of an adult's error in asking questions or in tracking a child's responses.

➤ **Subtheme 4: Skills regarding the knowledge of child development stages**

It is essential for anyone who undertakes work with a child to understand how children develop, especially in forensic assessments with sexually abused children in rural areas. Such knowledge enables the social worker to understand how the child has reached his or her current developmental stages (Colton, Sanders & Williams, 2001:20). Only two participants mentioned knowledge regarding child development stages as a skill.

'The social worker should also have knowledge about different stages of development of the child that she or he is working with...'

'The social worker needs to be also knowledgeable about the dynamics of sexual abuse, child development and possess skills in assessing risk factors for victimisation. Forensic interviewing of sexually abused children requires a lot of skills and knowledge of a range of topics such as language, concept formation, memory suggestibility, the process of disclosure and others.'

Smith, Cowie and Blades (cited in Kruger & Spies, 2007:158) define development as 'the process by which an organism (human or animal), grows and changes through its life span.' They distinguish the following phases:

- Infancy – birth to 18 months.
- Toddler – 18 months to 3 years.
- Preschool years – 3 to 6 years.
- Primary school years (middle childhood) – 6 to 12 years.
- Adolescence – 13 to 19 years (Kruger & Spies, 2006:158-159).

Kuehnle and Connell (2009:101) argue that it is necessary for professionals such as social workers performing forensic assessments to know the developmental stages and to understand developmental trends in sexual abuse and nonsexual abuse behaviours that might be construed as symptoms of abuse. Lamb, Herskowitz, Orbach and Esplin (2009:20-21) argued that the clarity and completeness of children's testimony in cases such as sexual abuse are clearly affected by their development stage and communicative abilities. The vocabularies of young children are much more limited and less descriptive than those of adults. It is therefore so important for social workers who undertake work with a sexually abused child to understand how the child develops, especially in performing forensic assessments.

➤ **Subtheme 5: Documentation skills**

The conviction rates for sexual abuse cases in South-Africa and in the rest of the world are very low (Barret, 2014:1; Collings, 2007:14). One factor that influences this is incomplete documentation which makes it extremely difficult

to analyse documents on sexual abuse cases (Brits, 2015:50; Cussons, 2011:33; Faller, 2007:58; Ntlatleng, 2011:2-3; Stern & Walsh, 1997:10).

Only four participants mentioned the documentation as an important skill social workers needed when performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in rural areas. Good documentation can shape the view of a sexual abuse case, clarify objectives, stimulate further action and in this way form the basis for sound professional decision making (Barker & Hodes, 2007:78). Some of the responses of the participants were:

‘Analytical skills which include ... court report writing and ability to give expert testimony.’

‘You need to be creative, liaise with traditional leaders when you want to assess children because some people are not having cell phone, taxi fare and report writing skills.’

‘Report writing skills, even if you have a video you need something you have written.’

Forensic written documents are used in courts as the expert opinion of an expert witness such as a social worker (Faller, Cordisco-Steele & Nelson-Gardell, 2010:572). Records of the social worker therefore should be legible, continuous and clear; the information systematically stored and easy to access for other professionals to read as well (Barker & Hodes, 2007:78). Process notes contain

important information that can be used in a child sexual abuse court case and these process notes allow for close oversight by organisations and the social worker her/himself (Brits, 2015:47). The court may sometimes request the documents of social workers and this need to be taken into consideration when the social worker writes the process notes because it can influence the court case (Brits, 2015:47; Nanton, 2015). In research done by Brits (2015:47) many of the process notes she evaluated were not detailed and the social workers often wrote in acronyms and symbols which made it difficult to determine what the social worker was saying. One of the recommendations of Brits (2015:50) is that process notes and other records in the documents of social workers need to be detailed and clear so that other professionals can make sense of it.

THEME 3: PROTOCOLS SOCIAL WORKERS FOLLOWED TO BE COMPETENT IN PERFORMING FORENSIC ASSESSMENTS

The participants were asked to describe the forensic process/protocols they follow that enable them to be competent in performing forensic assessments with the sexually abused child in a rural area. The majority (11) of participants are not using any protocol – they simply open a file after having received a referral, sign the consent form and ask open-ended questions.

One participant indicated that he is using a number of protocols depending on the case he is dealing with.

'In my practice I use a number of forensic protocols depending on the case that I am dealing with. However I have found the seven- phase forensic interview protocol, the Michigan protocol and NICHD protocol to be the most relevant in my work with sexually abused children.'

Some other remarks of the participants were:

'A forensic social worker is a person that must be able to do assessment following the protocol..... who can write a report and testify at court and testify in a professional way.'

'I use the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Investigative Interview protocol which begins with self-introduction and asking child to introduce himself or herself. Building rapport with the child -do puzzles and storytelling, narrating neutral events, truth and lie concept, asking questions for clarity, checking consistency, bringing about neutral topic and termination.'

'I would suggest NICHD Protocol (structured interview) introduce yourself to the child, ground rules, build rapport, competency assessment, test the level of understanding of child, differentiation between the truth and a lie, test the memory of the child, structured interview questions (friends, family and other important people of your life), Apply techniques and you can get information from the child.'

Faller (2007:88) remarks that considerable progress has been made in developing guidance for interviewers in how to structure their interviews. Although these structures vary there is consistency in advising a phased interview. The simplest structure divides the interview into three phases, namely:

- the initial phase – rapport building which begins with the orientation of the child to the interview and which allows the interviewer to gather information on the child's functioning;
- the information-gathering phase which focuses on the abuse or abuses experienced by the child; and
- the closure/final phase which allows for the closure of the interview and for the child (Faller, 2007:67; 88).

These structures are designed to avoid interviewers eliciting false positives which appear, according to Faller (2007:88), to be a lesser problem than false negatives. The National Institute of Child health and Human Development (NICHD) protocol is used by three participants. The NICHD protocol is most well-researched and well-supported interview protocol for conducting forensic interviews with children in cases of alleged child sexual abuse (Kuenhle & Connell, 2009:252). There is no other protocol that by any means comes close to the NICHD in terms of empirical validation for the purpose of interviewing alleged child victims of sexual abuse, especially since the publication of

Hershkowitz et al.'s (2007) study (cited in Kuehnle & Connell 2009:252). Hershkowitz et al. (cited in Kuehnle and Connell) state that the broader goal of the designers of the NICHD protocol was to help forensic professionals in assessing children's statements, thereby promoting justice for abused children.

The use of protocols is supported by Faller (2007:81) as it is stated that interview protocols are especially needed by professionals who conduct the vast majority of child interviews such as interviews with sexually abused children. It is further stated in Faller (2007:82) that interview protocols especially help with difficult aspects of the interview.

THEME 4: OBSTACLES SOCIAL WORKERS EXPERIENCE THAT PREVENT THEM FROM BEING COMPETENT IN PERFORMING FORENSIC ASSESSMENTS

A question was posed as to what participants see as obstacles preventing them as social workers from being competent in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area. The answers received from the participants are subsequently discussed according to the different subthemes established by the researcher.

➤ Subtheme 1: Unavailability of resources

Nine of the participants mentioned absence of resources such as assessment materials; interviewing rooms; vehicles; long travelling distances from homes of clients to the offices of the social worker and overcrowded offices.

‘Challenges are the resources like vehicles that are in good condition to visit rural areas like twin cab ‘bakkies’ not small vehicles at all.’

‘Children are coming from far/remote rural areas and they are brought by investigating officers, wake up very early to honour appointments and arrive at office with poor concentration, tired and drowsy because of waking up early and travelling long distances. Sometimes the child did not have breakfast just because woken up very early and parent did not make provision.’

‘A lack of resources such as conducive offices to give attention to cases of this nature. We are lacking materials such as toys.’

‘The distances that you have to drive and the bad conditions of the roads and the condition of the vehicles that we are using are not in good shape. You become tired before you have to start the assessment. Sometimes you find out that there is only one room and you struggle to conduct the assessment privately with the child so you rather end up assessing the child in a car or under the tree, which is not what it has to be.’

Research done by Alpaslan and Schenck (2012:400) and Schenk (2004:165) regarding challenges experienced by social workers in rural areas of South Africa indicates that rural social workers often feel unsupported by the communities in which they work – occasionally due to traditional/cultural factors overriding their duties; receiving little support from their supervisors;

and generally being under-resourced and therefore unable to attend to problems adequately. These tendencies are confirmed in research done by Calitz (Calitz, Roux & Strydom: 2014:159-162) involving 90 rural social workers in the North-West Province. The practice conditions of and demands on rural social workers should not be underestimated. Several authors (Beimers, Warner, & Mackie, 2013; Graham, 2013; Lewis, Scott, & Calfee, 2013; Mackie, 2012; Turbett, 2009) discussed the challenges of rural social work such as lack of community support, low levels of change in rural circumstances, inadequate resources, long travelling distances.

Although the above-listed problems emphasize potential deficits in rural social workers' skills there is sufficient evidence indicating the value-add of rural social workers. Rural social workers such as those in the Eastern Cape Province as 'insiders', have more access to and understanding of contextual information than their urban counterparts; are frequently more resourceful and innovative in finding solutions to complex problems; have more access to unique and valuable community supportive resources and are frequently better able to adapt non-suitable urban intervention models to local contexts. It is, however, recognized that rural social workers, in view of their poor resource base, have to be able to perform more specialized tasks while they do not necessarily possess the skills associated with these tasks (Beimers, Warner, & Mackie, 2013; Calitz,

2013; Graham, 2013; Jiya, 2015; Lewis, Scott, & Calfee, 2013; Mackie, 2012; Turbett, 2009).

➤ **Subtheme 2: Knowledge regarding participants' culture**

According to three participants, knowledge regarding the child's culture is an obstacle for them because they are not from the same culture. What families of a certain culture validate as child sexual abuse plays an important role in forensic assessments with the sexually abused child.

'It is essential for anyone who undertakes work with a child to understand how children develop, especially in forensic assessments with sexually abused children in rural areas.'

'It is difficult to do assessments if you do not know the culture issues of the case.'

'Talking about rape with the child from rural areas is like taboo to them. The term on its own brings discomfort, so it becomes difficult to get the information without delay as opposed to grew up in township. They respect you as an old person to them and culturally you are not allowed to use some terms in the presence of the elders.'

‘Children from families are not taught because of their culture and religion about private parts and when they are expected to mention the intimate details of the incident, they shun away.’

In assessing child abuse and child sexual abuse ‘try to understand the needs of children and families, try to understand the influence that different cultures and religions have on parental beliefs, values and behaviour’ (Barker & Hodes, 2007:11). In research done by Gogela (2013:19-20) and Rapholo (2014:26) in rural areas of South Africa, they found that culture plays a very important role in the disclosure of child sexual abuse. Gogela (2013:20) notes that children in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province listen how old people are talking with disgrace about sexual abuse, so ‘in their minds to disclose sexual abuse will be an embarrassment.’

Any cultural issues should be noted because cultural differences between the interviewer and the child may impede the forensic assessment process (Faller, 2007:169). Cultural as well as racial differences can thus, as some of the participants had experienced, be an obstacle because it forms a barrier between the sexually abused child and the social worker as the interviewer’ (Faller, 2007:169).

➤ Subtheme 3: Training in performing forensic assessments

Only two participants mentioned the lack of specialised training as an obstacle in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children while 13 respondents wanted to be assisted with specialised training in how to perform forensic assessments. Although they don't experience lack of specialised training as being an obstacle in the way of performing forensic assessments with the sexually abused child on their caseloads, they realised that they need assistance in this field. The responses of the two participants were:

'Sometimes the victims of sexual abuse do not like to speak out until you call someone who is an expert dealing with children, who have specialised training and who is able to use techniques or skills for the child to voice out.'

'Lack of training in the field of assessing children, lack of institutions that provide postgraduate studies in forensic practice and lack of courses that are being offered by the department and nongovernmental organisation that are having social workers that are assessing sexual abused children in rural areas.'

In research done by researchers such as Jiya (2015:32), Gogela (2011:34), Grunder (2014:48) and Ntlatleng (2013:37) in the rural areas of South Africa, most of the participants in these studies mentioned that they need specialised training and on-going training such as workshops in dealing with child sexual abuse cases. Sadan (2006:247) states that while each role-player in the field of

child sexual abuse still provides specialised training to his or her staff, a single co-ordinating body could develop and present a basic course on child sexual abuse that cuts across all disciplines. He further advised that training of staff has to be built into the budgets of all role-players in the field of child sexual abuse.

➤ **Subtheme 4: High caseloads**

Three participants experienced high caseloads as an obstacle in the way of being competent in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children.

‘In rural areas there are many obstacles such as social workers who have high case loads. There are no social workers who focus on these cases of sexual abuse.’

‘We are dealing with high caseloads and many programmes. The workload is too much.’

‘The shortage of social workers caused social workers like me feeling overloaded.’

Although only three participants mentioned high caseloads, the researcher observed that most of the participants felt exhausted. In research done by researchers such as Calitz (Calitz, Roux & Strydom: 2014:159-162), Grunder (2015:40), Jiya, (2015:28) and Ntlatleng (2011:23-240) in rural areas, all experienced that these social workers have to cope with large caseloads. Jiya

(2015:28) found in her research regarding delays in the conviction process of child sexual abuse cases in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province that the most important factor causing delays was a shortage of social workers and too many cases to deal with. According to Kopane (2011:1) there were at least 60 000 social workers needed to implement the Children's Act of 2005. By October 2011 there were only 15 611 registered social workers, which represents almost a 75% shortage.

The Social work policy institute (2010) cited in Brits (2015:47) notes that high caseloads have the following impact on the social service profession:

- 'A higher turnover rate of staff.
- It can lead to emotional exhaustion of social workers (which might also affect the social worker's ability to do the forensic assessment to the best of his/her ability).
- They also found that in order to reach policy requirements for cases, social workers could not have more than 15 cases a month'.

THEME 5: ASSISTANCE NEEDED TO BE MORE COMPETENT IN PERFORMING FORENSIC ASSESSMENTS

The researcher posed a question to the participants regarding the kind of assistance they need that would assist them as social workers in being more competent in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area. The assistance these participants identified are subsequently

discussed in accordance with the three subthemes.

➤ **Subtheme 1: Training and specialisation of social workers performing forensic assessments in child sexual abuse cases**

Most of the participants (13) reported that training would assist them in performing specialised services regarding forensic assessments with sexually abused children in rural areas. Some of the responses received were:

‘To be trained and equipped with more information regarding the forensic assessment of sexually abused children.’

‘The social worker can be assisted through trainings, workshops, observation from co-assessor. The social worker can be assisted by registering for the Master’s degree.’

‘More training on sexual abuse assessments, awareness of steps to take when sexually assaulted, more training on play therapy materials’.

‘On-going training of social workers on how to perform forensic assessment on cases of child sexual abuse because most of social workers are not trained.’

‘It is essential for anyone who undertakes work with a child to understand how children develop, especially in forensic assessments with sexually abused children in rural areas.’

‘There is a desperate need for all Departments to have people who have specialised training with these cases of child sexual abuse. On-going training of social workers regarding child sexual abuse must be the goal of all social work Departments.’

‘Training and workshops regarding new developments in the field of Forensic Social Work. The social worker must also empower himself or herself by reading new published books talking about the forensic social work assessments.’

‘I also think that a number of professionals within system still do not understand the role of a social worker performing forensic assessments.’

‘Attending courses available or attending post graduate studies in forensic practice in the nearest Training Institution. Attending conference that is abbreviated as SAPSAC where most cases of children who are sexually abused are discussed-people present papers. Providing social workers with the necessary tool kits for the assessment of children who are sexually abused.’

In research done by Jiya (2015:32-33) in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape, one of the most important factors identified by the participants regarding court delays in child sexual abuse cases was role-players such as social workers with no specialised training in forensic assessment. All the participants in the research of Jiya, like most of the participants in this research, had only had a

BA degree and no postgraduate degree in Forensic Practice. The participants in the research of Jiya (2015:32) recommended specialization in child sexual abuse cases in all Departments and organisations. Thus South Africa, according to Jiya (2015:29), Grunder (2014:52), Ntlatleng (2013:37) and Vizard (2013:511) ‘urgently needs social workers with specialised training in Forensic Social Work (Jiya, 2015:29). The importance of specialised training of professionals regarding structured techniques or protocols are emphasised by Kuehnle and Connell (2009:300-303).

➤ **Subtheme 2: Better resources**

Eight of the participants identified resources that will assist them to be competent in performing forensic assessments with the sexually abused child in a rural area. Some of the responses were:

‘Availability of resources and training on sexual abuse of children will be so important.’

‘If one can have strong ‘bakkies’ as some roads are not accessible, one can reach the home of the child without giving problem or expect the parent and child to come to office for assessment session. Assessment tools for children who seem to be reluctant to disclose.’

‘Allocation of resources is need.’

‘Cars suitable for driving in gravel roads, Office space, assessment tools.’

‘Shortage of resources such as cars, taxi fees and assessment tools.’

‘Provision of assessment tools in a mobile office (caddy cars), where the forensic social worker will be able to conduct the assessment by using available materials according to the age of the child.’

‘Providing social workers with the necessary tool kits for the assessment of children who are sexually abused.’

Syptak et al. (cited in Calitz, 2013:41) advised that everything should be done to keep equipment and facilities up to standard. Even a nice chair can make a world of difference to an individual’s psyche. If possible, overcrowding should be avoided and each employee should have his or her own space such as a desk, locker or even a drawer (Calitz, 2013:41). Rural social workers, in view of their poor resource base have to be able to perform more specialized tasks while they do not necessarily possess the resources acquired for these services (Beimers, Warner, & Mackie, 2013; Graham, 2013; Lewis, Scott, & Calfee, 2013; Mackie, 2012; Turbett, 2009).

➤ **Subtheme 3: Awareness campaigns**

Two of the participants mentioned that they would like to be assisted with awareness campaigns to equip the people in the community with knowledge

regarding child sexual abuse. Awareness campaigns must be conducted in the communities on child protection services if one wishes to protect the child and especially the sexually abused child in the rural areas (Ncanywa, 2014:46). The responses of the participants regarding awareness were:

‘Awareness campaigns in rural areas on where to report such cases.’

‘Awareness campaigns should be conducted now and again to equip people.’

Prevention strategies, according to Meyers (2011:20), are effective when they focus on a clearly defined target population with identifiable risk factors such as sexually abused children. These campaigns can include strategies such as media coverage, nationwide toll-free information and referral hotline, the production of television and radio and the distribution of informational brochures (Meyers, 2011:21). Cronch et al. (2006:196) point out that sexual abuse ‘is often a very private, embarrassing and shameful topic to discuss and many children are unlikely to ever tell their story’.

➤ **Subtheme 4: Co-operation between stakeholders**

Two of the participants mentioned that co-operation between stakeholders in assessing sexually abused children in rural areas is very important.

‘More involvement of teachers, less involvement of some guardian/mothers.’

‘Co-operation between stake holders as when we refer they do not assist the other role-player.’

Cooperation between stakeholders in service delivery to the sexually abused child must be encouraged (Lotter, 2004:129). In research done by Cussons (2011:14-16) she experienced that doctors and psychologists want to get involved but they did not want to put anything in writing. Long et al. (2011:1) maintain that it is important to create a multi-disciplinary team to deal with child sexual abuse because this will keep the witness safe and allow them to participate in the prosecution process. Coordination of services promotes and encourages victims to cooperate and to network. Barker and Hodes (2007:10-11) find it to be vital for every worker in the public sector in all services and in all agencies to work together to ensure the child is safeguarded and that the services for children and their families are properly co-ordinated. ‘It is only possible to safeguard children effectively if all health service workers are committed to working collaboratively with others as part of the multi-agency as well as a multi-disciplinary team’ (Barker & Hodes, 2007:10-11).

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

The researcher asked the participants whether they wished to make any recommendations to the social work profession concerning how to improve social workers’ competencies in performing forensic assessment with sexually abused children in rural areas. The participants suggested the following actions

in the interest of improving social workers' competencies in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in rural areas:

- It must be standardised that forensic social workers need to attend specialised training in forensic social work.
- Improve skills development by presenting workshops to forensic social workers and by training them.
- Promotion and recognition of good work and extra courses.
- Provision of resources and bursaries so that people can educate themselves in forensic practise.
- Providing regular trainings to those social workers who perform forensic assessments.
- Putting more emphasis on report-writing skills.
- Employing more forensic social workers and wide marketing of the services.
- On-going supervision should also be prioritized to sharpen the skills base within forensic practice
- All police stations should have forensic social workers as opposed to the status quo.

CONCLUSION

From this research findings regarding the competencies of social workers performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area one may draw the conclusion that social workers in these rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province

need many skills with a view to enhance their competencies in performing forensic assessments with the sexually abused child. Managers of the Departments Social Development, the South African Police Service and Child Welfare in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province need to improve the competencies of social workers in rural areas regarding forensic assessments on sexually abused children.

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SECTION C

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

Research was conducted with a view to gain an understanding of social workers' views on the competencies social workers in rural practice conditions needed regarding forensic assessments with sexually abused children. In this section the researcher will give a summary, conclusion as well as recommendations regarding this study. The aim and objectives and the central theoretical assumption will also be tested by means of the findings and conclusion.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 Aim of the research

The aim of this research was to describe and explore the views of social workers in rural areas regarding their own competencies in performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children.

2.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the research were the following:

- To gain an understanding of social workers' views on their own competencies in rural practice conditions regarding forensic assessments on sexually abused children.
- To discuss the key findings and recommendations with managers of the Department of Social Development, of the South African Police Service, and of Child Welfare in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province about how to improve the competencies of social workers in rural areas regarding forensic assessments on sexually abused children.

2.3 Research approach

The researcher used a qualitative approach to collect data in a natural setting sensitive to the social workers under study (Creswell, 2007:37). In qualitative studies an inductive process was followed by means of which themes and sub-themes emerged through analysis of data collected by individual interviews with 17 social workers from the Mthatha, Mqaduli, Ngqeleni and Port St Johns areas of the Eastern Cape Province.

2.4 Research design

A descriptive design was used to describe and explore the contextually relevant descriptions in their own terms and therefore provide a description of human experience as found among the subjects (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:28; Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi & Wright, 2010:194). With this research project the researcher aimed at describing and exploring an overall picture of the competencies of social workers regarding the forensic assessment of sexually abused children in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province.

2.5 Participants and sampling

The participants were all registered social workers employed by the Department of Social Development, SAPS and Child Welfare (a non-government organisation), practicing forensic assessments in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape which included the rural areas of Mthatha, Mqaduli, Ngqeleni and Port St Johns. The sample was small and purposively selected (Thyer, 2001:258).

2.6 Data collection

The researcher used the semi-structured one-on-one interviews for collecting the richest data possible until data saturation was achieved (Greeff, 2011:351). Data saturation was reached after 17 interviews. The interview was rather guided than dictated by an interview schedule with open-ended questions (Greeff, 2011:351-352). The interview schedule provided the participants with an opportunity to explain how they see the competencies needed with regard to conducting forensic assessments in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province.

2.7 Data analysis

The researcher followed Creswell's (2009) qualitative analysis approach. Transcribing the data was performed by the researcher herself. Creswell's (2009) method of data analysis cited in Botma et al. (2010:223-227) was applied during research. The steps in analysing the data according to Creswell (2009) cited in Botma *et al.* (2010:223-227) were:

Step1: Organise and prepare the data by transcribing the interviews and typing field notes.

Step 2: Obtain a general sense of the information received and reflect on its overall meaning. Write notes in the margins as well as general thoughts regarding the data.

Step 3: Code the data by cataloguing text data gathered during data collection into categories and label these categories with a term based on the language of the participants. Use colour-code schemes.

Step 4: Describe and identify themes from the coding process. Generate a number of themes to create headings in the report findings.

Step 5: Represent the findings by means of a detailed discussion of the themes.

Step 6: Interpret the data. This will be the researcher's personal interpretation in combination with the literature and theories.

3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Before conducting research the researcher read several books, journals and articles so that she could align that with the findings.

3.1 Literature study

The central focus of the study was on the competencies social workers need for performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children as well as how social workers have to deal with challenges or obstacles while performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in rural areas of South Africa such as the Eastern Cape Province.

A literature study proved that social workers performing forensic assessments need to be trained in the field, seeing that they need to follow guidelines and rules when

following the forensic assessment process with sexually abused children. The concern is that the social workers in rural areas are expected to perform forensic assessments while they are not trained to perform the forensic assessments.

3.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of this research was achieved. The researcher explored and described the views of participants (working in a rural area) with regard to performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area.

All the objectives were achieved in the following manner:

- The researcher gained an understanding of social workers' views on the competencies needed in rural practice conditions regarding forensic assessments on sexually abused children.
- The researcher discussed the key findings and recommendations with managers of the Department of Social Development, the South African Police Service, and of Child Welfare in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province about how to improve the competencies of social workers in rural areas regarding forensic assessments on sexually abused children. This was done in March 2017 after receiving a letter from the North-West University Potchefstroom Campus, informing the researcher that she has complied with the requirements for the Master's degree.

3.3 Article 1: Research results on the competencies of social workers performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area

The views of the 17 participants were discussed regarding what they see as a competent social worker performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area. The majority of participants indicated that a competent social worker must have undergone specialised training in forensic assessments of sexually abused children following a certain protocol. The participants identified three qualities they see as being requirements a social worker performing forensic assessment should meet to be seen as competent, namely specialised knowledge and training in performing forensic assessments; knowing the difference between

clinical and forensic roles of social workers and knowing the environment and culture of sexually abused children.

Five skills social workers need to be capable of performing forensic assessments were identified by the participants, namely communication and listening skills; conflict managing skills; interviewing skills; skills regarding the knowledge of a child's development stages and documentation skills.

The majority (11) of participants are not following any protocol. They simply open a file after having received a referral, sign the consent form and ask open-ended questions. Only four participants used a protocol, especially the Michigan protocol and NICHD protocols.

The participants identified four obstacles in performing forensic assessments. These obstacles were unavailability of resources; lack of knowledge pertaining to participants' culture; a need for training in performing forensic assessments, and high caseloads of social workers. They wanted assistance with training and specialization in performing forensic assessments in child sexual abuse cases; better resources; assistance in awareness campaigns and better co-operation between stakeholders. This information clearly showed the needs of social workers performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area of the Eastern Cape Province,

3.4 Research results

The survey procedure and the interviews conducted by the researcher with a view to gather information concerning the competencies of social workers doing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area showed that participants were willing to share their experiences as well as challenges experienced by them. The results of the research will be discussed with the managers of the two Departments and Child Welfare. The offices of some social workers are overcrowded (five social workers sharing an office). According to forensic assessment it must only be a social worker and a child in the interview room. Social workers have to travel long distances to conduct assessments due to a scarcity of forensic social workers doing forensic assessments. The study showed that in the Eastern Cape social workers are overloaded and are lacking resources such as cars for travelling to the

sites to conduct the forensic assessment of the sexually abused children, materials such as toys, as well as computers for typing assessment reports.

4. RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATION

The study shows that most social workers performing assessments of sexually abused children in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province lack knowledge pertaining to performing forensic assessment of sexually abused children. As a result they do not follow any protocol or process. They only ask the child about the abuse. Most of them were not trained in assessing sexually abused children and have only a BA degree in social work. They deal with all kinds of cases – not only those connected to child sexual abuse, do not have assessment tools and most of their offices are overcrowded. They also struggle with limited resources to do the forensic assessments as been expected of them. From the interviews with the social workers in this study it became obvious that most of them are not competent in performing forensic assessments as expected, and this leads to defence attorneys questioning the content and format of the forensic interview and the expertise of the interviewer (Brits, 2015:48).

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the research findings:

5.1 Recommendations regarding the competencies of social workers performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children are:

- Social workers performing forensic assessments should be trained in the field of sexual abuse and forensic assessments of sexually abused children to prevent further trauma to the child.
- Forensic social work should be treated as a speciality so that social workers doing forensic assessments focus on sexually abused children only and not on other programmes as well.
- The departments and the nongovernment organisation need to provide their social workers with suitable resources in order to perform their work regarding forensic assessments effectively.

- The departments and the nongovernment organisations need to improve their social workers' skills by presenting workshops in how to do forensic assessments.
- The departments and the nongovernment organisations need to provide bursaries to social workers for post-graduate degrees in forensic practise.
- More emphasis should be on report-writing skills especially in forensic practice.
- On-going supervision should also be prioritized to sharpen the skills base within forensic practice.
- All police stations should have forensic social workers as opposed to the status quo.
- Forensic Social Work should be recognised by the South African Council for Social Service Professions as a field of speciality so that social workers doing forensic assessments focus on child sexual abuse only and not on other programmes as well.

5.2 Recommendations regarding further research

- More research should be conducted in the field of Forensic social work.

5.3 General recommendations on the topic

- Proper programmes on forensic social work need to be developed to equip social workers doing forensic assessment with sexually abused
- More trained social workers are needed in South Africa to address the problem of child sexual.
- The rural communities need awareness campaigns or education in child sexual abuse.
- Social workers need promotion in recognition of their good work.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Forensic Social Work is a specialised field and it is imperative that social workers conducting forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area need to be trained and equipped. From these research findings regarding the competencies of social workers performing forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area, one may come to the conclusion that social workers in these

rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province need a large number of skills to enhance their competencies in performing forensic assessments with the sexually abused child. Managers of the Department of Social Development, and the South African Police Service, and of Child Welfare in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province need to improve the competencies of social workers in rural areas regarding forensic assessments on sexually abused children.

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SECTION D: ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE 1: ETHICAL APPROVAL



2016/09/13

Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee

Tel: +27 18 299 4849

Email: Ethics@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF STUDY

Based on approval by Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) after being reviewed at the meeting held on 13/07/2016, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IRERC) hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IRERC grants its permission that provided the special 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: Competencies of social workers regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area.																																												
Study Leader/Supervisor: Dr AA Roux																																												
Student: L. Lupondo																																												
Ethics number:	<table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>6</td><td>8</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>6</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Institution</td><td colspan="6">Study Number</td><td colspan="2">Year</td><td colspan="2">Status</td></tr><tr><td colspan="15">Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation</td></tr></table>	N	W	U	-	0	0	0	6	8	-	1	6	-	A	1	Institution			Study Number						Year		Status		Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation														
N	W	U	-	0	0	0	6	8	-	1	6	-	A	1																														
Institution			Study Number						Year		Status																																	
Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation																																												
Application Type: Single study																																												
Commencement date: 2016-09-07																																												
Risk: Medium																																												
Continuation of the study is dependent on receipt of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation up to a maximum period of three years.																																												

Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the HREC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the HREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The study leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IRERC via HREC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, and upon completion of the study
 - 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.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader must apply for approval of these amendments at the HREC, prior to implementation. Would there be deviation from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IRERC and HREC retains 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 HREC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
 - the required amendments, annual (or otherwise stipulated) report and reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately,
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- HREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via Ethics-HREC@nwu.ac.za or 018 299 1200.

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

Yours sincerely

Prof LA
Du Plessis

Digitally signed by
Prof LA Du Plessis
Date: 2016.09.13
14:35:43 +02'00'

Prof Linda du Plessis

Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC)

ANNEXURE 2: APPROVAL DEPARTMENT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ground Floor - Port st Johns Private Bag X1006 - Port st Johns, Libode Area Office- 5140 - REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 047-5641239 * Fax: 047-5641239* Email address nomakholwa.vinindwa@ecdsd.gov.za Website: www.socdev.ecprov.gov.za

Enquiries: Ms N.Vinindwa

Date : 09/06/2016

THE NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH BY N. LUPHONDO WITH A STUDENT
NUMBER 24002623

The Department of Social Development is granting permission to the above mentioned student to conduct research study on Competencies of Social Workers regarding forensic assessment to sexually abused children in the Eastern Cape.

Yours Faithfully
Miss N. Vinindwa


Service Office Manager



Building a Caring Society. Together.

ANNEXURE 3: APPROVAL SAPS

G.P.-S. 002-0222

SAP 21

SUID-AFRIKAANSE POLISIEDIENS



SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE

Privaatsak/Private Bag X94

Reference Nr Verwysing	3/34/2
Navrae Enquiries	Lt Col GJ Joubert
Telefoon Telephone	012-393 3118
Faksnommer Fax number	012-393 3178

**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT COMPONENT
HEAD OFFICE
PRETORIA**

The Provincial Commissioner
EASTERN CAPE

(Attention: Col Tengisile)

**RE: RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING
FORENSIC ASSESSMENT OF SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN IN A RURAL AREA;
MASTERS DEGREE; NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY; RESEARCHER: N LUPONDO**

1. The research proposal of by Capt N Luondo, pertaining to the above mentioned topic, refers.
2. The goal of the research is to explore and describe the experiences of social workers in rural areas regarding forensic assessments, in order to gain an understanding of potential factors that might influence the forensic assessments of sexually abused children (see proposal attached)
3. The research will be conducted amongst social workers in the Eastern Cape Province. The researcher needs permission to include two forensic social workers of the SAPS, who are conducting forensic assessments on sexually abused children in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province.
4. The proposal was perused according to National Instruction 1 of 2006 by this office and it is recommended that permission be granted for the research subject to the final approval and further arrangements by the office of the Provincial Commissioner: Eastern Cape and that the undertaking be obtained from the researcher prior to the commencement of the research that –
 - 4.1. the research will be at his/her exclusive cost;
 - 4.2. the researcher will conduct the research without any disruption of the duties of members of the Service and where it is necessary for the research goals, research procedure or research instruments to disrupt the duties of a member, prior arrangements must be made with the commander of such member;
 - 4.3. the information will at all times be treated as strictly confidential, and
 - 4.4. The researcher will provide an annotated copy of the research work to the Service.

RE: RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING
FORENSIC ASSESSMENT OF SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN IN A RURAL AREA;
MASTERS DEGREE; NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY; RESEARCHER: N LUPONDO

With kind regards,


MAJOR GENERAL
HEAD: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT
M. MENZIWA

Date: 2015.05.25

ANNEXURE 4: APPROVAL CHILD WELFARE

1

5
June
2016

THE NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY
Social Work Department
Potchefstroom Campus

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: PROVISIONAL APPROVAL TO CONDUCT
RESEARCH BY MS. N. LUPONDO TITLED:
COMPETENCIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS
REGARDING FORENSIC ASSESSMENT TO
SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN IN THE
EASTERN CAPE.**

This letter serves as a provisional approval pending the receipt of research ethical clearance/certificate issued by your institution to the investigator to conduct the aforementioned study. Our institution welcomes and grants the permission, however, on the day or month of conducting such a study the investigator will be expected to produce a copy of ethical certificate to safeguard her,



043-6434197(T) 043-6433825(F)
No. 6 Edward Street, King William's Town
P.O. Box 177 King William's Town, 5600
E-mail: childwelfarekwt@telkomsa.net

ANNEXURE 5: INFORMED CONSENT



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM FOR

Social workers who perform forensic assessments in the Departments of Social Development, South African Police Service and Child Welfare with sexually abused children in the rural areas of Mthatha, Mqanduli, Ngqeleni and Port St'Johns in the Eastern Cape Province for one year or more.

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: Competencies of social workers regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU-00068-16-S1

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr AA Roux

POST GRADUATE STUDENT: Miss N Lupondo

ADDRESS: Villa Marlize 1, Hatting Street, Baillie Park
Potchefstroom 2531 OR Po Box 19693,
Noordbrug, Potchefstroom 2522

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 290 5760 OR 082 704 3922

You are being invited to take part in a research study that forms part of Miss N Lupondo's Master degree studies in Social Work: Forensic Practice. 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 Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00068-16-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 in your office in the Eastern Cape during August or September 2016, or in an office agreed with you after working hours where privacy can be assured. It will involve an individual semi-structured interview with an experienced health researcher Miss Lupondo trained in conducting a research qualitative individual semi-structured interview. Approximately 22 participants (social workers from the Departments of Social Development, South African Police Service and Child Welfare performing forensic interviews with sexually abused children in the rural areas of Mthatha, Mqanduli, Ngqeleni and Port St'Johns in the Eastern Cape Province) will be included in this study.

- *We plan to:*
 - *Gain an understanding of social worker's views on their own competencies in rural practice conditions regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children.*
 - *Discuss the key findings and recommendations with managers of the Departments Social Development, the South African Police Service and Child Welfare in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province about how to improve the competencies of social workers in rural areas regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children.*

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been invited to be part of this research because you are performing forensic assessments for one year or longer with the sexually abused children in the rural areas of Mthatha, Mqanduli, Ngqeleni and Port St'Johns of the Eastern Province. Your experience can make a valuable contribution to this study. Because of your experiences you can answer questions on your views regarding your competencies in performing forensic assessments with the sexually abused child in a rural area.*
- *You also fit the research because you can speak English.*
- *You will not be able to take part in this research if you are not working in a rural area of the Eastern Cape and if you have no experience regarding forensic assessments with the sexually abused child.*

What will be expected of you?

- *You will be expected to sign a written informed consent form to give consent that you are willing to participate in the research.*
- *You will have to answer a short biographical questionnaire followed by six questions regarding your views on your own competencies in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children during an individual semi-structured interview of approximately 60 minutes with the researcher, Miss Lupondo.*
- *During the interview, audiotape recordings will be made with the written consent of you.*

- *The researcher Miss Lupondo will determine the accuracy of the findings with you by a follow-up individual interview with you to discuss the data received from you (member checking). Member checking is to determine the accuracy of the findings by taking the final results back to the participants.*
- *The information received from the individual semi-structured interview will be used to complete a Masters in Social work in Forensic Practice dissertation at the North-West University Potchefstroom Campus.*

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

- *There will be no direct benefits for you as participant. You as social worker as well as the social work field will indirectly benefit from this study because of managers who will understand social workers' own competencies in dealing with forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area. Managers may then be in a position to contribute in enhancing social workers competencies regarding forensic assessments in rural areas by means of specialised training in forensic assessments with sexually abused children. This can lead to social workers abilities in rural area to act as expert witnesses in court in order to the successful prosecutions of alleged perpetrators.*
- *The other gain of the study is that you will receive refreshments after the interview, for the inconvenience of participating in the study.*

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

- *The risks to you in this study are emotional harm that may occur due to your experiences of forensic assessments with sexually abused children. You might however experience discomfort and distress due to discussing your views regarding your competencies in performing forensic assessments. It will be limited throughout the study by evaluating your emotional wellbeing. If you experience any harm or emotional consequence as a result of participating in the research study you will be offered free debriefing sessions by an appropriate therapist. The service will be free of charge as long as it is related to the participant's involvement in the research.*
- *There are more gains for you in joining this study than there are risks.*

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

- *Anonymity will be protected by allocating a number such as participant 1 instead of using your name on the transcribe interview report and by ensuring that no private information of you will be given to the public and kept anonymous for the purposes of the research.*
- *Your privacy will be respected by conducting the interviews after hours in your office or an office agreed upon with you. Only the researchers, the co-coder who will be a registered social worker with a MA in Social Work: Forensic Practice and who signed a confidentiality agreement and Prof C Wessels, the co-study leader will be able to look at your findings. Findings will be kept safe by locking hard copies in locked cabinets in the researcher's offices and for electronic data it will be password protected on the computers of the researchers. As soon as data has been transcribed it will be deleted from the researchers' computers. Tape recordings will be destroyed following transcription by the researcher Miss Lupondo. Data will be stored for five years.*
- **What will happen with the findings or samples?**

The findings of this study will only be used for this study. Analysed data will be stored in a room at the Social work Division of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus to be sent to COMPRES prohibiting all people, including the researcher and study leader from having access to the material. After five years the University will destroy all the data. The findings of the study will be introduced to the reading public in written form by means of a dissertation as well as an article in an accredited journal.

How will you know about the results of this research?

We will give you the result of this research after data analysis are accepted as correct by the study leader and co-study leader. to you and the managers of the Department of Social Development and The researcher will write a report highlighting the final results and recommendations SAPS as well as Child Welfare without identifying the name of any social worker as participant. This will assure confidentiality. The managers will discuss the report with the social workers in their Departments and NGO.

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

No, you will not be paid to take part in the study and there will thus be no costs involved for you, if you do take part. *You will receive refreshments after the interviews, for the inconvenience of participating in the study. You will not receive any kind of payment for your participation except for travelling expenses if we can't do the interviews in your office. The researcher will pay the travelling expenses.*

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact Dr Adrie Roux at 082 704 3922 or Miss Nolon Lupondo at 71 352 4616 if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 2089 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(name and surname of participant) agree to take part in the research study titled:: Competencies of social workers regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural are.....

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 my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

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

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (*name*) declare that:

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

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

.....
Signature of person obtaining consent

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.

- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that he/she had time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

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

.....

Signature of researcher

.....

Signature of witness

ANNEXURE 6: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

RESPONDENT:

--	--

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS PRACTISING FORENSIC ASSESSMENTS WITH SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN

POST GRADUATE STUDENT: MIS N LUPONDO

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBER: NWU-00068-16-S1

RESEARCH TOPIC: *Competencies of social workers regarding assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area*

INTRODUCTION

The undersigned social worker is conducting research on the topic: ***Competencies of generic social workers regarding forensic assessments of sexually abused children in a rural area.***

If the difficulties generic social workers experience regarding their competencies in forensic assessments of child sexual abuse cases are known, the researcher can come up with recommendations to the managers of the Government Departments and Nongovernment Organisations in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province in how to handle these problems generic social workers experience and what action needs to be taken to empower the generic social workers with the necessary knowledge and skills so that they can be competent enough to do forensic assessments and act in the best interest of the child.

SECTION A: IDENTIFICATION PARTICULARS

1. TABLE 1: AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

AGE	FEMALE 1	MALE 2
1. 20-30		
2. 31-40		
3. 41-50		
4. 51-60		
5. Above 60		

2. TABLE 2: HIGHEST QUALIFICATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Diploma	Degree	Master degree	Doctors degree	Other (specify)
1	2	3	4	5

3. TABLE 4: YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN FORENSIC ASSESMENTS OF SEXUAL ABUSED CHILDREN

Years working as a social worker	Specify
1. 0-3 years	
2. 4-7 years	
3. 7-10 years	
4. 10-13 years	
5. 14-17 years	
6. 18-20 years	
7. 20 years and more (specify)	

SECTION B: FORENSIC ASSESSMENT

- 1. What is your view of a competent social worker performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area?*
- 2. What skills do you think you need to be competent in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area?*
- 3. As a social worker, tell me more about the forensic process/protocol you follow that allow you to be competent in performing forensic assessments with the sexually abused child in a rural area?*
- 4. What do you see as obstacles that prevent you as social worker in being competent in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area?*
- 5. What kind of assistance do you see would assist you as social worker to be more competent in performing forensic assessments with sexually abused children in a rural area?*
- 6. Any recommendations to the social work profession how to improve social workers' competencies in performing forensic assessment with sexually abused in rural areas?*

Thank you for your participation in this research.

Captain N Lupondo

MA-STUDENT IN SOCIAL WORK: FOR

ANNEXURE 7: CONFIDENTIAL AGREEMENT

1

CONFIDENTIALITY UNDERTAKING

entered into between:

I, the undersigned

Prof / Dr / Mr / Ms _____

Identity Number: _____

Address: _____

hereby undertake in favor of the **NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY**, a public higher education institution established in terms of the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997

Address: Office of the Institutional Registrar, Building C1, 53 Borchard Street, Potchefstroom, 2520
(hereinafter the "NWU")

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 NWU 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

2 Preamble

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

2.2 The NWU has agreed to disclose certain of this 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 NWU 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 NWU, 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 NWU; and

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

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. 3

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 NWU.

Dated at Potchefstroom this _____ 20____

Witnesses: 1

2

(Signatures of witnesses)

(Signature)