

The relationship between perceived social support, on-line social network usage and reflective practice in forensic social work

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- My mother and my father for their unconditional love, encouragement and continuous support.

DECLARATION

Declaration of originality of research:

I, Judith Magrietha Swanepoel, hereby state that the manuscript titled: **“The relationship between perceived social support, online social network usage and reflective practice in forensic social work.”** is my own work.

I further declare that the content of this research study will not be handed in for any other qualification at any other tertiary institution.



March 2018

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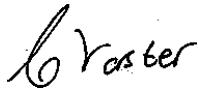
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PERMISSION LETTER



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Dear Prof Minrie Greeff

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The above project proposal was reviewed by the Scientific Panel of COMPRES during a review meeting on 14 October 2015. It was accepted and found adequate for submission to HREC.

The COMPRES review panel consisted of: Proff K Botha, E Van Rensburg, M Weyers, and CC Wessels; Dr W De Klerk, Mrs S. Jacobs

Signed: Prof KFH Botha

Chairperson: COMPRES Review Panel

ABSTRACT

Online social networking usage has increased amongst social workers who utilise it for many reasons, including reflecting on work and private life and for support purposes. This study investigated the relationship between online social networking usage, perceived social support and reflective practice and how it relates to the forensic social worker. With the findings of this study, the researcher hopes to contribute towards an embracing of social media as a tool for social workers and towards a better understanding of the potential risks and benefits of using social media for supportive and reflective purposes. As forensic social workers in South Africa at present receive little to no supervision on their forensic work, this study contributes towards finding support-alternatives for them as it considers the potential for online support structures for forensic social workers. An electronic survey was conducted with social workers by using a Question Pro questionnaire. Three standardised measuring instruments, namely the Inventory for Social Supportive Behaviour (ISSB), Media and Technology Usage and Attitude Scale (MTUAS) and the Self-reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS) were incorporated into the survey instrument. The survey was completed by 51 social workers. The findings of the survey were analysed by using various statistical methods. The study found that there was a correlation between the constructs of social support and social networking usage, as well as between self-reflection and social media usage but not between self-reflection and social support.

KEYWORDS:

Social support, online social networking, reflective practice, forensic social work

OPSOMMING

Die gebruik van aanlyn-sosiale netwerke het die afgelope tyd toeneem onder maatskaplike werkers wat dit al meer begin gebruik het vir redes soos die reflektoring op werk en privaatlewe asook vir ondersteuningsdoeleindes. Hierdie studie het die verwantskap tussen aanlyn sosiale netwerkgebruik, gewaande sosiale ondersteuning en reflektiewe praktyk ondersoek asook hoe dit inskakel by forensiese maatskaplike werk. Met hierdie studie hoop die navorser om 'n bydra te lewer tot die beter begrip van die potensiele risiko's en voordele wat die gebruik van sosiale media teweeg kan bring vir ondersteunings- en reflektieringsdoeleindes. Forensiese maatskaplike werkers in Suid Afrika ontvang min tot geen toesig in die forensiese werk wat hulle doen en as sulks hoop die navorser om by te dra tot die vind van ondersteuningsalternatiewe in die vorm van aanlyn ondersteuningstrukture. 'n Elektroniese steekproef is uitgevoer deur gebruik te maak van 'n Question Pro vraelys. Drie gestandaardiseerde meetinstrumente is gebruik en ingesluit in die steekproef, naamlik die Inventaris van Sosiale Ondersteunende gedrag, Media en Tegnologie- gebruik en Houding Skaal asook die Self-refleksie en Insig Skaal. Die bevindinge van die steekproef is ontleed deur gebruik te maak van verskeie statistiese metodes. Met die studie is bevind dat daar 'n korrelasie bestaan tussen die konstrakte sosiale ondersteuning en sosiale netwerkgebruik, asook tussen sosiale netwerk gebruik en self-refleksie, maar nie tussen sosiale ondersteuning en self-refleksie nie.

Sleutelwoorde:

Sosiale ondersteuning, aanlyn sosiale netwerke, reflektiewe praktyk, forensiese maatskaplike werk.

FOREWORD

The article format was selected in accordance with Regulation A.11.2.5 for a Master's degree in Social Work in Forensic Practice. The article complies with the requirements of the Journal Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE AUTHORS

MAATSKAPLIKE WERK/SOCIAL WORK

The Journal publishes articles, short communications, book reviews and commentary on articles already published from any field of social work. Contributions relevant to social work from other disciplines will also be considered. Contributions may be written in English or Afrikaans. 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 or presentation does not conform to the Journal practice. Commentary on articles already published in the Journal must be submitted with appropriate captions, the name(s) and addressee(s) of the author(s) and preferably not exceed 5 pages. The whole manuscript plus one clear copy as well as a diskette with all the text, preferably in MS Windows (Word or WordPerfect) or ASCII must be submitted. Articles of fewer than 2,000 words are normally not considered for publication. Manuscripts should be typed in 12 pt Times Roman double spaced on one side of A4 paper only. If possible 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 1967:12). More details about sources referred to in the text should appear at the end of the manuscript under the caption "References".

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SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Safety has become a fundamental value of recent times (Stanford, 2009:2). Forensic social work, a still young speciality field in South Africa (Government Gazette, 2016:4-10; Ludwig, 2007:1; Truter, 2010:1), deals with the opposite of safety, namely a world full of risks - danger and vulnerability; independence and dependency; responsibility and irresponsibility; trustworthiness and untrustworthiness; culpability and innocence (Stanford, 2009:2). It is the work of the forensic social worker to weigh up these aspects of risk in order to form an objective opinion to report to the court. Because of the risk of potential harm involved for the child and social worker in child protection work and forensic social work, social workers need to be supported in this challenging work (Cussons, 2011:1; Stanley, 2005:10, Stanley, 2007:163). A supportive work environment which offers “containment” is critical to secure the healing effect of social support. According to Ruch (2005:662), containment is achieved by accessing so-called safe spaces where social workers can safely make sense of the uncertainty and anxiety that they encounter daily. Risk can be addressed more effectively if such safe spaces exist. According to Stanley (2005:68-69), social workers can address risk by means of a reflexive process where risk is developed through assessment work and the social workers actively select facts and issues to inform how they reached the assessed position. Fook (2002:43) refers to reflexivity as a specific stance or ability to put oneself in a specific situation. Stanley (2005:69) understands reflexivity in social work as some form of action following a process of reflection, such as taking a set of particular issues to supervision for discussion, or making a journal entry. He further argues that the values and perspectives maintained by social workers are central to their fact selection and that this is crucial in the development of reflective practice.

In forensic social work, social workers should be fact finders and reflective practice can support them in doing so, thereby minimising the risk of faulty assessments in child protection work. The work of Stanley (2005:69) shows the value of support to social workers, as a social worker who is reflecting upon their work will be able to identify risks and will, with the necessary support such as supervision, be able to take action and rectify mistakes, see gaps in work-protocols and not only work more evidence-based, but practice both reflectively and reflexively. Reflective practice is defined by Fook (2002:43) as a process of reflecting on practice. The act of merely reflecting on practice has limited value if it does not lead to action and like Fook (2002:43) suggests, these terms should be used interchangeably as it can be assumed that reflective processes will be underpinned by a reflexive stance. The role that social support can play in the overall process of becoming a reflexive practitioner and in the development of the professional self should therefore not be underplayed. In this study, the emphasis will be on the reflective abilities of social workers and not necessarily on their reflexive abilities, but the interchangeable aspect of these concepts should be kept in mind. Reflection was defined by Dewey (1933:9), considered as the originator of this concept, as an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge. Reflection is a necessary component of reflective practice.

In South Africa, the Department of Social Development (2014:1-5) promotes the incorporation of reflective practice into forensic social work practice but does not indicate how this should be done and does not provide any guidelines regarding the supportive needs of forensic social workers. Stanley (2005:69) suggests the utilisation of supervision forums by social workers to locate themselves reflexively. Such forums for supervision purposes will lead to a shared social identity or group membership, which is a pre-condition for effective social support (Frisch, Häusser, Dick, Van & Mojzisch, 2014:154-155).

Supervision of social workers in South Africa is mandatory (Department of Social Development (DSD) and South African Council for social service professions (SACSSP), 2012:31) and only social workers may act as supervisors for social workers. In specialised fields, such as forensic social work, a person who is registered with the SACSSP as a specialist may consult another social work specialist in a similar area of specialism (DSD & SACSSP, 2012:42). The large geographical area of South Africa can make the provision of supervision or consultation challenging (Monosi, 2017:49) and can impact on the utilisation of supervisory forums for reflection as well as support. It is however clear that a solution to this challenge needs to be found. Technology may be utilised as a source of support and for reflective purposes (Gunawardena, Hermans, Sanchez, Richmond, Bohley & Tuttle, 2009:6; Halabuza, 2014:23; Lynch, 2012:8; Simpson, 2013:94). Currently, little is understood about how social workers utilise social networks as tools for self-reflection, support and practice improvement.

As is evident here, three constructs, namely *social support*, *social networking usage* and *reflective practice* emerge that need further exploration.

Regarding the *reflective practice construct*, many articles about critical reflection exist in the international body of knowledge and across various disciplines, but this is not the case locally, as paucity in articles regarding these constructs is observed in local literature. International literature focusses on the role of reflection in both theory and field instruction and placements of social workers (Issitt, 2003:173-188; Wilson, 2013:154-172); tools and techniques for practice reflection such as journaling and narrative approaches (Chirema, 2007:192-202; Donaghy & Morss, 2000:3-14; Hernandez-Ramos, 2004:1-16; Yliruka & Karvinen-Niinikoski, 2013:191-206) as well as critical theory and reflection as tool for cultural sensitive practice (Heron, 2005:341-351; Jensen-Hart & Williams, 2010:450–467).

Within a South African context, Esau and Keet (2014:460-466) discuss the social support value of reflective teaching practices in a University setting, concluding that reflection remains a key activity in social work education. Collins (2013:9-13) discussed constructivist approaches that promote reflective learning in South African institutions of social work training and pointed out that reflection is often neglected in the interest of theory instruction. No articles focussing on reflective practice specifically within the field of forensic social work in South Africa, could be sourced.

Likewise, the *social networking usage construct* received a lot of international attention in literature, focussing on aspects such as ethics (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2014; Cooner, Knowles & Stout, 2016:245–259), its utilisation in the social work profession (Chan, 2016:263–276; Campbell & McColgan, 2016:297–309; Hitchcock & Battista, 2013:33-45), the specific utilisation of social media within further education in social work (Kilpeläinen, Päykkönen & Sankala, 2011:1-12; Tetloff, Hitchcock, Battista & Lowry, 2014:22-38) and establishments of virtual communities of practice (Adedoyin, 2016:357–370; Budiman, 2008:1-155). It further focusses on the utilisation of social media for communication purposes (Alderson, 2012:1-57), social support purposes (Cohen, 2011:1-196; Kim, 2014:2340–2342; Ruud, 2013:1-188) and reflection purposes (Hickson, 2012:32-48). The topic of social networking has received little attention in local literature. Social networking has been described from a nursing perspective by Nyangeni, du Toit and Van Rooyen (2015:4-8) who found the use of social networking by nurses in training to be largely inappropriate, asking for clear guidelines that promote ethical social network during the training of nurses. In social work in South Africa, there seems to be a gap in literature related to the construct of social networking.

Although the construct of social support has received much attention in both international and local literature, Ruud (2013:8) indicates that researchers still have a limited understanding of the extent to which perceptions of social support relate to social networking and Rebollo and Vico (2014:175) indicate that most research on this topic have focussed on child and adolescent populations and not on adults. It therefore seems as if there is a gap in literature relating the constructs of social support and social networking to adult populations. Consideration needs to be given to whether social networks alone can contribute to social support and whether network usage enables the user to find a common social identity at the receiving end of the technology and whether it assists in the achievement of a certain supportive level of “containment”.

As can be seen, literature mostly reports extensively on various combinations of any two of these constructs, but what makes this study unique, is that the focus is on the three constructs together. Given the paucity in literature within the South African context, regarding the specific relationship amongst the three constructs, it can be concluded that a need exists to fill this gap in indigenous literature by exploring these constructs further and to describe the relationships between them. In Section B of this study, these constructs are explored in greater detail. A potential relationship between these constructs may suggest that social networking may be advantageous to promote reflective practice and useful in supervisory practices.

In this section, an overview of the study is given as well as details regarding the design of choice and measures used to determine a possible relationship between the constructs. Further sections of this study host the literature review, the article written for publication to Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk as well as conclusions, recommendations and limitations found in the study. Relevant additional materials are attached as annexures.

1.2 PURPOSE STATEMENT

This study is conducted to determine if online social networking usage affects the forensic social worker's perceived sense of social support and levels of self-reflection and insight, in the South African context. Given the paucity in literature regarding the relationship between the concepts of online *social networking usage*, perceived *social support* and *reflective practice*, this study may assist in establishing the potential value of online social networking in promoting reflective practice and social support and add to the knowledge base on these concepts. The potential usefulness of this study's results may provide solutions to the taxing and challenged forensic practice characteristics of the local context such as geographical location of forensic social workers and support needs of this group. Mann, Gordon and MacLeod (2007:595) regard a professional's reflective capacity as essential for developing professional competency, but the impact of reflective activities included in training courses remains unclear and largely theoretical. This study could potentially provide some support for the inclusion of reflective activities in the training of forensic social workers as well as in their further professional development as forensic social workers.

Examining the three-way relationship amongst these three core concepts could provide necessary evidence to promote social network usage amongst social workers and develop suitable social support networks, specifically for use by social workers in remote areas that do not have "live" support systems (Engelbrecht, 2014:161; Monosi, 2017:39). The field of forensic social work was chosen as focus area for this study as the work of a forensic social worker is viewed as highly stressful and taxing (Stanley, 2007:163). As such there is a need to test how this class of practitioners perceives the support they receive through social networking usage and to see whether there is an association with their self-reflection abilities.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions that are addressed by testing hypotheses according to the correlational design are:

1. Is there a significant relationship between the three constructs, namely perceived social support, online social network usage and reflective practice?
2. Does online social network usage contribute to reflective practice and perceived social support?

The study was guided by the following assumptions regarding the key concepts and how these resonate with the research population:

- Reflective practice might not be a familiar concept to all social workers.
- Self-reflection and insight are theoretically related to the social worker's ability to reflect on practice.
- Age may play a role in social networking usage and the ability to self-reflect and to show insight.
- Social support is associated with self-reflection and social network usage.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to establish the nature of associations amongst self-reflection, social support and social networking usage in the case of forensic social workers or social workers in general.

The general aim is pursued through the following objectives:

- To obtain a quantitative dataset from forensic graduates of NWU and social workers in general, containing measurements on each of the three central constructs of the study by means of an online survey generated through Question Pro (<https://www.questionpro.com>).
- To examine correlations between the three constructs.
- To report and interpret the results against literature on the three central concepts of the study.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Research approach and design

A quantitative approach is used in this study. Maree and Pietersen (2007:145) view a quantitative research approach as a systematic and objective process of using numerical data obtained with the aim of generalising the findings to the universe that is being studied. The design of choice is determined by the nature of the study. In this case, a non-experimental exploratory-descriptive design is applied, as such a design can measure all the relevant variables at a specific time without manipulation of variables (Maree & Pietersen, 2007:149). The study is exploratory because it looks at relationships between constructs tentatively and hypothetically without objectives of generalisation. Furthermore, corresponding to the hypothesis generating criterion of the exploratory design, this study tests hypotheses regarding postulated relationships between the three key concepts of this study, within the constraints of a limited sample and then generate hypotheses for further study involving larger samples. The study can therefore be regarded as utilising a combination of exploratory-descriptive correlational design. The purpose of correlational research is to

investigate to what extent differences in one characteristic or variable are related to differences in one or more other characteristics or variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:183). This study is correlational as it draws correlations between the three constructs of social support, online social network usage and self-reflection and insight.

1.5.2 Population and sampling

The population was purposively selected to include forensic social workers that have completed a post-graduate degree in forensic practice. A name list consisting of 81 students who completed their MSW-degree in social work in forensic practice at the North West University, between 2006 and 2014, was obtained from the Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Psychosocial Behavioural Sciences. The whole population was sampled to ensure sampling adequacy. However, the validity of the known database was suspect due to normal attrition and e-mail changes and therefore a low response rate was achieved during the initial data collection effort. The assistance of a mediator was obtained to help in identifying and contacting possible respondents by means of an electronic data collection platform and e-mails. The project was advertised to prospective respondents and a link was provided to the survey on Question Pro (<https://www.questionpro.com>). The survey was completed by a total of 51 respondents.

1.5.3 Data collection and measurements used in the study

A survey is a method of collecting relevant descriptive data from a number of individuals or groups in order to answer a specific research problem or question (Watson & Coombes, 2009:121). This study utilised an online survey generated through Question Pro (<https://www.questionpro.com>) that was e-mailed to respondents. Online surveys have the advantage that it can be sent to large numbers of prospective respondents (Rubin & Babbie,

2011:395). Biographical data items were collected and combined with a battery of standardised measures for the three constructs, namely social support, social networking usage and self-reflection and insight. Social support was measured by the *Inventory for Social Supportive Behaviour* (ISSB) developed by Barrera, Sandler and Ramsay (Barrera *et al.*, 1981:435-447). Social network utilisation was measured by means of the *Media and Technology Usage and Attitude Scale* (MTUAS) developed by Rosen, Whaling, Carrier, Cheever and Rokkum (Rosen *et al.*, 2013:2501-2511). Reflective practice was measured by means of the *Self-reflection and Insight scale* (SRIS) developed by Grant, Franklin and Langford (Grant *et al.*, 2002:821-836). A study of this nature requires a selection of scales that have been rigorously standardised (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:207). The three measuring scales have however not been standardised within the South African context and the intent of this study was not to accomplish this. Sufficient evidence exists about the psychometric properties of the ISSB, MTUAS and SRIS. The properties of the above instruments are as follows:

a. Social support construct

The *Inventory of social supportive behaviour* (ISSB) (see Annexure A) measures the total amount of social support in a person's environment (Patenaude-Jones, 1988:36). The ISSB was chosen for its ability to indicate the supportive behaviour and services which forensic social workers find most helpful. The ISSB does not focus on the people or systems providing social support or on the adequacy of support provided by them, however, it can be administered to assess the support from particular types of relationships, such as family or friends. This consideration is important for purposes of this study because the researcher is not primarily interested in identifying the different sources of social support, but wants an overall impression of social support in the respondent's situation. It is therefore

acknowledged that scores on this scale may be attributed to other factors, separate from the respondent's work environment. The ISSB normally contains 40 items. A 5-point Likert scale is used to indicate frequency, where 1 indicate "not at all" and 5 indicates "about every day". The ISSB can be customised by adding or removing items that are unique to a particular stressor. The internal consistency of the ISSB was consistently above 0.9 and on the 19-item version the internal consistency was 0.84. Test-retest reliability over a 2-day interval was 0.88. Over a one-month period, the test-retest reliability was found to be 0.80. Test-retest reliability over a 2-day interval ranged between 0.44 and 0.91 across the 40-item inventory (Barrera *et al.*, 1981:441). The average reliability coefficient was 0.88. The internal correlation coefficients ranged from -0.82 and 0.69, indicating that not all social supportive behaviours listed are assessing the same construct. The overall internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha was between 0.93 and 0.94 (Barrera *et al.*, 1981:441). The ISSB is scored by summing or averaging responses to individual items and subscales can be scored individually (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010:517).

b. Social network usage construct

The *Media and Technology Usage and attitude scale* (MTUAS) (See Annexure B) is a fairly newly developed scale comprising of 60 items on a Likert-type scale which assesses self-reported frequency of media and technology use as well as attitudes towards technology use (Rosen *et al.*, 2013:2502-2503). This scale was developed to assess all major technologies on a variety of standard devices and also includes attitudinal beliefs about the use of technology. Two independent studies, identified as the "magical thinking study" and the "sleep study" were done to allow an assessment of the validity of this new scale by using online survey methodology (Rosen *et al.*, 2013:2503). Both studies tested the scale on adult populations of working people or college students and would therefore be appropriate to use with this

study's population. The final scale has 11 sub-scales focussing on the use of media and four attitude-based sub-scales. It can be used as a single 60-item scale or as any subset of the 15 sub-scales. Validation of the scale consisted of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Varimax-rotation and the assumption that factors are inter-correlated as they all represent uses of similar technologies. Factor loading cut off was 0.55 and an eigenvalue of 1.0 was used. Items not reaching this factor loading were excluded. Items on some of the sub-scales are reversed scored. The various usage sub-scales score on Cronbach's alpha ranged between 0.61 and 0.97 and on the attitudes sub-scales ranged between 0.80 and 0.87 (Rosen *et al.*, 2013:2502-2504). This means that all 15 sub-scales showed acceptable to excellent reliability. These sub-scales can therefore be administered individually. MTUAS is scored by summing or averaging responses to individual items and some items are reverse scored. The researcher chose this scale for its ability to test people's social media usage and attitude on a number of devices such as smartphones, e-mail and others and it is assumed that this scale will give a general idea regarding the way social workers view and interact with social media.

c. Self-Reflection and Insight construct

The *Self-reflection and Insight Scale* (SRIS) (See Annexure C) measures private self-consciousness (Grant *et al.*, 2002:821). It is a scale that focusses on the recognition of the need to reflect, the process of engaging in reflection and the presence of insight (Van Breda & Agherdien, 2012:129).

According to Harris (2012:57), the SRIS is a 5-point Likert scale type questionnaire consisting of 20-items. The SRIS consists of two factors, namely self-reflection (SRIS-SR) measured by 12 items and insight (SRIS-IN) measured by 8 items (Stein & Grant, 2014:6). The SRIS tests the ability to integrate professional theory with experience and the awareness

of one's own performance and that of others (Roberts & Stark, 2008:2). This scale was chosen by the researcher for its ability to capture a change in thinking regarding engagement in self-reflection, which is needed to commence reflection on practice, as was found by Asselin and Fain (2013:118) in their study of self-reflection, insight and reflective thinking amongst experienced nurses in an acute care setting. The SRIS has been tested extensively with university students, both at undergraduate and post-graduate level, mainly in psychology (Erden, 2015:1465-1473; Grant, 2008:54-70; Silvia & Phillips, 2011:234-237) and nursing (Pai, 2014:1-25) as well as with the general public (Lyke, 2009:66–70; Sauter, Heyne & Blöte, 2010:303–317). Pai (2014:1-25) tested the SRIS in a longitudinal design with nursing students in a clinical programme to measure the self-reflective abilities and insight that students developed if self-reflective learning was made part of the curriculum and found a positive increase in self-reflection practice and an improving reflective insight.

The SRIS is scored by calculating the total scores for each component of the questionnaire and the higher the score, the greater the level of self-reflection or insight on the two subscales. The internal consistency coefficients for the two subscales were found to be 0.91 for self-reflection and 0.87 for insight (Grant *et al.*, 2002:826). Test-retest reliability was measured across a 7-week interval and was 0.77 for SRIS-SR and 0.78 for SRIS-IN. Reliability and content validity were found with object measures such as diary keeping (Grant *et al.*, 2002:826-833; Stein & Grant, 2014:12). Factorial validity was established (Roberts & Stark, 2008:3). The SRIS demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity. It negatively correlated with measures of depression, anxiety, stress and alexithymia while it correlated positively with cognitive flexibility and self-regulation (Grant *et al.*, 2002:829). Kalk, Luik, Taimalu and Täht (2014:124), in reviewing some scales, have found the SRIS to have a reliability of 0.77 for self-reflection and 0.78 for insight on the Cronbach's alpha.

1.5.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is the categorising, ordering, manipulating and summarising of data in order to answer research questions (Kruger, De Vos, Fouché & Venter, 2005:218). Data in this study was analysed in collaboration with the North-West University Statistical Services by means of IBM SPSS version 22. Analysis for this study consisted of the following steps;

1. Besides descriptive analysis, the data analysis comprised parametric or non-parametric techniques depending on the initial assessment of normality in data.
2. Mean scores on the different scales were regarded as continuous and dependent variables whilst the nominal variables were considered as independent or grouping variables.
3. Scale properties such as construct validity by means of factor analysis were not established in this study due to the relative small sample sizes and the fact that prior standardised scales were utilised.
4. Scale reliability was assessed by means of Cronbach's Alpha.
5. Correlational analysis was done between the three constructs. The researcher initially planned to conduct Structural Equation Modelling as a more rigorous mechanism for investigating the direction and strength of the interrelationships amongst constructs, but this strategy was abandoned as the data set was found to be too small, resulting in weak models and it did not warrant the use of such techniques.
6. Research findings are made available in an article format as evidenced in Section C of this dissertation.

1.6 ETHICAL ASPECTS

The research design, implementation and reporting of findings complied with the North-West University's guidelines for ethical research (Ethics Committee, reference number: NWU-00360-15-S1). The researcher took into account and gave ethical consideration to the following:

- The controversy regarding research through online-surveys (Buchanan & Hvizdak, 2009:37-48; Strydom, 2005:58-67) due to the possibility of identification of respondents and took measures to ensure that data remain confidential by utilising a software platform, namely Question Pro (<https://www.questionpro.com>) which generated a unique computerised number for each respondent and data was analysed accordingly.
- The value of voluntary participation (Strydom, 2011:117). The respondents were informed on the cover page of the Question Pro-Questionnaire of the purpose of the study, aspects of confidentiality and voluntary participation. The respondents were free to exit the online survey at any time.
- Respondents were clearly informed of the purpose of this research study and that participation in the online survey would be regarded as provision of informed consent.
- Avoidance of harm to respondents is a fundamental ethical rule in research (Strydom, 2011:115). This study mainly made use of existing measurement scales with low emotional content and therefore posed a minimal risk to respondents. The electronic nature of the questionnaire made it virtually impossible to identify any trauma to respondents due to their involvement in the research and therefore respondents were informed on the cover page of the Question Pro-Questionnaire to inform the researcher should they have a need to receive counselling or support. No respondents

however requested any further counselling or support, apart from one respondent who contacted the researcher to obtain more information about the ISSB as the respondent felt that this questionnaire might be of use with social work clientele. It can therefore be assumed that the study indeed had a low risk factor.

- The research was supervised and guided by a competent supervisor, Prof. W.J.H Roestenburg who has more than 15 years of demonstrated experience in statistical analysis in a social science research context.

1.7 PROVISIONAL CHAPTER DEVISION

In accordance with the rules and regulations of the North-West University for mini-dissertations in article format, this manuscript does not contain chapters, but consists of five sections. *Section A*, as already described provides an overview of the study and examines detail regarding the design of choice and measures used in the study. *Section B* focuses on a literature review exploring the three key concepts of this study. *Section C* provides a draft manuscript of the research article that is to be published from this research and follows the format provided for the journal “Social work/Maatskaplike werk”. Readers need to note that some material provided in the other sections may be duplicated in the research article as this is the actual submission to the Journal as indicated. *Section D* provides more information on the final conclusions, limitations and recommendations of the study, whilst *Section E* hosts the Annexures.

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SECTION B: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is a characteristic of modern social work practice that social workers, from time to time, reflect or think about what they are doing with clients and what the impact is of what they do with clients. Sometimes practicing social workers not only reflect by themselves, but share these reflections with colleagues, or their supervisors, to gain new insights about the case, obtain clarity on the direction of intervention, or to evaluate the impact of their actions. This sharing helps them gain insight and direction regarding future actions, but also gives them a sense of being supported in their work. As shown in the subsequent discussion, social workers, as a result of their exposure to modern technology, increasingly use internet-based technologies such as social media and networking, for self-reflection purposes. Evidence suggests they derive significant social support from using social networking sites and this helps them cope in practice. Thus, three concepts, potentially related, emerge that are worthwhile of further study. Section A indicated a paucity in literature relating the three concepts to each other. In this section, a literature review reveals the connections between these concepts and how it features within the helping professions, such as nursing, psychology and social work.

2.2 PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT, ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORK USAGE AND SELF-REFLECTION AND INSIGHT WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Limited research has been done in South Africa regarding the relationship between the three constructs, namely *perceived social support*, *online social networking* usage and *reflective practice* and no research could be found relating them to each other within the forensic social work field locally. Internationally, much has been written about the relationship between

social support and online social networking (Adedoyin, 2016:357–370; Best, Manktelow & Taylor, 2016:257–276; Deepak, Wisner & Benton, 2016:310–322; Gandy-Guedes, Vance, Bridgewater, Montgomery & Taylor, 2016:323–332, Kilpeläinen *et al.*, 2011:1–12). There is significant publication on the relationship between self-reflective practice and social networking (Campbell & McColgan, 2016:297–309; Cooner, Knowles & Stout, 2016:245–259; Knowles & Cooner, 2016:260–270; Stanfield & Beddoe, 2016:284–296; Sitter & Curnew, 2016:271–283). Evidence has also been found regarding the supportive value of self-reflection for instance (Kinman & Grant, 2010:1-18; Wilson, 2013:154–172; Yliruka & Karvinen-Niinikoski, 2013:191–206), but little work has been done regarding the rather complex inter-relationship amongst the three concepts conjointly (Hitchcock & Battista, 2013:33-45; Kilpeläinen *et al.*, 2011:1–12). The study of Hitchcock and Battista (2013:35) merely discussed an educational study in which it was found that educational students used Twitter to practice their self-reflection abilities, but also found that it supported them as they gained support from other students in this manner. Based on this, Hitchcock and Battista (2013:35) concluded that, in social work education, social media should be embraced as a tool for professional practice. In the study of Kilpeläinen *et al.* (2011:1-12), research was done about social work students in Finland who made use of various social media platforms and in this study, the three constructs were present and seemingly supportive of each other, but the emphasis of this study was not to look at the relationship between these constructs in the context of social work practice.

Looking at the literature, several questions arise, for instance, are social workers who reflect on their practice more likely to use social networks for this purpose and are reflecting social workers who use social networks more likely to gain social support from using these social networks? These questions are important for the future development of the profession, since the use of modern technology may be exploited more rigorously in promoting practice

reflection, if it shows that using this media not only promotes reflection in practice, but also social support. Finding a relationship amongst the three concepts may prove that social media can be used actively as platform for supervision, as it can be accessed over great distance. This literature review provides us with an exploration of the three concepts and the possible relationships amongst these concepts.

2.3 REALITIES OF FORENSIC PRACTICE

Within forensic social work in South Africa, practitioners are not always supported in the work that they do (Meüter, 2011:38). Some of the challenges that they face include 1) limited number of social workers (Joubert & Van Wyk, 2014:497) in general and specifically trained social workers in forensic work resulting in limited numbers of skilled supervisors in this service field who are available to provide supervision to other forensic social workers; 2) huge geographical distances between supervisees and trained supervisors, effectively disabling chances of live supervision from occurring (Monosi, 2017:39-40); 3) lack of supervision (Kinman & Grant, 2010:16), limited supervision or poor supervision (Monosi, 2017:35) and 4) the fact that forensic social work as speciality field in South Africa (Government Gazette, 40349:4-10) is still not widely acknowledged.

The forensic social work field can be taxing and requires practitioners who are capable of self-reflecting on their practice, able to examine and challenge own practice and thereby promote their own professional growth (Duffy, 2007:1405). Internationally, social workers are increasingly using social media for various purposes such as social support, communication, self-reflection (Halabuza, 2014:23) and mediatization of social work by means of blogs, digital stories and e-journals (La Rose, 2013:50). The internet and digital media spaces such as You Tube are increasingly becoming places known for the production of new knowledge and are therefore bringing about the globalisation of social work (La Rose,

2013:50-68). Virtual or online communities of practice often form with the aim of enhancing interaction between professionals, sharing knowledge and learning from each other. It offers support as it provides a sense of belonging and identity (Budiman, 2008:78). Wenger (2002:4) defines virtual online communities as groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who want to deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting regularly and on-going. Given the challenges faced in supporting forensic social workers, there may very well be value in considering the three identified constructs, because if a relationship between them could be established, they may be utilised effectively in addressing some of these challenges. For example, it is known that social workers, like most other people, need to feel supported in their work, especially if they work in remote places such as in private practice, are inexperienced and uncertain about their professional roles. It is further known that social workers utilise social media for gaining social support informally and in many cases for professional support. It is further noted that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are more frequently the tools used for learning, getting information and probably for reflecting on one's own practice. Conclusively, it appears that these three concepts may well be interrelated and this potentially offers a significant opportunity to be exploited more effectively towards more effective practice and growth of practitioners.

As indicated in Section A, the researcher needed to explore and understand the constructs of online social networking, self-reflection and insight as well as perceived social support individually, to develop an understanding of their complex interrelationship. It is imperative that these constructs be better understood as online supportive structures may be useful tools that can address some of the challenges faced by the forensic social worker who often works in a counter-reflective, multi-disciplinary and adversarial environment where support is a

much-needed commodity. Effective operationalisation of the theoretical links amongst these concepts facilitates the ensuing empirical investigation.

2.4. THE SOCIAL SUPPORT CONSTRUCT

2.4.1 Defining of perceived social support

Social support is defined as the belief by an individual that he is cared for and loved, esteemed and valued and that he is part of a network of communication and mutual obligations (Cobb, 1976:300; Feeley, Moon, Kozey & Slowe, 2010:171). Hobfoll and Stokes (1988:499) included relationships with actual assistance or feelings of attachment to a person or group in their definition of social support. According to Cohen (2011:6), perceived support refers to an individual's beliefs about the availability of support if it is needed, therefore referring to hypothetical support from different sources in the workplace such as colleagues and supervisors. Social networks can be viewed as one such hypothetical source of support and could include formal and informal support. Carmack and Holm (2015:18) view other organisational members, including colleagues, co-workers, supervisors and administrators as social work support networks. These supportive sources can include formal support such as supervision and informal support such as that given by colleagues, friends and family. There is still very limited research measuring online social support (Cohen, 2011:6) and although social networking sites can provide unlimited potential support, we still do not understand how this support is perceived by the social work profession.

2.4.2 The importance of social support in the forensic social work arena

The perception that social work is an emotionally demanding and stressful career has been linked to retention problems in the social work field as work-related stress and burnout lead to social workers leaving the profession (Kinman & Grant, 2010:2-3). Professional supervision

is a key strategy to ensure the retention of social workers (Parker, 2017:5). In child protection matters, the level of stress may be even higher which has been linked with burnout that may lead to poor performance or practitioners leaving the profession (Acker, 2005:72-73; Sánchez-Moreno, de La Fuente Roldán, Gallardo-Peralta & de Roda, 2014:2368). It is therefore crucial that social workers are protected against the negative impact of the demands that they face through the implementation of a good supportive structure in the practice context. Social workers utilise a variety of sources for support, such as peers, lecturers, family and friends as well as social networking sites (Hickson, 2012:34).

The supervisor can act as a valuable source of support and can assist with reducing the stress that is associated with the work-demands (Acker, 2005:73; Mbau, 2005:33). Provision of a supportive work-environment, support in balancing work-family life, peer support groups and in-service training are suggested as ways to provide support (Acker, 2005:72-73; Kalliath, P., Kalliath, T. & Chan, 2015: 2401).

Parker (2015:59) promotes the notion of supportive networks amongst people working in challenging work environments by referring to “critical kinship” as a partnership for mutual benefit and growth between likeminded colleagues who trust each other to critique one-another’s practice and identify areas for improvement. Critical kinship can only exist where a learning environment can be created through agreed trust, confidentiality, clarity on interpersonal boundaries and transparent objectives. For critical kinship to form, she suggests professional supervision to gain support and encouragement (Parker, 2015:59). Professional supervision might greatly be lacking within the forensic social work field in South Africa, but South African social workers are finding creative ways to ensure work-related support for themselves, such as utilising online social networking sites. Some forensic social workers have started their own Facebook page, promoting themselves as forensic social workers and

also sharing work-related information. An example is a Facebook page called “Forensic social work South Africa” ([http://nofsw.org/-Forensic Social Work South Africa](http://nofsw.org/-Forensic%20Social%20Work%20South%20Africa) | Facebook) where information is shared about forensic social work.

2.4.3 Findings related to social support

Acker (2004:68) found that social workers who are well supported by their supervisors and co-workers are generally more satisfied in their work with less intention to quit their work, however, workers with higher levels of education seem to receive lower levels of support from managers. This implies that well supported forensic social workers will have greater job-satisfaction. If this is the case, it may very well be that forensic social workers receive lower support from their managers. A possible reason for this may justly lie in the additional speciality training that the forensic social workers receive and supervisors without this speciality training, may feel inadequate in giving them work-related support.

Kinman and Grant (2010:10) found that social support obtained from tutors, practice assessors, work colleagues and supervisors as well as from family and friends, was significantly related to resilience. They further found a significant relationship between resilience, social competence, emotional intelligence and reflective ability. Therefore, social workers who are well supported and can reflect may have the resilience to cope with difficult aspects of the work. Deepak *et al.* (2016:311) suggest a relationship between social media and social capital in the form of bonding capital. They define bonding capital as networks of close friends and family in continuing relationships which provide strong emotional and substantive support and promote group cohesion. It therefore seems as if social workers who utilise social media may be more resilient as they may have bonding capital through the support of friends and family. Such social workers will be able to cope with difficulties in the work environment. It can be concluded that social media may, to some extent, provide social

support to the individual. This is important in the forensic social work field, as forensic social workers need to be resilient, have reflective abilities and need to have bonding capital to ensure their own emotional health and to support group cohesion. A relationship between the three constructs under study seemingly exists.

2.5 THE SOCIAL NETWORK USAGE CONSTRUCT

2.5.1 Defining of the social network usage construct

Social networking is the action through which a person uses a social networking site (such as Facebook or Google +) as an online space to share content and to build relationships with known or unknown persons by exposing the user to broader networks and creating connections that may not otherwise occur (Kimbal & Kim, 2013:185). Social networking can potentially link social workers from around the world and the profession can be promoted in this way.

2.5.2 The importance of social network usage in the forensic social work arena

Social workers are increasingly using social media for networking, peer support, reflection and fun and whilst it creates opportunities for social work practice, it can also bring about challenges and conflicts (Gandy-Guedes *et al.*, 2016:323; Halabuza, 2014:1; Hickson, 2012:32). Kilpeläinen, *et al.* (2011:8) found that social workers support their peers online by finding work-related materials and information as well as challenging their peers to participate and give feedback to others. Hitchcock and Battista (2013:35-36) suggest that it is logical for the social work profession to utilise social media tools as learning with social media helps students to develop metacognition, self-reflection and communication abilities. In practice, social workers use social media for de-briefing, awareness training and reflection purposes with their clients (Dreifuerst, 2010:3; Hickson, 2012:34). Furthermore, social media

is at times used as practice support system for doing research, data collection, online counselling, group counselling and social advocacy (Halabuza, 2014:23). Social workers are increasingly using social networking sites in both a professional and personal capacity. In South Africa, social workers are also utilising social media, such as Facebook, to link with one another for purposes of informal support, sharing of information and for recruitment purposes.

Social networking is used by people for self-expression, communication and for defining who they are (Gunawardena *et al.*, 2009:6-7; McElveen, 2014:3). Social networking sites present opportunities for the enhancement of what can be perceived as social support (Lynch, 2012:8; Parker, 2015:59) while also presenting opportunities to reflect on practice and discussing issues of interest with other interested parties (Gunawardena *et al.*, 2009:6).

Social support and self-care were found to be significant uses for social blogging, according to an article by Hickson (2012:30). Blogging social workers used their social networks for multiple purposes such as learning, critical reflection on one's practice, finding new ways to intervene in clients' lives, or simply because they liked writing and journaling, debriefing and ventilation and soliciting support from other practitioners. The latter seems to be an increasing trend (Cunningham & Moore, 2014:271-272). In this instance, social networks allow social workers to gain a sense of relief and release as well as an opportunity to deconstruct, share and learn from their experiences (Cunningham & Moore, 2014:274). In other instances, groups of practitioners will jointly access a social network site, forming what is called a community of practice. A community of practice is defined as a group of people with shared concerns, passions or problems regarding a specific topic, which deepens their knowledge and expertise through regular interaction (Gunawardena *et al.*, 2009:6). Social networking tools can assist in developing practitioner expertise through the support of online

communities of practice. Through these virtual communities of practice, professionals can engage and share knowledge, evidence, ideas and reflection on practice (Parker, 2015:59).

While technology can powerfully support the faster development of reflective thinking by means of social networking platforms (Benson, Hardy & Maxfield, 2001:87; Kayisli, s.a.:27), the use of such networks causes ethical dilemmas in practice (Dombo, Kays & Weller, 2014:901; Saladino, 2014:5). Social workers increasingly find that their personal use of social media encroaches upon their professional lives (Dombo *et al.*, 2014:909; Kirwan & McGuckin, 2014:119). Therefore, boundaries between personal and professional personalities may diminish when using social networks. As a result, network users may neglect confidentiality requirements or fail to adequately set privacy settings on social network sites, resulting in violations of confidentiality and privacy arrangements. Social networking behaviour may become inappropriate in cases where roles conflict or where vested interests exist, or networkers become careless in distancing themselves from client situations. Despite these potentially harmful ethical issues, social networks have equally as many positive and supportive capabilities (Halabuza, 2014:24).

A clear example of the benefits of social media comes from a Messenger conversation with W.L. Van der Westhuizen (2018), the creator of the Facebook page “Forensic social work South Africa” ([http://nofsw.org/-Forensic Social Work South Africa](http://nofsw.org/-Forensic-Social-Work-South-Africa) | Facebook) who initiated this page as a forum “where social workers could discuss matters related to forensic social work, regardless of whether they specialise or not, in order to just stimulate awareness of our specialisations and to bring together social workers with similar concerns or ideas to bridge the geographic distance”. He found that social workers in South Africa often operate in very isolated ways and the idea of the page was to create some form of collective identity and power and to be able to consciously develop the profession. He wished to “create a

platform where social workers could debate more issues and perhaps also become more proactive in the profession, not leaving development to either academics or government”. This objective is consistent with the notions of practice reflection and social support as discussed here. At present, his page, which has been active since August 2017, is “followed” by 77 individuals and “liked” by another 75 individuals. The three constructs come together in this example to show their benefit, not only to forensic social work, but to the whole social work profession.

2.5.3 Findings relating to social networking

The number of people who utilises social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Skype, YouTube, on-line blogs, etc. is ever increasing. According to Halabuza (2014:23), 47% of adults use social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook and 10 % of adults are likely to use personal blogs or journals. The popularity of social media sites brings many benefits to the social work profession, such as the ability to communicate with on-line professional communities (Pan, Lu, Wang & Chau, 2017:72), information and resource-sharing, promotion of research and imparting ideas and expertise. Social networking usage however also challenges the profession to think critically about professional and personal boundaries (Fang, Mishna, Zhang, Van Wert & Bogo, 2014:809; Groshong & Phillips, 2015:148), levels of self-disclosure, dual and multiple relationships, privacy and conflicts of interest within an ethical framework (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2014). A study by Adedoyin (2016:367) suggests that students more readily and proactively embrace virtual communities of practice than their lecturers and social service agency supervisors, which can make it more challenging for the latter to utilise these virtual communities of practice as a supportive tool.

Kilpeläinen *et al.* (2011:7-10) found many benefits to utilising social media in blended learning with students from the University of Lapland, Finland, where large geographical areas exist and these large geographical areas pose a problem for linking social workers together. They found that utilising social media as part of the curriculum enhanced not only the information and communication technology competency of social workers, but also created a positive support system between them as well as ensured critical reflection on work. In Lapland, the northernmost region of Finland, receiving and giving professional consultation via the Internet is becoming a part of everyday social work (Kilpeläinen *et al.*, 2011:3). This is done by sending out questions and getting answers back. Important aspects that are addressed in their blended learning are: shared but self-paced learning; formulating relevant knowledge; assessing own work and that of others as well as giving and receiving peer support. Consultation in forensic social work in South Africa may be addressed in similar ways by utilising social media.

It can be concluded that social networking usage can go both ways – it can solve potential problems and create challenges. Within the forensic social work field, it seems as if the potential benefits of utilising social media, at this point, may outweigh the potential challenges. An ethical framework may very well be needed in South Africa soon to guide the social media usage of social service professionals. Such a framework will assist in avoiding potential problems and will give guidance in challenging situations.

2.6 THE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE CONSTRUCT

2.6.1 Defining the reflective practice construct

Reflective practice is defined as a form of practice which seeks to allow practitioners to continually learn, grow and develop through turning practice situations into potential learning

situations. This is done through a process of problem setting versus problem solving (Hagerty, 2011:20; Schön, 1983:40; Tate, 2004:8). Cussons (2011:27) found proof in her study on the experiences of social workers in child protection work in South Africa, that child sexual-abuse investigations do impact on the behaviour, decisions and service delivery by the social worker, but that training ensures that they remain professional in their work. She does not indicate however whether they fully implement reflective practice.

Gadsby and Cronin (2012:2) define reflective practice as a process by which individuals make sense of their experiences by a consideration of, and possible change in, their own personal skills, knowledge and dispositions in light of the personal, professional and wider social contexts in which they as practitioners operate. Ruch (2007:660) suggests that more emphasis should be given to organisational and external conditions and not just to the individual and internal characteristics of the practitioner and that the inter-dependence of the internal and external factors should be acknowledged. Reflective practice is a process of self-involvement and self-reflection (Yip, 2006:778). Operationally and within this study, it can be defined as an active, deliberate process of critically examining or challenging one's own practice, what you do in practice and then, enabling a person towards self-development and personal transformation (Duffy, 2007:1405).

To be reflective is an important social work competency as a reflective practitioner is not merely skilful and knowledgeable, but also uses intuition and insight in practice (Cunningham & Moore, 2014:272). Reflection is defined by Pee, Woodman, Fry & Davenport. (2000:755) as the process of actively and consciously engaging with experiences in order to learn from these. They view reflection as crucial to deep learning and meaning making as it enables new experiences to be integrated into existing frameworks of knowledge. It is therefore a core professional competency needed by social workers.

The terms reflection, self-reflection and reflective practice are often used interchangeably. In the literature, it is a multi-faceted and collective concept, i.e. introspective, retrospective, transformatory, emancipatory, hierarchical, sequential, technical, practical and purpose driven (Lawrence, 2009:53; Ryan, 2011:3). It is multi-faceted as there are different types or hierarchical levels of reflection which seem to move along a depth-continuum between descriptive accounts, to different levels of mental processing, to transformative or intensive reflection (Ryan, 2011:3). This suggests that reflection can vary from superficial to highly in-depth. As a collective concept, it suggests looking inward and backward when reflecting and by being reflective, a person never stays the same, but becomes more and free. Central to all the concepts of reflection, reflective practice and self-reflection, is the person who does the action of reflection, practice reflectively or doing self-reflection. Insight and self-reflection are terms that are also often linked together with such terms as self-awareness (Pai, 2014:5-6). These terms are so inter-related that it is sometimes difficult to separate them from one another. Self-reflection can be defined as the action of becoming aware of one's own knowledge, assumptions and past experiences and entails a process of review of the self, the self in relation to others and in relation to the world at large (Rae, 2010:3). Insight can be defined as "the clarity of one's understanding of one's thoughts, feelings and behaviour" (Grant *et al.*, 2002:821).

Reflective practice is therefore the exercising of the competency of reflection which includes insight and intuition by self-aware practitioners who reflects upon themselves, their work and the practice environment, issues that impact on these aspects as well as on the client. Practicing reflectively suggests a purpose-driven effort to utilise reflection within the work that is done. It suggests a mind-set of being introspective, retrospective and self-aware.

2.6.2 The importance of reflective practice, self-reflection and insight in the forensic social work arena

Reflective practice is a multi-disciplined construct adopted by social work that should be understood in a discipline specific manner (Aronson, Niehaus, Hill-Sakurai, Lai & O'Sullivan, 2012:808; Finlay, 2008:1). It can assist the transition from student to professional (Smith & Pilling, 2007:266) and further on towards expert professional. The Department of Social Development (2014:1-5) recommend that reflective practice be incorporated into South African forensic social work practice.

Reflective practice is a complex concept that involves acknowledging the uniqueness of each situation, the complexity of human functioning and the anxiety invoked in practitioners by the work that they do (Ruch, 2007:202) and therefore safe spaces is needed, where practitioners can come to terms with the uncertain and anxiety provoked nature of their work (Ruch, 2007:662). Reflective practice as an approach recognises complexities, uncertainties and risks characteristic of social work one's own unique characteristics, multiple ways of managing client problems and generation of specific knowledge for specific problems (Halabuza, 2014:28). Reflective practice seems well suited for such fields as forensic social work practice.

The value of reflection seems to be that it assists in the development of professional expertise, valid knowledge and competence and that it can be both a learning tool as well as a means of learning from practice. Self-reflectiveness builds clinical competence, can prevent boundary violations and burnout and can also offer some protection against client violence. Reflective practice acknowledges the dynamic interconnectedness between professional and personal "self" (McDonald, 2009:4; Raniga, 2012:280) and Urdang (2010:523) views it to be a basic cornerstone for the development of the professional self and professional maturity. The

professional therefore need guidance to be aware of the major factors in the helping process, namely their own feelings, attitudes and relationships with clients. Under appropriate conditions such as a supportive environment, readiness for self-reflection is increased and awareness of own limits heightened. These are ideal conditions for self-reflection that enhance the social worker's personal and professional development (Yip, 2006:781). This process leads to experiential learning, insight gaining and self-awareness (Finlay, 2008:1). Supervision can be seen as the medium through which self-awareness is fostered and honed (Mbau, 2005:21). Included is reflection on the impact of one's own background, assumptions, positioning, feelings, behaviour, the wider organisational, ideological and political context on the client system (Finlay, 2008:6). Through a process of reflection, it becomes possible to understand how personal knowledge contributes to professional practice and how professional experiences impact on our personal wellbeing (Ruch, 2002:204). Reflection should be a healthy, constructive process undertaken at the professional's own pace, with support from colleagues, family and friends to ventilate and develop insight into unpleasant experiences and personal frustrations (Yip, 2006:782). Social Workers seem more inclined to reflect on their practice informally and outside of the workplace and with people that they trust, than within the formal organisational context (Andrews, Gidman & Humphreys, 1998:416; Coombs, 2001:266; Fritts, 1989:166). Practice reflection requires a self-aware practitioner that can critically evaluate own responses in practice (Finlay, 2008:1; Raniga, 2012:280). Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000:212) define an expert social worker as a self-aware practitioner who is critically aware of their own power in relation to that of service users. It seems that to be an expert in one's field of practice, which is the expectation society places on a forensic social worker, requires critical self-awareness that is mostly obtained through a deep level of self-reflection.

2.6.3 Findings relating to self-reflection and insight

There is a gap in literature in South Africa relating to reflective practice in social work. The complex nature of self-reflection (Ringel, 2003:15) makes it difficult to measure, but in a study conducted by Aronson *et al.* (2012:807), they found that the provision of critical reflection guidelines improved performance and that when feedback on both content and reflective ability is given, that performance also improved. Wilson (2013:166) found that the higher a person is educated the more they reflect and that people perceive their ability to reflect as greater after learning than prior to learning. Spies and Carstens (2005:35-36) are of the opinion that forensic social workers should work according to guidelines to enable them to act as expert witnesses in court, but much should still be done to ensure that guidelines that come into existence also include the component of critical reflection on the process being followed. Mogole (2008:12) defines guidelines as defined ways of doing things and therefore it should be expected that guidelines in this field should be broadened to include reflective practices. As it is unclear how social workers utilise reflection in South Africa, research is needed to build on the knowledge about this construct. Reflective practice guidelines could then be developed to assist social workers in critical reflection within the work-context that will lead to improved performance. As there seems to be a link between level of education and reflection, it seems necessary that student social workers be introduced as early as possible to the concept of reflection so that this skill can develop as they gain more knowledge.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Literature suggests some relationship between two of the constructs, but a link between all three the constructs is just vaguely suggested and does not investigate the relationship between these constructs. The example of W.L. Van der Westhuizen's Facebook page

(<http://nofsw.org/>-Forensic Social Work South Africa | Facebook) suggests that the three constructs are already being linked together within the field of forensic social work. It is however still an area for further exploration. A relationship between the three constructs will open the door for the social work profession to embrace social media both in teaching and in supervision. A further step would then be to support the establishment of two vital guidelines for the South African context, namely a reflective practice guideline and an ethical guideline on social media utilisation in the profession. To accomplish this, a lot more research will be needed around these constructs. For the forensic social work field, a relationship between the three constructs will mean that a real challenge, namely that of geographical location of forensic social workers, will no longer be a challenge, as creative ways could be found to bring supervision or consultation to them. Social media tools could also be utilised in creative ways to bring about a focus on reflective practice.

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SECTION C: RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT, ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORK USAGE AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN FORENSIC SOCIAL WORK.

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Abstract

Social media is a potential tool which can be utilised in South Africa for supervision and support purposes within forensic social work, as well as in the development of reflective practice abilities of the forensic social worker. In this article the value of online social networking as a contributor towards social support and reflective practice is highlighted through the relationship that was found between three constructs, namely perceived social support, social network usage and reflective practice. The relationship was established by utilising an online survey using three standardised scales, namely the ISSB, SRIS and MTUAS. The findings indicate that social support correlates with both social network usage and self-reflection independently, but reflective practice does not relate significantly to social support. Recommendations are made regarding the increased use of social media in practice supervision.

Keywords

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

Social media in its' various forms is fast being integrated into the social work profession in many creative ways all over the world. Like other parts of the world (Dombo, Kays & Weller, 2014:909; Kirwan & Mc Guckin, 2014:119), South African social workers seem to be utilising social media more frequently for personal and sometimes for professional purposes. Social media has already successfully linked family and friends (Budiman, 2008:18-26) separated by large geographical. Within social work it has the potential to link members of the professional community to one another (Hitchcock & Battista, 2013:35; Kilpeläinen, Päykkönen & Sankala, 2011:2-3). Its potential further lies in its support value as people using this medium feel connected to one another. Social workers do reflect upon their work, and because they are exposed to modern technology, are increasingly also utilising social media and networking for self-reflective purposes (Hickson, 2012:32). In social work, social media may be utilised as a potential tool for supervision and support purposes as well as for the development of reflective practice abilities. The value thereof in forensic social work, is however greater, given the limited opportunities currently for "live" supervision within this field due to such aspects as large geographical areas and few suitable qualified social workers able to act as supervisors. This article aims to describe the nature of the relationship amongst three constructs, *perceived social support*, *online social network usage* and *self-reflection and insight* and draw correlations to highlight relationships. These constructs were measured by the *Inventory for Social Supportive Behaviour* (ISSB) (Barrera, Sandler & Ramsay, 1981: 435-447), the *Media and Technology Usage and Attitude Scale* (MTUAS) (Rosen, Whaling, Carrier, Cheever & Rokkum, 2013:2501-2511) and the *Self-reflection and Insight scale* (SRIS) (Grant, Franklin & Langford, 2002:821-836) and the relationships were measured

with parametric and non-parametric tests. The reason why establishing the existence of such relationships are important for the social work profession, is that it may prove that social media can be used actively as platform for supervision and because it can be accessed over great distances for purposes of support and education.

3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE THREE CONSTRUCTS

Social workers increasingly use social media in a professional and personal capacity for purposes of de-briefing, awareness training, reflection with their clients (Dreifuerst, 2010:3; Hickson, 2012:30-34), for doing research, data collection, online counselling, group counselling and social advocacy, for writing personal blogs and journals (Halabuza, 2014:23), for soliciting collegial support to gain a sense of relief, release and an opportunity to deconstruct, share, discuss interests and learn from others' experiences (Cunningham & Moore, 2014:274; Gunawardena, Hermans, Sanchez, Richmond, Bohley & Tuttle, 2009:6; Lynch, 2012:8) for purposes of self-expression, communication and for defining who they are (Gunawardena *et al.*, 2009:6-7; McElveen, 2014:3).

By gaining joint access to social networking sites, practice communities are formed by practitioners, which is defined as groups of people with shared concerns, passions or problems regarding a specific topic, which deepens their knowledge and expertise through regular interaction (Gunawardena *et al.*, 2009:6). In such communities, attachments may form as people feel supported by one another. Social support is defined as relationships of attachment to a person or group where an individual believe that he is cared for and loved, esteemed and valued and that he is part of a network of communication and mutual obligations (Cobb, 1976: 300; Feeley, Moon, Kozey & Slowe, 2010:171; Hobfoll & Stokes, 1988:499). Social networking tools can assist to develop practitioner expertise through the support of online communities of practice.

The use of social networking sites can cause ethical dilemmas in practice (Dombo *et al.*, 2014:901; Saladino, 2014:5). Social workers increasingly find that their personal use of social media encroaches upon their professional lives (Dombo *et al.*, 2014:909; Kirwan & McGuckin, 2014:119), as it diminishes boundaries between personal and professional personalities. According to Halabuza (2014:24), social network users may neglect confidentiality requirements or fail to adequately set privacy settings on social network sites, resulting in violations of confidentiality and privacy arrangements. Social networking behaviour may therefore become inappropriate in cases where roles conflict or where vested interests exist, or networkers become careless in distancing themselves from client situations. Despite these potentially harmful ethical issues social networks have equally as many positive and supportive capabilities. Hickson (2012:34) found that social networking sites were regarded a source of support by social workers, where they could reflect on practice issues whilst interacting with other social workers and even with friends. Kilpeläinen *et al.* (2011:7-10) support this view as they have found in a study that social media effectively link social workers from a large geographical area and these social workers felt supported within the group and were able to develop their reflective abilities. Technology can powerfully support the faster development of reflective thinking through the use of social networking platforms (Benson, Hardy & Maxfield, 2001:87, Kayisli, s.a.:27).

Through reflection it becomes possible to understand how personal knowledge contributes to professional practice and how professional experiences impact our personal wellbeing (Ruch, 2002:204). Reflection should be a healthy, constructive process undertaken by self-aware professionals at their own pace, with support from colleagues, family and friends (Yip, 2006:782) to enable a critical evaluation of own practice responses and power in relation to that of service users (Finlay, 2008:1; Raniga, 2012:280). Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000:212) define an expert social worker as a self-aware practitioner. To be an expert,

which is the expectation society places on a forensic social worker, requires critical self-awareness that is mostly obtained through a deep level of self-reflection and together with insight are central to self-regulation which is necessary if the social worker wants to achieve goals and improve upon their performance.

Self-reflection can be defined as the ability to integrate professional practice theory with experience and insight can be defined as an awareness of one's own and others' performance and a capacity to reflect thereon to make appropriate judgements (Roberts & Stark, 2008:2). The Department of Social Development (2014:1-5) calls upon forensic social workers to incorporate reflective practice into forensic social work. Reflective practice is a multi-disciplinary construct adopted by Social Work that should be understood in a discipline specific manner (Aronson, Niehaus, Hill-Sakurai, Lai & O'Sullivan, 2012:808; Finlay, 2008:1). Reflective practice as an approach recognises complexities, uncertainties and risks characteristic of social work practice and encourages thinking (or reflecting) about one's own unique characteristics, multiple ways of managing client problems and generation of specific knowledge for specific problems (Halabuza, 2014:28). Reflective practice is a process of self-involvement and self-reflection, which under appropriate supportive conditions, is increased (Yip, 2006:778-781) and acknowledges the dynamic interconnectedness between professional and personal "self" (McDonald, 2009:4; Raniga, 2012:280). It is an active, deliberate process of critically examining or challenging of own practice, enabling self-development and personal transformation (Duffy, 2007:1405) and leading to experiential learning, insight gaining and self-awareness (Finlay, 2008:1), as well as reflecting on own background, assumptions, positioning, feelings, behaviour, the wider organisational, ideological and political context of the client system (Finlay, 2008:6).

Reflective practice, the use of social network sites and social support gained from interacting and reflecting upon one's professional life increasingly occurs knowingly or unknowingly in most professional roles, inclusive of social work. How these constructs interact and link with one another eventually becomes the topic of this article.

3.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

In reviewing the three main constructs of this study, namely online social networking, self-reflection and social support, there seems to be sufficient international literature exploring these constructs individually, applied to the roles of social workers and in relation to one another.

Literature clearly demonstrates the benefits and pitfalls of social network utilisation by social workers, specifically for the purpose of practice reflection. Many articles about critical reflection exist in the international body of knowledge and across various disciplines, but not so locally as paucity in articles regarding these constructs are observed. International literature focuses on the role of reflection in both theory and field instruction and placements of social workers; tools and techniques for practice reflection such as journaling and narrative approaches; critical theory and feminism and reflection as tool for cultural sensitive practice. No articles on reflective practice within the field of Forensic social work could be sourced. The topic of networking equally received little attention in local literature. Social networking has been described from a nursing perspective by Nyangeni, Du Rand and Van Rooyen (2015:4-8), who found the use of social networking by nurses in training to be largely inappropriate, asking for clear guidelines that promote ethical social network during training of nurses. No literature could be found specifically relating to the three constructs of this study, although some literature was found that vaguely suggests a relationship. Therefore,

indigenous research is needed to gain an improved knowledge and understanding of these constructs and to address the gaps in literature from a South African perspective.

Ruud (2013:8) indicates that researchers still have a limited understanding of the extent to which social networking sites relate to perceptions of social support and Rebollo and Vico (2014:175) indicate that most research on this topic has focussed on child and adolescent populations and not on adults. There is a need to investigate the role of factors such as age, gender, geographic location etc. in adult populations relating to the three constructs under investigation. This should bring about a better understanding of the professional utilisation of social networks as tools for self-reflection and practice improvement.

Currently little is understood about how social workers utilise social networks as tools for self-reflection, support and practice improvement. In a highly stressful work-environment such as forensic social work, it is imperative that these constructs are better understood as online supportive structures may be useful tools worth exploiting in future. The forensic environment may be regarded as counter-reflective, multi-disciplinary and adversarial. It is an environment according to (Cole, 2012:5-8) where role players work towards different objectives and there is often little space for emotionality or reflection. Locally forensic social workers in most practice contexts at present receive little or no supervision on their forensic work and many are unable to access supervision due to significant geographical distances between the forensic social worker and a suitable qualified supervisor. Thus, opportunities for social support may be lacking in these practice conditions, hence it may be of importance to consider the role of online supportive structures as replacement for live social support.

Regarding the supportive nature of work environments, Ruch (2005:662) singles out the concept of “containment” as critical pre-condition for the healing effect of social support. Containment is achieved by accessing so-called safe spaces where social workers can safely

make sense of the uncertainty and anxiety they encounter daily complementing earlier stated deconstruction and reconstruction activities associated with social support. Frisch, Häusser, Van Dick and Mojzisch (2014:154-155) report on the direct, positive stress releasing effect of social support. They found that social support was not always effective in reducing stress directly and this they attributed to a lack of a shared social identity or group membership, an important pre-condition for effectiveness of social support. This study not only considered the use of social networks as a contributor to social support, but also whether social network usage enables the user to find some common identity at the receiving end of the technology, a person that assists the achievement of a certain supportive level of “containment”.

3.4 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH STUDY

The aim of this study was to explore the nature of support, reflective practice and social media usage of social workers with the hope of being able to utilise findings eventually to the betterment of supporting the forensic social workers through supervision. As reflective practice is promoted within this service field, it is important that we formulate a better understanding of how social workers practice reflective abilities. It further seems necessary to find ways to overcome the challenges in supporting social workers from a large geographical area where live supervision cannot be accessed easily. Social networking may offer a way to address this challenge.

3.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions informed this study and are addressed in this article:

1. Is there a significant relationship between the three constructs, namely perceived social support, online social network usage and reflective practice?

2. Does online social network usage contribute to reflective practice and perceived social support?

3.6 ETHICAL APPROVAL

The project was approved by the North West University Health Research Ethics Committee with Ethics number: NWU-00360-15-S1. Due to the on-line survey data collection the research had a low risk level.

3.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research approach was followed. A non-experimental exploratory design was used to enable the measurement of relevant variables at a specific time without manipulation of variables (Maree & Pietersen, 2014:152). The study is correlational as it looks at relationships between constructs (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:183) tentatively and hypothetically without having the objective to generalise findings. As hypotheses are tested, this study can be viewed as a combination exploratory correlation study.

The research population of choice was forensic social workers, but given the limited number of social workers formally trained in forensic social work, the study was opened to all social workers in South Africa. Two recruitment strategies were employed namely 1) the alumni list of social workers who obtained a forensic social work degree from the North West University, Potchefstroom between 2006 and 2014 were used and 2) snowball sampling were used to identify further respondents, thereby using non-probability sampling methods. With this sampling method the limitations around generalising and representativeness of the population should be kept in mind (Maree & Pietersen, 2014:176). Fifty-one (N=51) social workers completed the online survey. Of this group, only five (n=5) fit with the first recruitment strategy.

3.8 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

An online survey generated through Question Pro (<https://www.questionpro.com/>) as online host, was e-mailed to respondents. The role of an online host is to ensure the confidentiality of respondents and to further retain the integrity in the survey process. The advantage of online surveys is that it is anonymous, can cover an unrestricted geographical area and can be sent to large numbers of prospective respondents at relatively low costs (Buchanan & Hvizdak, 2009:37; Rubin & Babbie, 2005:299).

3.8.1 Instrumentation

Biographical data items were collected and combined with a battery of standardised measures for the three constructs, namely social support, measured by the *Inventory for Social Supportive Behaviour* (ISSB), social networking usage, measured by means of the *Media and Technology Usage and Attitude Scale* (MTUAS) and self-reflection and insight, measuring reflective abilities by means of the *Self-reflection and Insight scale* (SRIS). A study of this nature requires selection of scales that have been rigorously standardised (Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011:207) and sufficient evidence exists about the psychometric properties of the ISSB, MTUAS and SRIS. The three measuring scales have however not been standardised within the South African context and the intent of the study was not to accomplish this. The researchers therefore chose to work with prior derived properties. The properties of these scales are as follows:

A. The Inventory of Social Supportive Behaviours (ISSB)

The ISSB, developed by Barrera *et al.* (1981:435-447) is a 40 item Likert-type scale appropriate to use in community-based surveys to assess support derived from types of relationships, such as family or friends within a time-limited period (Milburn, Brown &

Lawrence, 1987:4). The ISSB can be customised by adding or removing items that are unique to a stressor and is scored by summing or averaging responses to individual items where higher numbers indicates more regular frequencies (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010:517). For this study the ISSB factor clusters with labels of “*emotional support*”, “*guidance*” and “*tangible assistance*” was used. The reliability and validity of this scale has been tested thoroughly by various studies and the internal consistency reliability of Cronbach’s alpha ranges from 0.92 to 0.94 with the original instrument having a consistent reliability above 0.90 (Barrera *et al.*, 1981:441).

B. The Media and Technology Usage and Attitude Scale (MTUAS)

The MTUAS, developed by Rosen *et al.* (2013: 2501–2511) consists of 60 items arranged into 11 subscales covering technology and social media usage behaviours which scores between 0.61 and 0.97 on Cronbach’s alpha. Four sub-scales in this scale assess attitudes towards technology and have a Cronbach’s alpha ranged between 0.80 and 0.87 (Rosen *et al.*, 2013:2502-2504). This means that all 15 sub-scales showed acceptable to excellent reliability and can therefore be administered individually. MTUAS is scored by summing or averaging responses to individual items and some items are reverse scored.

C. The Self-reflective and Insight Scale (SRIS)

The SRIS, developed by Grant *et al.* (2002:821-836) is a 20-item Likert-type scale consisting of two factors which can be clustered together under three components, namely “*engagement in self-reflection*” (SRIS-SR), “*need for self-reflection*” (SRIS-SR) measured by 12 items and “*insight*” (SRIS-IN) measured by 8 items (Harris, 2012:57). Both these factors are central to self-regulation and self-consciousness which is necessary in goal achievement and assist practice evaluation to improve performance (Grant *et al.*,

2002:821). While self-reflection is seen as the ability to integrate professional practice theory with experience, insight can be defined as an awareness of one's own performance and that of others and a capacity to reflect thereon in order to make appropriate judgements (Roberts & Stark, 2008:2). Self-regulation focuses on the recognition of the need to reflect, the process of engaging with reflection and the presence of insight (Van Breda & Agherdien, 2012:129). This scale was chosen for its ability to capture a change in thinking regarding engagement in self-reflection, a needed skill to commence reflection on practice (Asselin & Fain, 2013:118).

The SRIS is scored by calculating the total scores for each component of the questionnaire and the higher the score the greater the level of self-reflection or insight on the two subscales. Coefficient alpha for the SRIS-SR was .91, and .87 for the SRIS-IN. A non-significant correlation of $r = -.03$ between the SRIS-SR and the SRIS-IN was found in the original study (Grant *et al.*, 2002:826-827) and these two factors appear to be inextricably connected. The original model proposed that self-reflection should correlate positively with insight (Chen, Lai, Chang, Hsu & Pai, 2016:342). Reliability and content validity was found with object measures such as diary keeping (Grant *et al.*, 2002:826-833; Stein & Grant, 2014:12). Factorial validity has been established (Roberts & Stark, 2008:3). The SRIS demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity.

3.9 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the categorising, ordering, manipulating and summarising of data to answer research questions (Kruger, De Vos, Fouché & Venter, 2005:218). Data in this study was analysed with the assistance of the NWU Statistical Data Analysis service. Analysis for this study consisted of the following steps;

- 1) Sample characteristics were analysed by means of univariate descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics refer to a collection of methods used to organise and summarise data in a meaningful way (Pietersen & Maree, 2014:183).
- 2) Mean scores on the different scales was regarded as continuous and dependent variables whilst the nominal variables were considered as independent or grouping variables.
- 3) Correlations amongst the key concepts of the study were investigated by means of a non-parametric Spearman's Rho test to describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between variables. This non-parametric correlation coefficient makes no assumptions about the distribution of variables but uses ranks instead of the actual values and can be used with ordinal scales (Pietersen & Maree, 2014:241). Non-parametric tests are less powerful than their parametric alternatives, but still provide sufficient strength to investigate relationships in smaller samples (Pallant, 2011:112). First, we investigated the relationship amongst the three constructs in terms of the overall scores, then repeated the analysis involving components of the different constructs as indicated in the following Figures:

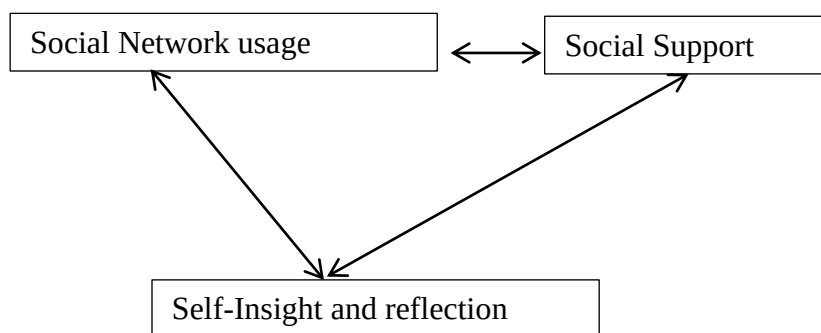


Figure 1: Overall model

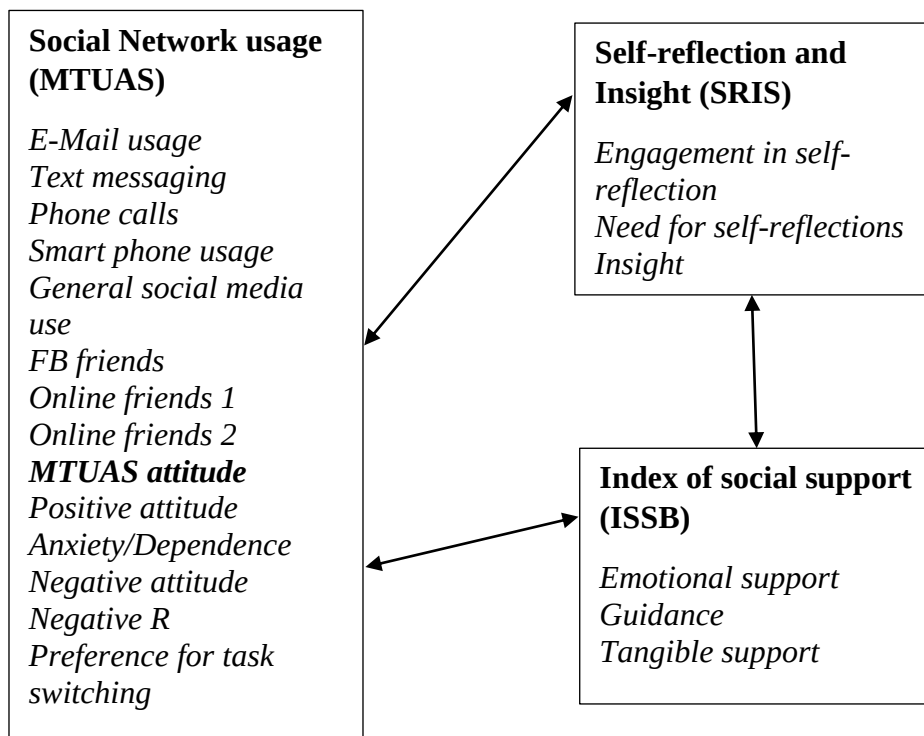


Figure 2: Component model

Correlations were investigated at the 95% and 99% confidence interval, whilst correlations of 0.2 and greater were interpreted as relevant.

- 4) Scale properties such as Construct validity by means of factor analysis were not established in this study due to the relative small sample sizes and the fact that prior standardised scales were utilised.
- 5) Scale reliabilities were assessed by means of Cronbach's Alpha.
- 6) A non-parametric Mann Whitney-U test was used to analyse data further. The data was analysed with the assistance of the Statistical Consultations Services of the North West University.

3.10 RESULTS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

3.10.1 Descriptive statistics of the sample

This analysis of data starts with univariate descriptive statistics regarding the respondents who participated in this study. Forty-six female social workers (90, 2%) and 5 male social workers (9, 8%) participated in the study, reflecting that the profession is still dominated to a large degree by females. In this study, it was important to reflect upon the characteristics of a younger generation of social workers against those of older and often more experienced and higher qualified social workers. Respondents were grouped into two age groups, namely group 1 (20-30 years) and group 2 (31+ years). Group 1 consisted of 35, 3% (n =18) of the respondents, whilst group 2 consisted of 64, 7% (n = 33) of the respondents. In group 2, twelve (23, 5%) were between the ages of 31-40, fifteen (29, 4%) between 41-50 and five (9, 8%) between 51-60 with only one (2%) being older than 60.

Most respondents (n =39) possessed a 4-year BSW qualification (76, 5%), seven respondents (13, 7%) had a post-graduate qualification in other focus areas of social work, whilst five (9, 8%) had a post-graduate qualification in forensic social work. The small proportion of forensic qualifications made it impossible for the researchers to study this group separately.

Thirty-five respondents (68, 6%) worked in the NGO-sector, seven (13, 7%) were employed at governmental departments, seven (13, 7%) worked in private practice or were self-employed whilst two (3, 9%) of the respondents in this study were unemployed. In terms of work-experience, respondents were grouped into two groups, with group 1 (between 1 and 10 years' experience) consisting of twenty-eight (54, 9%) respondents and group 2 (more than 11 years' experience) consisting of twenty-three (45%) respondents. Respondents (39, 2%) were mostly involved in generalised social work tasks, court work (35%) and supervision (47,

1%). Only 13, 7% indicated that their work involved forensic investigative work. Respondents (64, 7%) preferred to discuss cases with colleagues as opposed to friends.

Forty-nine respondents (96, 1%) indicated that they had a social media account and two respondents (3, 9%) indicated not having such an account at all. The most popular social media accounts seemed to be Facebook (n=46, 90, 2%) and WhatsApp (n=46, 90, 2%). E-mail (n=48, 94, 1%) and short message services (n=44, 86, 3%) seemed to still be popular methods of communicating. The majority of respondents (72%) received some form of social support from social media with 49% indicating that social media was their primary source of support. Halabuza (2014:23) quotes figures of 47% of adults using social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook.

3.10.2 Scale reliability

Table 1: Internal Reliability of ISSB, MTUAS and SRIS

SCALE	Cronbach Alpha (N=51)
ISSB “ <i>Emotional support</i> ”	0.913
ISSB “ <i>Guidance</i> ”	0.951
ISSB “ <i>Tangible assistance</i> ”	0.531
MTUAS “ <i>E-mailing</i> ”	0.877
MTUAS “ <i>Text messaging</i> ”	0.678
MTUAS “ <i>Phone calling</i> ”	0.609
MTUAS “ <i>Smartphone usage</i> ”	0.824
MTUAS “ <i>General Social Media usage</i> ”	0.940
MTUAS “ <i>Facebook friendships</i> ”	0.936
MTUAS “ <i>Online friendships</i> ”	0.416

MTUAS-ATTITUDE “ <i>Positive attitudes towards technology</i> ”	0.706
MTUAS-ATTITUDE “ <i>Anxiety/Dependence regarding technology</i> ”	0.846
MTUAS-ATTITUDE “ <i>Negative attitude toward technology</i> ”	0.696
MTUAS-ATTITUDE “ <i>Preference for task switching</i> ”	0.779
SRIS-SR “ <i>Engagement in self-reflection</i> ”	0.595
SRIS-SR “ <i>Need for self-reflection</i> ”	0.593
SRIS-IN “ <i>Insight</i> ”	0.894

Table 1 above reflects the reliability of the ISSB, MTUAS and SRIS.

The MTUAS factor of “*online friendships*” shows a poor reliability coefficient of just over 0.4.

These results might indicate differences in the understanding of the “online” persona versus “in person” persona. People can argue that those whom they have met in the virtual world are also “in person” personas as they see them daily on their social media accounts. The virtual “friend” can take on a “life” persona. This scale dimension was discarded due to weak reliability.

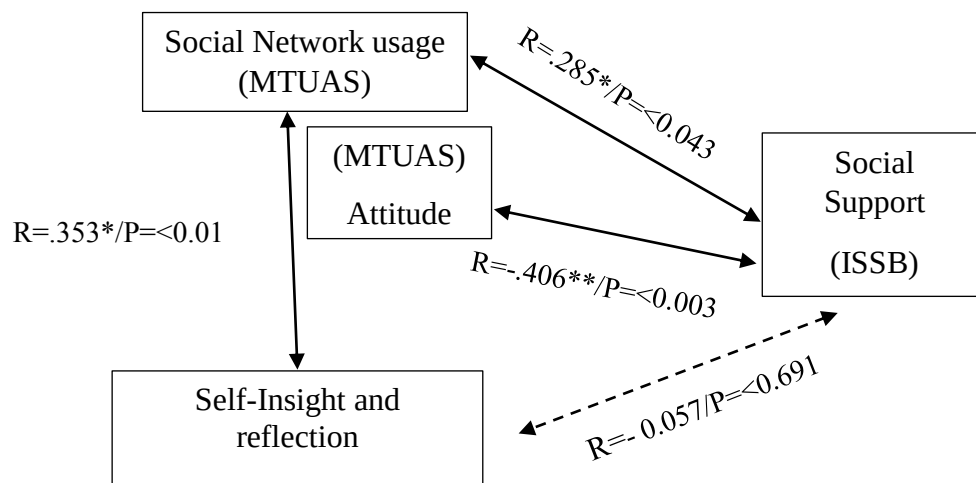
Interpretation of the Cronbach's alpha needed to be done with caution but a possible reason for the poor reliability performance of some of the factors on these scales could be related to the psychological nature and diversity of the constructs (Field, 2006:1) which realistically could have values even below 0.7. Another possible reason could be related to survey fatigue on some of the sub-scales of the MTUAS as this scale was the final scale in the survey.

3.10.3 Correlations between the three constructs

The analysis was performed according to the above plan and the results are provided as follows:

a) Overall model result

Correlations for the overall model are shown in Figure 3.



Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

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

Figure 3: Correlations between the constructs of social support (ISSB), social network usage (MTUAS) and self-reflection and insight (SRIS)

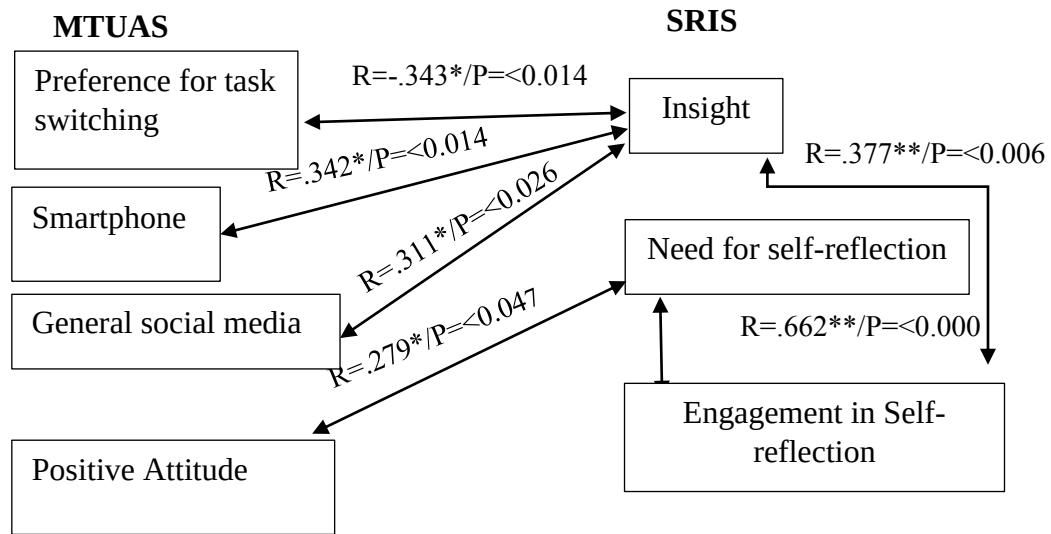
According to the above result, *self-insight and reflection* (SRIS) does not correlate significantly or strongly with *perceived social support* (ISSB). It can be concluded that social workers do not necessarily derive social support from reflecting on their own practice. *Self-*

insight positively correlates with *social media usage*. This means the more frequently social workers tend to use social media, the more likely they are to reflect about their everyday life and possibly their own practice. It is possible that the content of social media and the amount of support received in this manner, stimulate the social worker to more actively and deeply think about aspects of both their personal and professional lives.

There is a positive and moderate correlation between *social media usage* (MTUAS) overall and *perceived social support* (ISSB). This supports the finding by Nabi, Prestin and So (2013:724) that, as one's Facebook friends increase in number, so do one's perceptions of support. Social media usage does significantly increase perceived social support according to this model. Thus, social workers seem to have embraced social media technology as source for support in their lives and may use this media to reflect on their practice, but reflecting about practice in itself does not promote a feeling of support. Social workers seemingly use social media for dual purposes, such as to learn about their own practice and to gain support, but these activities may not be integrated.

A significantly negative correlation was found between the ISSB and the MTUAS Attitude factor ($r = -.406^{**}$, $p < 0.003$) and a significantly negative correlation was also found between the general sub-scales of MTUAS and the MTUAS Attitude factor ($r = -.449^{**}$, $p < 0.001$). This seemed to indicate that, as support increased or decreased, attitude towards social media might change positively or negatively and likewise, any changes in the sub-scales of MTUAS might bring about a change in the MTUAS Attitude factor.

b) Component model results



* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

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

Figure 4: Correlations between MTUAS and SRIS

Figure 4 indicates a significant correlation between the SRIS components of “*engagement in self-reflection*” and “*need for self-reflection*” and between “*engagement in self-reflection*” and “*insight*”. Grant *et al.* (2002) indicate a correlation between self-regulation and insight (Aikin, Demirci & Yildiz, 2015:84). No significant relationship was found between “*need for self-reflection*” and “*insight*”. This indicates that social workers who engage in self-reflection will also have a need to reflect and will have insight into their own behaviour, but a need for reflection does not necessarily lead to insight. Lyke (2009:67) suggests that, if self-reflection and insight are unrelated, one may reflect without necessarily understanding the thoughts and feelings being reflected upon and similarly insight might be experienced without the need for reflection. A positive correlation exists between “*Positive attitude about social media usage*” and “*need for self-reflection*” (SRIS-SR). This indicates that social workers

who positively engage with social media are more likely to utilise social media to satisfy their need for self-reflection. This seem to be in line with studies that found that social workers seem more inclined to reflect on their practice informally and outside of the workplace and with people whom they trust, than within the formal organisational context (Andrews, Gidman & Humphreys, 1998:416; Coombs, 2001:266; Fritts, 1989:166). A strong positive relationship was also found between SRIS-IN and “*general social media usage*” as well as “*smart phone usage*”. It seems that social workers, who frequently interact with any form of social media including smart phones, tend to be self-insightful. Roberts and Stark (2008:9) suggest a process where students move from theory to practice and as this happen, they become less engaged in self-reflection and experience greater insight. This seemed to be true in this study as social workers with more than 11 years’ practice experience showed a small to medium difference between mean ($M=2.1522$ as opposed to the less experienced $M=2,5445$) and effect size (0.46), indicating a slightly greater insight than those with less practice experience.

Figure 5 below shows that smart phone users, including those who frequently text and social media users have a greater need for tangible, concrete assistance, guidance and social support. This supports the findings of Kim (2014:2213) and Alderson (2012:39-40) that social media in its various forms is a significant source of social support, which includes such aspects as financial support, emotional support and knowledge support. Furthermore, the significant correlations amongst the three social support constructs show that tangible assistance and help have the most impact on a person’s feelings of support.

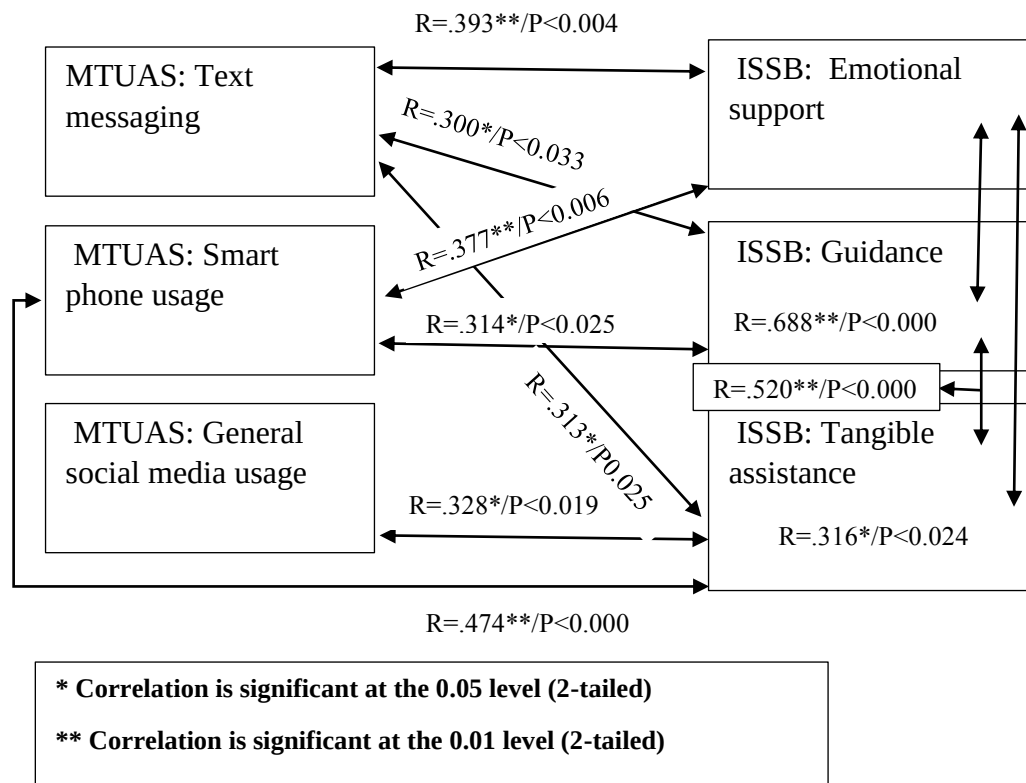


Figure 5: Correlations between Texting, smart phone and general social media use and social support

Emotional support refers to expressions of concern and caring (Cohen, 2011:8), while guidance refers to support through information and tangible support refers to the giving of practical help or reception thereof (Bailey, 1998:8; Barrera, 1986:417; Cohen, 2011:8; Stefanone, Kwon & Lackaff, 2012:454). “Guidance” and “tangible assistance” correlated significantly ($r=.520^{**}$, $p<0,000$), indicating that people who receive guidance also receive tangible support. Erol (2008:35) found similar correlations within the original study of Barrera *et al.* (1981:435-447) as well as in his study where he replicated the ISSB to Turkish culture and tested it with a group of university students. As the findings of this study are like results already found by other studies, it seems to indicate construct validity of this scale. It

can therefore be concluded that, in this sample, social media usage and self-reflection and insight show a complex but inter-related connectedness, making social media a potential instrument to be utilised more effectively to support and assist social workers and promote reflective practice. This is an important finding as this will open the door to the utilisation of technology for purposes of offering support to social workers, especially those who, due to geographical location, are unable to access in-person support from supervisors. It is also important to note that support through technology is much wider than just emotional support and includes other important aspects such as knowledge support that will assist a supervisor significantly in utilising technology to the advantage of the supervisory relationship.

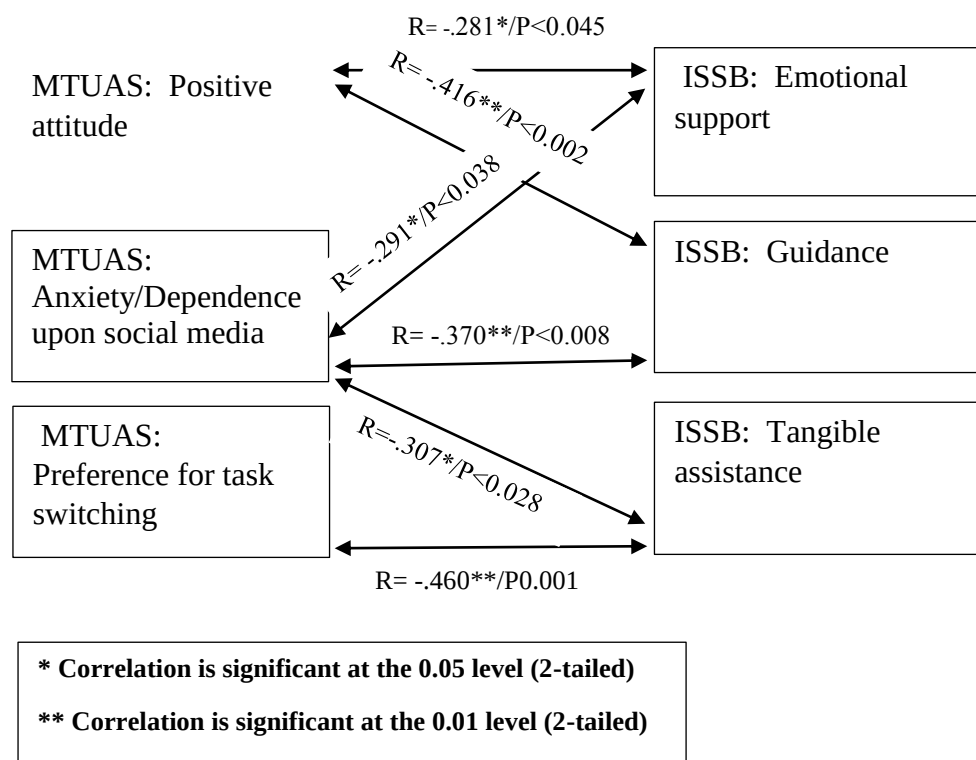


Figure 6: Attitudes towards social media use and social support

Looking at the MTUAS Attitude sub-scale and components of the ISSB as shown in Figure 6, it can be seen that “*emotional support*” negatively correlates with a “*positive attitude*” (about

social media usage) and “*anxiety/dependence*” (about social media). Anxiety/dependence in the context of this scale refers to the feelings of stress related to not having access to the social media and feelings of dependence on social media. This suggests that, with an increase in emotional support, a possible decrease of accessing of- and dependency upon social media may happen. Emotionally supported social workers will probably be less dependent on social media and may access it less often. Further research may be needed to determine whether emotional support solely derived from social media will yield similar results, thereby indicating the possibility of a vicious circle effect where emotional support is obtained through social media usage, leading to a decrease of accessing it, possibly leading to feeling a lack of support, leading back to an increased usage of social media. In fact, it can become an attachment object to people. Dependency or anxiety of being out of touch without social media affects more than half and as much as 73% of smartphone users (Özgür, 2016:1712) and if pathological, it is known as “nomophobia” (Bragazzi & Del Puente, 2014:156; Melumad, 2017:10; Pellowe, Cooper & Mattingly, 2015:20). This viewpoint can offer a possible explanation as to why social workers may feel physically supported when they spend time on Facebook. The social media becomes an extension of the self (Clayton, Leshner & Almond, 2015:121; Melumad, 2017:10) and as it increasingly becomes part of the self, it also becomes natural and loses the fear-element attached to it, hence the finding that “*tangible assistance*” has a strong negative correlation with “*anxiety/dependence*” and a significantly negative correlation with “*preference for task switching*”. Preference for task switching refers to the individual’s choice to stick with one activity as opposed to being busy with many tasks at the same time and switching between them. Within this viewpoint, the findings seem to suggest that, as social media becomes part of the self, the preference to switch between tasks will possibly decrease. In fact, different tasks become so much a part of the self, that they seem to lose their boundaries. A person may be busy reading an e-mail, switching to his

Facebook account and going back to reading the e-mail without noticing that he is completing two tasks in a short space of time.

3.10.4 T-test findings

The researcher wanted to know whether two factors, namely age and level of experience, played any role in the way respondents answered the questions. For this purpose, the Spearman Rho-test was used, results of which were confirmed by the Mann Witney-U test. The findings were as follows:

a) Influence of age on social support

Table 2: Inventory of Social supportive behaviour (ISSB) with factor clusters of Emotional support, guidance and tangible assistance paired with the age categories of 20 -30 vs. 31+

ISSB Factor cluster	Age	N	Mean	Standard deviation	P value	Effect size
ISSB: Emotional Support	20 - 30	18	2,6759	1,02417	0,466	0,20
	31+	33	2,4679	0,83692		
ISSB: Guidance	20 - 30	18	2,4684	0,83211	0,010	0,75
	31+	33	1,8485	0,64800		
ISSB: Tangible Assistance	20 - 30	18	1,7333	0,66155	0,025	0,61
	31+	33	1,3273	0,38993		

Results indicate that, in the factor cluster of “*tangible assistance*”, there was a significant difference ($t = 2.388$, $p < .05$) CI.95 0.05476, 0.75736 between the younger social workers (aged 20-30) with ($M = 1.73$, $SD = 0.66$) and older social workers (31+years) with ($M = 1.32$, $SD = 0.38$). This seems to indicate that younger social workers may require more physical support, for example, a supervisor that gives them a specific tool to assist them in their work,

where older social workers may be more able to work independently, not requiring such physical support from the supervisor.

A visible difference ($t = 2.740$, $p < .05$), CI.95 0.15682, 1.08308 was found in terms of the factor cluster of “*guidance*”, between the younger social workers ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.64$) and the older social workers ($M = 1.84$, $SD = 0.64$). This indicates that the younger social workers may still need more guidance than the older group, which is to be expected as they may still lack some experience. No significant difference was found within the factor cluster of emotional support between the two age groups.

A Mann Whitney-U test found a significant difference in group medians between the younger social workers ($Md=33.50$, $n=18$) in terms of ISSB “*guidance*” and the older social workers ($Md=21.91$, $n=33$) $U=162,000$, $Z=-2.664$, $p=0.008$. It further showed a significant difference between the younger social workers ($Md=32.39$, $n=18$) and older social workers ($Md=22.52$, $n=33$) $U=182,000$, $Z=-2.322$, $p=0.020$ in terms of the ISSB cluster of “*tangible assistance*”. This confirms the t-test findings whereby it is indicated that younger social workers need more guidance and tangible assistance than the older group of social workers, which is to be expected as they are still in the phase of their careers and lives where they need more support and may feel more anxious in general about their lives and careers than older people who have already been schooled by life and career. This result is confirmed by Caldwell and Reinhardt (1988:144-145) who found anxious college students to be significantly more in need of guidance types of tangible support, compared to more secure individuals who tend to elicit and receive more emotional support.

There was a visible difference ($t=1.978$, $p < .05$) CI.95 -0.02167, 1.98253 in the respondents’ “*smart phone usage*” between the younger social workers ($M= 5.96$, $SD = 1.59$) and older social workers ($M=4.98$, $SD = 1.85$), indicating that younger social workers more regularly

use their smart phones than older social workers, suggesting that social media becomes increasingly important in the social worker's daily routine (Kim, 2014:2211) and that younger people are more likely to use modern social media. There was also a visible difference ($t=1,985$, $p<.05$) CI.95 $-0,06994$, $1,80731$ between the group of younger social workers ($M=5,52$, $SD=2,17$) and older social workers ($M=4,27$, $SD=2,11$) in terms of their "Facebook friendships", with younger social workers having around 250 Facebook friends and older social workers around 175 Facebook friends on average. A Mann Whitney-U test revealed a significant difference in terms of the number of Facebook friends of the younger social workers ($Md=31,42$, $n=18$) and the older group ($Md=23,05$, $n=33$), $U=199,500$, $Z=-1,929$ and $p=0,054$. Literature supports the difference in technology usage between younger and older generations (Alderson, 2012:14-15). A significant difference was also found between the number of "online friendships" where the person was not met in person, with the younger social workers ($M=2,44$, $SD=1,88$) having on average more than 50 such friends ($Md=32,19$, $n=18$) and older social workers ($M=1,57$, $SD=1,41$) having less than 50 such friends ($Md=22,62$, $n=33$), $U=185,500$, $Z=-2,445$ and $p=0,014$ but no visible difference was found using Spearman's Rho with ($t=1,710$, $p<.05$) CI.95 $-0,17274$, $1,91012$. A study done by Stefanone, Lackaff & Rosen (2010:522) found a positive and significant relationship between the amount of reality television consumed and the likelihood that social network contacts were relative strangers. A smart phone is very similar to a television device where information, stories, videos etc. are shared on the device and as such, the amount of time spent is most likely also leading to having more contact with relative strangers (Ruud, 2013:6).

In general, younger social workers ($M=5,22$, $SD=2,29$) ($MD=31,69$) utilised "general social media" more often than older social workers ($M=4,14$, $SD=1,79$) ($MD=22,89$), $U=194,500$, $Z=-2,021$, $p<0,043$ by utilising general social media on average several times a week to once

a day versus the older social workers who utilised it once a week or more. Stefanone *et al.* (2012:459) report similar findings in terms of younger people.

b) Influence of level of experience on social support

Table 3: Inventory of Social supportive behaviours with factor clusters of guidance and tangible assistance paired with years' experience of 1-10 years' experience vs. 11 + years' experience.

ISSB cluster	Factor	Years' experience	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P. value	Effect size
ISSB: Guidance		1-10	28	2,3785	0,83827	0,001	0,82
		11+	23	1,6884	0,46208		
ISSB: Tangible Assistance		1-10	28	1,6786	0,60452	0,001	0,76
		11+	23	1,2174	0,27577		

In terms of years of experience, a visible difference ($t = 3.606$, $p < .05$) CI.95 0.20255, 0.71981 was found between the less experienced social workers (1-10 years' experience) with ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 0.60$) and more experienced social workers (10+ years) with ($M = 1.21$, $SD = 0.27$) on the factor cluster of “*tangible assistance*”. On the cluster factor of “*guidance*” a significant difference ($t = 3.722$, $p < .05$) CI.95 0.31628, 1.06395 was found between the less experienced social workers with ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 0.83$) and more experienced social workers ($M = 1.68$, $SD = 0.46$). No significant difference was found within the factor cluster of emotional support within experience level.

A Mann Whitney-U test found a significant difference in group medians between the less experienced social workers ($Md = 31.54$, $n = 18$) in terms of ISSB “*guidance*” and the more experienced social workers ($Md = 19.26$, $n = 33$) $U = 167,000$, $Z = -2.937$, $p = 0.003$. It further showed a significant difference between the less experienced social workers ($Md = 31.63$,

n=18) and more experienced social workers (Md=19,15, n=33) U= 164,500, Z= -3,054, p= 0,002 in terms of the ISSB cluster of “*tangible assistance*”.

A significant difference was found using the Mann Whitney U test when comparing the level of “*insight*” between the less experienced (MD=29,79) and more experienced social workers (MD=21,39) U= 216,000, Z= -2,012, p= 0,044). The mean was 2,54 for the less experienced and 2,15 for the more experienced workers, showing a more neutral stance on the part of less experienced social workers on issues needing insight than the more experienced social workers.

A visible difference (t= 2,409, p < .05) CI.95 0,19183, 2,12223) was noted between the less experienced social workers (M=5,85, SD=1,85) and more experienced social workers (M=4,69, SD = 1,57) in terms of their “*smart phone usage*”. A Mann Whitney-U test showed a significant difference in terms of the less experienced social workers (Md=30,09, n=28) and more experienced social worker (Md=21,02, n=23) U=207,500, Z=-2,170, p=0,030 regarding their “*smart phone usage*”. A visible difference (t=1,967, p< .05) CI.95 -0,02703, 2,39660 was also found in terms of the “*Facebook friendships*” of less experienced social workers (M=5,25, SD =2,14) and more experienced social worker (M= 4,06, SD =2,13). A Mann Whitney-U test revealed a visible difference (M29,66, n 28) between the less experienced and more experienced social workers (M21,54, n 23) U=219,500, Z=-1,948, p=0,051 in terms of their “*Facebook friendships*”. This implies that more experienced social workers have less Facebook friendships and use their smart phones less than the less experienced social workers. No indications were found that there was any difference between the less experienced and more experienced social workers in terms of their online friendships with both groups having 50 online friends.

3.11 CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest a relationship between social support and online social network usage. It also suggests a relationship between online social network usage and reflective practice. It did not reveal a significant relationship between social support and reflective practice. This means that reflective practice may either be a lesser known concept, or respondents do not directly associate reflective practice with receiving social support. Reflective practice is positively associated with social networking usage, demonstrating the important role this technology can play, both as source of social support and reflective practice agent. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalised to the forensic social work field specifically, they do add to the indigenous knowledge on the three constructs and the potential utilisation thereof in social work.

The findings further suggest differences between younger and older generations and between less experienced and more experienced social workers. Younger and less experienced respondents are more likely to use social networks as tools for reflection and tangible support and this underscores the importance of this technology for future use in for example supervision to younger workers. These findings are important as it can suggest possible ways of utilising social networking to the benefit of the profession.

3.12 RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, due to the relative small size of the sample, this study needs to be replicated to larger samples for confirmation of the findings obtained here. The greater investment in, adaptation of, and utilisation of social networking as a tool within the profession of social work, may hold great value. Social networking seems to be the important factor that supports self-reflection and perceptions of social support and as such will need a lot more indigenous

research to facilitate a true understanding thereof. With the necessary caution, social networking should be embraced for its potential to support some of the challenges within the social work profession as was mentioned before. For example, as an interim measure, supervisors at agencies can easily create closed supervision groups for their staff on social networks such as WhatsApp or Facebook. These forums can be used by staff to reflect on cases, share successes or failures, and generally reflect on own roles in work situations. The supervisor then becomes an active collaborator in the group by offering advice or to facilitate solutions to problems. Younger workers may easily take to this option as they are able to report issues they have immediately and get an immediate answer from the supervisor. Alternatively, workers can send voice messages to the group, presenting problem case information in voice format. Furthermore, provided confidentiality can be assured as well as the necessary permissions are obtained, workers can share actual video material with the group to demonstrate issues they may have.

The potential that social networking holds is unlimited and social work as a profession can gain from actively starting to utilise it to the benefit of the profession. Not embracing social networking as a tool in social work may mean that the profession in South Africa may be lacking behind in the international arena and that it cannot link effectively with the international community of social workers to the benefit of globalisation of theories in social work.

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SECTION D: FINAL CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Final conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the study and relevant literature and shared in this section. This study is titled:

The relationship between perceived social support, online social network usage and reflective practice in forensic social work.

The questions that are addressed by testing hypotheses according to the correlational design are:

1. Is there a significant relationship between the three constructs, namely perceived social support, online social network usage and reflective practice?
2. Does online social network usage contribute to reflective practice and perceived social support?

The findings of this study suggest a relationship between social support and online social network usage and between online social network usage and reflective practice but not between social support and reflective practice. Social networking usage contributes towards reflective practice and towards social support.

4.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was intended to measure the relationship between the three constructs within the context of forensic social work. This focus was followed to contribute to a better understanding of the unique practice conditions and demands, associated with the newly

established forensic social work specialisation. However, the limited number of forensic social workers who participated in this study makes it impossible to generalise the findings of this study to this specific field of social work. Despite this limitation, the findings do suggest valuable considerations that may assist the social work profession in general towards further embracing of social networking technology which in turn can be beneficial to social work in general and the specific field of forensic social work.

To limit the potential bias relating to access to online technology the researcher sent the online-survey where possible to work-place e-mail addresses as most social work offices are equipped with these facilities. However, some potential respondents could have been excluded from the study because of no access to online technology.

In terms of the model, some statistically significant effects were found, but some of the effects were relatively small. The correlational nature of the design does not lead to causal inferences and therefore speculations are made about the causal variables and their direction of influence.

Despite limitations, this study has extended the knowledge base regarding the three constructs in social work. This study was realised with a sample of 51 respondents.

4.3 FURTHER CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From this study the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The finding of this study seems to indicate that social networking is very popular amongst social workers. This holds potential benefit for the future educational and supportive functions within the profession. According to Tetloff, Hitchcock, Battista and Lowry (2014:24) learning processes has shifted profoundly from traditional

pedagogical approaches to technology approaches and purely pedagogical approaches will not equip social workers to excel as critical thinkers or social advocates in today's professional environment. The fact that social workers in this study have seemingly embraced the technology, means that they may be ready for new approaches to learning.

- Age plays a role in how social media is utilised by social workers. Younger social workers seem to form larger social networks and to also venture out to unknown social networks whilst older social workers seem to stick with traditional social networks within their known community spheres. This knowledge potentially holds value for formation of future online communities.
- Less experienced social workers need more guidance and tangible assistance, making them the ideal candidates for supervision. They seem to need to grow in their development of insight, again making them good candidates for supervision. This support the idea that newly qualified social workers should receive supervision to enable them to develop as a professional. The implications of this is that even though a social worker may have ample experience in generic social work, if they have just qualified as a forensic social worker, they may lack some of the forensic social work specific skills and experience and may therefore need guidance, again making them good candidates for supervision.
- Social media can be utilised to support social workers. Social media is already popular amongst social workers as shown by the high percentage of social workers in this study having an own social media account. Ways could be found to utilise social media in creative ways as a supervision platform. Many creative ways already exist, such as blogging, online journaling etc. that could be adapted to fit the specific supervision functions. New technology methods such as specifically created

applications can also be developed to support these functions. It seems that the question as to whether social media could assist with aspects of supervision has been confirmatively answered, and although suggestions have been made as to how this will be done, it will be up to further research to investigate this further.

- The positive attitude of social workers towards social media use and the mobility of technology such as smartphones now permit online communities to be constantly connected regardless of location and able to perform all sorts of daily activities (Alderson, 2012:2; Budiman, 2008:124; Özgür, 2016:1712). A benefit is that it allows relationships to form across geographical distance (Farrugia, 2013:5; Kilpeläinen *et al.*, 2011:2-3) thereby offering a solution to the problem of bringing supervision to social workers situated in a wide geographical area and overcoming the problem of supervisory skills in forensic social work. According to Kilpeläinen *et al.* (2011:3) receiving and giving professional consultation via the Internet is already used with success in Finland. As a matter of fact, a supervisor that is adequately trained in forensic social work can now be situated on the other side of the world, but through technology may be able to reach out in supervision to supervisees. Embracing technology can work to the advantage of both supervisor and supervisee in social work.
- Social media usage is a way for social workers to engage in self-reflection. It is therefore required that we embrace social media as a tool to create self-reflective practitioners within the field of social work. South African welfare organisations have always struggled to keep up with developments in technology. It is now suggested that these organisations embrace the technology for the enhancement of reflective practice which will truly create evidence-based practice. Hitchcock and Battista

(2013:34) argues that social media has the potential to inflect how future professionals will obtain and assess information for evidence-based practice.

- There seems to be no relationship between the reflective abilities of social workers and their perceived support or their use of social media. This seem to indicate that social media serves a dual purpose, to reflect and to gain support, but there is no support for the idea that the mere use of social media enhances one's capacity to self-reflect on practice. Thus, self-reflection is a skill learnt independently from social media usage which seems to indicate that reflection and training is an area to investigate and to also exploit in further development of social media. This opens the door for a new hypothesis, namely that if we can develop an app for instance that can assist social workers with reflecting and gaining insight, we may indeed find that social media is being used for self-reflection. Social media in its current format cannot create or enhance self-reflection, but can be a tool in teaching the skill of self-reflection.
- There may well be relevance in the growing body of literature suggesting that the social media devices become an extension of the self and that it becomes an attachment object (Cvetkovich, 2003:7). It has become a popular constant presence where sensory contact with the device is the first step to elicit and emotional relationship between the user and the device (Serrano-Puche, 2015:6). If this is the case, the device in a person's hands with the information displayed on it, may become an extension of the information within the person. Knowledge in the hand therefore can become knowledge for the head but not necessarily in the head, meaning that without proper evaluation of the knowledge in the hand, a person may just accept any information as relevant. This creates a potentially risky environment in which social workers will need to be able to distinguish between knowledge and information

available to them. It can therefore be concluded that with social media usage comes a wide field of potential risks that will also need to be considered.

- More research on various aspects of the relationship between the constructs of social support, social networking usage and self-reflection and insight may be needed to form a clearer understanding of their interaction with each other. This study should preferably be replicated with a bigger sample to test the hypothesis findings further. Research designs that utilises parametric testing could also be considered as it may result in more powerful statistics with a larger probability to show associations between the constructs.
- From the review of literature and the whole research process thus far, some general observations are made about areas for potential further research, namely;
 - Research is still needed that focus on the forensic social workers as a primary focus.
 - The further practical and ethical considerations may need to be clarified if social networking in the social work profession is to be used for work-related purposes.
 - Within research as a field, especially in South Africa, consideration can be given to the area of doing online research with a focus on the potential risks and how to avoid it.

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SECTION E: ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A

INVENTORY OF SOCIAL SUPPORTIVE BEHAVIOURS (ISSB)

“During the past four weeks, how often did other people do these activities for you, to you, or with you?” Respondents respond on a Likert scale as follows: “Not at all, once or twice, about once a week, several times a week, about every day”.

NR	ITEM
1.	Looked after a family member when you were away.
2.	Was right there with you (physically) in a stressful situation.
3.	Provided you with a place where you could get away for a while.
4.	Watched after your possessions when you were away (pets, plants, home, apartment, etc.).
5.	Told you what she/he did in a situation that was similar to yours.
6.	Did some activity with you to help you get your mind off things?
7.	Talked with you about some interests of yours.
8.	Let you know that you did something well.
9.	Went with you to someone who could take action.
10.	Told you that you are okay just the way you are.
11.	Told you that she/he would keep the things that you talk about private - just between the two of you.
12.	Assisted you in setting a goal for yourself.
13.	Made it clear what was expected of you.
14.	Expressed esteem or respect for a competency or personal quality of you.
15.	Gave you some information on how to do something.
16.	Suggested some action that you should take.
17.	Gave you over R250,00.
18.	Comforted you by showing you some physical affection.
19.	Gave you some information to help you understand a situation you were in.
20.	Provided you with some transportation.
21.	Checked back with you to see if you followed the advice you were given.
22.	Gave you under R250,00.
23.	Helped you understand why you didn't do something well.
24.	Listened to you talk about your private feelings.
25.	Loaned or gave you something (a physical object other than money) that you needed.
26.	Agreed that what you wanted to do was right.
27.	Said things that made your situation clearer and easier to understand.

28.	Told you how he/she felt in a situation similar to yours.
29.	Let you know that he/she will always be around if you need assistance.
30.	Expressed interest and concern in your well-being.
31.	Told you that she/he feels very close to you.
32.	Told you who you should see for assistance.
33.	Told you what to expect in a situation that was about to happen.
34.	Loaned you over R250,00.
35.	Taught you how to do something.
36.	Gave you feedback on how you were doing without saying it was good or bad.
37.	Joked and kidded to try to cheer you up.
38.	Provided you with a place to stay.
39.	Pitched in to help you do something that needed to get done.
40.	Loaned you under R250.00

ANNEXURE B

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY USAGE AND ATTITUDE SCALE (MTUAS)

This scale comprises of 60 items. It is divided into 11 Usage subscales. For this study the following subscales were utilised;

Smartphone Usage, General Social Media Usage, E-Mailing, Text Messaging, Online Friendships, Facebook Friendships, Phone Calling, Attitude (full subscale).

Please indicate how often you do each of the following e-mail activities on any device (mobile phone, laptop, desktop, etc.)	
Nr. (as on original scale)	Subscale Questions 10-point frequency scale for items 1–40 (with scoring in parentheses): Never (1) Once a month (2) Several times a month (3) Once a week (4) Several times a week (5) Once a day (6) Several times a day (7) Once an hour (8) Several times an hour (9) All the time (10)
1.	(E-mailing subscale) Send, receive and read e-mails (not including spam or junk mail).
2.	(E-mailing subscale) Check your personal e-mail.
3.	(E-mailing subscale) Check your work or school e-mail.
4.	(E-mailing subscale) Send or receive files via e-mail.
Please indicate how often you do each of the following activities on your mobile phone.	
5.	(Text messaging subscale) Send and receive text messages on a mobile phone.
6.	(Phone calling subscale) Make and receive mobile phone calls.
7.	(Text messaging subscale) Check for text messages on a mobile phone.
8.	(Phone calling subscale) Check for voice calls on a mobile phone.
9.	(Smartphone usage subscale) Read e-mail on a mobile phone.
10.	(Smartphone usage subscale) Get directions or use GPS on a mobile phone.
11.	(Smartphone usage subscale) Browse the web on a mobile phone.
12.	(Smartphone usage subscale) Listen to music on a mobile phone.
13.	(Smartphone usage subscale) Take pictures using a mobile phone.

14.	(Smartphone usage subscale) Check the news on a mobile phone.
15.	(Smartphone usage subscale) Record video on a mobile phone.
16.	(Smartphone usage subscale) Use apps (for any purpose) on a mobile phone.
17.	(Smartphone usage subscale) Search for information with a mobile phone.
18.	(Text messaging subscale) Use your mobile phone during class or work time.

How often do you do each of the following activities on social networking sites such as Facebook?	
32.	(General social media usage subscale) Check your Facebook page or other social networks.
33.	(General social media usage subscale) Check your Facebook page from your smartphone.
34.	(General social media usage subscale) Check Facebook at work or school.
35.	(General social media usage subscale) Post status updates.
36.	(General social media usage subscale) Post photos.
37.	(General social media usage subscale) Browse profiles and photos.
38.	(General social media usage subscale) Read postings.
39.	(General social media usage subscale) Comment on postings, status updates, photos, etc.
40.	(General social media usage subscale) Click “Like” to a posting, photo, etc.
Please answer the following questions about your Facebook and other online friends. 9-point scale (with scoring in parentheses): 0 (1) 1–50 (2) 51–100 (3) 101–175 (4) 176–250 (5) 251–375 (6) 376–500 (7) 501–750 (8) 751 or more (9)	
41.	(Facebook friendships subscale) How many friends do you have on Facebook?
42.	(Facebook friendships subscale) How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person?
43.	(Online friendships subscale) How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?
44.	(Online friendships subscale) How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person?
Attitudes subscales 5-point Likert scale for all items (with scoring in parentheses): Strongly agree (5) Agree (4) Neither agree nor disagree (3) Disagree (2) Strongly disagree (1)	

1.	(Positive attitudes) I feel it is important to be able to find any information whenever I want online.
2.	(Positive attitudes) I feel it is important to be able to access the Internet any time I want.
3.	(Positive attitudes) I think it is important to keep up with the latest trends in technology.
4.	(Anxiety/dependence) I get anxious when I don't have my cell phone.
5.	(Anxiety/dependence) I get anxious when I don't have the Internet available to me.
6.	(Anxiety/dependence) I am dependent on my technology.

7.	(Positive attitudes) Technology will provide solutions to many of our problems.
8.	(Positive attitudes) With technology anything is possible.
9.	(Positive attitudes) I feel that I get more accomplished because of technology.
10.	(Negative attitudes) New technology makes people waste too much time.
11.	(Negative attitudes) New technology makes life more complicated.
12.	(Negative attitudes) New technology makes people more isolated.
13.	(Preference for task switching) I prefer to work on several projects in a day, rather than completing one project and then switching to another.
14.	(Preference for task switching) When doing a number of assignments, I like to switch back and forth between them rather than do one at a time.
15.	*(Preference for task switching) I like to finish one task completely before focusing on anything else. *Scoring for item 15 is reversed with strongly agree = 1 and strongly disagree = 5.
16.	(Preference for task switching) When I have a task to complete, I like to break it up by switching to other tasks intermittently.

ANNEXURE C

THE SELF REFLECTION AND INSIGHT SCALE (SRIS)

Respondents respond on a Likert scale as follows: “Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree”

1.	I don't often think about my thoughts (1)
2.	I am not really interested in analysing my behaviour (2)
3.	I am usually aware of my thoughts (3)
4.	I am often confused about the way that I really feel about things (3)
5.	It is important for me to evaluate the things that I do (2)
6.	I usually have a very clear idea about why I have behaved in a certain way (3)
7.	I am very interested in examining what I think about (2)
8.	I rarely spend time in self-reflection (1)
9.	I'm often aware that I am having a feeling, but I often don't quite know what it is (3)
10.	I frequently examine my feelings (1)
11.	My behaviour often puzzles me (3)
12.	It is important to me to try to understand what my feelings mean (2)
13.	I don't really think about why I behave in the way that I do (1)
14.	Thinking about my thoughts make me more confused (3)
15.	I have a definite need to understand the way my mind works (2)
16.	I frequently take time to reflect on my thoughts (1)
17.	Often, I find it difficult to make sense of the way I feel about things (3)
18.	It is important to me to be able to understand how my thoughts arise (2)
19.	I often think about the way I feel about things (1)
20.	I usually know why I feel the way I do (3)

Items 1,2,4,8,11,13,14 and 17 are reversed.

1. Engaging in self-reflection
2. Need for self-reflection
3. Insight

Grant, A.M., Franklin, J & Langford, P. 2002. The self-reflection and insight scale: A new measure of private self-consciousness. Social behaviour and personality, 30(8):821-836.

ANNEXURE D

SURVEY INSTRUMENT: EXAMPLE

QuestionPro - [Social media usage, Reflection and social support]

Response Details

ID	
Timestamp	
IP Address	
Time Taken	
Survey Language	
Email Address	
Email List	

Geo Coding

Country	
Region	
City	
Area Code	
DMA Code	

"What is your gender?"

Male

Female

* Gender

--	--

"What is your age?"

20-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

60+

* Age

--	--	--	--	--

"To which cultural group do you belong?"

	Asian	Black	Coloured	White
* Cultural Group				

"What is the highest social work qualification that you hold?"

	3 Year degree/diploma in Social Work	4 Year degree in Social Work	Post-graduate degree in Social Work (excluding Forensic Social Work)	Post-graduate degree in Forensic Social Work
* Qualification				

"How much experience do you have working as a Social Worker?"

	1-5 Years experience as a social worker	6-10 Years experience as a social worker	11-15 Years experience as a social worker	16-20 Years experience as a social worker	20+ Years experience as a social worker
* Experience level					

"Which of the following categories best describe your employment status?"

	Self-employed in Private practice	Employed at a Non-Governmental organisation	Employed at a Governmental organisation	Not employed	Retired	Disabled or not able to work
* Employment status						

* "How would you describe the kind of Social Work you do? (Select all that apply)"

»General non-counselling work

"Do you have a social media (Facebook, Twitter or other) account?"

	Yes	No
* Social media account		

"Which of the following social media accounts do you subscribe to?"

	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram	Whatsapp	SMS	E-mail	LinkedIn	ResearchGate	Other network not mentioned here
* Social media account									

"To what extent do you gain personal meaningful support from your contacts on social media?"

	Measure of support
No Support	
A small amount of support	
Some support	
Sometimes more than I get from live contacts	
It is my only source of friend support	

"Rate how you reflect upon your work"

	Never	Sometimes	Always
* 1) Do you discuss cases or practice examples with friends in order to get clarity about your practice?			
* 2) Do you discuss cases or practice examples with colleagues in order to get clarity about your work?			

"During the past four weeks, how often did other people do these activities for you, to you, or with you:"

	Not at all.	Once or twice.	About once a week.	Several times a week.	About every day.
* 1. Looked after a family member when you were away.					
* 2. Was right there with you (physically) in a stressful situation.					
* 3. Provided you with a place where you could get away for a while.					

* 4. Watched after your possessions when you were away (pets, plants, home, apartment, etc.).					
* 5. Told you what she/he did in a situation that was similar to yours.					
* 6. Did some activity with you to help you get your mind off of things.					
* 7. Talked with you about some interests of yours.					
* 8. Let you know that you did something well.					
* 9. Went with you to someone who could take action.					
* 10. Told you that you are okay just the way you are.					

Not at all. Once or twice. About once a week. Several times a week. About every day.

* 11. Told you that she/he would keep the things that you talk about private - just between the two of you.					
* 12. Assisted you in setting a goal for yourself.					
* 13. Made it clear what was expected of you.					
* 14. Expressed esteem or respect for a competency or personal quality of you.					
* 15. Gave you some information on how to do something.					
* 16. Suggested some action that you should take.					
* 17. Gave you over					

R250,00.

* 18. Comforted you by showing you some physical affection.

* 19. Gave you some information to help you understand a situation you were in.

* 20. Provided you with some transportation.

* 21. Checked back with you to see if you followed the advice you were given.

* 22. Gave you under R250,00.

* 23. Helped you understand why you didn't do something well.

* 24. Listened to you talk about your private feelings.

"During the past four weeks, how often did other people do these activities for you, to you, or with you:"

Not at all. Once or twice. About once a week. Several times a week. About every day.

* 25. Loaned or gave you something (a physical object other than money) that you needed.

* 26. Agreed that what you wanted to do was right.

* 27. Said things that made your situation clearer and easier to understand.

* 28. Told you how he/she felt in a situation similar to yours.

* 29. Let you know that he/she will always be around if you need

assistance.

* 30. Expressed interest and concern in your well-being.

* 31. Told you that she/he feels very close to you.

* 32. Told you who you should see for assistance.

* 33. Told you what to expect in a situation that was about to happen.

* 34. Loaned you over R250,00.

Not at all. Once or twice. About once a week. Several times a week. About every day.

* 35. Taught you how to do something.

* 36. Gave you feedback on how you were doing without saying it was good or bad.

* 37. Joked and kidded to try to cheer you up.

* 38. Provided you with a place to stay.

* 39. Pitched in to help you do something that needed to get done.

* 40. Loaned you under R250.00

"Indicate your stance with regards to:"

Strongly agree. Agree. Neutral. Disagree. Strongly disagree.

* 1. I don't think about my thoughts.

* 2. I am not really interested in analysing my behaviour.

* 3. I am usually aware of

my thoughts.

* 4. I am often confused about the way that I really feel about things.

* 5. It is important for me to evaluate the things that I do.

* 6. I usually have a very clear idea about why I have behaved in a certain way.

* 7. I am very interested in examining what I think about.

* 8. I rarely spend time in self reflection.

* 9. I am often aware that I am having a feeling, but I often don't quite know what it is.

* 10. I frequently examine my feelings.

Strongly agree.

Agree.

Neutral.

Disagree.

Strongly disagree.

* 11. My behaviour often puzzles me.

* 12. It is important to me to try to understand what my feelings mean.

* 13. I don't really think about why I behave in the way that I do.

* 14. Thinking about my thoughts make me more confused.

* 15. I have a definite need to understand how my mind works.

* 16. I frequently take time to reflect on my thoughts.

* 17. Often I find it difficult to make sense of the way

I feel about things.

* 18. It is important to me to be able to understand how my thoughts arise.

* 19. I often think about the way I feel about things.

* 20. I usually know why I feel the way I do.

"Please indicate how often you do each of the following e-mail activities on any device (mobile phone, laptop, desktop, etc.)."

Never. Once a month. Several times a month. Once a week. Several times a week. Once a day. Several times a day. Once an hour. Several times an hour. All the time.

* 1. Send, receive and read e-mails (not including spam or junk mail).

* 2. Check your personal e-mail.

* 3. Check your work e-mail.

* 4. Send or receive files via e-mail.

"Please indicate how often you do each of the following activities on your mobile phone:"

Never. Once a month. Several times a month. Once a week. Several times a week. Once a day. Several times a day. Once an hour. Several times an hour. All the time.

* 1. Send and receive text messages on a mobile phone.

* 2. Make and receive mobile phone calls.

* 3. Check for text messages on a mobile phone.

* 4. Check for voice calls on a mobile phone.

- * 5. Read e-mail on a mobile phone.
- * 6. Get directions or use GPS on a mobile phone.
- * 7. Browse the web on a mobile phone.
- * 8. Listen to music on a mobile phone.
- * 9. Take pictures using a mobile phone.
- * 10. Check the news on a mobile phone.
- * 11. Use apps (for any purpose) on a mobile phone.
- * 12. Search for information with a mobile phone.
- * 13. Use your mobile phone during class or work time.

"How often do you do each of the following activities on social networking sites such as Facebook:"

Never. a month. Once a month. Several times a week. Once a week. Several times a day. Once a day. Several times an hour. All the time.

- * 1. Check your Facebook page or other social networks.
- * 2. Check your Facebook page from your smartphone.
- * 3. Check Facebook at work.
- * 4. Post status updates.
- * 5. Post photos.
- * 6. Browse profiles and photos.

* 7. Read postings.

* 8. Comment on postings, status updates, photos, etc.

* 9. Click "like" to a posting, photo, etc.

"Please answer the following questions about your Facebook and other online friends:"

0 1- 51- 101-176-251-251-376-376-501-501-751 751
(None).50.100.175.250.375.375.500.500.750.750. or or
more.more.

* 1. How many friends do you have on Facebook?

* 2. How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person?

* 3. How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?

* 4. How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person?

"Please share your feelings about the following:"

Strongly agree. Agree. Neither agree or disagree. Disagree. Strongly disagree.

* 1. I feel it is important to be able to find any information whenever I want online.

* 2. I feel it is important to be able to access the internet any time I want.

* 3. I think it is important to keep up with the latest trends in social media.

* 4. I get anxious when I don't have my cell phone.

* 5. I get anxious when I don't have the Internet available to me.

- * 6. I am dependent on my social media.
- * 7. Social media will provide solutions to many of our problems.
- * 8. With social media anything is possible.
- * 9. I feel that I get more accomplished because of technology.
- * 10. New social media makes people waste too much time.
- * 11. New social media makes life more complicated.
- * 12. New social media makes people more isolated.
- * 13. I prefer to work on several projects in a day, rather than completing one project and then switching to another.
- * 14. I like to finish one task completely before focusing on anything else.
- * 15. When I have a task to complete, I like to break it up by switching to other tasks intermittently.
