

**A NON-UNIONISED SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN THE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA: IMPLICATIONS FOR
POLICY AND PRACTICE**

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that 'A non-unionised social work profession in the Republic of South Africa: Implications for policy and practice' thesis hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree of (Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work) has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other University; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

Kwakwa WMMM (Mrs)

9 April 2024

DEDICATION

To my late parents, Norman Sentsho and Edith Montsheng Mabe; to my forefathers and foremothers who taught me that nothing is impossible with the God almighty, and that, above all else, is love, faith, humility and respect for your fellow human-kind.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFL: American Federation of Labor

ANC: African National Congress

BOPSWU: Border Progressive Social Workers Union

CCMA: Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration

CIO: Congress of Industrial Organizations

CNETU: Council of the Non-European Union

CR: Critical theory

DENOSA: Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa

DSD: Department of Social Development

GR: Grounded Theory

HOSPERSA: Health & Other Services Personnel Trade Union of South Africa

IASW: International Association of Social Workers

ICU: Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa

IFSW: International Federation of Social Workers

LRA: Labour Relations Act

MEC: Member of the Executive Council

NASW: National Association of Social Workers

NEHAWU: National, Education, Health and Allied Workers Union

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

PAR: Participatory Action Research

POPCRU: Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union

PSA: Public Servants Association

PSL: Public Service League

RSA: Republic of South Africa

SABSWA: South African Black Social Workers Association

SACOL: South African Confederation of Labour

SACSSP: South African Council for Social Service Professions

SACTU: South African Congress of Trade Unions

SADTU: South African Democratic Teachers Union

SAMA: South African Medical Association

SANA: South African Nurses Association

SAPS: South African Police Services

SASWU: South African Social Workers Union

SWAN: Social Work Action Network

TCA: Thematic Content Analyses

TUCSA: Trade Unions Council of South Africa

ULSWAC: University of Limpopo Social Work Alumni Committee

UK: United Kingdom

US: United States

WW2: World War II

ABSTRACT

The primary focus of this study was on non-unionisation of the social work profession in South Africa. On a secondary level, the study examined the history of the social work profession and unionisation, the evolution of the profession itself since its inception to the current status and its intersectionality with gender, identity, status and image both locally and globally. The study triangulates three designs, which are Grounded Theory, Multiple case studies and exploratory design. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews from social workers who were part of the defunct social work union committee and alumni in Limpopo and those of the general social work practitioners in South Africa in their respective private spaces, to acquire a broader understanding of the phenomenon. Data was analysed thematically using thematic analysis. The general consensus was that a union is a necessity however, disunity and fragmentation of the profession, is still a thorny issue. The legacy of the South African history was fingered as perpetuating the disunity and fragmentation of this profession. In addition, the colonial social work curriculum that failed to prepare students for political activism and also the critical lens towards systemic and neo-liberal realities of today that are viewed to be exacerbating the status quo. The use of post-modernism (constructivism) and grounded theory enabled the development of a model of the social work union in South Africa based on the data and scenario provided by participants. The study is envisaged to set a way forward for more inquiry into the unionisation of the social work profession in other provinces, and to create further debate on the critical and radical field of social work and prospects of forming a union based on the proposed conceptual model.

Key words: Unionisation, Social Work profession, South Africa, Grounded theory, Model.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Social work in South Africa began in the early 1900s, and in 1924 the country was the first to offer social work education in the African continent (Sewpaul, 2005). However, social work activities predated much earlier, in the 18th century in the form of philanthropy and charity work in England and subsequently in the US. These activities were based on humanitarian, religious and democratic convictions (McNutt, 2013; Abramovitz, 1998; Abbot, 1995). In the home front, Mckendrick (1990; 2001), Gray and Mazibuko (2002), Chetty (2009), Sithole (2009), Nicholas et.al (2010) and Smith (2014) gave an account of the South African social welfare and social work system, a journey that has been marred by the implementation of racially segregated service delivery in different populations until the establishment of the state bureau in 1932. The move resulted in two approaches to social welfare: residual for Africans and institutional for the white minority. This, according to Mckendrick (1990), necessitated the country's social welfare and social work to operate on two antagonistic influences of modern social work practice and apartheid system. The situation then prompted the demand for training of more social workers such that by the mid-1970s, 3 728 social workers were registered with the National Welfare Act of 1965. However, more than 80% of these social workers were white.

The researcher believes that this was the beginning of the troubled partnership between social work and its master, the state. The predicament of social workers, especially those working for the state, namely, the Department of Social Development (DSD) lies in biting the hand that feeds them because historically, the profession was dominated by Afrikaner white social workers who were part of, and promoted the mandate of, the apartheid regime (Mckendrick, 1990; Gray & Mazibuko, 2002; Mazibuko & Gray, 2004). Earle-Mallesson (2009:64) further asserts that "the profession's relationship with the state has become even more intertwined and

complicated, thus reflecting the priorities and values of the host community at the same time having its sphere of practice and autonomy constrained to large extent by these same factors". Social work and the welfare system are shaped by historical, geo-political and socio-economic and neo-liberal factors in the home front (Chetty, 2009; Patel, 2016; Smith, 2014).

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Globally, social work as a profession cannot be separated from the concept of national and social welfare policies as its mandate is to develop these policies and to carry them out. However, the profession's relationship with governments proves to be very complicated and creates dilemmas in practice (Earle-Mallesson, 2009). To a greater extent, the legacy of colonialism and apartheid compounded the struggles of this profession in South Africa. Social work activities are guided by the social welfare system of the host country. Therefore, the history of social work as an occupation and its curriculum in South Africa is founded on colonial and apartheid ideologies (Mckendrick, 2001; Nicholas et al., 2010; Smith, 2014).

African social workers were then expected and forced to carry out the very policies that oppressed and ostracised them and their populations in the process. However, some gallant African social workers began to challenge the inequities and social realities that faced the clientele that they had to serve, including unfair discriminatory laws. This also affected and applied to them as practitioners. Therefore, this profession was and is still no stranger to activism and radicalism in its quest to challenge the status quo. Healy (2008) and Smith (2014) reported that a large number of South African social workers fought the apartheid regime for its racial social policies, including Ellen Khuzwayo, Shirley Gunn, Charlotte Maxeke and Winnie Madikizela, to name a few. The latter two were some of the first who graduated in 1941 from the non-white Jan Hofmeyr School of social work in Johannesburg (McKendrick, 1990; Shokane & Masoga, 2019). However, Smith (2014) wrote that Charlotte Maxeke was the first South African social worker from 1902. In addition, associations like South African Black Social Workers Association (SABSWA) which was established in 1945,

never ceased to challenge the injustices facing the profession and populations they serve (Mazibuko & Gray, 2004).

The researcher further believes that the foundation of social work emanating from philanthropist, religious and charitable background is another factor that seems to give some political leaders and policy makers a lame excuse to deny the profession the accolades it deserves despite extensive contributions by social workers nationwide. The myriad social problems facing South Africa today are insurmountable. The fundamental profession of social work, which is tasked with the responsibility of addressing social and health ills, seem to be marginalised from all angles. The core functions of this profession are caring, remedial, prevention, promotion, protection and change functions (Midgley, 2014; Sithole, 2010).

The researcher further argues that the function of social work is to represent the dehumanised and vulnerable persons of the world in promoting human rights and social justice. Therefore, social workers are supposed to be the mouth-piece for the poor, to empower, advocate, catalyse and organise for and with the poor and vulnerable. The question is: how do social workers emancipate the nation if they are not emancipated themselves? This is reiterated by Mmadi and Sithole (2018), who argued that social workers' core business is to empower communities. However, if they are less empowered themselves, then they would be a disservice to the nation. Echoing the same sentiments is Douglass (2016:1) in his project on the alignment of social work union and ethical clinical social work practice, who states that "You are in a better position to protect people when you feel protected yourself". In emphasis, Farr (2021) has recently made a call for social workers to unionise and unite at the time of Covid 19, perturbed by incidents that put social workers in the front line at risk in terms of public health and safety.

The researcher further observed that prior 1994, other occupational groups such as nurses, teachers, police officers and medical doctors were also marginalised in terms of resource allocation; the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. However, gradually and radically, these other professions made positive strides in fighting for recognition

and improved incentives through unionisation. All these groups have union representatives in South Africa, such as the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (DENOSA), South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) and the South African Medical Association (SAMA). The latter also registered as a trade union for medical students and doctors in the public sector.

Somehow, majority of social workers have remained stagnant in this regard. Mazibuko and Gray (2004), reporting on the history of social work associations in South Africa, wrote that approximately 1000 social workers were at that period members of unions such as NEHAWU and HOSPERSA, but none that solely represents the interests of South African social workers. This status has not changed to date. This then, highlights the need for an organisation or movement that will be concerned with labour and workplace issues of social workers. Note should be taken that attempts have been made to form a union for social workers in the recent past without much success. The only study identified by the researcher in South Africa is by Dyakala (1999). His focus was on social workers' perceptions of unionisation and collective bargaining. This will add to the envisaged knowledge this study intends to explore. It is therefore, imperative for social workers to rise up from the inertia which seems to have clouded the profession, and through social action, unionise in order to confront and reverse the status quo.

In South Africa, any organisation or association wishing to register as a union has to comply with the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No 66 of 1995). Sections 23 and 28 speak directly to the formation and qualification for membership and activities of the trade union (Labour Relations Act, 1995). Social work and unionisation are no strangers at all, as highlighted in the following brief history of social work and unions in the US and Africa. However, in South Africa and Africa, social workers do not currently have a registered union that is specifically and solely for the social work profession, to address issues relating to the work environment of social workers at bargaining councils. In South Africa, social work unions such as the South African Social Workers Union (SASWU) for white social workers, and the Concerned Social

Workers and the Progressive Social Workers Union for non-racial social workers were dissolved in 1997, three years into the new democratic dispensation. Non-racial social workers were represented by the Concerned Social Workers and the Progressive Social Workers Union at the time.

A number of scholars (Scanlon & Harding, 2005; Farr, 2020; Fisher, 1987; Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 2006; Straussner & Phillips, 1988) among others wrote on the evolution of unions in the US, and the relationship of unions with the social work profession, however, emphasising different aspects. Pople (1981) indicated that in America, social work and organised labour did not become adversarial until the Great Depression. For forty years, this has grown into a fruitful partnership that benefits both parties. It is a reflection of the complementary nature of their interests and activities. Schillinger (2005) wrote that trade unions in colonial Africa began subsequent to the end of WW 2, that is, immediately after 1945, except with a few countries like Tunisia, South Africa and the British colonies of Sierra Leone and The Gambia. It was only at this period that trade unions for African workers were considered when the colonial administrations in both British and French put in place legal requirements for the establishment of indigenous labour organisations. African trade unions were formed primarily in the public service and the public transport sector because there was a lack of pronounced manufacturing sector. Thus, it was mostly for teachers, and railway and port workers. Social workers even to date in Africa have had no union that solely represent their professional woes.

Interestingly, social work in South Africa has had and still has many professional associations, which Mazibuko and Gray (2004:131) view as “systems that enhance professional identity, provide opportunities to exchange ideas and encourage professional growth”. The scholars, however, acknowledge that the history of the country resulted in the fragmentation of these associations in line with the racial segregation of the South African population. No wonder social workers are still faced with the issues of unity and unionisation to date. As a reflection on the aspect of professional associations, the researcher opines that somehow this move may have been intentionally or perhaps unintentionally created to divert social workers’ focus from unionisation matters such that ‘the more they are occupied with the development

of professional associations, the lesser time and energy will be left for development of a strong unifying body that may lead to unionisation of the profession’.

In addition, from the observation by the researcher, these associations are more actively developed and dominated by social workers in educational institutions rather than front line social work practitioners. Hence during professional gatherings, be it conferences, symposiums or book launches that usually promote research activities based on societal struggles that are addressed daily by the very front-line workers, their absence in these platforms is conspicuously notable and should be a cause for concern. Perhaps this is partly due to the fact that social workers in educational institutions are subsidised and encouraged by the employer settings to participate in these forums whilst with the soldiers on the ground, it is the matter of a self-funded mandate. If not, the process of being subsidised is a long and tedious one and not wholly supported by the management, especially within public welfare settings. On the contrary, social workers in management positions are provided with those opportunities from time to time. It is indeed an unfair and unfortunate picture.

1.2 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.2.1 Social work

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and to enhance collective wellbeing.” (IFSW, 2014). The study adopts this definition as is.

1.2.2 Union/Trade union

Labour or trade unions are organisations formed by workers from associated fields that are geared towards a common interest of its members. They focus on the issues in the work environment of employees like fair salaries, good working environment, hours of work and benefits. They represent groups of workers, and provide a link

between the management and workers (Levine, 2001). Labour or trade unions can also be viewed as group of organisations of workers with the purpose of substituting a collective bargain for separate individual bargaining and thereby maintain and improve the standard of living of their members (McLean & MacMillan, 2009). The study aligns with both definitions.

1.2.3 Unionise/Unionism

To unionise means the right of employees to organise and bargain collectively, and to affirm workers' freedom of association (Levine, 2001) and to provide support for the political aims of trade unions (McLean & McMillan, 2009).

1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The recent protests, including the September 2016 national march by social workers to the Union Buildings in Pretoria (Madibogo, 2016), followed by the 2017 five-week long national strike led by National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU), which resulted in the closure of most Social Development offices in Matatiele, Maluti, Vhembe and Mopani Districts (Nketo, 2017), indicate strides made by social workers to be heard. Other events in the life of the profession include the attempted establishment and non-survival of the South African Social Workers Union (SAWSU) in the Western Cape Province (NGO Pulse, 2012), and the launching of the National Association of Social Workers of South Africa in September 2007 (Sewpaul, 2012), marking the first non-racial social work association in South Africa, though with much struggle. These actions are viewed by this study as an outcry by social workers for radical change in how the profession is viewed, identified and positioned. Although this can be seen as a positive move, the researcher is perturbed by what appears as disunity and reluctance by social workers in supporting structures that may assist in bringing about change such as the union for social workers. To date, little is known of what happened to SASWU, and why it could not even see the light of day. The failure to launch the union for social workers in the Limpopo branch is another case.

In support of the above assertions, available research highlights the need for social workers to unite, organise and mobilise themselves as a formidable force (Gray &

Mazibuko, 2002; Dlamini & Sewpaul, 2015; Strier & Bershtling, 2016; Farr, 2021). In addition, Craig da Silva (2007) believes that a strong movement will be the most powerful approach for change. Social Work Action Network (SWAN), a contemporary global social work movement, aims to revive action in the field of social work. To combat any injustices meted out to the profession or the community they serve, they exhort social workers to become politically educated. Three practitioners and academics who are aware of the critical and radical social work movement SWAN-International, established the SWAN-SA WhatsApp group on May 8 and invited those in the social work industry to join. Within a few hours, about 120 social work practitioners, students, and academics had joined (Turton, Zimba, Smith & Perumal, 2020).

There have also been complaints of victimisation, harassment and marginalisation of social workers who support radical/critical social work practice, especially in government settings by managers who at times are social workers themselves (Naidoo & Kasiram, 2004; Sithole, 2010). These factors highlight the need for a strong movement that has collective bargaining power that will speak in one voice against these unfair inflictions, and further call for an extensive exploration and description of reasons hampering the unity and action in South Africa in order to unravel this conundrum, which is the inability to form a sustainable functional union. In addition, through casual interactions with colleagues, the researcher observed and noted how some of them are unacquainted and unaware of the impact of political, socio-economic and neo-liberal factors affecting the social work profession in South Africa.

Therefore, this study seeks to interrogate factors militating against unity and unionisation, and to create awareness of internal and external factors impacting negatively on the profession, with a view to forming a viable and united working force ready to unionise. Social workers can no longer afford to be spectators and side-lined in the development of policies that they have to implement, which are often vague, unfair and likely not to bring positive changes to the livelihoods of individuals, groups and communities. Other countries such as Hong Kong, Britain and the US' rank and

file movement of the 1930s have made strides in the area of unionisation (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2013). If social workers in South Africa need change, it should be very clear by now that more radical strategies are required, and only through a strong social work movement.

1.5 AIM, RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 Aim

The primary aim of the study was to interrogate and describe factors militating against the unionisation of the social work profession in South Africa with a view to the development of a practical model for social work union.

1.5.2 Objectives were:

- To establish how the social work profession is viewed, identified and positioned globally by the states and the general population;
- To identify and assess the causes of disunity and reluctance amongst social workers to unionise;
- To appraise circumstances that result in social workers being unacquainted and unaware of political, socio-economic and neo-liberal factors impacting on the profession; and
- To develop a practical model for the union of social workers in South Africa.

1.5.3 Research questions were:

- How do governments or states and the general public view, identify and position (status) the profession of social work?
- Which factors cause disunity and reluctance of social workers to unionise?
- What are the circumstances that result in social workers not being acquainted and aware of political, socio-economic and neo-liberal factors impacting on the profession?
- Which practical union model could be developed and be relevant for the social work profession in South Africa?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 Contribution to the body of knowledge

Throughout the data collection process, the interviews were an eye-opener to the majority of social work participants. It was also a learning curve in awareness of how historical, political and socio-economic factors impact on the profession in South Africa, an aspect that some, especially novice social workers admitted ignorance to such factors. This position is avowed by Reich and Andrews (2001) who observed that contemporary social workers demonstrate very little understanding of the struggles fought by their social work ancestors to challenge structural inequities. The articles and debates that are envisaged to emanate from this study are regarded as tools of awareness, knowledge and discussions to the social work fraternity at large both locally and internationally on the relevance and formation of a viable social work union in South Africa. Political leaders and senior managers in the Department of Social Development are expected to take cognisance of the significance of the role of social work in the country as part of the multi-disciplinary or multi-sectoral team in bringing about social change to individuals, groups and communities. This study envisages a scenario where social workers through different professional platforms would identify bargaining tools to negotiate for improved working conditions, image and status of the profession as a united formidable force that speaks in one voice based on the studies' findings of the barriers inhibiting successful unionisation of the profession.

1.6.2 Contribution to policy ideation, development and implementation

Social policy addresses social injustices and brings about positive transformation. Social workers are change agents and therefore should be involved in social policy issues from the initial stages right up to the implementation phase (Patel, 2015). Therefore, social policy informs social welfare policy, whose aim is to improve the well-being of people and enhance their ability to cope and function effectively in society in the face of extreme hardship, poverty, vulnerabilities and risks (Taylor et al., 2018). The role of social workers is to engage with individuals, groups and communities to

learn from their daily narratives about their felt needs. This will enable them to analyse and formulate policies that will inform legislation that addresses these social ills and injustices. To be heard and to be a significant part of the policy-making process, social workers need to speak in one voice, united and not fragmented as is the current status.

1.6.3 Programme, service and benefits offshoot of the study

The creation of platforms to confront and transform ineffective programmes and streamline services that truly benefit society will be possible. Currently, social workers are expected to practice developmental social work guided by the integrated service delivery model, which requires extensive resources, including adequate budget (Lombard, 2008). The entire process is curtailed by both internal and external systems and challenges that did not adequately prepare for the kind of implementation needed. Hence, when social workers are in a union, they will be in a good position to address the internal systems hampering effective practice. This will, to some extent, eventually minimise or control the external aspects e.g., as questioned by Engelbrecht (2015) that, can non-social workers supervise social workers? This has posed a number of challenges in social work settings affecting effective social service delivery.

1.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the research project and its fundamental, foundational elements. The chapter explains the evolution of social work traced back to the nineteenth century emanating from the global North and subsequently introduced and practiced in South Africa. However, the journey up the current status has been a long one muddled with challenges and some positive strides. To help identify the specific conditions under which such an investigation is necessary, a problem statement was presented. Lastly, the significance of the study was presented. The conceptual framework of the study will be described in the next chapter, along with its two primary concepts: social work and unionisation.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The study is premised on the two primary concepts, namely, the social work profession and unionisation. In this study, the social work profession was viewed in terms of variables such as identity and position, disunity and reluctance of social workers to unite and become a formidable force; awareness of political, socio-economic and neo-liberal factors affecting the profession and application of critical social work in daily practice. Unionisation, on the other hand, will address elements of victimisation, fear, challenges of cohesion, political participation, social control and managerial influences. The study did not limit itself to the above concepts, the use of GR is precisely to break new ground and discover more variables and concepts that are not known to the researcher.

In addition, the three perspectives were used to comprehend the dynamics confronting the social work profession and unionisation, that is, post-modernism (constructivist-interpretive), grounded theory and critical theory. Social work practice needs be rethought in light of postmodern theory's questions about the reality of truth in an ambiguous setting. Post-modernism suggests that social workers should prioritise community-based interventions. Community in the conventional sense is not at the centre of this attention, but rather community as a structure for validating one's own subjective interpretations of the world. Moreover, critical theory was also found essential in this study because the theory stresses that individuals have the power to effect social change through introspection. The theory asserts that once we understand the social order, we will be able to use that understanding to bring about social change. This is essential in this study because knowledge of the social order is of paramount importance in the social work practice. Grounded theory emphasises that researchers should not just use pre-existing theoretical frameworks, but rather should be able to create their own theories based on what they uncover in social research. The adoption of this theory in the present study is significant because one

of the major objectives of the study is to develop a prototype model for social work unionisation.

Table 1: Summary of the conceptual framework

Interpretive frameworks	Ontological beliefs (Nature of reality)	Epistemological beliefs (how reality is known)	Axiological beliefs (role of values)	Methodological beliefs (approach to inquiry)
Social constructivism [Interpretivist-constructive Grounded Theory]	Multiple realities are built through our lived experiences and interactions with others [co-construction of data with participants]	Reality was co-created between the researcher and the participants and shaped by individual experiences within their contexts	Individual values are respected and upheld [principles of self-determination and uniqueness of individuals]	Inductive approach to data collection [ideas, thoughts, experiences, perceptions] through consensus with participants was implemented using interviews, observation and analysis of texts
Transformative/postmodern [Critical Social Work theory and Participatory Action Research]	Belief in collective participation of the researcher and population being studied. There is usually emergence of objective-subjective reality.	Findings were co-constructed to produce numerous ways of knowing and understanding.	Respect for different value systems which need to be problematised and interrogated. Here the	Use of collective effort in the research processes, encouraging political participation, questioning of

			researcher was conscious of 'Epoche' or bracketing at all times.	existing methods and highlighting issues of concern.
<p>Aim/Goals of the study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants to comprehend the realities of social work practice arena in relation to the political and neo-liberal aspects of South Africa. - So, to address areas of inequities and become empowered, and in the process change ways of thinking - So that they can take action for social change and improvement 				

of their situation.				
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Adapted and modified from (Babchuk & Guetterman, 2019)

2.2 POST-MODERNISM

Various academic areas have varied conceptions of postmodernism (Brown, 2006). Postmodernism has been embraced by a number of disciplines, including architecture, art history, anthropology, civil engineering, cultural studies, economics, education, geography, history, law, literature, management, marketing, media studies, organization studies, philosophy, political science, psychology, and sociology (Brown, 1995). Even though postmodernism can be understood in a variety of ways, most people agree that it is primarily a cultural issue (Firat & Dholakia, 2006; Jameson, 2016:484). The postmodern cultural perspective is multifaceted, hence it can perfectly benefit in a social work narrative.

Postmodernism differs from modernism in that it does not subscribe to modernism's four grand narratives (Firat & Dholakia, 2006; Kumar, 2005), that is, history and progress; truth and freedom; reason and revolution; and science and industrialism. Capitalism, scientific discovery, and democratic governance are all examples of the benefits that have accrued to Western humanity as a result of modernity, which was driven and based on noble life stories and global practices that always choose the best course of action (Samuels, 2008). Modernism is characterised by focus on reason, linear development and ideology (Berthon & Katsikeas, 1998). Brown (1995:69) acknowledges that modernism "has provided unimaginable material well-being, incalculable knowledge accumulation, astonishing aesthetic accomplishment, and incredible technological innovation". He believes that the costs incurred to achieve these gains outweigh the benefits. For all its industrialisation, bureaucratisation and secularisation, Western modernisation has increased societal challenges such as crime, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, mental illness, consumerism and materialism etc. (Brown, 1995).

Conflict theorists hold that the powerful in society are the root of all evil because they seek to enrich themselves at the expense of everyone else (Horton, 1966). As the name implies, conflict theorists argue that society is not held together by common goals and interests; but rather by groups that are inherently at odds with one another and struggle for control over its resources. Whoever amasses such wealth and power "exercises control by imposing an ideological world view that holds capitalism as the best of all economic systems" (Mullaly, 1993). A society has entered the postmodern era (O'Hara & Anderson, 1991). This occurs when people no longer hold a universal truth to be possible or true. Instead, a culture's perception of what constitutes truth becomes tinged with irony over time. The paradoxical idea that a truth can be made to be either good or bad is just one example.

Gorman (1993) asserts that postmodernists can be placed on a spectrum ranging from pessimistic to optimistic. Sceptical postmodern thinkers paint a bleak picture of humanity and analyse theories by picking apart assumptions, generalisations and holes in the logic. Affirmative postmodernists, on the other hand, reject the extreme nihilistic relativism of the sceptical variety by recognising the worth of a common understanding of a human experience. Since postmodernism is inherently contentious, it is challenging to describe a unified definition of the theory. Postmodernism as a whole, however, is predicated on the idea that all barriers to human authenticity whether institutional or individual should be removed.

2.2.1 Postmodernism and Social Work Practice

Social work practice may need to be rethought in light of postmodern theory's questions about the reality of truth in an ambiguous setting (Brown, 1995). The generalisability of existing assessment models should be questioned. A naturalistic model of evaluation is one method that could work with a postmodern worldview. A central tenet of their argument is that it is no longer possible to think of culture as a coherent whole. A socially constructed reality is proposed to replace this view. Consequently, social workers should prioritise community-based interventions. Community in the conventional sense is not at the centre of this attention, but rather

community as a structure for validating one's own subjective interpretations of the world. Interventions could be better pinpointed if more weight were given to linguistically defined conceptions of reality.

Cultural differences have long been a cause for concern in the administration of social services (Pozatek, 1994). Culture plays an important role in the lives of postmodern social workers. Clients' cultural backgrounds should be prioritised in social work because of the central role culture plays in providing the socially constructed reality that defines who we are. Focussing on a person's experiences allows for a form of communication that invites the client to collaborate in the interpretive process and in the construction of meaning associated with the experience. Culture and meaning play a crucial role in the experiences of human beings (Saleebey, 1994). A person finds their place in the world through the interplay of their own culture and identity. This was traditionally fostered among first world nations through their engagement with oral traditions such as storytelling and mythology.

In the helping relationships, the social worker may be interpreting clients' stories within the worker's personal and theoretical constructs, consequently forcing clients to relinquish their own (Pozatek, 1994). The employee is tasked with putting their own ideas and beliefs aside in order to better comprehend and value the client's unique perspective. Once this is accomplished, social workers will be able to help clients construct meanings, stories and narratives that are more empowering and hopeful. Postmodern social work in Britain was assessed by McBeath and Webb (1991). The authors argue that there has been an effort in both academia and practice to present social work as a generic body of knowledge, theory and practice. Some principles of modernity and Kant's philosophy underpin this unified approach to practice.

Those who work in social services strive to aid clients while respecting their individuality and diversity of thought. The framework has flaws because social work theory and practice often seem to contradict one another. There is no agreement in the social work community about the generalisability of the frameworks it uses to

attempt to conceptualise individuals within its contexts. Instead, the field of social work must navigate a number of contradictions on how people and social issues are viewed. Constructionist approaches to social work practice are seen as particularly suited to the northern and rural context, which readily extend to work with First Nation peoples, and this is one way in which postmodernism can be operationalised in practice. The social worker in the north and the countryside needs to be viewed as a co-discoverer of people's lives, rather than an expert, if constructionist interventions are to be successful (Brownlee, 1992). A social worker's job in the north or the country is to help people see that there are other possible interpretations of their lives and to help them think of the actions and reactions that would be consistent with those interpretations.

While there has been considerable attention paid to postmodernism and postmodernity in social work theory, the modernist premises of social work knowledge themselves seem to be rarely discussed. It is helpful to specify what these assumptions are, especially given the widespread belief that social work is, at its core, a thoroughly modernist endeavour (Fawcett, 2013). Fundamentally, modernists are believers in progress and order, reflecting the values of the Enlightenment. Therefore, modernist ideas can be seen in social work, which is focused on providing solutions to social problems and aiding individuals as a means of achieving greater social harmony. Therefore, social work knowledge seems to be grounded in modernism in that it seeks to enhance social work interventions and services by enhancing the field's ideas, systems and practices. The central theme of modernist frameworks is progress, and the development of knowledge to develop practices, along with the contribution of ideas and methods to improve understandings about practices (Fawcett, 2013). This is typically understood to entail making sure that rigorous standards of methodology or analysis are applied to demonstrate the validity of proposed ideas and methods, and that there is transparency in defining the significance of knowledge and its relevance to application. It is often said that the central goals of modernism are cohesion and the systematic organisation of disparate concepts.

In its most audacious form, modernism demands and asserts that with the right and effective systems, social workers, equipped with proper competent skills and

knowledge, can effectively address social problems or satisfy particular mandated roles (Brown, 1995). For instance, this is a prevalent theory in political social work specifically with regards to issues pertaining to unions and social work. Modernist frameworks for practice have necessitated that knowledge be developed and analysed to a certain standard of rigour and accuracy, and that this knowledge then contributes to the ongoing improvement of social work practice. Perhaps evidence-based practice is a current method that exemplifies such modernist frameworks. This grew out of discussions about how much or little emphasis is placed on whether or not social work interventions actually achieve their intended goals, and it is generally concerned with maintaining a steady stream of methodical inquiry into the efficacy of various social work approaches, interventions and methods (Ainsworth & Hansen, 2005). It appears to be both a modernist and a postmodern enterprise, with social work contributing to the latter.

It would be beyond the scope of this article to provide a detailed definition of postmodernism, especially given the heated debate that often surrounds it. Suffice it to say, however, that postmodernism is concerned with the fluidity, diversity and uncertainty of human understanding (Brown, 1995). As such, social workers are frequently faced with situations where they must deal with a high degree of uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity, as well as situations where multiple explanations seem plausible. Therefore, postmodernist frameworks are useful for considering the various discourses at work in social work practices and for comprehending the interplay between them, especially as it relates to the distribution of power. One way to do this is to stop searching for unshakeable truths and to start appreciating the variety of knowledges at play in different practice contexts, such as the fact that some knowledges are more widely held and accepted than others (Fawcett, 2009).

2.3 GROUNDED THEORY

The major proponents of grounded theory include the sociologist Barney Glaser and the psychologist Anselm Strauss. The theory was developed as a result of dissatisfaction with the preeminent ideas in sociological study that inspired Glaser and Strauss to develop their own alternatives (Glaser, 1992). The main point was that

researchers should not just use pre-existing theoretical frameworks, but rather be able to create their own theories based on what they uncover in social research. This was deemed useful because it stimulates the development of new social ideas that are connected to particular communities and historical moments. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), such theories are necessary to fully grasp the nuances of any given discipline of social science. Rather than depending on analytical categories and variables from pre-existing theories, the theory would be rooted in the facts from which it had arisen. So, to make room for the growth of new contextualised ideas, grounded theory was formed.

In addition, Glaser (1992) argues that grounded theory should be used as a universal technique of analysis since it is intrinsically linked to data collection, and uses facts to create a theory through a systematic application of a set of methodologies. Another benefit of grounded theory, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), is that it can assist prevent the haphazard application of theories that are a poor match. In their view, scientists have a propensity to conduct studies with heavy emphasis on empirical evidence, with an afterthought theory explanation added on for good measure. In doing so, the author will attempt to provide the data with a broader social work significance, as well as to provide an explanation for and interpretation of the results. Logico-deductive theory is presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967). As part of this method, the sociologist routinely employs particular examples and gives them authority over his theoretical conceptions. This is largely due to the fact that sociological theory relies on the concept that it is inextricable from the method by which it is formulated in order to be considered adequate (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Consequently, evaluating the process through which a theory was developed might be a good indicator of how applicable it is. It is also argued that characteristics such as logical consistency, clarity, parsimony, scope, and integration are necessary for a theory to achieve widespread acceptance and success (Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

In addition, the data collected for the study is not always the driving force behind the development of a hypothesis. Instead, it is the result of integrating the research's findings with additional concepts that evolved during the process of methodical data

analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Ideas might originate from places apart from the facts as well. Following the procedures outlined in grounded theory guidelines, a researcher can arrive at theoretically informed findings. Grounded theory is replacing the previously dominant hypothetico-deductive methods of testing theories. Because of this, Glaser and Strauss proposed the use of grounded theory as a method for systematically constructing a theory from social research data. Therefore, the following are the procedures and rules that were followed when using grounded theory to develop the conceptual model used in this investigation:

2.3.1 Identifying Categories

When developing a theory, it is necessary for the researcher to classify cases according to their core similarities and traits. Corbin and Strauss (1990) are of the view that categories can be at a low level of abstraction, in which case they function as descriptive labels. Words like "worry," "anger," and "sadness," for instance, can all be categorised under the umbrella term "emotions." When viewed in this light, categories are seen as more analytical than descriptive.

2.3.2 The Coding process

After the identification of the categories, coding followed, which is mainly descriptive as it provided the researcher with the opportunity to identify higher-level categories that systematically integrate low-level categories into meaningful units (Glaser, 1992). This means that analytical categories are introduced. This is significant because grounded theory is about the development of new theories that are distinct to particular contexts. Hence, category labels need not be deduced from existing theoretical formulations. It is therefore significant that category labels be *in vivo*, which means that they should frequently apply phrases and words used by participants in the study. That mainly enables the researcher to avoid borrowing traits of existing theories into the analysis. The development of a conceptual model resulted in the categorisation of high level and low-level themes to establish meaningful units.

2.3.3 Negative case analysis

To ensure that the researcher consistently develops the emergent hypothesis within the bounds of the evidence, a negative case analysis is essential (Glaser, 1992). To do so, the researcher must first establish a category and a connection across categories, and then seek for 'negative cases,' or examples that do not fit into the category (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Because of this, the researcher is able to give the developing theory more weight and nuance. The conceptual model was created by thinking critically about the available evidence, which is the fieldwork's collected empirical data.

2.3.4 Theoretical sensitivity and sampling

When conducting research with theoretical sensitivity, the researcher moves from a descriptive to an analytical level of inquiry. In contrast, the primary focus of theoretical sampling is to gather additional information in light of categories predicted to emerge in subsequent stages of data analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In essence, the method is a way of comparing a developing theory against actual events in order to see if they hold up to the theory's claims. In grounded theory, the researcher becomes so familiar with the evidence that he or she can strategically probe and draw conclusions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

2.3.5 Theoretical saturation

For grounded theory to develop, researchers must keep on collecting evidence and analysing it until they reach theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This means that the researcher will keep sampling and coding data until new categories appear. Saturation in theory is an ideal rather than a practical possibility, and this fact needs to be taken into account (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In this regard, the construction of the conceptual model becomes the purpose of this thesis, which ought to be enhanced in future studies.

2.4 CRITICAL SOCIAL WORK THEORY

Critical theory can be traced back to the writings of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, two central figures in the Frankfurt School of social philosophy, in the 1920s and 1930s. The term "Frankfurt School" was coined to describe a group of German philosophers, sociologists, and economists affiliated with the Institute for Social Research that opened in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1923 (Held, 1980). The rise of reactionary and totalitarian ideas in Western Europe inspired the development of critical theory. The central idea was that people can find freedom and help bring about social change by gaining knowledge. This includes knowledge of the natural world, of other people, and of the social order (Fay, 1987). Horkheimer advocated for the idea that reflexivity was what set apart the knowledge of natural science from that of social science (Horkheimer, 1972).

Due to the Institute's views being at odds with those in power during the Nazi rise to power, its members were forced into exile. Critical theorists emigrated to the United States and other parts of Europe, spreading their ideas. Since the 1930s, critical theory's ideology has been reflected in other theoretical stances, most notably feminist and emancipation theory. Critical theorists also include Jurgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida (Salas et al., 2010). Early critical theory focused on classism, social order, and the power of institutions, but hooks' and Freire's writings questioned the impact of sexism and racism on power and the social order, expanding critical theory's scope. Among critical theory's central tenets is the belief that by analysing social systems from a position of power and dominance, we can better recognise the importance of change and take steps to effect it (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). To better understand how to effect positive change towards greater autonomy, it can be helpful to consider how one fits into the larger social order. There is need for an examination of the social order to determine why people's needs aren't being met even though the status quo remains in place.

In terms of critical theory, individuals have the power to effect social change through introspection (Fay, 1987). Critical theory stresses that once we understand the social order, we will be able to use that understanding to bring about social change and the

liberation of the oppressed (Hoy & McCarthy, 1994). Although the idea that fostering critical thinking can help people become more self-reliant and bring about positive social change may sound idealistic, there is evidence that it can be effective when put into practice. Freire emphasised class differences, feminists examined sexism, African American activists challenged the power of racism, and proponents of welfare rights argued against the dominance of classism, sexism, and racism. All of these uprisings led to societal shifts in which people felt more in control of their own lives. They were united by their desire to question established authority, to dig deeper into the past, and to encourage introspection among their audiences.

2.4.1 Critical theory and practice

Helping people meet their basic needs and working to improve oppressive social and environmental conditions are central to social work's ability to make a difference (Mullaly, 2007; Vodde & Gallant, 2002). The purpose of critical practice is to encourage people to recognise their own oppression and take collective action to bring about social change. Those who work with individuals and families help their clients cope with the effects of oppression by giving them access to information, training, and therapy. There must also be an avenue opened up between individual concerns and dominant social structures (Payne 2005; Mullaly, 2007; Pease & Fook, 1999). Based on their research, Vodde and Gallant (2002) state, "Unless we are able to adequately connect the problems of clients in oppressed groups to the roots of their oppression and the clients to each other, fundamental change will not occur". In solidarity with others, consumers can begin to work towards transforming oppressive societal structures once they are able to recognise the ways in which they have been affected by these structures. Similarly, those whose work is focused on the macro level must help oppressed individuals access resources and cope with the effects of that oppression. There is a mending of fences between the micro and macro levels of application this way. Many critical social workers now hold the view that real, lasting change can only come about when both macro and micro practice are employed simultaneously (Pease, Allan & Briskman, 2020). Two case studies are provided below to illustrate how critical theory can be applied in micro and macro settings, respectively.

Capitalist and neoliberal societies often impose restrictions, inequality, and oppression in order to gain social control and higher profits at the expense of ordinary citizens, and the Critical Social Work Theory (Payne, 2005) is a good fit for these problems. These theories are also seen as liberating and revolutionary by Payne (2005). He elaborates by saying that the goal of radical and critical practice is to increase people's awareness of social injustice, political engagement, and social change in order to eliminate cultural hegemony, the process by which elites maintain a social order in which they benefit by instilling their own worldviews in the populace through the media, schools, and other institutions.

Transformation from an exploitative, unequal, and oppressive society to one that is more egalitarian and liberated is a central concern of critical theory (Mullaly, 1993). Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is an example of a critical theory that satisfies these conditions (Freire, 1968). Critical theory's foundational ideas from Karl Marx have been developed further by the Frankfurt School and others into modernism, which can be interpreted as a type of structuralism. The term "structuralism" is commonly used to describe a particular philosophical perspective that takes a relational approach to understanding the world (Caws, 1988). It's a way of looking at the connections between things and the possible clusters that form as a result of those connections critically. Therefore, it could be seen as an analytic approach characterised by an effort to reveal fundamental structures that serve as the basis for organising relationships, thoughts, and experiences (Sands, 1962).

Although structuralism has been widely discussed in the spread across the social sciences, literature, and art, it has not been associated with any particular doctrines (DeGeorge, 1972). It can be interpreted as an effort to bring together these fields in the same way that the scientific method has brought the physical sciences closer together. Whereas postmodernism generally agrees with the basic tenets of critical theory, it rejects the idea that modernism contains within itself the potential for human emancipation (Mullaly, 1993). Postmodernism owes a great deal to the work of French poststructuralists, claims Smart (1993). After modernism's failure to realise its goal of

unifying and objectifying reality, post-structuralism emerged as an attempt at a comprehensive critique of the movement. Specifically, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Guattari, Lacan, and Lyotard were all worried about a crisis of representation in epistemological, artistic, and political spheres.

2.5 LEGISLATION UNDER-GIRDING UNIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Labour Relations Act (No. 66 of 1995) and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) are the two main legislation guiding labour relations in South Africa. The main purpose of the LRA was to modify the law that governs the labour relations in a country, moving away from the old order into the new system that aligns with the RSA Constitution, hence the amendments were largely on trade unions and their roles in different worlds of work. The focus was to redress the imbalances that were created in work spaces of African/black employees by unjust laws that were legislated undermining their rights both at work and in their social spheres. These changes were geared towards regulating the rights of trade unions and achieve the following purposes:

- to organise or form constituencies; to encourage and facilitate collective bargaining in the work place;
- to formulate workplace forums to enable workers to participate in decision making processes;
- creating practical procedures to settle labour disputes through statutory conciliation, mediation and arbitration which purported the establishment and purpose of the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA);
- to manage the right to strike and ways to address lockout in line with the Constitution;
- to establish the Labour Court and Labour Appeal Court as superior courts providing them with exclusive powers to decide on matters of labour relations;
- to facilitate registration of trade unions and employers' organisations in an efficient simple manner and to ensure proper regulation, promotion of fair practices for all and responsible management of funds;

- to ratify the public international law obligations of the Republic relating to labour relations;
- to modify and rescind some laws relating to labour relations;
- Lastly, to make room for incidental matters (Government Gazette No. 1877. 13 December 1995).

The Bill of rights in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996) refers to sections that this study finds relevant and aligns with the rights of employers and employees when it comes to issues of trade unions and unionism. Section (s) 16, addresses freedom of expression, 17, talks to the right to assemble, demonstrate, picket and present petitions unarmed and in a peaceful manner, whereas section 18, refers to freedom of association. All these rights may only be realised if the three basic rights such as equality (sec. 9), human dignity (10), freedom and security of a person (12) and privacy (14) are respected and observed.

Whereas, Chapter 2 (4) of the LRA, states the following; “(1) Everyone has the right to fair labour practices; (2) Every worker has the right to (a) form and join a trade union; (b) to take part in the activities and programmes of a trade union; (c) to strike. (3) Every employer has the right to (a) form and join an employers’ organisation; and (b) to take part in the activities and programmes of an employers’ organisation. (4) Every trade union and every employer’s organisation have the right (a) to determine its own administration, programmes and activities; (b) to organise; and (c) to form and join a federation. (5) Every trade union, employers’ organisation and employer have the right to engage in collective bargaining and (6) National legislation may recognise union security arrangements contained in collective agreements”. Aspects in point 5 and 6 are subject to limitations in accordance with section 36 (1) of the RSA Constitution, giving the National legislation the powers to regulate collective bargaining such that limitations may apply to these rights for as long as the limitations are reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom as enshrined in the Bill of rights (Labour relations Act, No. 66 of 1995: 12).

The evolution of unionisation and legislation from colonial period, to apartheid and post-apartheid highlights the struggles that African workers endured to be part of unions to date, social work profession being at the tail end in this scenario. Professional groups unionised way later than blue collar workers with teachers being at the forefront in this group, a situation similar in Africa as highlighted earlier in the text. Attempts by social workers to form a union(s) has been highlighted in the previous chapters and the woes that somehow contributed to these unsuccessful strides aggravated by both internal (organisational) and external (governmental, societal) factors.

Alluding to those scenarios, it can be concluded therefore, that the social worker's right of association in the workplace is often infringed by management and certain governmental structures. As accentuated by Budeli (2007:1), the workers right of association in the work place, is a core fundamental labour right and basically "without the right to freedom of association, workers are at risk of being isolated and powerless". The study further acknowledges the impact that the history of South Africa has on the evolvement of the social work profession both globally and locally, its relationship with the government and ultimately associated with pushing the mandate of the oppressor. Rightfully so, because during the apartheid era, white social workers were for the government of that day. Post-apartheid, most of them were still occupying managerial positions in both government structures (what is now DSD) and in NGO's where they are currently populated and as history has revealed, alteration of previous mind-sets is not an easy task.

The Constitution of RSA, section 9, states clearly:

- a) Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.
- b) Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken.

- c) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth;

Section 10, states that everyone have inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected. This also being a social work value of promoting worth and dignity of all people. Section 12 outlining the freedom and security of the person indicates that everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person, which includes the right (a) not to be deprived of freedom arbitrarily or without just cause. Lastly, section 14, speaking to privacy and stating that everyone has the right to privacy, which includes the right not to have (d) the privacy of their communications infringed (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996).

Van De Ruit (2017) wrote that the legacy of apartheid resulted in a sustained racial inequality among social workers which enhances fragmentation within the profession weakening the ability to present a unified front in confronting injustices imposed on the profession including sound policy changes. The dependency of the profession on states' funding for salaries and work resources prevents social workers from assertive practice in line with professional ethics and values autonomous from the state's agenda, and further that, there is an imbalance of opportunities for participation in activism and policy modification in agency settings that employ social workers.

To this end, it would then imply that, these fundamental rights of social workers are and have been infringed on a number of aspects. It would also be not at fault to advance the argument that the profession of social work is marginalised, undermined and oppressed by employing organisations, management in this organisation and the state itself.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the theoretical foundations of the investigation. Three different theoretical stances were used in this study: postmodernism, grounded theory, and

critical theory. As postmodern theory raises doubts about the veracity of truth in such a context, social work practice must be re-evaluated. According to postmodernist theory, social workers should focus on grassroots efforts to improve their communities, not community in the traditional sense, but rather community as a framework for confirming one's own subjective perceptions of the world, is at the centre of this attention. Due to its emphasis on the agency of individuals to bring about societal change through reflection, critical theory was also deemed important to this investigation. In terms of this notion, societal transformation is possible after a thorough examination of the current status quo. This is crucial because understanding the social hierarchy is fundamental to effective social work. According to the proponents of grounded theory, social scientists need to be able to generate their own theoretical frameworks from the data they collect, rather than relying solely on those already developed by other scholars.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEXUS OF UNIONISATION AND SOCIAL WORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the nexus of unionisation and social work. The chapter begins by presenting the history of trade unions in developed countries. As early as the 1700's the issues of unionisation in developed countries had already begun though much with blue collar workers. Then followed the era of Social Darwinism, a period of rapid economic and scientific development coinciding with the rise of the ideology of Social Darwinism. This is followed by a chapter on the positive strides and efforts to resuscitate social work unionisation in South Africa. The chapter also presents a brief history of the evolution of social work profession vis-à-vis perceptions, identity, image and status of the profession. Lastly, the chapter looks at the impact of geo-political, socio-economic and neo-liberal factors on the social work profession.

3.2 UNIONS AND SOCIAL WORK: HISTORY AND LESSONS FROM DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

As early as the 1700's, the issues of unionisation in developed countries had already begun though much with blue collar workers. The white-collar unionisation followed suit, which process evolved and is still a bone of contention today. In developing countries, this phenomenon was necessitated by industrialisation and the rise of capitalism. A number of scholars (Scanlon & Harding, 2005; Fisher, 1987; Straussner & Phillips, 1988; Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 2006; Farr, 2020) wrote about the evolution of unions in the US, and the relationship of unions with the social work profession, however, emphasising different aspects. In America, interest in occupational social work has grown since the 1970s, and both the industrial and union sectors have become vital hubs for the recruitment, education and employment of social workers (Ozawa, 1987; Kurzman, 2009). A wealth of material on the longstanding connection between social work and business has been revealed, but far less on the subject of social workers and the labour movement (Poppo, 1981). By the 1980's, changes in social and political values during this time period mirrored the dramatic swings

between cooperation and conflict that occurred during this time. Social work and organised labour did not become adversarial until the Great Depression. For forty years, this has grown into a fruitful partnership that benefits both parties. It is a reflection of the complementary nature of their interests and activities.

3.3 THE ERA OF SOCIAL DARWINISM

Following the Civil War, a period of rapid economic and scientific development coincided with the rise of the ideology of Social Darwinism (Leonard, 2007). This paved the way for the development of modern labour unions and the first steps towards the development of professional social work in the form of "scientific charity" (Ratner, 1984). Before the Civil War, there were several failed attempts to organise workers. The first was an anonymous Philadelphia shoemakers' association, which was formed in 1792 and disbanded the following year (Taft, 1964). Again, the shoemakers banded together in 1794 to form the Federal Society of Cordwainers. Until some of its leaders were arrested in 1806 and charged with "conspiracy to raise wages," this Society led several strikes and remained active (Boyer, Boyer & Morais, 1955).

Trade unions were seen to be colluding with the employer organisations or states using force as a method of undermining society (Boyer, Boyer & Morais, 1955), so they were criminally prosecuted and their numbers were severely reduced before the Civil War. The Knights of Labor was the most influential union after the Civil War. It was founded in 1869 and set itself apart from other labour organisations by welcoming members of any sex, religion, race, ability or occupation. The Order's goal was to give workers "a proper share of the wealth that they create; more of the leisure that belongs to them; more societal advantages; more of the benefits, privileges, and employments of the world" (Taft, 1964: 87). Concern for child labour, the reduction of working hours to eight per day, and equal pay for equal work were also central concerns of the Knights of Labor, as was cooperation between producers and consumers. Existing social welfare organisations were also trying to organise at the same time with the labour movement.

Founded in Buffalo, New York in 1877, the Charity Organization Societies quickly spread across the country. These Societies reflected the prevailing values of their time, which were predictability, rationality, and efficiency. Their stated mission was to centralise the community's charitable resources and provide emotional support to those in need. They tried to apply standard business practices to charity work and, not surprisingly, received the most backing from the corporate and professional elite (Ratner, 1984). The emergence of the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor and the rise of the Charity Organization Societies almost simultaneously reflected opposing perspectives on the social and economic issues of the time. The Knights of Labor blamed the social system for the "pauperisation and hopeless degradation of the toiling masses" (Gettleman, 1963; Douglass, 2016), while the members of the Charity Organization Societies, many of whom upper class, were concerned about "attempting to alleviate the sufferings of the deserving poor" (Gettleman, 1963: 58). The Knights of Labor were concerned with social justice, but the Charity Organization was more concerned with helping those in need.

An invited labour representative at the 1890 Conference on Charities and Correction asked, movingly, "if there is not something radically wrong in that system which compels men willing to work to stand idle and poverty-stricken in the midst of plenty" (Gettleman, 1963). Labor leader speaker continued, Poverty is presented as inevitable for the masses in all charity literature, an aspect that the helping organisations accept as normal the idea that many of God's children will always live in poverty. Value differences were also on display in the way the early labour unions and the social welfare community viewed strikes, the primary organising tool of the unions. Strikers and their families were "neither entitled to sympathy nor aid," and many did not even bother to offer assistance (Wingate 1883: 37).

3.4 PROGRESSIVE ERA: LABOUR UNIONS AND THE SETTLEMENT MOVEMENT

During the tail end of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, the labour movement and the field of social welfare were both impacted by changing economic conditions and shifting social norms, and for a short time, the gap

between the two fields was bridged. In the 1880s, the number of people joining the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor began to dwindle (Straussner & Phillips, 1988). Several internal policy issues, as well as disagreements with the emerging "pure and simple" trade unions, which focused on the needs of union members within a given trade rather than on broader social issues, led to its demise. The American Federation of Labor was renamed from the Federation of Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada after the formation of these new and rapidly expanding trade unions (AFL). The AFL, led by Samuel Gompers, was formally established in 1886 as an alliance of trade unions representing skilled workers organised along craft lines (Straussner & Phillips, 1988).

One of the AFL's founding principles was "exclusive jurisdiction," the belief that only one union should represent workers in any given trade (Fitch, 1931). By banding together, craft unions were able to exert enough influence to realise some of their goals, like the gradual lowering of work hours. In addition, craft unions established their own welfare system for their members out of discontent with the government's existing laissez-faire policies, which were seen as benefiting industry at the expense of labour, and the degrading character of charity handouts (Deutsch, 1944). Pension plans, health insurance, death benefits, and unemployment insurance were all things unions started offering. Although these benefits were relatively small, their provision by unions demonstrated that unions viewed meeting the social welfare needs of members as equally important to the labour movement as achieving better working conditions, higher wages and fewer hours per week (Munts and Munts, 1968).

A severe economic crisis hit the country in the early 1890s, and wreaked havoc on the working class. It also sparked complaints about the industry's status quo. The public sided with the workers for the first time in their fight for better pay and benefits. The union movement gained traction as corporate wrongdoing and blatant inequalities in treatment of workers became public knowledge. Over two million more people joined unions between 1897 and 1904, and by the end of World War I, over four million American workers were represented by unions. The number of federal and state laws enacted to protect and advance the interests of workers increased (Taft, 1964). The

results of the social, political, and economic activities on social welfare that were experienced between the 1890s and the First World War; the period that Jane Addams referred to as the time of the coming together of the Charitable and the Radical.

Some of the challenges between labour and social work have been broken down as a result of developments within social work, such as the transition from upper-class volunteers to paid workers from middle-class backgrounds, the growing emphasis on formal training for those involved in social welfare, and the rapid growth of the Settlement Movement (Deutsch, 1944). A number of prominent leaders within the Settlement Movement, such as Jane Addams and Lillian Wald, were active in the formation of the National Women's Trade Union League (Davis, 1964) and other labour unions due to the shared values of the two movements. Gladys Boone, who researched and wrote about the history of women in labour unions, claims that Chicago in the 1890s was the site of many labour and social work organisations working together. Women's labour organising was spearheaded by Hull House, while Mary McDowell and Michael Donnelly helped formalise the Maud Gonne Club, a loose association of women who worked in the meat packing industry into Local 183 of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America (Lundblad, 1995).

Again demonstrating its solidarity with workers in 1915, Hull House funded strikes, supplied strikers with food and other necessities, and coordinated public support for the unorganised union that would eventually become the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (Lundblad, 1995; Chambers, 1963). The union between labour and social work, however, did not last. In the years following World War I, when conservatism was on the rise, settlement houses largely withdrew from politics. With its focus on psychodynamic theory, the social work community shifted its attention from the economy to direct service delivery. Because of this, labour unions once again began to view social work with suspicion. Many individual caseworkers' actions, which unintentionally undermined the unions' efforts, shook labour's faith in social work. In one extreme case, union members were not kind to the social worker who, out of concern for an individual client, recommended that an unemployed man "go out and

apply for a position as a strike breaker." And when a family caseworker was discovered "actually writing to an employer..., asking him to give the employee seven days' work a week because his large family and other complications made an increased income desirable," union members were outraged (Scott, 1929: 316). However, social work began the reconciliation mission with the trade union movement in the 1930s through active support of the Congress of Industrial Organizations' (CIO) leading and taking part in organising drives and reaching out to unemployed workers during the height of the Great Depression.

3.5 WELFARE CAPITALISM

Scanlon and Harding (2005) explored the conflict between Social Work and Labour Unions during the rapid industrialisation that followed the Civil War. Welfare capitalism was introduced; its heyday was during and immediately after World War I. Brandes (1976:8) defined welfare capitalism as "any service provided for the comfort or improvement of employees which was neither a necessity of the industry nor required by law". The need to shield businesses from trade unionism was a major factor in the emergence of welfare capitalism, with scholars noting that "the anti-union overtones of welfare were dear and definite" (Brandes, 1976). Due to the shortage of available workers and the rise in demand for defence-related goods during World War I, workers found themselves in a position of increased influence. Membership in unions increased, and the labour movement became more militant as a result. The business elite, who amassed massive profits during the war, responded to workers' demands for a greater share of the wealth by introducing more generous welfare policies. By stressing their dedication to productivity and the recognition of the mutuality of interests between workers and management, businessmen hoped to improve the old industrialism's reputation. Some businesses spent a lot on employee benefits like health care, education, recreation, accident prevention and compensation for those who were hurt on the job (Brandes, 1976).

Four hundred and thirty-one of the largest companies in the United States in 1919 participated in a survey conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Of this number, 141 had permanent welfare secretary and 154 had contracted with outside agencies

to provide social work services (Poppo, 1981). With the goal of "transforming labourers into the kinds of people closer to the company's heart's desire," this early industrial "social worker" became an important instrument of social control. These social workers assisted workers, but they also reported back to management on workers' gripes with the company, employees' lifestyle choices, union activity and the effectiveness of union organisers (Brandes, 1976:115). This view is also held by Kurzman (2009: 7), who indicates that, at the beginning of the 20th century, social workers were seen as "Lady Bountifuls", providing charity to the not so deserving, rather than eliminating unfair practices in the workplace. In addition, the assistance they provided to poor immigrant workers and their families was loaded and carrying advice and moral judgment. At the time, social work did not support strike, which was the labour's central weapon, and a consistent refusal to side with labour's enmity towards strike breakers called "scabs." During the 1920s, when business was booming, social workers often were invited by industrial sectors to serve as "welfare secretaries" to assist workers with personal and economic problems, but always as agents of employers. It was not a surprise to union movements that corporations that were likely to contract welfare secretaries were those whose policies and practices were against unions (Akabas & Kurzman, 1982; Fisher, 1987). In other words, social workers were viewed as supporting and working with management in promoting the wishes of the employer rather than the employees, a phenomenon that the profession is still accused of even today worldwide.

The decline of welfare capitalism in the 1920s can be attributed to several factors, including the decade's overall prosperity, the expansion of the social work sector, and the development of industrial technology that reduced the demand for skilled labour. The Great Depression's economic destruction, the resulting financial burdens on industry, and the Roosevelt administration's position to protect employee rights and support the development of unions sparked the demise for welfare capitalism. As a result, welfare capitalism failed miserably in its goal of limiting union activity, and the position of social secretary was rendered unnecessary from the perspective of business (Brandes, 1976). So, the doors were opened for a renewed alliance between labour and social work after the industry-social work relationship broke down and labour unions were given official status.

3.6 MOMENTS OF TRUTH IN THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL WORK UNION: WORLD WAR II AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

There was a new complementarity of interests and objectives between social work and labour unions after the economic and social upheaval of the Great Depression, along with changes in societal attitudes towards workers and unions as reflected in federal legislation of the New Deal. With the exception of temporary shifts in response to shifting social conditions, a fundamentally cooperative stance has prevailed over the past fifty years. Whether social workers should keep their focus on individual problems or shift to a concern with poverty, and whether the federal government should be involved in funding and administering relief and social insurances, were all topics of heated debate within the social work profession until the Great Depression's resilience put an end to the discussion (Chambers, 1963; Fisher, 1980). This time around, social workers were worried about "the problems arising out of insufficient income-whether due to a low wage scale, interruption in opportunity to earn, as in case of accident, illness, and unemployment, or to a termination of ability to earn, as in old age" (Fitch, 1930: 333).

As the field of social work went through ideological shifts in the 1930s (Straussner & Phillips, 1988), it grew closer to the labour movement. An integral part of the closer labour-social work relationship that emerged in the 1930s was the unionisation of social workers. There are currently six different unions that social workers can join, all of which date back to 1932 and the formation of the American Federation of Government Employees. The exact percentage of professional social workers among the union's membership is unknown, but its influence on social workers' salaries has been widely acknowledged (Chambers, 1963). In 1934, the Joint Committee of Trade Unions in Social Work was formed when workers in the public welfare and voluntary social agency sectors, who had previously belonged to two different unions, joined the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The Committee facilitated the participation of unions from both the public and private sectors of social work in

national social work conferences, and coordinated the activities of the various social work unions (Chambers, 1963).

Another indicator of the growing solidarity between social workers and unions is the history of the radical Rank-and-File movement within the social work profession. During the years of crucial social and economic change (1934–1942), the movement provided financial support to several striking unions and defence funds (Fisher, 1980), and introduced the radical journal, *Social Work Today*, which served as a forum for voices of reform. This publication was founded with the stated goal of fostering "an interest in the fundamental reorganisation society must undergo to provide security for all and to support labour's struggle for a greater measure of control as the basic condition for that reorganisation" (Reynolds, 1963:156).

During the 1990s, there was a renewed interest in labour unions among professionals such as nurses, physicians, social workers, and psychologists. These professions embarked on examining ways of forming unions to promote the needs of their respective professions, hence professional membership in unions increased in that era. This was referred to as the era of New "Unionism" which saw the increase in the presence of women and people of colour occupying highest leadership levels, and establishment of interest groups for African-American, gay and lesbian, Hispanic and Asian-Pacific Islander labour union members. By 1999, labour, which had been declining in membership for 40 years, had its most successful organising year ever (Scanlon and Harding, 2005). Similarly, this trend was also witnessed in South Africa as it will be discussed in the upcoming discussions.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the nexus of unionisation and social work. The chapter started out by discussing the evolution of labour unions in industrialised nations. Whereas concerns about unionisation among blue collar workers in affluent countries date back to at least the 18th century. Rapid economic and technological progress coincided with the birth of the concept of Social Darwinism. The chapter also highlighted the progress

and initiatives made to revive social work unions in South Africa. In this chapter's final section, the researcher looked at how the social work profession has changed over time in terms of its reputation, identity and standing.

CHAPTER 4

EXPOSITION OF THE HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF UNIONS IN AFRICA AND SOUTH AFRICA: RELEVANCE TO SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an exposition of the history and background of unions in Southern African countries. The chapter established that trade unions for African workers were considered when the colonial administrations both in British and French put in place the legal requirements for the establishment of indigenous labour organisations. The Union of South Africa was established in May 1910 by bringing together the British colonies of the Cape and Natal, together with the former Boer Republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, therefore the constitution was adopted, but the rights and freedom of black South Africans were not catered for, the focus was mainly on white interests. Nevertheless, the period between 1919 and 1947 witnessed the rapid growth of blue-collar unions, which came before the prominence of white-collar unions. The chapter notes that efforts have been put in place to resuscitate social work unionisation in South Africa. This was done through engagements such as protests. Some of the notable ones included the September 2016 national march by social workers to the Union Buildings in Pretoria and the 2017 five-week long national strike led by the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union.

4.2 BACKGROUND OF TRADE UNIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Trade unions in Africa began as far back as 1919 during the times of Clement Kadalie, a teacher from Nyasaland (now known as Malawi), who formed the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU) among dock workers in Cape Town (Dyakala 1999, citing Baskin, 1991; Friedman, 1987). However, Schillinger (2005) wrote that trade unions in colonial Africa began subsequent to the end of World War

2, that is, immediately after 1945, except with a few countries like Tunisia, South Africa and the British colonies of Sierra Leone and The Gambia. It was only at this period that trade unions for African workers were considered when the colonial administrations both in Britain and France put in place the legal requirements for the establishment of indigenous labour organisations. The development of African trade unions was primarily in the public service and the public transport sector, mainly for teachers, railway and port workers because there was no significant manufacturing sector at the time.

Trade unions were also formed in the export enclaves of the mining industry like in Zambia, and the then Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and some minor trade union activities in the plantation economy of East Africa. The status quo has not changed in that regard in African countries. In contrast then, trade unionism in South Africa was initially due to industrialisation and the colonial legacy, and began with the blue-collar working sector i.e., the mining, carpentry and textile sectors. The public service and transport sectors only followed suit in the latter years. Basically, the models of trade unions in Africa and South Africa were adopted from the British and French colonies. On arrival, workers from these countries became development workers of trade unionism in the South.

Budeli (2005), Shillinger (2005) and Buhlungu, Brookes and Wood (2008) discussed the role of trade unions in party politics and their instrumental role in political changes both in South Africa and the entire continent. However, this collaboration came at a costly price, and to some extent, hampered the autonomy of these unions, which resulted in 'half-baked' representation of workers in many structures of the world of work. A phenomenon which Shillinger (2005:2) referred to as trade unions turning into "state labour organisations or transmission belts of ruling parties". This aspect will be deliberated more upon under trade unionism in the new democracy.

4.2 TRADE UNIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

In May of 1910, the British colonies of the Cape and Natal and the former Boer Republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State merged to form the Union of South Africa (Budeli, 2007). This merger brought with it a new constitution, but it was one

that did not adequately protect the rights and freedoms of black South Africans in favour of protecting white interests (Dyakala, 1999). Trade unionism among white employees in South Africa and elsewhere was encouraged by the law that governed labour relations at the time, which was codified in the Constitution at the same time. Not only were Africans and Blacks prevented from joining labour unions, but they were also subjected to deliberate harassment whenever they attempted to do so (Budeli, 2007). Only white workers were granted the benefits of freedom of association in the workplace, including the opportunity to organise, form and join a trade union; the right to collectively bargain and go on strike; and the right to collectively organise and go on strike (Kappo-Abidemi, Allen-Ile & Iwu, 2015).

Before the advent of white-collar unions, as was mentioned earlier, there was a boom of blue-collar unions between 1919 and 1947 (Budeli, 2007). The blue-collar unions in the United States were not only formidable unions, they were also influential in the process of transforming the nation's industrial relations. This legislation was enacted in an effort to protect white labourers, who were primarily from overseas, from the infiltrating threat of black labour, which primarily performed unskilled and menial works in the mines. Since black African workers were prohibited from performing skilled and certain unskilled jobs in the mines, this legislation was enacted in an effort to protect black African workers from performing skilled and certain unskilled jobs in the mines. As a direct consequence of this, they were unable to acquire proper qualifications (Dyakala 1999; Budeli, 2007). In the same year, strikes by African black employees were made illegal by the Native Labour Regulations Act 34, which was passed into law in the same year. As a direct result of these laws, the Rand Revolt Act of 1922 incited a massive worker uprising against the government of Jan Smuts, and the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 encouraged Afrikaner Nationalism in South Africa. Both of these acts were passed in 1922. The Industrial Disputes Prevention Act 22 of 1909 was the first South African act meant to govern labour relations in general, and was approved by the assembly of the Transvaal in 1909 (Dyakala 1999).

Grossett and Venter (1998) maintain that the Industrial Disputes Prevention Act signalled the formalisation of national sentiment since it formalised the combined experiences of black and white employees. They believe that this formalisation was necessary for the formalisation of national sentiment. African-American men were

required to carry permits as proof that they were employed as a result of the Act. If they were unable to provide these permits, they were considered "vagrants" who had deserted their employers and needed to be found, disciplined and brought back to work. The Act also mandated that African-American women be allowed to carry permits to prove that they were married (Friedman, 1987). In addition to losing their political rights, members of the black community also lost their legal rights at the hands of the legislature.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the white Afrikaner Nationalists undertook a move to remove all black workers from the Railway Union. In response, black workers formed around twenty-seven other unions. As a direct result of this, a union known as the South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union (SARHWU) was established by a number of black workers in Cape Town. Between the years 1941 and 1947, there was a significant expansion of the labour union movement, which resulted in the establishment of a large number of federations, including the African Miners Union, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA), the South African Confederation of Labour, and the Council of the Non-European Union (CNETU) (Grossett & Venter, 1998).

Between the years 1941 and 1947, a number of different unions, including the African Miners Union, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA), the South African Confederation of Labour (SACL), and the Council of the Non-European Union (CNETU) came into existence as a result of the expansion of the labour movement. It did not get any better for black trade unions, the liberation struggle, black South Africans in general, and notably African indigenous people after the National Party came to power in 1948 and ruled the country until 1994 (Grossett & Venter, 1998).

In 1950, following the adoption of the Suppression of Communism Act, the government of the National Party deemed the Communist Party to be unlawful and called for its outright prohibition. Because of this, several multiracial subgroups came into existence. The African National Congress (ANC), which was at the centre of mass mobilisation against the development of apartheid, was responsible for the founding of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), which consisted of nineteen

affiliated unions and had a membership of up to 20,000 people (Grossett & Venter (1998). In order to lobby for white worker benefits and racial segregation, a number of white worker unions, including the Trades and Labour Council, aligned themselves with unions affiliated with radical right-wing Afrikaner Nationalist organisations. In 1950, the National Executive Council of the Trade and Labor Council came to the conclusion that African unions should not be allowed to become members of the organisation (Grossett & Venter, 1998). After coming to an agreement with the African National Congress, the South African Council of Trade Unions was joined by a great number of additional white labour organisations (SACTU). In spite of these differences, it was commonly believed that white unions supported the free market system, which was the epitome of the capitalist system, and that black unions were at the forefront of the struggle for Marxist and socialist economic systems. There were dual alliances in secret and in the open at the same time. As a direct consequence of this, the so-called white-collar unions were totally committed to and linked with the government that was led by the Boer National Party. As a result, they offered significant support to the administration (Grossett and Venter, 1998).

It was a bleak period in South African history when, in the middle of the 1960s, political, military and labour union resistance to apartheid was successfully eliminated (Maree, 1987). The reorientation of workers' efforts towards better serving white business owners was one of the primary motivations behind the passage of more stringent labour laws, which were enacted with the dual objectives of maintaining worker compliance and keeping workers under control (Maree, 1987). As a consequence of decrees issued by the government, political activities and unions were both made illegal. According to Maree (1987), the period between 1973 and 1985 saw the emergence of active black unions. In recent decades, there has been a pervasive pattern of racial segregation in the workplace, and the social work profession has not been an exception to this pattern. There was the South African Black Social Workers Association (SABSWA) for black social workers, the South African Social Workers Union (SASWU) for white social workers, and the Concerned Social Workers and the Progressive Social Workers Union for non-racial social workers. Both of these organisations were dissolved in 1997. Non-racial social workers were represented by the Concerned Social Workers and the Progressive Social Workers Union.

An attempt to establish an Interim Committee of Social Work Associations (ICSWA) was reportedly made in the year 1997, as stated by the South African Interim Council of Social Workers (SAICSW) (South African Council Newsletter, 1997). Along with nursing, social work is a predominantly female profession in South Africa, and the unions that represent social workers have typically mirrored the gender dynamics of the blue collar sector in the country. As described by Marks (1994), the era in which white nurses refused to mix with black nurses, non-Europeans as they were regarded in professional associations like South African Nurses Association [SANA], one of the oldest nurses staff associations ended, and was succeeded by the era in which racially based organisations began to dissolve (Marks, 1994). In other words, the era in which white nurses refused to mix with black nurses, non-Europeans began to end. This is because the apartheid state aimed to effectively eliminate black people from industrial relations by imposing harsh legislation like pass laws, the only place where black nurses were allowed to work was in the homelands.

Dyakala (1999) reported on the following events while serving as co-chairperson of the Border Progressive Social Workers Union (BOPSWU) in the Ciskei at the time. According to him, the history of social work unionism in South Africa is limited still in its infancy. He indicated that in 1988, social workers from the Border region of the Eastern Cape, directed by Dalindyabo Maxegwana, mobilised and assembled to engage about the predicament that social workers found themselves in, as well as the situation of the profession in general. The conclusion was that the matter to form a union of social workers of all different races and political persuasions should be treated as urgent. A large number of these social workers called the neighbourhoods of East London and King William's Town their home. Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown, Queenstown, Transkei, and the districts that were formerly a part of Ciskei were all attacked in these attempts.

He added that in 1993, social workers nationally made an effort to attend a series of seminars in King William's Town, Grahamstown, and Transkei in trying to pursue the mission. Some of these social workers were members of organisations such as the South African Black Social Association (SABSWA), the South African Social Workers Union (SASWU), the Public Service League (PSL), the Public Servants Association (PSA), the Police, Prison and Civil Rights Union (POPCRU), and other organisations

of a similar nature. Others, on the other hand, were not connected to any group at all in any way. The social workers in the Border Ciskei area reached a turning point in 1994 when they gathered at the King William's Town Motel on June 18 to establish the Border Progressive Social Professionals Union. This event marked the beginning of a new era for these social workers (BOPSWU) (Dyakala, 1999).

The following paragraph presents the narrative as written by Dyakala (1999) of the events as written in the Ciskei Social Workers Forum records of 1994; there was a robust feeling of brotherhood and sisterhood among the social workers. Even the Executive Committee included members who accurately reflected the population of the country. It was decided that Maxegwana would serve as President, and that Bebeza would take on the role of General Secretary. It was an interesting dynamic in and of itself that this group of social workers was willing to renounce membership in their existing organisations in order to form a powerful professional social work union. They were in agreement that the existence of a union that represented only social workers would encourage a deeper sense of community and pride among those working in the area of social work in general. The intention to create the framework for a more expansive national organisation representing social workers was one of the primary motivating factors that led to the founding of a regional union. This national organisation would have a large regional and provincial foundation.

Ciskei social workers who were members of BOPSWU went on a wildcat strike to support the union's existence. The action was organised by the Ciskei Social Workers Forum, whose co-chairs were Tumeka Dyakala and Mzimasi Bebeza. The strike lasted for three days (General Secretary of BOPSWU). Because the striking social workers had not followed the constitutional processes of the union prior to the strike, opinions on the legality of the action, which took place from August 9th to September 10th, 1994, were mixed. The strike lasted for a total of ten weeks. Because it was not recognised as a bargaining structure by the Central Bargaining Chamber, BOPSWU was not eligible to go on strike under the terms of the Labour Relations Act of 1956, which stipulates that unions are not permitted to engage in illegal strike activities. It would appear that the social worker from Ciskei was attempting to take shortcuts in their work (Ciskei Social Workers Forum records, 1994 cited in Dyakala, 1999).

4.2.1 Positive strides and efforts to resuscitate social work unionisation in South Africa

The following protests and activities, including the September 2016 national march by social workers to the Union Buildings in Pretoria (Madibogo, 2016), followed by the 2017 five-week long national strike led by National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU), which resulted in the closure of most Social Development offices in Matatiele, Maluti, Vhembe and Mopani Districts (Nketo, 2017), indicate strides made by social workers to be heard. Other events in the life of the profession include the attempted establishment and non-survival of the South African Social Workers Union (SASWU) in the Western Cape Province (NGO Pulse, 2012), and the launching of the National Association of Social Workers of South Africa in September 2007 (Sewpaul, 2012), marking the first non-racial social work association in South Africa, though with much struggle. These actions are viewed as an outcry by social workers for radical change on how the profession is viewed, identified and positioned. Though this can be seen as a positive move, the concern of the study is what appears as disunity and reluctance by social workers in supporting structures that may assist in bringing about change such as the union for social workers. To date, little is known of what happened to SASWU, and why it could not even see the light of day, and the failure to launch the union for social workers in the Limpopo branch, is another case.

In support of the above assertions, available research highlights the need for social workers to unite, organise and mobilise themselves as a formidable force (Gray & Mazibuko, 2002; Dlamini & Sewpaul, 2015; Strier & Bershtling, 2016). In addition, Craig da Silva (2007) believes that a strong movement will be the most powerful approach for change. However, only one project by Dyakala (1999) conducted in the Eastern Cape was identified by this study. The project investigated social workers' perceptions of unionisation and collective bargaining, and provided some light on past social work union activities as described in the earlier text. There has also been complaints of victimisation, harassment and marginalisation of social workers who support radical/critical social work practice, especially in government settings by managers who, in most cases, are social workers themselves (Naidoo & Kasiram, 2004; Sithole, 2010).

These factors highlight the need for a strong movement that has collective bargaining power that will speak in one voice against these unfair inflictions.

4.2.2 Political, socio-economic and Neo-Liberal factors confronting the profession

Mmatli (2008) countered that structural issues that African social workers deal with are typically the outcome of political decisions that require political remedies. It goes on to say that social workers are routinely left out of the larger policy-making process and are instead tasked with managing ambiguous, inadequately financed welfare programs and community development initiatives. In agreement, Strier (2019) claimed that social work practice has been devalued as a result of the adoption of new management techniques. A greater number of social workers are rushing into the clinical field in the commercial sector as a result of neoliberal reforms that bring intolerable working circumstances. This aspect is observed in different countries where managerialism has altered the mandate of social workers.

Naidoo and Kasiram (2004) concurs to the fact that the internal and external forms of oppression experienced by social workers and social service recipients are obstacles for relevant and adequate service delivery. Complaints of being bullied and emotionally blackmailed were reported by some social workers in South Africa when resisting those forms of afflictions. In addition, Dlamini and Sewpaul (2015) established that social workers are faced with high caseloads, lack of resources, poor working conditions, bureaucratic control, lack of professional autonomy, political and government interference in practice, resulting in the erosion of the legitimacy of the profession. An aspect that Mmatli (2008) highlighted on, of professional groups, politicians, economists and bureaucrats who largely define the social work agenda, yet with so limited knowledge of problems faced by social work clientele. Another problem is that managers are more focused on the minute details of administrative tasks and often lack experience in social work, the fragmentation of social work into various subdivisions as a result of social workers' altered work has a negative impact on professionalisation. This diminishes social workers' professional autonomy and identity. (Wallace & Pease, 2011).

Hence the researcher strongly opines those social workers can no longer afford to be spectators and side-lined in the development of policies that they have to implement, which are often unclear, unfair and unlikely to bring positive changes to the livelihoods of individuals, groups and communities. A call for social workers to be politically committed and willed to campaign for structural changes that would promote human rights and dignity has been made across the globe. They are urged to be radical and resist hegemonic policies, to condemn discriminatory behaviours of authorities and to use available data from practice to lobby against unfair systemic decisions (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2013; Sithole, 2010 and Strier & Bershtling, 2016).

As argued by Ornellas, Engelbrecht and Atamtürk (2020), the field of economics and economic policy is of a distant concern to the majority of social workers who are largely overwhelmed by the daily challenges of their practice and while social policy and legislation are the core foundation of the profession. Many social workers tend to shift the economic argument and theory to academics when in fact, it is highly significant for social workers to comprehend the manner in which the broader national and international economic policies impact upon the discursive daily work of social workers. Hence, majority of social workers are oblivious to the socio-economic and neo-liberal factors confronting the profession.

According to Magubane (2002), neo-liberalism values global economy, globalisation, free market, free trade and unrestricted flow of capital where there is minimal government spending, low taxation, limited regulations, fewer restrictions on business operations and does not favour government intervention. Similarly, (Harvey, 2010 cited in Spolander et al. 2020: 303) defines neo-liberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices”. To this end, it is the researcher’s perspective that social workers need to comprehend the above factors and how they impact on social work profession and practice. Issues of neo-liberalism reflects the political and socio-economic spheres in capitalistic countries where welfarism is not totally embraced and the poor and marginalised are somehow seen as an inconvenience. Social workers are therefore

aligned to these groupings, challenging governments to spend more in taking care and providing resources to the very groups. The reason perhaps social workers' salaries, the status of the profession and resources for service delivery are often never prioritised.

During the 2016 march, Madibogo (2016) reported that "Over 20,000 social workers came from as far as Limpopo, the Eastern Cape and Free State to march for better working conditions..... their demands included better salaries, separate office space allocations, pool cars and work equipment like laptops and cell phones". In support of this, Sithole (2010) mentioned the deployment of cadres with no social work background to supervise social workers, professional and turf rivalry existing between social workers, community development officers and youth and child care workers as compounding the situation. In addition, Engelbrecht (2017), Mmadi and Sithole (2017), Patel (2016) and Earle-Mallesson (2009) also mentioned turf rivalry and power struggles with other occupational groups and government officials as compounding the situation.

Malherbe and Hendriks (2004: 25) wrote about how conditions of employment of social workers result in "high levels of absenteeism and staff turnover, regular complaints, low morale, and poor attitude to the work.... resistance to change, job dissatisfaction and perceptions of unfairness". This supports the statement by the researcher that these factors are unknown to the public, and perpetuate perceptions that social workers are not ready and willing to serve the nation. The researcher is inclined to believe that today's social workers have the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No.108, 1996 and the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 to protect them against such exploits. In addition, the revised document of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), which was approved by the IASSW delegate assembly in 2017 under the sub-theme, 'Social and Political Action', clearly states that "Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to resources, employment, services and opportunities... Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena in practice, and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions... and promote social justice" (IFSW Delegate Assembly, 2017: 22).

However, what is on paper and the everyday experiences of social workers provides a grim picture as painted by the above narrative. In the same breath, some scholars (Fisher, 1987; Douglass, 2016) referred to issues of ethics and values of social work being a problematic area compounded by associations of social work not being robust about their stance when it comes to the issue. It then, according to the author, often leaves social workers confused and unsure of how to behave when it comes to unionisation and taking part in strikes, concerned and questioning whether these two align with social work ethics and values. If indeed, NASW and SACSSP do not necessarily support unionisation, collective bargaining and social workers taking part in legitimate strikes, would that not be a bridge to their Constitutional rights and the infringement of LRA (section 23 and 28)? Another bone of contention is how social workers would be expected to advocate for changes in policy and legislation in order to improve social conditions and promote social justice for their clientele, yet that does not apply to them. Douglass (2016) project's title states it clearly that 'You are in a better position to protect people when you feel like you're protected yourself'. The same concern was registered by Mmadi and Sithole (2017), questioning how would social workers emancipate the nation if they are not emancipated themselves? They argued that social workers' core business is to empower communities. However, if they are less empowered themselves, then they would be a disservice to the nation and to the profession.

4.3 THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

It is imperative to highlight the intersection of identity, perception, position and status of the profession to its emergence in the North and its development in the South. In South Africa where it began in the 19th century, its activities prefaced much earlier in the 18th century in the form of philanthropist and charity work in England and subsequently in the US. These activities were based on humanitarian, religious and democratic principles (McNutt, 2013; Abramovitz, 1998; Abbot, 1995). In the 1860s, social work was a response to many urban problems in the US due to industrialisation that brought mass immigration, mass poverty and urbanisation (McNutt 2013; Ingrao 2014). Similarly, in South Africa the discovery of minerals in the late 1800s gave birth to the mining industry and the highly industrialised society, resulting in mass poverty,

diseases, illiteracy, starvation and mental health challenges, which subsequently called for social work intervention (Mckendrick 2001; Patel 2005).

It is this history of philanthropy somewhat that purported an educator, Abraham Flexner (2001) original work in 1915 to have suggested that social work is not a profession. His famous, yet injurious speech has been referred to by other scholars (Abbot, 1995; McNutt, 2013; Ingrao, 2014; Gelman & Gonzalèz, 2016; van de Ruit, 2017), and gave birth to the anecdotal of professionalisation that brought forth the issues of identity, perceptions, status and image of the social work profession into question to date. Other researchers conceive of gender as another aspect of concern (Weick, 2000; Sithole, 2010; Khunou & Pillay, 2012; Beddoe, 2017), among others. Lastly, the attachment to the state and populations that social work represents seem to create more dilemma. As described by Gibelman (1999: 303) "Social work's sanction comes from the society of which it is a part", meaning the profession is highly associated with groups it serves and represents.

The debate of whether social work is a profession or semi-profession was based on Flexner's ideology of what a profession is or should be. He believed that social work lacked the scientific knowledge base. A criticism that McNutt (2013) believes social work is still trying to address even today. That is, working on its knowledge base to satisfy Flexner's reproach. Gelman and González (2016: 2) concede that "the devaluation of our field and the manifold ways of refuting the snub and endeavouring to prove it meritless continue to reverberate to this day". However, these authors believe that the profession need not worry, declaring that so much has been achieved, so much has evolved, so much that even Flexner himself would not have recognised the social work profession today. Staniforth, Fouché and O'Brien (2011:192) concur and laments that since its origin, social work has been battling with "how it is defined, practised and perceived," undergoing many evolutions that have shaped how it is practiced today.

According to Flexner (2001:5), a profession has to adhere to the following six criteria: "professions involve essentially intellectual operations with large individual responsibility; they derive their raw material from science and learning; this material they work up to a practical and definite end; they possess an educationally

communicable technique; they tend to self-organisation; they are becoming increasingly altruistic in motivation". He further compared social work with what he called genuine professions that are universally accepted as such: law, medicine and preaching. In his view, these professions possess, as mentioned by Ingrao (2014), specialised skills, exactness and knowledge base. Forty-two years later, Greenwoods, a functionalist (1957, cited in Abbot 2005) wrote a commemorated article titled "The Attributes of a profession" about social work. He made mention of five attributes; two, the same as Flexner's then added these three; length of formal training and education, a code of ethics or regulations and some form of community approval backed by professional licensing.

Weick (2000), as if responding to Flexner's rebuke, actually lamented social works' loss of its first voice, that is, its original mission and core business in intervening in people's lives and remaining true to itself. However, Weick's work is more on the gendering of the profession (a women profession). She echoed how the profession throughout the subsequent years took a robust journey to prove its professional status to the scientific world by adopting scientific methodologies, and in the process, compromising the ordinary concerns of human relationships, social change and people's well-being.

In emphasis, she wrote that "emotions are replaced with studied disinterest; complexity is resolved by narrowing the point of study; mystery evaporates in the face of calibrated instruments and precise numbers, nowhere to be found are the living tissues of human drama and human triumph.....social work has let slip through its fingers the language that fills its veins with the fullest expression of human". Weick (2000:16) further registered concerns around social work's difficulty in articulating what it does, how it does it and the source of practice knowledge in an uncompromising manner. In addition, Weick (2000) stated how social work as a women's profession is accorded the same status that society bestows on women globally.

This debate of professionalisation became an area of interest to Abbott (1995) in his studies of system of professions. Unlike Flexner (2001), Abbot did not question the professionalism of social work, but empathised with it. Abbott (1995) further wrote about the conceptions of the attributes of a profession by Greenwoods and the social

work history of professionalisation that created problems of turf rivalry and the boundaries that seemed to have enveloped the profession. He was confronted with whether social work is “a social work of boundaries” or rather, talk should be about “boundaries of social work?” Initially influenced by Parson’s functionalist theory to examine social work’s place in this turf-conflicted area, Abbot, decided that social work was a profession of boundaries or what he calls, a profession of interstitiality because of its discursive nature; mediating and brokering between all these groups such as doctors, lawyers and psychiatrists, on the one hand, and patients, organisations and families, on the other. This, he later abandoned and argued the position of social work from his own theory of systems of professions. He realised that of importance was “boundaries of social work” (Abbot, 1995:555) and viewed social work as introduced from a set of boundary groups and a complicated defended turf.

On the other hand, Bourdieu (1999), like Gilberman (2004), understood the pressures of the profession not necessarily coming from internal teams, but rather from the clientele that social workers are trying to serve. Bourdieu (1999: 190) continued to view the host government organisations that employ majority of social workers as the problem, stating that “Social workers must fight unceasingly on two fronts: on the one hand, against those they want to help and who are often too demoralised to take in hand their own interest, let alone the interest of the collective; and the other, against the administrations and bureaucrats divided and enclosed in separate universes”. Abbot (1995), Bourdieu (1999) and Beddoe (2013) are in unison about the unappreciated every day discourses of social workers including their discursive positions within the complex health and social welfare systems. They are often viewed as wandering from subject to subject, running to and fro, like the famous saying ‘jack of all traits but master of none’.

In addition, Gibelman (2004:301) views external forces being more influential in defining these boundaries. He sees the pressure being from the openness to the fluidity and dynamic change inherent within “the expansive and expanding boundaries of social work and the difficulty in providing succinct, encapsulated descriptions of a complex and multifaceted profession”. To this end, these scholars (Weick, 2000; Gibelman, 2004; Staniforth et al., 2013) are in agreement about the problem of a nebulous and a not well-constructed social work definition and roles. Arguably, other

scholars (Olin, 2013; Gelman & Gonzalez, 1999; Staniforth et al., 2011) are of the opinion that social work is in motion and evolves with inevitable societal changes owed to external factors such as job markets and political arenas. The study consents and believes that, for the profession to stay relevant, it has to undergo processes of adaptation and modification too. This is evident by how the definition of social work has been improved from time to time to relate to contextual narratives and social issues of the day. Social life is indeed dynamic and complex.

The area of turf rivalry and boundaries has intrigued Liz Beddoe, and this is demonstrated in her writings (Beddoe, 2017; Deane & Beddoe, 2016; Beddoe, 2015 & Beddoe, 2013) focussing on social work in different settings but mainly in health care and how these boundaries create turf rivalry that eventually unfolds into problematic issues of perceptions, identity, image and or status of the profession. In essence, the dynamics of turf rivalry, identity and status are more pronounced within the distinctive health care spaces, in which social workers directly share with medical doctors, nurses, psychologists and physiotherapists among others. Locally, this phenomenon outplays itself also in the legal system arena, the space social workers share with lawyers/advocates, the police, magistrates and psychologists. There is still an element of undermining and in certain instances, of bullying.

4.3.1 Perceptions, identity, image and status of the profession

The subject of identity of social workers, how social workers think the public views their profession, the image and status of the profession in relation to other human professions has been examined and written about by many scholars. The scholars include Webb (2015, 2017) in Scotland, Scholar (2016) UK, Beddoe (2013, 2016, 2017); Deane and Beddoe (2016); Hobbs and Evans (2017) all in New Zealand. In the U.S., Gibelman (2004), Tower (2000), Silverman (2012) and Staniforth et al. (2011), among others. Studies in the South (Davidson, 2005; Sithole, 2010, Mmadi & Sithole 2018; Earle-Mallesson, 2009; Kasiram, 2009; Engelbrecht, 2015; Van De Ruit, 2017; Seuwpaul & Dlamini, 2015) among others, address issues of identity, image and perception of the profession in their discussion about the woes and marginalisation of the social work profession in various discourses.

How social work and social workers are perceived by the public is vital as it has implications for service delivery, education, job satisfaction and retention of workers, and for the confidence of service users and referring agencies (Deane & Beddoe, 2016). To add, funding and budget allocation by bureaucracies is also influenced by these perceptions and attitudes towards professions. Olin (2013:1) spoke of how social work has, for some time, been concerned about its mission and perception, and consented that “for us to understand our worth we must be self-aware about who we are and what we do.” His focus is on perception and image of the profession as influenced by how the media portrays the profession to the public; and how these impacts on attraction of students towards the carrier, committed professional individuals of high integrity and implications for practice. The same sentiments are iterated by Kaufman and Raymond (1995), that when the profession of social work is acknowledged positively by society and service users, there will be more support for its programmes and services, and will attract new social workers and therefore, positive morale will be maintained.

Kagan (2015) found that in Israel, social workers’ roles were more understood in the context of child care, substance dependency, domestic violence and difficulties with individuals and family functioning, among others. However, most views were based on what was portrayed by the media and not personal experiences. This is problematic in the sense that the media often presents social workers negatively as professionals, and seem oblivious of the positive contributions and good intentions of the profession. South Africa is no stranger to such incidents. The researcher has observed how the media would scarcely report on the positive contributions by social workers, but should there be one single specific case where an error of judgement (as would be put by the public or sometimes misconstrued) was made on the part of the social worker, this would be blown out proportion and sensationalised to produce a negative impact on the profession. This aspect was also observed by the SACSSP, such that the current registrar Ms. L Malamba, at a social work symposium at the University of Johannesburg in 2021, made a call to the profession to engage in a dialogue to come up with strategies of involving the media in social work issues, thereby supporting the profession’s endeavours to uplift communities as change agents.

The aspect of social work as a woman's profession or rather from its inception, has been dominated by women globally, and as such is viewed as a woman's profession to the extent that Khonou, Pillay and Nethonanda (2012) argued that gender and socio-economic factors were found to play an important role on how social work is regarded and talked about, especially in patriarchal capitalist countries, including most caring professions like nursing and education, which are associated with mothering and gender inequities. In emphasis, Weick (2000:18) stated that "Social work has been a woman's profession. The vast majority of social workers have been and are women...I see more clearly the parallels between the status of women in society and the status of social work as a women's profession", expatiating that the same as taking up traditional household duties by majority of women, most social workers attend to their daily duties of tending, mending, gathering and strengthening without public praise, acknowledgement or recognition.

Hence, the assertion by this study that by virtue of their gender, majority of social workers are marginalised, undermined and generally ignored, a feature indeed common in patriarchal societies, including South Africa.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the literature review of the study. The chapter started out by discussing the evolution of labour unions in industrialised nations. It was noted that concerns about unionisation among blue collar workers in affluent countries date back to at least the 18th century. There was discussion of the Social Darwinist era as well, which was the time of fast economic and scientific advancement. The encouraging steps and initiatives to revive social work unionisation in South Africa were also highlighted in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the development of the social work profession across time as it relates to various views, identities, images and statuses.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter offered the literature review of the thesis, which places the investigation within the grounded theory paradigm. This chapter discusses techniques and materials of the study as well as key methodological issues. These involve data gathering and analysis, as well as population and sampling. Finally, the chapter discusses ethical concerns as well as the shortcomings of study.

5.2 RESEARCH APPROACH AND STRATEGY

This study was qualitative and approached from the interpretivist/constructivist angle. It is exploratory in nature and certain aspects and scenarios are described based on the respondents' lenses, guided by Participatory Action Research (PAR) where the researcher was part of the study in the sense that there was participation between the researcher and respondents and co-construction of the reality of the situation which was shaped by individual experiences. This aspect of unionisation continues to bother the researcher as much as it did and does other members of the social work profession. Thus, the intention was to ultimately join forces with those who are still interested in mobilising and supporting the unionisation of the social work profession in South Africa.

Punch (2013) opines that action research aims to solve practical or applied problems through action, that is, research for action. Reason and Bradbury (2013:4) assert that "participatory action research from its inception, sought to challenge and change the institutionalised and structural processes that promote gendered, racialised, sexual and economic oppressions; and their intersectionalities in different communities and organisations". To this end, the researcher can deduce that PAR dissolves the line between the researcher and participants such that there is collective commitment,

mutual benefit, engagement, involvement and ownership of the research project (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Sarantakos, 2015).

5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study triangulated three designs, which are Grounded Theory, Multiple case studies and exploratory design. Grounded Theory, with its sociological outlook, seeks to understand and unravel human behaviour through inductive reasoning processes (Elliott & Lazenbatt, 2005). It gives a practical and non-rigid approach to interpret complex social phenomena (Charmaz, 2013). Thus, Grounded Theory is a systematic generation of theory from data that applies inductive and deductive reasoning (Charmaz, 2009). Data is continuously subject to interrogation until the theory emerges (Charmaz, 2013). Data was collected, interrogated and analysed from social workers in different settings and fields of the profession. Therefore, multiple case studies aimed to place the reader of the research into the world of the subject(s). Case studies can provide an in-depth and clear picture of the phenomena under study through perceptions of the actor's reality more than other analytical methods (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Case studies usually deal with a single case scenario picked because of its unique characteristics. With multiple case study design, the researcher had an opportunity to explore the phenomena under study through the use of an iterative strategy. Yin (1994) looked at two ways of the replication strategy in performing more than one separate experiments on related topics. First, is replication in the literal sense where cases are chosen to achieve similar results, and secondly, a theoretical replication, in which cases are selected to investigate, confirm or disprove the patterns observed in the pre-selected cases. Therefore, if most or all of the cases offer similar results, this can be a solid ground for the development of a preliminary theory to describe the phenomena (Eisenhardt, 1989).

An exploratory research strategy was used for this thesis. As stated by Rahman (2016), a qualitative approach is used to get results that cannot be attained using statistical techniques or other quantifiable means. In a qualitative study, researchers

dig deep into topics, including people's daily lives, social movements and cultural phenomena. According to Shields and Rangarjan (2013), exploratory research is done when the research problem is unclear. Exploratory design was used to formulate objectives and research questions to create operative definitions. Importantly, the study's problem statement suggested that scant work has been done to date in the area of unionisation and social work. As a result, the exploratory research led to a re-examination of some narratives and activities that have not been thoroughly investigated in the past.

5.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The researcher gained entry through the UL social work Alumni committee (ULSWAC), comprising members from the different provinces of South Africa. Some ULSWAC members were active committee members of the aborted Social Work Union in Limpopo. The researcher attended the Alumni meeting that was held at her institution (UL) in 2019, and this is where she identified two of the members who formed part of the adjunct Limpopo Social Work Union committee. They then shared with her the names and contact details of the remaining members, making a total of number of seven. Five of the members were available and interviewed during data collection. Therefore, the first population of this study was constituted by the committee members of the defunct social work union. For the purpose of this study, multi-case study sampling design was chosen. In support of this option, O'Leary (2014) refers to this sampling method as non-random, where participants are hand-picked according to their suitability to meet a particular criterion such as typicality, expertise or wide variance.

The second group of participants were social workers employed in various sectors and settings of South Africa, hence the multi-case study. All participants were therefore purposely selected. The researcher used social media platform (WhatsApp) profile and status to recruit social workers. To enhance visibility and spreading of the invite, she contacted previous colleagues and students who were trained in the social work department (UL) and were then professional practitioners to share the invite in their social work circles. The researcher further requested their assistance with logistical arrangements of meeting with those who were willing and available to share their

narratives. When it became clear that no response was likely to come forth from the DSD National office to grant permission for the study, it then became of paramount importance for respondents to comprehend that interview can only be conducted in private spaces not at any employers' premises.

The researcher with the assistance of previous mentioned colleagues, made appointments with participants. Some of the interviews were conducted at colleagues' places of residence and with others, she was invited to their places of choice.

The study triangulated two sampling designs, namely, purposive and convenient sampling. In the multiple case study design, there are no hard-and-fast rules about how many cases are required to satisfy the requirements of the replication strategy. Yin (1994) expounds on the irrelevance of sample size on the multi-case approach since the samples do not depend on the type of representative sampling logic that applies in survey research. In this study, invariably, sample size was guided by saturation of data, which refers to the collection of data until no new significant information emerged. After collecting data from the three provinces (Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal, and the Northern Cape) the researcher was aware that nothing new was coming up. To make certain that data saturation has been achieved, she then conducted the focus group in Mpumalanga. That last exercise confirmed the data saturation position. Sarantakos (2013) refers to sampling in qualitative research as propositionally limited because sample size is not statistically determined nor representative, but depends on saturation involving low cost and less time. Participants were not excluded on the basis of practice setting, age, gender, rank, amongst others. The inclusion criteria are that participants had to be registered social workers in various settings of South Africa, and included those that were available during data collection.

5.5 DATA COLLECTION

The researcher used an interview guide with semi-structured interviews at the beginning of data collection from members of the defunct Limpopo Social Work Union (LSWU) (Annexure E). Then, eight one-on-one semi-structured interviews including one focus group of seven participants (Mpumalanga) were conducted with registered social workers, making a total of fifteen, using the second instrument (Annexure F).

Guided by Grounded Theory, the researcher began to collect data from the purposely identified defunct LSWU committee members. Then she generated, collected and analysed the data. The process gave guidance for further inquiry, which resulted in extensive probing using the second interview guide. Cognisance should be taken that the researcher moved back and forth during the collection and analysis of data, which led to additional participants (Punch, 2005). This was informed by information gaps in conceptual and theoretical formulation. The involvement and participation of committee members throughout the process (PAR) was an added advantage to improve conformability. Additionally, the researcher actively participated in the discussions, interrogated issues, added on some aspects. It was an interactive process and a learning curve for both the researcher and the participants. The triangulation of research designs, data collection methods and sampling techniques enhanced the credibility and truth value of the study.

5.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data was analysed using Grounded Theory and Thematic Content Analysis (TCA). Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013: 352) define Grounded Theory as “the methodology for developing theory from data, nearly always qualitative”. Sarantakos (2013) explains that codes are taken straight from data not from the theory, meaning no assumptions about data will be made from past experience or theoretical knowledge. Data was analysed in the form of concepts and indicators that were coded to construct a theory. The study followed Charmaz’ Constructivist Data Analysis method, namely;

- Initial coding,
- Focused coding and
- Theoretical coding as explained in Chung Tie *et al.* (2019).

The process of constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling and the use of memos are critical in the coding phase, which is repetitive until theoretical saturation is achieved. This process should be done with accuracy and in a disciplined manner.

Generally, Grounded theory is used as a way of building theory systematically using data obtained from social research. As such, the overall objective of this study was to develop a conceptual model. This was achieved through consistently following the steps prescribed in grounded theory. These are as follows: theoretical sampling, data collection, data analysis and theoretical saturation. Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2006: 183) define TCA as “a method used for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns in the data. TCA proceeds by breaking down the information collected into themes”. The researcher identified trends and patterns that developed from the data collected, then coded and classified them into different categories that were used to analyse the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest steps that should be considered in TCA.

Table 2: Steps of data analysis

Steps	Explanation
1. Familiarising with the data	The researcher familiarised herself with data is the initial stage, which involved the careful review of transcripts several times. Guided by this stage, the researcher revised all texts in the data by listening to the recorded data more than once. The significance of this step enabled the researcher to immerse herself in the data and to pick up all the relevant themes and aspects that were worth noting.
2. Generating initial codes	Then initial codes were generated whose aim was to identify trends and patterns that were developed from the data. After listening to the recordings more than once, the researcher picked up the trends and patterns thereof and coded and classified them into different categories.

<p>3. Searching and reviewing themes</p>	<p>The third phase is the searching and reviewing of themes which, on the other hand, took a top-down approach wherein the researcher used readily made categories and identified instances fitting into those categories. The aim was to develop condensed phrases that interpreted the views, opinions and experiences of social workers and committee members of the defunct union on the unionisation of the social work profession which, together with the use of grounded theory, enabled the development of the conceptual model.</p>
<p>1. Searching, defining and naming themes</p>	<p>The third stage was the searching, defining and naming of themes, which involved transforming notes into possible emerging themes. The researcher identified common themes that emerged from the data. This was done following the recommended procedure by Braun and Clarke (2006) in which the researcher identified connections between emerging themes, and grouped them together in line with their conceptual similarities.</p>
<p>2. Interpreting and compiling information.</p>	<p>Phase five, which is the final step, enabled the researcher to compile interpretations in a written account. This stage involved the interpretation and analysis of data, which was guided by the dictates of grounded theory and constructivism. Accordingly, data from</p>

	<p>two groups of participants using in-depth interviews was analysed using the same method. Hence, the two analysis methods, TCA and grounded theory were used interchangeably in order to comprehensively achieve the overall objectives of the study.</p>
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Following the tenets of grounded theory, the first step was to code the data accordingly, which was done following the dictates of both TCA and grounded theory. The coding was conducted through the consistent observation of trends and themes that emerged from the study, which later played an important role in the theoretical formulation which is termed theoretical saturation in grounded theory terms. Strauss and Corbin (1990:56) assert that "...categories designate the grouping together of instances such as events, processes, occurrences that have common central features with one another". This was demonstrated by the conceptual model that was developed through theoretical saturation in that all the components in the model are related to one another because they work together in order to provide the significance and role of all mentioned stakeholders in the development of a viable social work union in South Africa.

5.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher adhered to all ethical requirements relevant to the study. The purpose and significance of the study and data collection procedure were adequately explained to the participants. The participants were also informed of their rights such as to withdraw from the study at any point without any penalty, and that participation is voluntary. To ensure the participants' anonymity and confidentiality, the researcher used pseudo initials and numbers. All participants were requested to give their written informed consent and to sign before the interviews commenced. In capturing the experiences through narratives of participants, several quotations were transcribed verbatim in the presentation of findings. It should be noted that not all the information that was audio-recorded and written as field notes was used. Some parts were left out because they were not of particular importance to the objectives of the study.

5.7.1 Permission to Conduct the Study

The researcher acquired ethical clearance from the University of Limpopo Research Ethics Committee. Permission from the gatekeepers for social work practitioners was sought from the Department of Social Development, National office, and the South African Council for Social Service Professions nation-wide. This exercise and process began in late 2019, just before the country faced the Covid 19 pandemic dilemma. In late 2020, it became clear that receiving any response from the above bodies was mission impossible, even after visiting the offices in person. The researcher, with the assistance of the project supervisor, settled for an alternative route, that is, to access social workers at their own private spaces not at the employers' premises, taking into consideration and minding all ethical concerns. This option was also premised on workers' Constitutional rights to privacy, association and freedom of speech.

5.7.2 Ethical concerns

According to O' Leary (2014), one of the responsibilities of the researcher is to ensure that the rights and well-being of those involved in the study are protected at all times. De Vos *et al.* (2012: 114) define ethics as a "set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group. This set of principles should be subsequently widely accepted and provide rules and behavioural expectations about the most appropriate conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents who may be employers, sponsors, students assistants and students". Therefore, the researcher identified the following ethical issues:

5.7.2.1 Respect and Dignity and Standard of care

As a registered Social Worker and Social Work Educator guided by values, principles and ethics of the profession, the researcher was obliged to accord due respect to the participants irrespective of gender, race, creed, sex and sexual orientation, amongst others. It was incumbent upon the researcher to conform to constitutional universal rights, including affirming the worth and dignity of participants. The researcher, at all cost, ensured that fairness and justice during data collection prevailed.

5.7.2.2 Avoidance of Harm to Participants

Participants were informed in advance about the potential impact of the study. It is often thought that in Social Sciences, harm may only be of an emotional nature. However, De Vos *et al.* (2012: 115) state that “physical injury cannot be ruled out completely”. The researcher ensured at all costs that participants were protected from any possible physical and emotional harm. In the case of harm, participants would have been referred to appropriate service providers such as social workers or psychologists who would not have been part of the study. Fortunately, no form of physical harm was encountered during the study.

5.7.2.3 Informed Consent

Participants were informed about the purpose, aim and objectives of the study and were not coerced in any way to take part in study. They were made aware of their right not to participate, and to discontinue the interview process should they wish to do so. Written consent forms were distributed before the collection of data. The above steps were observed because “when subjects are involved without their consent, their right to self-determination is impaired; the principle causes a value conflict between the researcher’s assignment to broaden knowledge and his or her responsibility to protect participants” (De Vos *et al.*, 2011: 117). Participants were given the opportunity to peruse the informed consent and attach their signatures or simply put a mark (X) as a sign of giving consent.

5.7.2.4 Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

The identity of respondents was kept confidential and not be publicly divulged. Bless *et al.* (2013: 32) explain that information provided by participants, particularly sensitive and personal information, should be protected and not made available to anyone other than researchers. Sarantakos (2012: 21) emphasises that “informed consent forms should be kept apart from research instruments to make it impossible to link names with data”. Pseudonyms and in some cases initials were used during data collection and the data was stored in a lockable cabinet accessible only to the researcher and the study supervisor.

5.8 QUALITY CRITERIA/TRUSTWORTHINESS

Lincoln and Guba's model as cited in Morse and Field (1995:143) addresses four aspects of trustworthiness: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. They use the terms credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability to establish trustworthiness. Similarly, trustworthiness, according to Botma *et al.* (2010:232) and Schurink *et al.* (2011:419), has four epistemological standards attached to it, namely, truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

5.8.1 Credibility

Credibility can be defined as the extent to which data, data analysis and conclusions are believable and trustworthy (Mc Millan, 2011:277). The goal is to demonstrate that the research was conducted in a manner that ensures that the phenomena were accurately identified and described (Schurink *et al.*, 2011:419). For purposes of this study, the researcher ensured credibility through communicative validation because PAR entails involvement of participants, checking the accuracy of data, evaluation of the project process, using triangulation, etc. In addition, Grounded Theory is an iterative process of verification just like PAR (Sarantakos, 2013:86; Shenton, 2004:64). The recording of data during each interview, coupled with the taking of field notes, also strengthened the credibility of findings.

5.8.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the replication of the study done in the same context, making use of the same methods and with the same participants. In such conditions, the findings should stay consistent. To enable dependability, the researcher included the following:

- Dependable audit: the researcher gave a detailed account of how data was collected.
- Description of the methodology: the researcher explained in detail the research design, how it was planned and implemented during the study. The researcher ensured that data was correctly coded.

Peer examination of the study was also done (Botma *et al.*, 2010:232; Shenton, 2004:64).

5.8.3 Transferability

Transferability looks at the transferability of one set of findings to another context. It is an alternative to external validity or generalisability (Schurink *et al.*, 2011:420). Lincoln and Guba (as quoted by Schurink *et al.*, 2011:419) define triangulation as a strategy of ensuring transferability, which is determined by the degree to which findings can be generalised to the larger population. With multiple case studies, generalisability is not a steadfast rule as explained under sample size. The researcher triangulated sampling methods and was guided by the saturation of data, and also provided detailed description of the data collected (Botma *et al.*, 2010:232; Shenton, 2004:64).

5.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the research methodology of the study guided by the principles of Grounded Theory in order to necessitate the formulation of a conceptual model. Exploratory research design was adopted, and purposive and convenient sampling were used to select participants of the study. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and observations. The triangulation of Grounded Theory, Multiple case studies and exploratory design effectively enhanced the process of this qualitative inquiry to achieve its objectives and answer research questions.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data collection and analysis of the study. The chapter revealed mixed reactions about whether social workers are ready to unionise. The effort to formulate a union in the past was cited by participants as a sign that social workers are ready for a union. Those who believe that social workers are ready to unite pointed out to the support that they received from the Department of Social Development as one of the indicators that there are few barriers for them to form a union. However, with the change of political leadership and social work managers, this may alter the situation at any moment in time. In addition, the same participants indicated that the problem lies with the social workers themselves. Greed and hunger for power are what led to the unfortunate premature end of the union. The chapter revealed that some social workers believe that the profession is not ready for a union. It emerged from the interviews that social workers operate in unfavourable working conditions and at times, are led by non-professionals who do not understand the issues that are specific to social work. Managers who are politically appointed to head the Department of Social Development feel intimidated by their subordinates who have qualifications, whereas managers do not have the education required for them to lead social workers. These particular managers make it difficult for social workers to voice out their opinions to the extent that they make them feel intimidated. Accordingly, social workers will retreat and resort to keeping silent for wanting to keep the peace between themselves and their bosses and for fear of being overlooked for promotions.

6.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Table 3: Demographics of participants

Participant	Experience	Qualification	Location	Designation
1.	4yrs	BA (SW)	Gauteng (GP) – Urban	Social Worker
2.	11 yrs	BA (SW)	Gauteng (GP) – Urban	Social Worker
3.	3 yrs	MA (Dev Planning)	Gauteng (GP) – Urban	Social Worker
4.	6 yrs	BSW	Gauteng (GP) – Urban	Social Worker
5.	1-5	BSW	Mpumalanga (MP) - Urban	Junior Social Worker
6.	3 yrs	BSW	Mpumalanga (MP) - Urban	Social Worker
7.	1-5	BSW	Mpumalanga (MP) – Urban	Office Supervisor
8.	6-10	BSW	Mpumalanga (MP) – Peri-urban	Social Worker
9.	1-5	BSW	Mpumalanga (MP) – Urban	Social Worker
10.	1- 5	BSW	Mpumalanga (MP) – Peri-urban	Office supervisor
11.	1-5	BSW	Mpumalanga (MP) – Urban	Social Worker
12.	4 yrs	BSW	Northern Cape (NC) - Urban	Office supervisor
13.	3 yrs	BSW	Northern Cape (NC) - Urban	Social Worker
14.	5 yrs	BSW	KwaZulu Natal (KZN) – Peri-urban	Social Worker
15.	6 yrs	BSW	KwaZulu Natal (KZN) – Peri-urban	Social Worker
16. [CM]	N/A	N/A	Polokwane	Cluster supervisor
17. [MR]	N/A	N/A	Polokwane	Retired Cluster supervisor
18. [DL]	N/A	N/A	Polokwane	Social work manager
19. [MT]	N/A	N/A	Mankweng	Frontline social worker
20. [SK]	N/A	N/A	Polokwane	Senior Social Worker

The table above presents the demographics of participants. The first group of participants (No: 1-15) are general social work practitioners from different provinces in South Africa and are based in different settings. All are practicing in peri-urban and

urban settings, and there is none from the rural areas. The second group of participants are social workers based in Limpopo settings who formed the committee of the now-defunct Limpopo branch social work union. One had just retired from the profession. The table also illustrates the varied work experience of the respondents.

6.3 EMERGING THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

In developing the themes and subthemes, the researcher relied on Braun and Clarke (2006). The researcher started by familiarising herself with the data by careful reading of transcripts numerous times. The researcher immersed herself with the data and picked up all the relevant themes and aspects that were worth noting. After listening to the recordings repeatedly, the researcher picked up the trends and patterns thereof, and coded and classified them into different categories with the aim of developing themes and subthemes. The researcher reviewed themes, which conversely took a top-down approach where the researcher made use of readily made categories and identified instances fitting into those categories. The aim was to formulate concise phrases that interpreted the views, opinions and experiences of social workers and committee members of the now-defunct union on the unionisation of the social work profession together with the use of grounded theory, which enabled the development of the conceptual model. In this section, the researcher presents the identified themes and subthemes (see table 4) which she found during coding.

Table 4: Emerged themes and subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Theme 1: Readiness of social workers for a union	Subtheme 1: Lack of resource Subtheme 2: Supportive actions to indicate readiness
Theme 2: Relevance of the union and the changes it would bring for the social work profession in South Africa	Subtheme 1: Prioritisation of social workers Subtheme 2: Addressing injustices and dangers faced by social workers

<p>Theme 3: Internal factors hampering action by social workers</p>	<p>Subtheme 1: Inability to maintain positions</p> <p>Subtheme 2: Lack of resources</p> <p>Subtheme 3: Treatment of social workers by other professionals and the government of South Africa</p> <p>Subtheme 4: Perception of fragmentation in the Social Work Profession</p> <p>Subtheme 5: Sub-divisions, race and politics</p>
<p>Theme 4: Measures to unite social workers</p>	<p>Subtheme 1: Higher institutions</p> <p>Subtheme 2: Provision of tools of trade</p> <p>Subtheme 3: Activities to promote cohesion and unity</p>
<p>Theme 5: The role of apartheid in the operations of social work</p>	<p>Subtheme 1: The role of the white social workers in the efforts to unionise the profession</p> <p>Subtheme 2: Relationship between religion and politics</p> <p>Subtheme 3: Awareness of the political and neo-liberal environment that affects the profession</p>
<p>Theme 6: Factors that led to the failure of the social workers union</p>	<p>Subtheme 1: Fighting for leadership position</p> <p>Subtheme 2: Lack of coordination</p> <p>Subtheme 3: Lack of trust and transparency</p>

6.4 READINESS OF SOCIAL WORKERS FOR A UNION

The finding of the study established that a majority of participants do not believe that they are prepared for social workers union. Some of the reasons put forward by participants are that in South Africa, being a member of a labour union can be difficult, but the majority of people are utilising their membership in the union as a stepping stone to advance their careers in political parties. As such, it becomes difficult to create unions, particularly in certain fields of employment. The study also established that the field of social work in South Africa is not yet ready to be unionised by its practitioners. It emerged that there has been an attempt by social work practitioners to form a union but were unsuccessful. This is partly because the vast majority of social workers are not well informed about labour unions. The major difficulty originates in the foundation upon which the profession is built.

6.4.1 Lack of resources

Some participants indicated that due to the lack of exposure to politics that social workers experience while they are still in tertiary, many of them are unaware of the necessity of forming a union as well as the ways in which doing so will benefit them in the future. This pertains to the question of how the union will assist social workers in situations pertaining to their place of employment, such as if they are subjected to repression or discrimination while on the job. Nevertheless, it is important to establish that some social workers are willing to form social workers union. This is substantiated by one participant, who made reference to a demonstration that took place in 2016 at Union Buildings, which revealed that some social workers are eager to join unions. Some participants stressed that the voices of social workers cannot be heard if they are not organised into a union, signifying the need to unionise. Some participants indicated that it is essential for social workers to form their own union because it will help in separating politics from the social work profession. In this regard, it has been established that talks are under way to find someone who can lead them in the formation of a new union. Here is what some of the participants had to say:

“I don’t think they are ready. Belonging to a union in South Africa is a challenge and most people are using their affiliation/ involvement in the union as a

stepping stone/meat ticket to positions in political parties...this makes it difficult to form unions, especially in certain professions like ours” [CM]

Another said:

“Social workers in South Africa are not ready to unionise the profession. We tried before to form a union but failed. Most social workers do not understand matters of unionisation. The problem lies in the background of the profession itself...social workers are not exposed to the political environment while they are still training...they do not understand the need to form a union and how it will assist them moving forward... how will the union help social workers in work-related matters such as being oppressed or discriminated against at in the workplace”. [SK]

In addition, another participant echoed:

“I think they are ready...the march that took place in 2016 to the Union Buildings showed that social workers are ready to unionise. Social workers need to unionise because our voices are not heard when we are fragmented”. [DL]

In addition, another participant stated:

“Yes, because they are now trying to separate politics from the profession. They are talking amongst themselves about finding someone who can lead them in the formation of a new union”. [MR]

These responses are based on the question whether or not social workers are ready for a social work union. The participants revealed mixed responses whereas some believed that it is necessary, hence they are ready; while others were of the view that social workers are not really prepared for a union. It emerged from the responses that although joining a union in South Africa might be challenging, many people use their

union membership to pursue their political ambitions. The findings of the study also established those social workers in South Africa are not yet ready to form a union because the formation of a union has been tried before but the idea failed. The findings have also established that most people working in social service have no idea what unions are or do, which is one of the main reasons why the formation of a union becomes a challenging endeavour. This is of paramount importance because the issue of the formation of a union stems from the groundwork upon which the profession is based, which suggests that a majority of aspiring social workers do not understand the reasons they need to be organised in a union or how doing so will help them while they are still in school due to lack of political exposure.

In order to achieve the formation of a social work union, it is essential for social workers to know how their union will support them if they encounter problems at work, such as repression or discrimination. If social workers have such crucial understanding of the need for a union effort, to create one will be fruitful. To that effect, it is evident that there is a group of social workers who are ready for a union as indicated by one participant who gave an example of a demonstration that once took place demanding for the formation of a union that is peculiar to social workers. In essence, the unionisation of the social work profession is essential because it gives social workers the voice that they cannot acquire anywhere else. As such, this is why participants revealed that efforts are underway for the formation of a union.

6.4.2 Supportive actions to show readiness

This subtheme addressed the question on what kind of support would social workers give to show their readiness in establishing and joining the new union for social workers. Social workers need to comprehend that fence-sitting will not yield much progress. This exercise requires collective action, in emphasis not words but deliberate action in forming, joining and sustaining the existence of a viable union. Much as participants expressed their willingness and readiness to support the union, action and words may be too far apart in reality. One of the participants said that:

“I have previously ignored initiatives that has attempted to establish a union for social workers and that has not benefited me with anything...the situation for social workers has never changed. Now I see things differently, it is us social workers who must support these initiatives for the better of our harsh working environment and our salaries... I would support by attending meetings and marches organised to fight for social workers rights, encourage other junior social workers to participate in these initiatives and pay the initiation fees required to establish social work union” [MP: 5]

Another participant added:

“I would support the move... there’s a lot of challenges which I feel like a social worker alone will not be able to overcome but when unionised, our voices will be heard... by affiliating to become a member, attending meetings and ensuring that I pay the monthly membership fee, and also contributing through participating in research if there will be information required from me” [GP: 3]

Another indicated:

“Yes ...but I don’t promise to go to rallies and all that, I think I would support because now I am a social worker... participating in voting for some things or contributing in giving opinions, that way but toy-toying, am just not sure [KZN: 14]

Moreover, another participant echoed that:

“Personally, I feel that we do so much that is not being recognised. We work in schools, we work at court...we work everywhere...but all the people that we are helping in their careers all have unions except for us...so I would definitely support us having a union..., if they need attendance, or signatures, if they need marketing...I will be more than willing to do that. [MP: 11]

The findings reveal that social workers are willing and ready to support the new union should it be established. However, very few indicated that they may not be comfortable in going all the way. Issues of marching (toy-toying) and attending rallies is simply not their thing. This brings back the aspect mentioned above of some social workers not being comfortable to mingle with a lot of other people, yet social workers are expected

to work with large communities and mobilise for changes. In fighting injustices, it is expected that social workers should mobilise, advocate and agitate for change. As mentioned by one participant above expressing that, social workers work with different groups in different communities and settings thus fitting in aligning with these populations is expected and part of the mandate in social work practice.

6.5 RELEVANCE OF THE UNION AND THE CHANGES IT WOULD BRING FOR THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Majority of social workers consented that, the profession would benefit from a union that solely represent their interests at the bargaining council unlike other unions such as NEHAWU, PSA that represent a collective of members from different human disciplines. Social workers who belong to these unions are few compared to other professional groups. Thus, their needs are never prioritised. Participants shared the changes they believe a union for social workers would bring especially relating to safety issues and injustices they are confronted with in practice. Below are sub-themes and narratives addressing relevance and changes that a union can bring for social workers and also prioritisation of their work environmental needs.

6.5.1 Prioritisation of social workers

Participants highlighted the need for a dedicated union for social workers, citing experiences with NEHAWU, a health-focused union, which did not cater to their specific needs. Moreover, participants indicated that unions that are not dedicated for social workers do not prioritise social workers' concerns. Thus, participants calls for social work union that will have leaders with social work background who will be able to have a deep understanding of social work challenges and frustrations. The participants indicated that:

“Ya, it would be much more relevant...I remember in 2006 when I started working for the Department of Social Development, we did not have a union so, we affiliated with NEHAWU which is mainly for health workers...one feels like we could have our own union which will understand the needs, struggles, frustrations of the social workers... NEHAWU leaders do not have social work

background and as such social workers will never be a priority to them...it would be great for us as social workers to have our own union that understands and have background knowledge about social work and the challenges that social workers encounter on the ground". [GP: 1]

Another participant added that:

"In other government departments such as those in Health settings, social workers needs are not prioritised... it was always a struggle to get a car to perform my duties... to have an office space was a struggle, not to mention getting a laptop, even basic things such as stationery, through a union, these can be addressed". [NC: 12]

National Association of Social Workers (NASW) emphasises the pivotal role of social workers in their Code of Ethics, affirming their commitment to enhancing human well-being and advocating for social justice (NASW, 1999). Prioritisation involves providing social workers with adequate resources, training, and support systems to perform their duties effectively. However, having a union that does not understand the role of social workers, makes it difficult to provide adequate support and resources.

6.5.2 Addressing injustices and dangers faced by social workers

The issue of social workers being denied adequate tools of trade has been repeatedly mentioned by participants. It is a general consensus that social workers are expected to address a myriad of social problems with very little. Social workers are convinced that their main employer, DSD is not committed nor concerned about addressing these challenges. The safety of workers should a priority of every employer, an aspect that is taken very seriously in private sectors especially in the wake of stringent labour laws in that area. However, in the public government sector, especially within certain professions like social work, this matter seems to be taken casually. Hence, participants are of the opinion that a union would be the relevant solution to protect them from unfair afflictions. Social workers also hope that the union would challenge

and engage with the South African Council for Social Service Professions on their role in protecting the interests of social workers at the work place. Some of the participants said:

“...there is a lot of injustices by DSD and the SACSSP does not seem to have any teeth...think of unemployment of social workers nation-wide who got scholarships...they were promised jobs at the end of their training...the union will advocate for us in such matters”. [MP: 8]

Another participant echoed:

“Yes, this profession has been undermined and taken for granted...the social worker’s voices will be heard and considered appropriately”. [KZN: 15]

In the same breath, another indicated:

“We also face great danger when we go help our clients...remember that majority of social workers are women...at times you are required to conduct home visits in squatter camps/informal settlements which we are unfamiliar with...when you pose this dilemma and request a male co-worker to go with...it is like your safety is not a matter of concern and you are asking for too much”. [GP: 3]

Social workers often encounter various forms of injustice, such as inadequate resources, insufficient support from governing bodies or employers, and unmet promises such as guaranteed employment after training (Gxotelwa, 2021). These injustices hinder social workers' ability to effectively serve communities and individuals in need. Whilst social workers, try to make use of the little resources to provide services to their clients, they make themselves vulnerable to victimisation (Lyter & Abbott, 2007). They have to conduct home visits and sometimes they do not have vehicle access, if they do not deliver service, they get into the firing line with

management. It is during this period that those social workers need a union that can advocate for them to get tools of trade and/or protect them against injustices.

6.6 INTERNAL FACTORS HAMPERING ACTION BY SOCIAL WORKERS

The findings of the study have revealed that there is a plethora of factors hampering action by social workers to form a union. Some participants revealed that social workers that are served by the general unions are stripped of their professional identities due to the fact that social work training does not educate them to be unique from other individuals in their surroundings. It has emerged from the findings of the study that social workers are not confrontational, they are afraid of a conflict, and they do not want to stand up to be counted. In essence, the findings suggest that social workers are exceedingly accommodative. Some participants revealed that social workers are devalued by their management as well as other professionals in their work settings. The argument was that it appears as if they do not consider social workers to be independent professionals who are able to handle matters on their own.

6.6.1 Inability to maintain positions

Some participants revealed that majority of social workers are unable to maintain their position and honour the terms of their agreement. For instance, social workers in one of the facilities where the study was conducted once came to the conclusion that they needed a policy for funerals and burials for themselves, and that they submitted the notion to their bosses, who promptly changed the policy so that it now applies to other professionals working in the facility. Essentially, this is one of the reasons why participants are of the opinion that social workers are unable to fight their own battles. One of the participants said:

“Social workers work in hostile environment...they are victims of micromanagement...the problem for the unfriendly working conditions are exacerbated by political appointments into managerial positions...these political cadres often intimidate social workers who are often more educated

than their managers...social workers end up silenced for fear of being unfairly assessed and being overlooked for promotion". [MT]

The narratives from participants revealed that some social workers were scared to bring up unionisation with their supervisors. This was necessitated by the fact that they relied on support from the government's Department of Social Development. Despite this assistance, the findings of the study revealed that some social workers are not passionate about what they do. This was substantiated by the fact that they were given funding to pursue a degree in social work, which they did. This was made abundantly obvious during the mobilisation process, as members of the older generation of social workers were enthusiastic about the prospect of forming a union. It has further emerged that social work professionals are often objects of micromanagement and operate in an unfriendly workplace. Political appointments to managerial positions only serve to worsen the already hostile work environment. Political cadres frequently intimidate social workers, who are often more educated than their bosses. Many social workers do not speak up when they have concerns for fear of retaliation or being overlooked for advancement.

6.6.2 Lack of resources

The study revealed that even if one makes an effort to mobilise social workers, it is difficult for them to come together due to a lack of resources, which is another reason why this is a barrier. It has also been established that management in institutions where social workers are employed do not engage in any form of mediation. The study also established that, social workers in many institutions are reluctant to discuss the possibility of unionisation with their respective managers, and the Department of Social Development's national office is also doing little with regards to the creation of a social work union. One of the participants echoed that:

"Lack of resources is also a hindrance because even if one tries to mobilise people (social workers), it is not easy for them to come together...but there is no overt intimidation from management". [DL]

The above assertions have been corroborated by a number of scholars reporting on incidents of complaints about victimisation, harassment and marginalisation of social workers who support radical/critical social work practice, especially in government settings by managers who at times are social workers themselves (Naidoo & Kasiram, 2004; Sithole, 2010). Additionally, Naidoo and Kasiram (2006; 2009) allude to the fact that the internal and external forms of oppression experienced by social workers and social service recipients are obstacles for relevant and adequate service delivery. Complaints of being bullied and emotionally blackmailed were reported by some social workers in South Africa when resisting those forms of afflictions. The narratives above were based on the question relating to internal factors hampering action by social workers. The study findings established that social workers' identity has been eroded due to lack of a union that represents them. One of the major factors that was established that hampers action by social workers was that the social work curriculum does not stress the importance of standing out from the crowd. It has been established that some social workers avoid conflict and do not wish to make themselves heard because they are not aggressive. Participants raised grave concern over the treatment that they (social workers) receive from other professionals. It has been established from the narratives that social workers are perceived as incompetent professionals who cannot manage issues on their own. The narratives by participants also revealed that social workers have a tendency to pull back when their motives are questioned.

Nevertheless, it has emerged that even though the national government department of social development is doing less as mentioned earlier, the study has, however, established that Limpopo Department of Social Development is supportive and has approved social workers' plans to form a union and gave them the go-ahead to proceed. Some participants believed that some social workers are not enthusiastic about the profession because they were awarded bursaries to further their education in social work, and decided to enter the field. It has also emerged that a majority of participants believe that there is a huge difference between the new and old generations. Participants confirmed that the older generation of social workers were very supportive of the idea to form a union. The study established that the work environment for social workers is hostile, and they frequently find themselves targets of micromanagement. The problem of unfriendly working conditions is made worse by

political appointments into managerial positions, which further exacerbates the problem. Social workers, who are frequently more educated than their managers, are frequently subjected to intimidation at the hands of political cadres. They often keep their mouths shut out of fear of being evaluated in an unfair manner or being passed over for promotions. Here is what the participants had to say:

“Social workers lose their professional identity...social work training does not prepare us to be different from people we serve....we are too accommodating, not confrontational, afraid of a fight... not only are social workers undermined by their own management, I feel that other professionals look down upon us as well...It is like they do not perceive social workers as independent professionals who are capable of doing things for themselves...we tend to retreat when someone questions our motives...we are unable to stand our ground and to stick to what we agreed upon... for instance, social workers in this building once decided to have a burial and bereavement policy for themselves, they presented the proposal to their managers who then altered the policy to include other professionals working in the building... we did not challenge that decision.
[CM]

Another participant said:

“ I don’t think there were any internal factors that were hampering the union, for example, when we went to the Western Cape to launch the union, the Limpopo provincial government donated money for travel expenses...an indication that the government was in support of the union and wanted it to work... the support came from their previous experience after realising that they struggled without a union...the launch of a new union specifically for social workers was a historical event, it is unfortunate that the union did not take off the ground”. [SK]

Whereas, another participant indicated that:

“You could feel that other colleagues were afraid to speak to their managers about the idea of unionisation...but we had support from the national office of

the Department of Social Development...the Limpopo DSD also gave us the go ahead for the formation of the union...even received donations from them for travel expenses when we went to the launch in the Western Cape...I think another reason is that some social workers are not passionate about the profession, they joined the profession because they received bursaries to study social work...this was evident during the mobilisation process; the older generation social workers were really supportive of the idea to form a union".
[MR]

It has also been argued that the union's demise was due to internal issues but some participants refuted the assumption. Those participants argued that it would have been impossible for a provincial government to assist in the operations and efforts to form a union if there were internal factors hampering the success of the union. As such, it can be ascertained that the union was not undermined by any forces within it. This also points to the fact that some of the government officials have high hopes for the union and actively work to ensure its success in the workplace. The study has also found that when social workers established their own union to advocate for their needs, it was a watershed moment. Regrettably, the union did not get off the ground. In lieu of this, it is not easy to pull social workers together even if one tries to rally them.

6.6.3 Treatment of social workers by other professionals and the government of South Africa

Social workers feel undermined, unappreciated in the face of the challenging work they engage in on a daily basis. They point fingers at the management, the government and other professionals they engage with in multi-sectoral teams. These assertions are supported by some scholars such as Beddoe, (2017); Deane & Beddoe, (2016) and Beddoe (2015) indicating that social workers are placed in different settings, but those in health care settings, face boundaries that create turf rivalry that eventually unfolds into problematic issues of perceptions, identity, image and or status of the profession.

One of the participants reported:

“Social workers are the lowest paid professionals compared to most state employees...our working conditions are extremely harsh and unpleasant...when social workers embark on a go slow or tools down, our government or management take forever to respond compared to the teachers or nurses” [NC: 13]

Another participant retorted:

“No, social workers are regarded or treated as unprofessional, MEC’ and Ministers undermine us and are not robust to challenge injustices faced by social workers” [MP: 8]

Another participant echoed:

“No, we are not treated the same with other professionals...why should our salaries differ from those of other professionals when we are under the same government”? [KZN: 15]

In addition, another participant said:

“No, social workers are belittled in so many ways by other professionals like doctors and lawyers...we are never recognised for the hard work, nor receive any complement whatsoever from our managers” [GP: 1]

The above narratives connect to issues of perceptions, identity, image and status of the profession, unfortunately this not just a South African case but global. Olin (2013:1) spoke of how social work has, for some time, been concerned about its mission and perception, and consented that “for us to understand our worth we must be self-aware about who we are and what we do.” In unison, Gelman and González (2016: 2) concede that “the devaluation of our field and the manifold ways of refuting the snub and endeavouring to prove it meritless continue to reverberate to this day”. In essence, the profession has been and it is still marginalised from many angles such as those in power in governments, other professionals and to some extent the populations served by social workers. Other scholars such as Khonou, Pillay and Nethonanda (2012) argued that gender and socio-economic factors were found to play an important role on how social work is regarded and talked about, especially in patriarchal capitalist countries, including most caring professions like nursing, which are associated with

mothering and gender inequities meaning that, this treatment could be because for a long time social work is viewed as a women profession hence afforded the same status accorded to women in capitalist patriarchal societies.

6.6.4 Perception of fragmentation in the Social Work Profession

Some participants also concurred that lack of a coordinating structure that represents social workers in a positive way is another cause of the fragmentation, such that social workers lack a unifying body. Again, the interests of the existing unions that social workers are affiliated to, are more generic and do not speak to the social work profession. Some narratives in the study revealed that these unions do not have the understanding of social work issues. Another participant ascertained that if a social worker affiliated to that kind of a union needs to raise an issue, it will take long for that union to address your issues as they will first want to understand what the issue is about. Here is what some participants had to say:

“Yes, social workers are not united because of our background, we tend to see ourselves as unique... we do not want to collaborate with other stakeholders... there is a sense of pride that we do not want to mingle with others, depriving us of the opportunity to learn from them”. [SK]

Another participant said:

“Yes, we are indeed not united in the sense that we do not have a coordinating structure that can represent social workers in a positive way...the interests of the existing unions that social workers are affiliated to, are more generic and do not speak to the issues of the social work profession...these unions do not understand social work issues...when you raise an issue, it will take a long time for that union to address your issues...they will first want to understand what the issue is about... It is kind of difficult for them as they are not attuned with what happens in the social work profession”. [DL]

Another reported that:

“DSD must play a role in uniting us as it is the one that divided us...I do not understand why social workers in different settings should earn different salaries e.g., NGO’s and DSD with same qualifications...some even with more experience...white social workers have always been given preference” [GP: 3]

The narratives above are responses from a question relating to perceptions of fragmentation in the social work profession. The findings of the study established that, social work practitioners come from a wide variety of backgrounds and settings, and each one of them is likely to believe that they are special in their own way. The idea of working with other parties seem to be unwelcome. It has emerged that being conservative prevents them from mingling with others, which limits their exposure to new ideas and perspectives.

6.6.5 Sub-divisions, race and politics

The issue of divisions and sub-divisions within the social work profession have been highlighted by participants due to different practice settings and contexts. Colour also emerged in the sense that those in NGO settings mostly populated by white social workers are prioritised over others and this contributes to the division. Wallace & Pease (2011) have also observed that the alteration of the work of social workers gave way to the fragmentation of social work into different subdivisions, affecting issues of professionalisation due to managers who are more focussed on micro-management of administrative tasks and often with no social work background, thereby diminishing social workers’ professional autonomy and identity which the study sees as adding to the challenges stated by participants. Some of the participants narrated that:

“This is not a simple one...you know you have private practitioners, we have NGOs, then governmental social workers...I think the difference in income...that is creating disparities between us... we are talking here private and public...others have more resources, I mean tools of work, others next to nothing” [MP: 7]

Another participant shared that:

“Clients report issues of lack of service delivery and request us to intervene...that is impossible because as social workers we are encouraged to distance ourselves from political affiliations and politics...communities lose trust and confidence in us” [NC:1]

In addition, another participant said:

“Minister of DSD is more concerned with SASSA issues than our work...we also confuse empathy with softness such that we do not fight for our rights...we are afraid to confront issues and our leaders, even when things are totally wrong”. [KZN]

Based on the above assertions, social workers are left confused in relation to social work and politics. On the one hand issues that communities are faced with, and those faced by the profession are political in nature shaped by the contemporary neo-liberal system in most capitalist countries including South Africa. Social workers have also lost faith in the leaders within the DSD, who seem to be focussed more on increasing grants than on the social work profession. The history of the social work education stayed away from interrogating these issues both in class and in practice. In addition, for a long-time ethics and values of social work subtly discouraged social workers from engaging and participating in politics of their countries. No wonder some social even to date do not have strategies to constructively address these challenges. These experiences unfold into aspects of racial divisions in the country that have permeated all sectors and disciplines. Social work could not be spared either.

6.7 MEASURES TO UNITE SOCIAL WORKERS

The study established that the social work curriculum should include political education to conscientise student social workers about the fact that when they start practising, they will engage with political figures who are in control of the working environment so that they can be able to negotiate work-related matters. Some participants established that they have attempted to form a union throughout all of South Africa's provinces in

an effort to mobilise social workers, but their efforts have been fruitless. As such, participants are of the view that educational institutions at the higher-level ought to begin instructing student social workers in the politics of social work. This would make it possible for student social workers to put any knowledge they acquire into practice in the future. Nevertheless, some participants were pessimistic about the proposal because that was tried before and could not materialise accordingly. The significance of political education among social workers has been overemphasised largely based on the premise that political education is of paramount importance among social work students in order for them to understand their rights in the workplace. In this regard, one of the participants concurred that if the next generation of social workers could be made to comprehend the significance of belonging to a union, then perhaps they will be able to achieve their goals with ease.

6.7.1 Higher institutions

Universities ought to play a part in assisting students in comprehending why it is important to be part of unions and to help them understand the importance of being organised. As the largest employer of social workers, the Department of Social Development has the potential to play a role in the process of social workers' unification. Moreover, the quest by participants was that they require a coordinating body that will bring together social workers who are employed in a variety of fields. This was argued to be made possible by a variety of social media platforms available that could be used to bring them together. The main reason put forward by many participants was that if they are divided, they would not be able to stand firm on anything. As such, it has been established that there is a desire on the part of social workers to form unions, and the question of unionisation has been hanging around for a long time. Nevertheless, lack of coordination has been established as a major challenge. Therefore, if the union is better able to market itself in order to attract new members, this will be of great assistance. To accomplish this goal, it is necessary to explain to people why the newly formed union is superior to the other unions that social workers are already affiliated with. It also emerged from the findings that the coordinators need to explain to the members how the new union will assist them with issues that are related to their work. Involving influential people in the recruitment process of new employees is going to be beneficial because people are more likely to

use a product or service if someone in their circle of friends or acquaintances recommends it to them. Some of the participants indicated:

“The universities should also play a role in terms of assisting students to understand the importance of being unionised. The Department of Social Development as the biggest employer of social workers can play a role in unifying social workers...we need a unifying body that brings social workers employed in various sectors together...we currently have various social media platforms that can be used to bring us together...united we stand, divided we fall”. [MT]

Another participant echoed:

“The social work curriculum should at least include political education to conscientise student social workers about the fact that when they start practising, they will engage with political figures who are in control of the working environment so that they can be able to negotiate work-related matters”. [MT]

Another participant said:

“We have already tried to form a union across all the provinces in South Africa trying to mobilise social workers and have failed...I think institutions of higher learning should start educating student social workers to understand the politics of social work... I am however sceptical... I still believe however that political education is necessary to help the future generation of social workers to understand the necessity of having a union”. [SK]

The narratives above were responses to a question on measures that can be taken to unite social workers. The participants revealed that in as much as there are certain measures on the ground, efforts to unite social workers should begin by transforming the social work academic curriculum to incorporate political education in order to

ensure that student social workers are in a position to engage with political figures who are in control of the working environment. Participants also confirmed that efforts are underway to form a union throughout all of South Africa's provinces in an effort to mobilise social workers. This is despite the fact that the process has not yet achieved the anticipated results. This has resulted in many social workers becoming sceptical about the success of this initiative. Therefore, participants further affirmed the need for political education and its necessity in order to help student social workers understand the complex environment they work in. The argument therefore is that if the next generation of social workers could be made to comprehend the significance of belonging to a union, then perhaps the goal of forming a viable successful union may be achieved.

6.7.2 Provision of tools of trade

Some participants indicated that the Department of Social Development ought to provide its employees with the essential tools for doing their job. Self-reflection and contemplation on the path that one has chosen to take professionally are obligations that social workers need to observe. In essence, social workers need to ask themselves what drew them to the career path in the first place and why they have remained in it. In that regard, the younger generation of social workers is essentially disconnected from history and should make an effort to become more attuned to it. Here is what some participants had to say;

“It has been established that there is a will to unionise from social workers... issue of unionisation is long overdue...the problem is that there is lack of coordination... better marketing strategy of the union will attract new members... by informing people why the new union is better than the ones social workers are already affiliated to... coordinators need to explain how the new union will help members with work-related issues...involving influential people in the recruiting process is going to help as people tend to use a product or service that someone in their circle recommends”. [DL]

Another participant shared that:

“DSD should supply its workers with basic working tools... social workers need to do self-introspection and reflect on the career that they have chosen...ask themselves what made them choose the career and why they continue to be in it. The younger generation of social workers should be attuned with history because I think they are detached from it”. [MR]

As the largest employer of social workers, the Department of Social Development has the potential to play a role in the process of social worker unification. This can be taken into consideration due to the fact that a coordinating body is required to bring together social workers who are employed in a variety of fields. Moreover, it has been determined that there is a strong desire on the part of social workers to unionise. The question of unionisation has been hanging around for far too long and the issue here is lack of coordination, which is causing the problem. The findings revealed that for the proposed union to succeed, there is a need for coordinators to explain to the members how the new union will assist them with issues that are related to their work.

6.7.3 Activities to promote cohesion and unity

The issue of cohesion or unity cannot be overemphasised if social workers need to speak in one voice and be heard. The most significant aspect that was emphasised is that, the process needs to start with the social workers themselves. External Assistance can only materialise and appreciated if the work has already begun inside. Another factor brought forth was the role of experienced social workers in guiding novice ones especially on issues of attitude towards the profession and the mandate towards service delivery. It should not be about just collecting the salary, but passion and commitment to serve, to protect, and to advocate for change. Participants shared what they believe could promote cohesion and unity by stating that:

“It is time for us to encourage positive communication, build trust, encourage junior social workers to have the right attitude towards the profession...task teams are required to meet at the least quarterly to discuss challenges and changes then organise meetings to report to the larger social work groups”
[KZN: 15]

Another participant indicated:

“We need to respect, trust one another and work within teams to organise ourselves...like team building, training and development workshops...open communication that will contribute to collective decision-making processes”
[NC: 12]

In addition, another retorted:

“Those who claim to be representing us are dictators to say the least...they refuse discerning voices and views and this creates divisions...remember we have to contribute funds for activities like meetings, then how do you represent people when you are not transparent?” [GP: 2]

Some form of self-introspection would help social workers to ask themselves what drew them to the career path in the first place and why they have remained in it over the years. Commitment to the profession partly contribute to cohesion and interest for the profession among social workers, which in return would result in the success of their objectives such as the creation of a solely social work union. Attendance of all the platforms mentioned to promote togetherness need individual motivation, commitment and effort to realise the goal.

6.8 THE ROLE OF APARTHEID IN THE OPERATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK

The findings of the study sought to establish the role of the Apartheid regime in the operations of the social work profession. It has been established that in South Africa, the apartheid regime significantly impacted the social work curriculum because when social workers graduate, they have no idea of what happens in the political arena. As

such, there will be no unity due to lack of understanding of political issues. One participant had this to say:

“In South Africa, apartheid has impacted on the curriculum of social work... when social workers graduate, they have no idea of what happens in the political arena... there will be no unity due to lack of understanding of political issues”. [MT]

Another participant added that:

“The social workers of today do not understand the problems created by apartheid...perhaps because we were there and experienced it first-hand...hence they do not understand even the history of social work...talking to them about neo-liberal aspects impacting the profession...you are talking Greek”. [MR]

The narrative by the participant was based on the premise that the Apartheid government played a significant role in shaping the nature of the social work profession as it is known today in South Africa. It has been established through the findings of the study that the Apartheid government has had an effect on social work education because graduates of social work are often unaware of political dynamics that affect their profession, especially the younger generation. As a result, there will be no harmony since most do not understand the political factors at play.

6.8.1 The role of the white social workers in the efforts to unionise the profession

The findings of the study revealed that as much as there is lack of coordination in the formation of a union, there is also a race issue to take into consideration. During the 2016 march, one participant emphasised that all provinces were represented as this was a national action by social workers from all sectors. The argument was that there were no white social workers present at the march. The participant suggested that it could be because they do not relate to black social workers and their issues. In

essence, despite the profession being the same, the conditions are not the same based on race and ethnicity. White social workers are presumed to have better working conditions and resources; hence they will not complain the same way as black social workers for the establishment of a union. Further, it is important to note that the disparities identified are a result of the legacy of apartheid. History shows that most white social workers are concentrated in the NGO sector and occupy management positions where they work. As a result, they do not relate to issues that black social workers complain about because they are considered better off compared to their black counterparts. Further, the findings of the study have established that lack of participation in the struggle to improve the social work profession is a result of their quest and comfort in the status quo. Some participants had this to say;

“No...as much as there is lack of coordination, there is also a race issue. Going back to the 2016 march, all provinces were represented as this was a national action by social workers from all sectors...I did not see any white person participating there... their disinterest is due to the fact that they do not relate to us and our issues...they have better working conditions and resources...their needs are met”. [MT]

Another participant said:

“History shows that most white social workers are concentrated in the NGO sector and they occupy management positions where they work... they do not relate to issues that black social workers complain about...they are better off compared to us...I also think that their lack of participation in the struggle to improve our profession is that some still want to be segregated... I see a bit of resistance from the whites... I think the issue of unionisation will help bring us together because it will strengthen the unity between social workers”. [DL]

This narrative was based on a question relating to the role of the white social work community in the efforts to unionise the profession. The findings of the study revealed that the racial card plays a significant role in explaining the lack of coordination in the process. It has emerged that white social workers have not been active in registering

efforts to unionise the social work profession. It has also emerged that lack of coordination among social workers from different races is due to the fact that their working conditions significantly differ, hence they cannot fight for something that does not affect them in any way. To put this into perspective, the findings of the study revealed that most white social workers have traditionally worked for non-profits, where they have held positions of leadership. This suggests that they do not relate to concerns that black social workers have with regards to their working environment. This has been attributed to the legacy of the Apartheid regime wherein not only society was divided into race-based compartments, but also the workforce. Various professions also had different racial compartments that had varying privileges and rights.

6.8.2 Relationship between religion and politics

Apart from the racial card, the study also found that religion and politics are some of the factors that need to be taken into consideration in an effort to ascertain the delay in the formation of a social work union. One participant has reiterated that student social workers need to understand that they need religious people that assist them in the fight against the injustices of the past. If they acquire that kind of knowledge, they will come on board in the formation of the union. Further, the participant has also stressed the need for training institutions to provide information that will make their students proactive. In addition, a number of social work students belonged to religious movements, referring to themselves as *'born gain'* and for some reason, they conceived religion and politics as unrelated.

“Student social workers need to understand that we need religious people that will fight against the injustices of the people...having that understanding, they will come on board on the formation of the union...It is also the responsibility of the training institutions to provide information that will make students proactive and understand that religion is not against politics...in fact, they should complement each other”. [MT]

The narrative by the participant was based on a question relating to the relationship between religion and politics. It has emerged that it is important for aspiring social workers to realise that they need religious individuals who will stand out for the oppressed. This is important because the process of seeking consideration should be multifaceted in that no one should be left out. The other reason for the involvement of religious people is that religious leaders form a group of well-respected people in society, hence their voices will be instrumental in the lobbying process. Moreover, the participant also stressed the need for institutions of higher learning such as universities to also commit themselves to equip their students with knowledge that would encourage them to take the initiative including removing misperceptions of religion and politics as unrelated.

6.8.3 Awareness of the political and neo-liberal environment that affects the profession

Awareness of the political environment has been established as non-existent among a plethora of social workers. This can be regarded as the focal point in establishing the delay in the formation of a union that represents social workers. The study revealed that when social workers are new in the profession, they seem not to care. This is possibly because of lack of knowledge about the political dynamics that they find themselves in. A majority of social workers seem not to have an understanding of the political environment within the profession. The reason posed for this was that they were never made aware of that environment and its consequences. The participant also noted that the new generation of social workers are active in mobilisation, which is significant in the recruitment process and in making the unionisation of the profession a reality. On the other hand, the older generation can teach the younger generation about the influence of politics in the workplace, which essentially means that the collaboration of the two groups will make it possible for the formation of a social work union. Here is what the participant had to say;

“No, we are not politically informed...hence there is limited political participation by social workers...most are very ignorant of political and neo-liberal issues affecting our profession...perhaps workshops or some special awareness programmes could help” [NC: 12]

In support, another participant said:

“No... A lot of awareness needs to be done...new social workers seem to not have an understanding of the political environment within the profession... I do not think it is their fault because they were never made aware of that environment...the new generation social workers are however active in mobilisation and that can be crucial in the recruitment process...the older generation can teach the younger ones about the influence of politics in the workplace”. [DL]

The narrative by the participant was based on the question relating to social workers' awareness of the political environment that affects their profession. The findings of the study established that a great deal of education is required in order to ensure that social workers are aware of the political environment that significantly impacts their profession. Moreover, it has been established that the new generation of social workers seem to be instrumental in terms of mobilisation, and the older generation contains knowledge of the political dynamics in the workplace. This in essence should be considered to be a significant combination that should be cherished in the formation of the union.

Another participant indicated that:

“I think one of the issues is that we are led by people who do not have a social work background, I doubt our minister has that background, or does she?” [MP: 8]

Another participant echoed that:

“Personally, I would say I am ignorant about politics but the SACSSP ensures that the relevant information is shared with its members...my ignorance does not mean other social workers are ignorant as well”. [KZN: 14]

The narratives above are supported by (Mmatli, 2008) who highlighted on the aspect of professional groups, politicians, economists and bureaucrats who largely define the social work agenda, yet with so limited knowledge of problems faced by social work clientele. It is a reality that social work profession falls within the arena of the country's social welfare system, as such cannot escape the impact of the political and neo-liberal agenda. Conscientisation of social workers about such matters in order to develop strategies of mitigating some of the negative consequence is of great significance.

6.9 FACTORS THAT LED TO THE FAILURE OF THE SOCIAL WORKERS UNION

The findings of the study established that numerous factors have contributed to the failure of the social workers union. In an effort to present the factors that resulted in the failure of the formation of the union, participants began by revealing the support that they received in the province in order to make this dream a reality. Further, participants reiterated about how the attendance was impressive because social workers from all across the country were present. As a result of this support, participants managed to register the union with the Department of Labour and received the registration certificate. However, due to greediness, it has been recorded that some provinces started to pull out of the structure with the intention of forming their own. This is because they wanted leadership positions and money. In essence, it can be established that power and the need to be in leadership positions affected the formation of the union. It has also emerged that during the launch of the union in the Western Cape, the majority of founding members were from Limpopo, while some were based in the Western Cape. This suggests that there was no fair representation of provinces.

6.9.1 Fighting for leadership positions

Members from Gauteng province started withdrawing from the structure with the intention of forming their own union. This was done simply because they wanted to be in leadership positions and to be in control of funds of the newly launched union. In essence, those are some of the reasons that made the union not be successful.

Moreover, it has been established that the failure of the union can also be attributed to a lack of coordination. There was a need for provincial coordinators who would be on the ground in communities in order to make the process successful. Some of the participants had this to say:

“In the beginning, we had support from all the provinces...attendance of meetings was good, we had social workers coming from all across the country. We even managed to register the union with the Department of Labour and received the registration certificate as well... due to greediness, some provinces started to pull out of the structure with the intentions of forming their own for leadership positions... power and the need to be in leadership positions affected the formation of the union...for example, during the launch of the union in the Western Cape, the majority of the founding members were from Limpopo, while some were based in the Western Cape...other provinces were not well represented in the executive committee of the union. [MR]

Another participant said:

After the launch, members from Gauteng started withdrawing from the structure with the intentions of forming their own... because they wanted to be in leadership positions...also wanted to be in control of the funds of the newly launched union...those are some of the reasons that made the union to not be successful...the new union that was launched by the breakaway group was for Social Service Professionals...it was going to be impossible for the two unions to coexist because a union is formed to have sufficient members to be able to negotiate at the Bargaining Council...with two competing unions... we would not have the numbers that will enable us to have a voice at the bargaining council”. [MR]

The findings of the study revealed that the dissidents formed a new union called Social Service Professionals. A union is created so that it negotiates at the Bargaining Council, thus it was always going to be difficult for the two unions to exist side by side.

As such, it was never going to work out if there were two conflicting voices at the bargaining table.

6.9.2 Lack of coordination

Participants' narratives were based on the question relating to factors that led to the failure of the social workers union. The findings of the study revealed that coordination of provinces made it possible for the union to succeed. It emerged that initially there was a healthy turnout for the sessions, with social workers travelling from all corners of the country to participate. This in essence resulted in the successful registration of the union. The first major limitation that was identified was the breakaway of provinces for various reasons relating to power struggles and greed. This was consequential because the desire to pursue leadership positions was premature; hence it was not going to materialise. It has been noted that members from Gauteng began defecting soon after the inauguration, apparently with the goal of setting up their own rival union. This was done on purpose, as everybody involved had aspirations of advancement to senior roles. They were also concerned about access to the union's financial resources. Participants shared that:

"I think the union failed because of lack of coordination...we could have provincial coordinators who are solid in the ground.... also, it is difficult to convince people who are already affiliated to their unions to join a new one... people are sceptical and doubt the new union's capabilities to represent them".
[DL]

Another participant echoed:

"Some of the factors that led to the failure of the union was the change that happened in the provincial office when the MEC of Social Development was reshuffled and appointed to head a different portfolio... the retirement of the secretary of the Limpopo committee was also another blow that negatively affected the formation of the union...the secretary was very instrumental in the establishment of the constitution of the union". [SK]

Moreover, the union's failure has been attributed to lack of cooperation. Participants indicated that provincial coordinators were crucially important in the process. This can also be attributed to the fact that people who are already members of a union are notoriously difficult to convince to switch allegiances; thus this is another challenge that must be surmounted. Participants revealed that people are dubious of the new union and have worries about its ability to serve their interests. As such, it has been established that factors contributing to the union's demise include a provincial office shakeup that saw the MEC of Social Development replaced as a head of a separate ministry. Also, the retiring of the secretary of the Limpopo committee was a setback to the union's progress.

6.9.3 Lack of trust and transparency

The findings showed that the few that attended one or two meetings were left with a lot of doubt whether the union would succeed or not. The issue of trust was mentioned by the majority and others alluded to issues of trust with the finances. The participants had issues with aspects of transparency and were unhappy with the attitude of the coordinators who displayed discomfort when they were asked probing questions about handling of finances. The responses were based on the participant's opinions on reasons the union did not survive and if they had attended any of the meetings, forum or Imbizo to discuss social work problems with the view of forming a union for the profession. Participants had this to say:

“Those who claim to be representing us are dictators to say the least...they refuse discerning voices and views and this creates divisions...remember we have to contribute funds for activities like meetings, then how do you represent people when you are not transparent? [GP: 2]

Another participant indicated:

“In that meeting, we wanted uniformed salaries in all provinces as per grades...subsequently we experienced poor leadership, leaders who were

untrustworthy...corrupt selfish leaders who had no respect for the profession”.

[MP: 3]

In addition, the other participant added:

“Our union was not marketed properly...that is why we lacked support...we need to collaborate and work together as a collective to attract more members”.

[MP:8]

These responses paint another picture that reveals some of the reasons the union for the social work profession did not survive. This then implies that the next mobilising committees and task teams have a huge task to first gain trust of social workers. In addition, social workers themselves are faced with the mandate of screening those who aspire to lead them thoroughly.

6.10 CONCLUSION

The chapter has found that the formation of a social work union is essential among social workers. It has emerged that some social workers are not passionate about the profession, and therefore, not concerned about the political environment in which the profession operates. These calibres of social workers are simply happy to be drawing a salary and feel like unionisation is not their responsibility. Lack of historical background of the profession emerged as an important factor that leads to the ignorance of the importance of unionisation. The young generation of social workers seem not to care much about the politics of social work. Lack of resources discourages social workers to want to unionise. For a union to fully function, there has to be resources in place for the smooth running of the process. The process of mobilising social workers has to be properly coordinated and done in a way that social workers understand the need to have their own union. The constitution has to be properly explained so that social workers know what the new union will do for them that their existing unions do not offer. Tertiary institutions also have a big role to play in preparing their students for the work environment. They need to equip their students with

knowledge about the relation between their profession and the political sphere. While teaching them to be peacemakers, a little more emphasis needs to be put on the activism part of social work.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the discussion and interpretation of findings of the study. The chapter begins by tackling the level of preparedness of social workers to join a union, then goes on to discuss the internal barriers that prevent social workers from taking action, followed by initiatives to bring Social Workers together. The other major aspects that were covered in this chapter include fragmentation in the social work profession, the role of apartheid in the functioning of the social work profession, white community and the unionisation of the Social Work profession, religion versus politics and failure of the social workers union. Lastly, the chapter developed a Model/Strategy for Social Work unionisation.

7.1 PREPAREDNESS OF SOCIAL WORKERS TO JOIN A UNION

Based on the findings of the study, the vast majority of social workers are ready to join a social workers union. The fact that becoming a member of a labour union in South Africa can be challenging is one of the major arguments presented by the participants. On the other hand, the majority of people are making use of their membership in the union as a stepping stone to advance their careers within political parties. A phenomenon which Shillinger (2005:2) referred to as trade unions turning into “state labour organisations or transmission belts of ruling parties”. As a consequence of this, it is more challenging to establish labour unions, particularly in specific categories of jobs. The profession of social work in South Africa is not currently in a position where its practitioners are prepared to form a union. It has come to light that those individuals engaged in social work have attempted to form a union, but their efforts have been fruitless thus far. This is due, in part, to the fact that the overwhelming majority of social workers do not have adequate knowledge about labour unions. The most significant challenge stems from the groundwork on which the profession is established. These findings concur with Farr (2020), who found that even as far back as the 1700s,

employees in developed countries began to discuss the possibility of forming unions, although the focus was primarily on blue collar workers. The unionisation of white-collar workers followed suit. This process progressed through time, and continues to be a contentious issue in modern times as indicated in the South Africa social work context. Moreover, Scanlon and Harding (2005) assert that the rise of industrialisation and capitalism in emerging countries was a necessary prerequisite for the occurrence of this phenomenon.

Lack of political education that social workers receive while in school is to blame since many of them are unaware of the need to form a union as well as the ways in which doing so will benefit them in the future. This pertains to the question of how the union assists social workers in situations pertaining to their place of employment, such as if they are subjected to repression or discrimination while they are on the job. Despite this, it is critical to prove that at least some social workers are open to the idea of forming a social workers union. Farr (2020) emphasised that there is a wealth of information that has been uncovered regarding the long-standing connection between social work and business, but there is significantly less information regarding social workers and the labour movement. It was not until the Great Depression that social work and organised labour turned into enemies of one another. Over the course of four decades, this has developed into a successful cooperation that contributes to the success of both parties (Farr, 2020). This is a reflection of the fact that their activities and interests are complementary to one another. Farr's assertion also corresponds with the findings of this study in that it has been established that the voices of social workers cannot be heard if they are not organised into a union, which brought up the point that there is a need for social workers to unionise. It was therefore agreed upon in this study that it is crucial for social workers to establish their own union since doing so will assist in insulating the social work profession from the influence of politics. In this regard, it has been determined that discussions are currently taking place with the goal of identifying some people who can lead them in the process of forming a new union.

The major debate that needs to be resolved was whether or not social workers are prepared to join a social work union. The views of the participants were somewhat varied wherein some of them believed that it is imperative and they are ready, while others were of the opinion that social workers are not truly prepared for a union. As a result of the responses, it became clear that many individuals make use of their union membership to achieve their political aspirations. This is despite the fact that joining a union in South Africa could be difficult. The findings of the study also revealed that social workers in South Africa realise the need to create a union, however, they are ambivalent about its success. This is because the idea of forming a union has been tried in the past but has been unsuccessful.

According to the data, the vast majority of people employed in social care have no understanding of what unions are or what they perform, which is one of the primary reasons why the formation of a union is such a difficult endeavour. This is of utmost importance because the problem of forming a union originates from the groundwork upon which the profession is based. This suggests that the majority of students who aspire to become social workers do not understand why it is necessary for them to form a union or how doing so will help them while they are still in school due to a lack of exposure to political issues. Debate on the need for social work unions is not new in academia. Fisher (1987), Rosenberg and Rosenberg (2006), and Straussner and Phillips (1988) are just a few of the academics who have written about the need and development of unions and the relationship between unions and the social work profession. These authors, along with others, have focused on various aspects of this topic. Since the 1970s, there has been a rise in interest in occupational social work in the United States (Kurzman, 1987). Since that time, the industrial sector as well as the union sector have developed into significant hubs for the recruitment, education and employment of social workers (Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 2006).

It is crucial for social workers to know how their union will help them if they meet challenges at work, such as repression or discrimination in order to facilitate the development of a social work union. This is necessary in order to realise the goal of forming a social work union. If social workers have such a critical grasp of the need

for a union, it is likely that efforts to build a union will be fruitful. As a result of this, it is evident that there is a group of social workers who are ready for a union, as indicated by the actions of one participant who provided an illustration of a demonstration that took place in the past demanding the formation of a union that is specific to social workers. This shows that there is some form of resistance with regards to the formation of a social work union in South Africa with some racial groups. This shows similar traits to the philosophy of Social Darwinism wherein the need for a modern labour union was imminent.

After the American Civil War, there was a time of great economic and technological advancement, which corresponded with the growth of the philosophy of Social Darwinism (Hofstadter, 1977). This prepared the way for the creation of modern labour unions as well as the initial steps towards the establishment of professional social work. In addition, this paved the way for the development of professional social work (Trattner, 1984). Prior to the start of the Civil War, there were a number of unsuccessful initiatives to organise the workforce. The first organisation of its kind was an unnamed Philadelphia shoemakers' association that was established in 1792 and dissolved the following year (Taft, 1964). The current study has established that there is a group of social workers who are ready for a union. In essence, the unionisation of the social work profession is necessary because it provides social workers with a voice that they are unable to obtain any other way. It is apparent that that groups that are resisting the formation of a social work union have got certain fears. This can be considered common. For instance, before the start of the Civil War, trade unions were subject to criminal prosecution since it was believed that they were part of a larger plot to corrupt society through the use of coercion (Boyer & Morais, 1955). This shows that there was some form of resistance to the formation of a social work union. Nevertheless, following the end of the Civil War, the most powerful labour union was the Knights of Labor, which was established in 1869. From the beginning, it distinguished itself from other labour organisations by extending membership opportunities to people of any faith, race, aptitude or occupation.

7.2 INTERNAL BARRIERS THAT PREVENT SOCIAL WORKERS FROM TAKING ACTION

The current study established that there are a great deal of obstacles standing in the way of social workers taking the necessary steps to form a union. The present study disclosed that social workers who are represented by unions are deprived of their professional identities. This is due to the fact that the training that they receive does not teach them how to distinguish themselves from other people who are present in their environments. The present study revealed that social workers are not confrontational and fear getting into a fight. In a nutshell, the data imply that social workers are extremely flexible to accommodate their clients' needs. The current study revealed that other professionals in their work contexts, in addition to the management of their organisations, do not respect the worth of social workers. The contention of this argument was that it gives the impression that they do not believe social workers to be independent professionals who are capable of resolving issues on their own. Studies around the world have revealed that the formation of a social work unions is accompanied by some form of barriers.

Straussner and Phillips (1988) revealed that the emergence of the labour movement and the field of social welfare were both impacted by changing economic conditions and shifting social norms during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century. The 1880s marked the beginning of a gradual decline in the number of individuals joining the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor (Straussner & Phillips, 1988). Its failure can be attributed to a number of internal policy concerns in addition to differences with the newly developing pure and simple trade unions. These trade unions concentrated on the requirements of union members working within a specific trade rather than on broader societal issues.

The current study established that the vast majority of social workers are unable to keep their employment and honour the conditions of the agreement they made with their employer. For example, social workers in one of the facilities where the study was carried out came to the realisation at one point in time that they required a policy for funerals and burials for themselves. They then presented the idea to their

supervisors, who promptly changed the policy so that it now applies to all of the other professionals working in the facility. Participants are of the opinion that social workers are unable to fight their own battles. Smith (2014) critiques the concept of 'Exclusive jurisdiction' wherein only one union should represent workers in any given trade. Fitch (2017) asserts that in the 1960s, craft unions in America were able to exercise enough power to realise some of their aims, such as the gradual shortening of labour hours, since they banded together to form stronger organisations.

In addition, in response to the existing laissez-faire policies of the government, which were viewed as favouring industry at the expense of labour, and the degrading nature of charity handouts, craft unions came up with their own welfare system to provide for their members. This was done out of discontent with the government's policies (Fitch, 2017). Unions began providing a variety of benefits, including pension schemes, health insurance, death payments and unemployment insurance, among other perks. Despite the fact that these benefits were on the lower end of the scale, their provision by unions demonstrated that unions viewed the social welfare needs of members as being on par with the importance of achieving better working conditions, higher wages, and fewer hours per week to the labour movement.

In addition, some participants in the current study opined that there are no internal causes that are acting against the establishment of a social work union. This conclusion was reached due to the fact that certain individuals, upon registering their intentions to form a union, were awarded financial support from the government. The government, in its most basic form, endorses the establishment of a labour union and, consequently, hopes that it will be successful in the market for labour. It has also come to light that social workers were able to secure support from the government due to their prior experience, which included the realisation that they were having difficulty functioning without a union. This was one of the factors that contributed to the government's decision to offer support. In terms of the findings of the study, even if one makes an attempt to mobilise social workers, it is difficult for them to get together owing to a lack of resources. This is another reason why this constitutes a barrier.

Social workers at many different institutions are hesitant to discuss the possibility of unionisation with their respective managers, and the national office of the Department of Social Development is also not doing to promote the formation of a social work union. It is of paramount importance to establish that inasmuch as barriers exist in the social work profession, especially with regards to the formation of a social work union. There are various ways in which these barriers could be overcome. In support of this finding, Gary and Gary (1994) opined that the transition from upper-class volunteers to paid workers from middle-class backgrounds, the growing emphasis on formal training for those involved in social welfare, and the rapid growth of the Settlement Movement are examples of developments within social work that have helped break down some of the barriers that previously existed between labour and social work. Due to the overlapping values of the two movements, a number of major leaders within the Settlement Movement, such as Jane Addams and Lillian Wald, were active in the creation of the National Women's Trade Union League and other labour unions during this time period (Davis, 1964).

However, it has come to light that even though the national government department of social development is not doing enough, as was mentioned earlier, the Limpopo Department of Social Development is supportive and has approved social workers' plans to form a union, and given them the go-ahead to proceed. This was established by the study, which also found that the department is supportive. Some of the participants held the opinion that because some social workers were given scholarships to complete their degree in social work, they decided to enter the area even though they did not have much passion for the job. It has also come to light that the vast majority of participants are of the opinion that there is a significant generational gap between the current generation and previous generations. Furthermore, participants have confirmed that older social workers were very supportive of the concept of forming a union. In terms of the findings of the study, the working environment for social workers is unfriendly, and they are frequently the targets of micromanagement.

The issue of hostile working conditions is made much more difficult when political appointees are placed in administrative positions, which further exacerbates the problem. Social workers, who are frequently better educated than their managers, are frequently intimidated by political cadres. This is a problem because social professionals are frequently more educated than their managers. People who work in social services frequently stifle their opinions for fear of receiving negative feedback or being overlooked for career advancement opportunities.

The absence of a union that represents social workers has contributed to the erosion of their professional identity. It was found that one of the primary factors that prevented social workers from taking action was the fact that the training they receive did not emphasise how important it is to distinguish themselves from other people in their field. It has been proven that social workers avoid conflict and do not seek to make themselves known since they are not aggressive. The manner in which participants, in their capacity as social workers, are treated by members of other professions was cited as a source of considerable worry. Social workers have the reputation of being inept professionals who are unable to handle problems on their own. The accounts provided by the participants also made it clear that social workers have a propensity to withdraw from situations in which their motivations are called into question.

In support of this finding, there have been numerous strikes and demonstrations aimed at expressing the dire need for a social work union in South Africa. Demonstrations such as the national march by social workers to the Union Buildings in Pretoria in September 2016 (Madibogo, 2016), and the 2017 five-week long national strike led by the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU), which resulted in the closure of most Social Development offices in Matatiele, Maluti, Vhembe and Mopani Districts (Nketo, 2017) indicate that social workers have made strides to have their voices heard. Other events in the history of the profession include the attempted establishment of the South African Social Workers Union (SAWSU) in the Western Cape Province, which did not survive (NGO Pulse, 2012). Another important event was the launching of the National Association of Social Workers of South Africa in September 2007, which marked the first non-racial social work association in South

Africa, though with much struggle (Sewpaul, 2012). The study is concerned about what appears to be discord and reluctance on the part of social workers in supporting structures that may assist in bringing about change, such as the union for social workers. To this day, very little is known about what happened to SASWU or the reasons why it was never even able to see the light of day. Another example in point is the inability to launch the union for social workers in the Limpopo branch.

Moreover, the dissolution of the union was the result of problems within the organisation, but several participants have disputed this view. Participants in the discussion claimed that it would have been impossible for a provincial government to assist in the operations and efforts to build a union if there were elements within the union itself that were preventing it from being successful. As a result, it is possible to establish beyond a reasonable doubt that there was not a single faction within the union that worked to undermine it. This hints that the government has high expectations for the union, and is actively working to ensure that it is successful in the workplace. Another seminal event occurred when social workers organised themselves into their own union in order to advocate for their own interests. The union was unable to get off the ground, which is a great disappointment. Even if one makes an effort to gather social professionals together, it is not an easy task because of the reasons listed above.

The narratives of the participants suggested that some social workers were hesitant to discuss unionisation with their managers because of the potential consequences. Because they were dependent on assistance from the Department of Social Development, this was an unavoidable requirement. In spite of this help, the study showed that some social workers do not have strong love for the work that they do. This was demonstrated by the fact that they utilised the financial assistance that was provided to them in order to earn a degree in social work. During the mobilisation process, it became abundantly clear that this was the case, as members of the older generation of social workers expressed a positive attitude towards the possibility of creating a union. In addition, it has come to light that professionals in the field of social work are frequent targets of micromanagement and frequently work in hostile environments. Naidoo and Kasiram (2004) and Sithole (2010) are of the view that

there have also been reports of social workers being victimised, harassed and marginalised for their support of radical or critical social work practice, particularly in government settings by managers who are, in the majority of cases, social workers themselves. Appointments made on the basis of political considerations to managerial positions do nothing but make the already unpleasant working climate even worse. Social workers, who are typically more educated than their supervisors, are frequently subjected to intimidation on the part of political cadres. This is because they are afraid of reprisal or being passed over for promotion. Many social workers choose to keep their concerns to themselves when they have them.

In support of these findings, the necessity for social workers to come together as a formidable force by uniting, organising and mobilising themselves is of paramount importance (Gray & Mazibuko, 2002; Dlamini & Sewpaul, 2015; Strier & Bershtling, 2016). In addition, Craig da Silva (2007) is of the opinion that the most effective strategy for bringing about change will be to start a strong movement. This study explored social workers' perspectives of unionisation and collective bargaining. It shed some light on the actions that social work unions had participated in in the past. These aspects shed light on the necessity of a powerful movement that possesses the ability to collectively negotiate, and that will speak with one voice in opposition to these unfair afflictions. It is no longer acceptable for social workers to take a passive role in the formulation of the policies that they are tasked with enforcing. These policies are frequently ambiguous and unfair, and it is highly unlikely that they will bring about any positive changes to the standard of living of individuals, groups or communities.

7.3 INITIATIVES TO BRING SOCIAL WORKERS TOGETHER

In terms of the findings of the study, the curriculum for social work should include political education in order to make student social workers aware of the fact that once they begin practising, they will interact with political figures who are in control of the working environment. This is necessary in order for student social workers to be able to negotiate matters pertaining to their place of employment. Some of the participants revealed that, in an effort to mobilise social workers, they have tried to form a union throughout South Africa; however, their efforts have been unsuccessful. This is due to

what Ferguson and Lavalette (2013) term internal barriers intended to stop progress with regards to the formation of a union. This study has established that educational institutions at higher levels ought to begin training student social workers in the politics of social work. As a result, this is the position that has been expressed. Because of this, it will be possible for student social workers to eventually put any knowledge that they obtain into practice in the future. Despite this, a few of the participants were pessimistic about the proposition because it had been attempted previously and was unable to materialise in an appropriate manner.

In support of this finding, Ferguson and Lavalette (2013) emphasised the demand for social workers to be politically committed and push for structural changes that would enhance human rights and dignity has been made across the globe. They are strongly encouraged to be radical and to challenge hegemonic policies, to condemn discriminatory behaviours of authorities, and to make use of accessible facts from practice in order to lobby against unfair systemic judgements (Sithole, 2010 and Strier & Bershtling, 2016). Naidoo and Kasiram (2006) and Kasiram (2009) make a passing reference to the idea that the internal and external forms of oppression faced by social workers and recipients of social services pose challenges to the provision of relevant and effective services. When attempting to resist various forms of abuse, several social workers in South Africa have stated that they have received complaints of being bullied and emotionally blackmailed.

Overemphasising the significance of political education among social workers is largely due to the premise that political education is of paramount importance among social work students in order for them to understand their rights in the workplace. This premise has been the primary justification for the emphasis that has been placed on the significance of political education among social workers. In this regard, one of the participants concurred that if the next generation of social workers could be made to comprehend the significance of belonging to a union, then perhaps they will be able to easily achieve their goals. This was in reference to the fact that the current generation of social workers does not understand the significance of belonging to a union. In support of this finding, Madibogo (2016) emphasises the need and significance for a social work union that provides sufficient support to social workers

in order to enhance the social work profession. Madibogo (2016) ascertains that in as much as strides have been made to change this narrative, a lot still has to be done. In this regard, the author gave examples of the 2016 March in which over 20,000 social workers came from various South African provinces to March for better working conditions and the need for a union. Other demands included better salaries, separate office space allocations, pool cars, and work equipment like laptops and cell phones. In essence, such demands were going to be easily lobbied for if the participants in the march had the support of a union. This suggests that a march alone among professionals is not enough in order to achieve certain goals. Sithole (2017) cited the fact that social workers are supervised by cadres who do not have a background in social work, as well as the fact that there is professional and turf rivalry between social workers, community development officers, and youth and child care workers. These factors all contribute to the worsening of the situation. In addition, Engelbrecht (2017), Sithole (2017), Patel (2016) and Earle-Mallesson (2009) emphasised the fact that territorial rivalry and power struggles with other occupational groups and government officials were contributing factors that worsened the problem.

In addition, it has become clear that educational institutions such as colleges have a responsibility to play a role in supporting students in understanding why it is essential to be a part of unions and in assisting them in appreciating the significance of being organised. The Department of Social Development, which is the main employer of social workers, has the ability to play a role in the process of social workers unifying under a single umbrella organisation. In addition, the participants' need for a coordinating body that will bring together social workers who are employed in a range of professions emerged as a central theme during the discussion. It was suggested that this was made conceivable by the availability of a range of social media platforms that may be utilised to bring these people together. The need for a coordinating body that brings together social workers was emphasised by Malherbe and Hendriks (2004), who argued that working conditions of social workers are responsible for high levels of absenteeism and staff turnover, regular complaints, low morale and poor attitude to the work. This lends credence to the researcher's assertion that these aspects are not well known to the general public and helps maintain the false impression that social workers are not prepared or eager to serve their country in any capacity. The researcher has a strong predisposition towards the idea that the Constitution of the

Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108, 1996 shields contemporary social workers from the kinds of abuses described in the introduction.

In addition, the newly revised document of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), which was approved by the IASW delegate assembly in 2017 under the sub-theme, 'Social and Political Action,' makes it abundantly clear that Social workers 'should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to resources, employment, services, and opportunities. Social workers need to be aware of the impact that the political arena has in practice, and they need to push for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions' (IFSW Delegate Assembly, 2017). This will also enhance the unity of social workers because one of the primary arguments that was presented by a significant number of participants was that if they are not united, they will not be able to maintain a unified stance on anything. As a result of this, it has been established that social workers want to form unions, and the topic of unionisation has been lingering about for a very long time. Nevertheless, it has been determined that the most significant obstacle is a lack of coordination. Therefore, it will be of great benefit if the union is better able to market itself in order to recruit new members. In order to achieve this objective, it is vital to communicate to the general public the reasons behind why the newly created union is preferable to the other unions that social workers are already affiliated with.

The findings also revealed that the coordinators need to explain to the members of the new union how the new union will assist them with issues that are linked to their work in order to gain members' support and buy-in. This is because people are more likely to use a product or service if someone in their circle of friends or acquaintances recommends it to them. Involving influential people in the process of recruiting new employees is going to be beneficial. Again, this is because influential people have the ability to persuade others to use a product or service. In addition, a number of participants voiced their opinion that the Department of Social Development ought to make sure that its staff members have access to the resources they need to perform their tasks effectively. Social workers have a responsibility to regularly engage in introspective activities such as contemplation and self-analysis over the career path they have selected for themselves. In essence, social workers need to ask themselves what initially drew them to the field of work, as well as why they have remained in the

profession for as long as they have. In this regard, the younger generation of social workers is fundamentally separated from history; therefore, it is imperative that they make an effort to become more sensitive to the passage of time.

This study revealed that inasmuch as there are certain measures already in place, efforts to unite social workers should begin by transforming the social work academic curriculum to incorporate political education. This is necessary in order to ensure that student social workers are in a position to engage with political figures who are in control of the working environment. Participants also verified that attempts are underway to form a union throughout all nine provinces of South Africa in order to mobilise social workers. This is happening despite the fact that the process has not yet delivered the results that were hoped to be reached by the process. As a consequence of this, many social workers have developed a healthy amount of scepticism regarding the efficacy of this endeavour. As a result, participants reiterated the importance of political education and its role in assisting student social workers in better comprehending the dynamic setting in which they will be practising their profession. Therefore, the argument is that if the next generation of social workers could be made to appreciate the significance of belonging to a union, then perhaps they will be able to achieve their aims. This argument is based on the assumption that this is possible.

The vast majority of participants emphasised the need for universities to play a significant role in aiding students to comprehend the significance of becoming a part of unions, and in assisting them to comprehend the significance of being organised. The Department of Social Development has the ability to play a role in the process of social worker unification because it is the largest employer of social workers. This is something that should be taken into consideration due to the fact that in order to bring together social workers who are employed in a range of professions, a coordinating body is required. In addition, it has been found that the majority of social workers are interested in forming unions for their profession. The issue here is a lack of coordination, which is what is driving the difficulty, and the matter of unionisation has been lingering about for far too long. In terms of the findings, in order for the proposed union to be successful, the coordinators will need to explain to the members how the

new union will aid them with difficulties that are linked to their work. This is necessary for the success of the proposed union. This is informed by the Postmodernist scholarship that emphasises the concepts of history and progress; truth and freedom; reason and revolution; science and industrialism (Firat & Dholakia, 2006; Kumar, 2005). In this case, there is a need for aforementioned concepts to be adopted in the social work profession through the formation of a social work union. The social work profession needs to appreciate its history by acknowledging the lack of a union and ensuring progress by establishing the union.

The findings of this study emphasised the importance of the Department of Social Development in supplying its staff with the tools that are necessary for them to carry out their duties effectively. It was hoped that this would increase social workers' enthusiasm for their profession, which, in turn, would lead to the accomplishment of their goals, such as the formation of a union that is dedicated exclusively to social work. Social workers could benefit from engaging in this type of self-reflection by asking themselves what initially drew them to the field of social work and why they have remained in the field over the course of their careers.

7.4 FRAGMENTATION IN THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

Social workers do not have a strong sense of community due to their history, which leads them to believe that they are exceptional and distinct from members of other professions. Because of this attitude among social workers, they have not been able to effectively collaborate with various other stakeholders. This is also connected to what the study established as a feeling of pride, which is the belief that social workers do not want to collaborate with others, which, in a sense, denies them (social workers) an opportunity to learn from others. A 'sense of pride' was attributed to another participant, and several participants agreed with them when they said that another indicator of this pride is the absence of a coordinating structure that positively portrays social workers.

Existing unions that social workers are part of have interests that are more general and do not speak to the social work profession. These interests are not represented by the unions. These unions do not have adequate awareness of the issues that pertain to social work. This study has established that if a social worker who is a member of that kind of union needs to bring up an issue, it will take a long time for that union to address their issues because they will first want to understand what the issue is about. Hence, what is generally regarded as a sense of pride is actually an issue of identity. Many academics have researched and written about social workers' identities, as well as how they believe the general public views their job, the image and prestige of the profession in comparison to other human professions (Webb, 2017; Beddoe 2015, 2017; Deane & Beddoe, 2016; Hobbs & Evans, 2017). The authors emphasised the issues of identity, image and perception of the profession in their discussion about the woes and marginalisation of the social work profession in various discourses.

Moreover, the fragmentation that some people believe exists in the social work profession are not a matter of pride, but rather an issue of identity, image and perception (Hobbs & Evans, 2017). People who work in social work come from a diverse range of backgrounds, and it is likely that everyone believes that they are exceptional in their own unique ways. Social workers find the idea of collaborating with other groups to be revolting, and it has become apparent that identity and other personal factors prevent them from mixing with other people. As a result, they are less likely to be exposed to new thought patterns and points of view. The findings of the survey also established that social workers are not unified in the sense that there is no central entity that is able to communicate effectively on behalf of the social work profession. This was determined as a result of the fact that there is no social work union. This is of the utmost importance because the existing unions that social workers belong to have broader interests, whereas social workers would want a union that is particular to their line of work in order to have a representation that is fair to them. The length of time it takes to resolve issues as a result of the fact that such unions are overworked by members of other professions is one of the negative outcomes that can be expected from membership in such unions.

7.5 APARTHEID AND THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

One of the minor objectives of this study was to determine the extent to which the apartheid government played a role in the functioning of the social work industry. It has been proved that the apartheid government had a substantial impact on the social work curriculum in South Africa (Naidoo, 2004). This is due to the fact that social workers who graduate from social work programmes do not have any knowledge of what occurs in the political arena. As a result, there will be no unity because people do not understand political concerns. The Apartheid government played a significant role in moulding the character of the social work profession as it is known today in South Africa (van de Ruit, 2017). It has been demonstrated through the findings of the study that the government of Apartheid had an effect on social work education. This is due to the fact that graduates of social work programmes are frequently uninformed of the political dynamics that affect their profession.

In terms of the results of this study, not only is there a deficiency in coordination when it comes to the establishment of a union, but there is also a racial issue that needs to be taken into consideration. McKendrick (2001) blames the racial issue on the apartheid era. The author suggests that many factors contributed to social workers' marginalisation. These included the profession's association with apartheid, its failure to prioritise black poverty in favour of aiding whites, its identification with casework and social control, and its excessive preoccupation with professional status and the exclusion of others. Moreover, paying attention to the march that took place in 2016 in which participants came from all over the country, this study established that there were no people who identified as whites who attended the march.

The study hypothesised that perhaps this is because they are unable to empathise with black social workers and the challenges they face. In essence, the conditions are not the same for people of different races and ethnicities, despite the fact that the job itself is the same. This is due to the fact that it is generally assumed that white social professionals have access to superior working conditions and resources. It is unlikely that they will fight as hard for a union as black social workers do. The legacy of apartheid is responsible for the inequities that have been uncovered, which is another

point that must be emphasised. Research has established that the majority of white social workers are employed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), where they also hold positions of administration. As a consequence of this, they are unable to empathise with the problems that black social workers express concern over because they are regarded as being in a better position than their black colleagues.

In addition, the findings of the study have demonstrated that the reason for their quest and comfort in the status quo is the primary contributor to their lack of participation in the effort to enhance the social work profession. Based on this, it is apparent that social work needs to be better organised professionally. Coughlan (2000) asserts that there does not appear to be any kind of coordinated effort to defend the profession. Similarly, Gray (1999) argues that social workers contributed to their own marginalisation by failing to form a strong, cohesive professional organisation, and therefore, being overpowered by the massive political processes that were bearing down on them. The current study has established that using race as an excuse for a lack of coordination contributes to the problem. It has come to light that, white social workers have not been actively participating in efforts to unionise the social work field. It has also come to light that the lack of coordination that exists between social workers of all races is owing to the fact that their working conditions are significantly different from one another, and as a result, they are unable to fight for something that does not in any way concern them.

This study has established that the majority of white social workers had typically occupied positions of leadership inside non-profit organisations, where they were employed. This leads one to believe that they do not understand the problems that black social workers have with relation to the atmosphere of their place of employment. This has been attributed to the legacy of the apartheid government when not only society was separated into race-based divisions but also the workforce and other professions too had different racial compartments that had diverse advantages and rights. Luvhengo (1996) suggests that the marginalisation of black social workers stems from lack of understanding of the role of social workers in communities. A social worker, in the eyes of the average South African, is someone who helps with marriage

issues, takes care of children, and feeds the hungry and destitute. While social workers certainly provide these types of assistance, their focus is extremely restricted. Luvhengo (1996) points out that influential politicians and government decision-makers share this view, suggesting that there is some misunderstanding about the nature of social work and its place in the modern political landscape.

In addition to the racial card, this study discovered that religion and politics are two of the factors that need to be taken into consideration in an effort to ascertain the delay in the formation of a social work union. These are some of the factors that need to be taken into consideration in an effort to ascertain the cause of the delay. Student social workers need to realise that they need religious people who will assist them in the fight against the injustices that are faced by the people, and that this is something that they need to comprehend. If they are able to obtain that level of expertise, they will be willing to participate in the establishment of the union.

This study has established that aspiring social workers need to be aware that they require religious folks who will stand out for those who are oppressed in order to do their jobs effectively. This is significant because the procedure for requesting consideration should involve a number of different steps, and no one should be excluded from the process (Luvhengo, 1996). The other reason for the participation of people of other religions is that religious leaders include a group of highly recognised members of society; as a result, the contributions of these individuals' voices will be essential to the process of lobbying. It is therefore important for institutions of higher learning like colleges to make a commitment to providing their students with the knowledge that will inspire them to take the initiative.

Numerous social workers have been tested, and it was found that none of them have any understanding of the political climate in which they work. Coughlan (2000) asserts that this can be regarded as the primary factor in establishing why there has been a delay in the formation of a union that represents social workers. This study has established that newly graduated social workers appear to be unconcerned about the

political climate in which they find themselves. This could be due to a lack of familiarity with the political dynamics of the environment in which they work. It would appear that the vast majority of social workers are completely ignorant of the political climate that exists inside their field. The explanation given for this was that they were never informed of the nature of the setting and the effects it could have on them. This study has also established that the younger generation of social workers are involved in mobilisation, which is important in the process of recruiting and in making unionisation of the field a reality. On the other hand, the older generation can teach the younger generation about the effect of politics in the workplace, which, in essence, means that the partnership of the two groups will make it possible for the establishment of a social work union.

This study has established that a substantial amount of education is necessary in order to guarantee that social workers are aware of the political context that has a significant impact on the profession that they choose to pursue. In addition, it has been determined that the younger generation of social workers appear to be instrumental in terms of mobilisation, whereas the older generation possesses understanding of the political dynamics in the workplace. This is also subscribed to by Naidoo (2004). This should essentially be considered to be a significant combination that should be treasured throughout the process of the union's development because it will bring about significant benefits.

7.6 FAILURE OF THE SOCIAL WORKERS UNION

This study has established that the failure of the social workers union is attributed to a number of different reasons simultaneously. In an effort to present factors that resulted in the failure of the formation of the social work union, social workers who participated in this study disclosed the support that they received in the provinces in order to make this dream a reality. This was done in an effort to present factors that resulted in the failure of the formation of the social work union. In addition, attendees underlined how great the attendance was because there were social workers there from all over the country. They were able to successfully register the union with the

Department of Labour and obtained a registration certificate as a consequence of the support that was provided.

On the other hand, it has been documented that in an effort to satisfy their own avarice, a number of the provinces began the process of withdrawing from the organisation in order to establish their own. This is due to the fact that they desired financial success and positions of authority. It is possible to demonstrate, in the broadest sense, that power dynamics and the desire to occupy positions of authority played a role in the establishment of the union. In addition, it has been determined that the failure of the union can also be linked to a lack of coordination on the part of the parties involved. In order to ensure the process's overall success, it was necessary to have provincial coordinators who would be actively involved in the areas they served as attributed by Naidoo (2004).

This study established that the successful formation of the union was made possible through cooperative efforts of several provinces. It was discovered that initially there was a healthy turnout for the sessions, with social professionals traveling from all corners of the country to participate. The registration of the union was ultimately successful as a direct consequence of this. The first significant obstacle was the secession of provinces, which occurred for a variety of reasons, including power disputes and avarice. This was significant since the ambition to pursue leadership roles came at too early of a stage, and as a result, it was never going to come to fruition. The dissidents organised themselves into a new union which they dubbed Social Service Professionals. Due to the fact that the primary function of a union was to represent its members' interests during negotiations at the Bargaining Council, it was always going to be challenging for the two unions to coexist in the same space. As a result, there was never going to be a satisfactory outcome as long as there were two opposing voices at the negotiating table.

The inability of the union's members to cooperate is largely held responsible for their failure. Participants felt that provincial coordinators had an extremely significant role

in the process. This is due, in part, to the fact that people who are already members of a union are famously difficult to convince to transfer allegiances; hence, this is another obstacle that needs to be overcome. This study revealed that social workers were sceptical of the new union and had worries about its ability to serve their interests. They were concerned about the new union's ability to serve their interests.

7.7 CONCLUSION

The chapter presented the discussion and interpretation of findings of the study. The chapter started by tackling the level of preparedness of social workers to join a union, then went on to discuss internal barriers that prevent social workers from taking action, followed by initiatives to bring Social Workers together. The other major aspects that were covered in this chapter include fragmentation in the social work profession, the role of apartheid in the functioning of the social work profession, white community and unionisation the Social Work profession, religion versus politics and failure of the social workers union.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Figure 8.1 represents the author's developed model/strategy for the unionisation of the social work profession. The model is multilateral in nature and constitutes the following stakeholders: government, universities, political parties and other trade unions. These stakeholders are expected to work together in an effort to provide sufficient support for the establishment of the social work profession. Each stakeholder provides a unique support structure that is within its area of specialty. For instance, universities are anticipated to support the initiative by altering the current curriculum in order to equip social work students with knowledge pertaining to the need for a social work union. The government is anticipated to provide financial support for the initiative to be a success. Other trade unions, especially the ones where the majority of social workers are aligned, need to provide ideological support for the initiative to be a success. Political parties are expected to provide political education which is essential in the formation and existence of a social work union.

8.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The study found that most participants do not feel ready for a social workers union. In South Africa, joining a labour union is tough, but most people use it to improve their political careers. Thus, unionisation is difficult, especially in certain industries. The study found that South African social workers are not ready to unionise. Social workers failed to form a union because most social workers do not know much about labour unions. The foundation of the profession is the biggest issue. Many social workers are uninformed of the need to create a union and how it will help them in the future due to their lack of political exposure. This concerns how the union will help social workers who face workplace repression or discrimination. However, some social workers want a union. Some participants revealed that social workers need their own union to

separate politics from the field. As such, talks are underway to pick a leader for the new union.

Are social workers ready for a union? Some participants thought social workers were ready for a union, while others thought it was unnecessary. The results showed that while forming a union in South Africa is difficult, many use it to accomplish political goals. The study also found that South African social workers are not ready to create a union because unionisation has failed before. Most social workers do not know what unions are or do, which makes union formation difficult. Due to a lack of political exposure, most aspiring social workers do not comprehend why they need to form a union or how it will aid them while in school. Social workers must know how their union will support them if they face repression or prejudice at work to establish a union. One participant presented an example of a demonstration calling for a social worker-specific union, indicating that a group of social workers is ready for a union. Unionisation offers social workers a voice they cannot get elsewhere. Thus, participants disclosed union-formation initiatives.

The study found many factors preventing social workers from unionising. Some participants revealed that union-served social workers lose their professional identities since social work school doesn't teach them to be unique. The study found that social workers are not confrontational, fearful of disagreement, and unwilling to speak up. This implies that social workers are quite accommodating. Some participants revealed that management and other professions disrespect social workers. They appear to not view social workers as independent experts who can handle things on their own. Some participants echoed that most social workers cannot keep their jobs and follow their contracts.

The study also found that some individuals believe that there are no internal barriers to social work unionisation. Some participants received government assistance when they declared their union interests. The government wants a union to succeed in the labour market due to their earlier experience, including realising that they needed a

union. The government supported the social workers. The study found that lack of resources made mobilising social workers difficult, which is another hurdle. Social workers' employers do not mediate either. The study also found that many social workers are unwilling to discuss unionisation with their managers and that the Department of Social Development's national office is working less to create a social work union.

However, the study found that Limpopo Department of Social Development is helpful and gave social workers the go-ahead to organise the union, even though the national government department is not doing enough. Certain people thought some social workers were only in the sector because they received bursaries to study. A majority of participants also felt that the new and old generations are extremely different, and that the older generation of social workers supported the concept of forming a union. The study found that social workers are often micromanaged in unpleasant work environments. Political nominations to managerial posts worsen unpleasant working conditions. Political cadres intimidate social workers, who are often more educated than managers. Social workers often keep quiet for fear of unfair evaluation or promotion. Internal obstacles preventing social workers from acting inspired the narratives above. Lack of a union has undermined social workers' identity, according to the report. Social workers were hindered by the social work curriculum's lack of emphasis on standing out. Social workers avoid conflict and do not speak up because they are not aggressive. Participants expressed deep worry about how other professionals treat social workers. Narratives show that social workers are incompetent and unable to solve problems. Participants also said that social workers tend to withdraw when their intentions are questioned.

Some participants denied that internal difficulties caused the dissolution of the union. If internal problems were preventing the success of the union, a provincial government could not help. Thus, no union forces undermined it. This suggests that the government hopes the union succeeds in the workplace and actively supports it. The study also found that social workers unionisation was a turning point. Some social workers were afraid to discuss unionisation with their managers. They needed this

since the Department of Social Development supported them. Despite this help, the study found that some social workers are not passionate about their employment. They earned a social work degree after receiving funding from the government. During mobilisation, elder social workers were excited about unionising. Social workers also face micro-management and hostile workplaces. Political managers exacerbate the hostile workplace. It also appears that the support received from DSD management was from certain individuals who were in position of power at that time, and since they have been moved to hold other portfolios, social workers are left on their own again.

The study found that the social work curriculum should contain political education to prepare student social workers to cope with political actors who regulate the workplace. Some attendees said they tried to organise social workers in all South African provinces but failed. Participants believe higher education should teach student social workers about social work politics. However, several attendees were sceptical because the plan had failed before. Political education is overemphasised among social workers since it helps students comprehend their employment rights. One participant agreed that if the future generation of social workers could understand the value of union membership, they might be able to achieve their goals.

Universities should also educate students understand why unions are vital and how to organise. The Department of Social Development can help social workers unite as the main employer. Participants also wanted a coordinating body for social professionals in many professions. Various social media channels could bring them together. Many participants argued that if they are split, they cannot hold fast on anything. Thus, social workers want unions because unionisation has been a long-standing issue. Coordination is the biggest issue. Thus, stronger union marketing will help recruit new members. To achieve this purpose, social workers must explain why the newly created union is better than their former unions. The findings also showed that coordinators must inform members how the new union will help them with work-related concerns. Influential people can help recruit new hires since consumers are more inclined to use a product or service if a buddy or acquaintance promotes it. Some respondents also thought the Department of Social Development should equip its workers. Social

professionals must think on their career path. Social workers should consider why they chose the field and why they have stayed. Younger social professionals should try to learn more about history.

Responses to a question about social worker unity are presented above. In as much as there are certain measures on the ground, efforts to unite social workers should begin by changing the social work academic curriculum to include political education to ensure that student social workers may engage with political actors who influence the working environment. Despite the process' failure, participants indicated that attempts are underway to form a union in all South African provinces to mobilise social workers. Many social workers doubt the success of this initiative. Thus, participants reinforced the need for political education to help student social workers understand their complex environment. Thus, if the future generation of social workers can understand the value of union membership, they may be able to achieve their aims.

Most panellists stressed the necessity of universities helping students understand unions and organisation. The Department of Social Development, the main social worker employer, might help unify social workers. This is because a coordinating body is needed to bring together social professionals from various professions. Social workers also want to unionise. Lack of cooperation has delayed unionisation for too long. For the proposed union to thrive, coordinators must convey to members how the new union will help them with work-related concerns. Some participants also stressed the importance of the Social Development Department providing its personnel with the necessary tools. This was expected to increase social workers' enthusiasm in the profession, helping them achieve their goals like creating a social work union. Self-reflection helps social workers understand why they chose the field and why they have stayed.

The study established that social workers are divided because they see themselves as special and different from other professions. This image has prevented them from working with other stakeholders. Some participants ascribed this to a "feeling of pride"

that prevents them from collaborating and learning from others. Some participants agreed that the lack of a coordinating framework that positively portrays social workers is another indicator of the "feeling of pride" mentioned by another. The unions that social workers are affiliated to represent generic interests of workers, not specific social work issues. The study established that these unions lack social work knowledge. Another participant said that if a social worker in that union raises a problem, the union will first want to understand it, thus it will take a long time to resolve it.

Responses to a question on social work fragmentation are presented above. The findings are that social workers are diverse and likely to think they are special. They dislike working with others, and pride keeps them from interacting with others, limiting their exposure to fresh ideas and opinions. The study also found that social workers lack a central voice. This is crucial because they require a union dedicated to their field to be fairly represented. Due to overburdening by other professions, unions take longer to resolve concerns.

The study examined how apartheid affected social work. The apartheid system in South Africa influenced the social work curriculum since social workers graduate without political knowledge. Political ignorance prevents togetherness. The participant's story assumed that the Apartheid government shaped South Africa's social work profession. The study found that the Apartheid administration affected social work education because graduates are often uninformed of political dynamics that affect their profession. Since most do not understand politics, there will be no harmony.

The study further found that both race and coordination affect union formation. One participant noted that social workers from all sectors marched in 2016 in all provinces. The march had no white social workers. The participant speculated that they do not understand African black social workers' difficulties. Despite the same profession, race and ethnicity affect conditions. White social workers have greater working

circumstances and resources than black social workers, therefore they do not worry about a union. Note that apartheid caused the discrepancies. White social work professionals dominate NGO management, according to history and because they are managers receiving competent salaries and adequate work resources than black social workers, they cannot relate to their problems. The survey also found that their quest and comfort in the current status quo prevent them from participating in social work reform.

This narrative asked how the white community helped unionise the profession. The study found that the race card explains process incoordination. White social workers have not joined unionisation initiatives since their working conditions are so varied that they cannot fight for something that does not concern them. The study found that most white social workers had led NPO's. They do not comprehend black social workers' workplace problems. The apartheid regime divided society, the workforce and professions by race, each with different privileges and rights. The study indicated that religion, politics and the race card all contribute to the delay in social work union formation. One participant stressed that student social workers need religious individuals to fight social injustice. They will support the union if they learn that.

The participant's account addressed religion-politics ties. Aspiring social professionals need religious people who will stand up for the oppressed. This is crucial since the consideration process should be diverse to include everyone. Religious leaders are well-respected, therefore their voices will help during the lobbying. The participants also underlined the necessity for colleges to provide students with knowledge that encourages initiative.

Many social work professionals are unaware of politics. This highlights the delay in social worker unionisation. The study found that new social workers seem unconcerned, probably due to a lack of political awareness. Most social workers do not grasp the politics of their profession. They were not informed of the effects of their environment. The participant also remarked that new social workers are involved in

mobilisation, which helps with recruitment and unionisation. However, the elder age may teach the younger generation about politics in the workplace, making a social work union conceivable. The narratives from the participants addressed social work professionals' political awareness. The study found that social workers must be educated on the political climate that affects their job. The younger generation of social workers mobilises, whereas the elder generation understands workplace politics. This combination should be valued in the establishment of a union.

The study found many reasons for the failure of the social workers union. Participants began by describing the provincial support they received to establish a social work union in an attempt to explain its failure. They also noted the excellent presence of social professionals from across the nation. Participants registered the union with the Department of Labour and received a certificate with this support. However, greedy provinces began to leave the system to build their own. They sought leadership and money. The union was formed through power and leadership. The bulk of initial members of the union were from Limpopo, but some were from the Western Cape. This implies unequal province representation. After the launch, Gauteng members left to form their own union. They did this because they wanted to lead the new union and manage its funds. The union succeeded for those reasons. Coordination issues also contributed to the union's demise. To succeed, provincial coordinators had to be community-based.

The question of the social workers union's demise shaped participants' narratives. The study found that province coordination enabled the merger. Social professionals from across the nation attended the seminars initially. This enabled union registration. The first big issue was provinces breaking away for power and greed. The urge to pursue leadership roles was premature and would not materialise. After the inauguration, Gauteng members defected to form their own union. Since everyone wanted senior positions, this was done on purpose. They also wanted union funds. The study found that dissidents formed Social Service Professionals. The two unions could never coexist since a union exists to bargain at the Bargaining Council. Thus, two clashing voices at the bargaining table were doomed. Lack of cooperation contributed to the

union's downfall. Participants said provincial coordinators were crucial. Another issue is convincing union members to swap allegiances. Participants expressed doubts about the new union's ability to serve them.

8.2 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

8.2.1 Unionisation Readiness among Social Workers

In terms of the results of the study, the vast majority of respondents do not feel that they are ready to join a social workers union. This was shown to be the case. The fact that becoming a member of a labour union in South Africa can be challenging is one of the arguments that was presented by the participants. On the other hand, the majority of people are making use of their membership in the union as a stepping stone to advance their careers within political parties. As a consequence of this, it is more challenging to establish labour unions, particularly in specific categories of jobs. In terms of the findings of the study, the profession of social work in South Africa is not currently in a position where its practitioners are prepared to form a union. It has come to light that individuals engaged in social work have attempted to form a union, but their efforts have been fruitless thus far. This is due, in part, to the fact that the overwhelming majority of social workers do not have adequate knowledge about labour unions. The most significant challenge stems from the groundwork on which the profession is established.

Some of the participants claimed that the lack of political education that social workers receive while they are still in school is to blame for the fact that many of them are unaware of the need to form a union as well as the ways in which doing so will benefit them in the future. This relates to the question of how the union will aid social workers in situations relevant to their place of employment, such as if they are subjected to repression or discrimination while they are on the job. One example of such a situation is shown here. Despite this, it is critical to prove that at least some social workers are open to the idea of forming a social workers union. This is supported by the fact that one participant mentioned a demonstration that took place in 2016 at Union Buildings. The demonstration showed that certain social workers are ready to join unions, which

supports the previous statement. Some of the participants brought up the point that the voices of social workers cannot be heard if they are not organised into a union, which brought up the point that there is a need for social workers to unionise. Some of the participants expressed the belief that it is crucial for social workers to establish their own union since doing so will assist in insulating the social work profession from the influence of politics. In this regard, it has been determined that discussions are currently taking place with the goal of identifying someone who can lead them in the process of forming a new union.

These replies are in response to the topic of whether or not social workers are prepared to join a social work union. The views of the participants were somewhat varied: some of them believed that it is required and thus ready, while others were of the opinion that social workers are not truly prepared for a union. As a result of the responses, it became clear that many individuals make use of their union membership to achieve their political aspirations. This is despite the fact that joining a union in South Africa could be difficult. The findings of the survey also revealed that social workers in South Africa are not yet ready to create a union since the notion of forming a union has been tried in the past but has been unsuccessful. According to the data, the vast majority of people employed in social care have no understanding of what unions are or what they perform, which is one of the primary reasons why the formation of a union is such a tough endeavour. This is of utmost importance because the problem of forming a union originates from the groundwork upon which the profession is based. This suggests that the majority of students who aspire to become social workers do not understand why it is necessary for them to form a union or how doing so will help them while they are still in school due to a lack of exposure to political issues.

It is crucial for social workers to know how their union will help them if they come across challenges at work, such as repression or discrimination, in order to facilitate the development of a social work union. This is necessary in order to realise the goal of forming a social work union. If social workers have such a critical grasp of the need for a union, it is likely that efforts to build one will be fruitful. As a result of this, it is

evident that there is a group of social workers who are ready for a union, as indicated by the actions of one participant who provided an illustration that took place in the past demanding the formation of a union that is specific to social workers. In this regard, it is evident that there is a group of social workers who are ready for a union. In essence, the unionisation of the social work profession is necessary because it provides social workers with a voice that they are unable to obtain any other way. Consequently, this is the reason why participants indicated that attempts are currently ongoing for the formation of a union.

8.2.2 Internal factors hampering action by social workers

In terms of the conclusions of the study, there are a great deal of obstacles standing in the way of social workers taking the necessary steps to form a union. Some of the participants argued that social workers who are represented by unions are deprived of their professional identities. This is due to the fact that the training that social workers receive does not teach them how to distinguish themselves from the other people who are present in their environments. The outcomes of the study indicate that social workers are not confrontational, that they fear getting into a fight, and that they do not want to stand up to be counted. These are all conclusions that can be drawn from the data of the study. In a nutshell, the data imply that social workers are extremely flexible to accommodate their clients' needs. Some of the participants indicated that other professionals in their work contexts, in addition to the management of their organisations, do not respect the worth of social workers. The contention was that it gives the impression that they do not believe social workers to be independent professionals who are capable of resolving issues on their own.

It was discovered by a few of the participants that the vast majority of social workers are unable to keep their employment and honour the conditions of the agreement they made with their employer. For example, social workers in one of the facilities where the study was carried out came to the realisation at one point in time that they required a policy for funerals and burials for themselves. They then presented the idea to their supervisors, who promptly changed the policy so that it now applies to all of the other professionals working in the facility. Participants are of the opinion that social workers

are unable to fight their own battles because this is, essentially, one of the reasons why social professionals are unable to fight their own wars.

In addition, one of the other things that was discovered through the findings of the survey was the fact that some of the participants are of the opinion that there are no internal causes that are acting against the establishment of a social work union. This conclusion was reached due to the fact that certain individuals, upon registering their intentions to form a union, were awarded financial support from the government. The government, in its most basic form, endorses the establishment of a labour union and, consequently, hopes that it will be successful in the market for labour. It has also come to light that the social workers were able to secure support from the government due to their prior experience, which included the realisation that they were having difficulty functioning without a union. This was one of the factors that contributed to the government's decision to offer support.

In terms of the findings of the study, even if an individual makes an effort to mobilise social workers, it is difficult for them to get together owing to a lack of resources, which is another reason why this is a barrier. In addition, it has been discovered that the management of the institutions in which social workers are employed does not participate in any kind of mediation of disputes. In terms of the findings of the study, social workers at many different institutions are hesitant to discuss the possibility of unionisation with their respective managers, and the national office of the Department of Social Development is also not doing enough to promote the formation of a social work union.

However, it has come to light that even though the national government department of social development is not doing enough as was mentioned earlier, the study has nevertheless established that the Limpopo Department of Social Development is supportive and has approved the plans of social workers to form a union, and has given them the go-ahead to proceed. This was discovered despite the fact that it was mentioned earlier that the national government department of social development is

not doing enough. Some of the participants held the opinion that because some social workers were given bursaries to complete their degree in social work, they decided to be part of the profession without enthusiasm for the career. It has also come to light that the vast majority of participants are of the opinion that there is a significant generational gap between the current and previous generations. Furthermore, participants have confirmed that older social workers were very supportive of the concept of forming a union. In terms of the findings of the study, the working environment for social workers is unfriendly, and they have become targets of micromanagement. The issue of hostile working conditions is made much more difficult when political appointees are placed in administrative positions, which further exacerbates the problem. Social workers, who are frequently better educated than their managers, are frequently intimidated by political cadres. This is a problem because social work professionals are frequently more educated than their managers. People who work in social services frequently stifle their opinions for fear of receiving negative feedback or being overlooked for career advancement opportunities.

The tales that were presented before were in response to a query about internal issues that prevent social workers from taking action. In terms of the conclusions of the study, the lack of a union that represents social workers has contributed to the erosion of their professional identity. It was found that one of the primary factors that prevented social workers from taking action was the fact that the training they receive did not emphasise how important it is to distinguish themselves from other people in their field. It has been proven that social workers avoid conflict and do not seek to make themselves known since they are not aggressive. Another thing that has been established is that social workers are not assertive. The manner in which participants, in their capacity as social workers, are treated by members of other professions was cited as a source of considerable worry. According to the narratives, social workers have the reputation of being inept professionals who are unable to handle problems on their own. This perception has been formed. The accounts provided by the participants also made it clear that social workers have a propensity to withdraw from situations in which their motivations are called into question.

It has also been suggested that the dissolution of the union was a result of problems within the organisation, but some of the participants have disputed this view. Participants in the discussion claimed that it would have been impossible for a provincial government to assist in the operations and efforts to build a union if there were elements within the union itself that were preventing it from being successful. As a result, it is possible to establish beyond a reasonable doubt that there was not a single faction within the union that worked to undermine it. This indicates that the government has high expectations for the union and is actively working to ensure that it is successful in the workplace. In terms of the findings of the study, another seminal event occurred when social workers organised themselves into their own union in order to advocate for their own interests. The union was unable to get off the ground, which is a great disappointment. Even if one makes an effort to gather social professionals together, it is not an easy task because of the reasons listed above.

The narratives of the participants suggested that some social workers were hesitant to discuss unionisation with their managers because of the potential consequences. Because they were dependent on assistance from the Department of Social Development of the federal government, this was an unavoidable requirement. In spite of this help, the results of the study showed that some social workers do not have a strong love for the work that they do. This was demonstrated by the fact that they utilised the financial assistance that was provided to them in order to earn a degree in social work. During the mobilisation process, it became abundantly clear that this was the case, as members of the elder generation of social workers expressed a positive attitude towards the possibility of creating a union. In addition, it has come to light that professionals in the field of social work are frequently targets of micromanagement and frequently work in hostile environments. Appointments made on the basis of political considerations to managerial positions do nothing but make the already unpleasant working climate even worse. Social workers, who are typically more educated than their supervisors, are frequently subjected to intimidation by political cadres. Because they are afraid of reprisal or being passed over for promotion, many social workers choose to keep their concerns to themselves.

8.2.3 Measures to unite social workers

In terms of the findings of the study, the curriculum for social work should include political education in order to make student social workers aware of the fact that once they begin practising, they will interact with political figures who are in control of the working environment. This is necessary in order for them to be able to negotiate matters pertaining to their place of employment. Some of the participants revealed that, in an effort to mobilise social workers, they have tried to form a union throughout all of South Africa's provinces; however, their efforts have been unsuccessful. Participants are of the opinion that educational institutions at higher levels ought to begin training student social workers in the politics of social work. As a result, this is the position that has been expressed. Because of this, it will be possible for the student social workers to eventually put any knowledge that they obtain into practice in the future. However, some of the participants had a gloomy outlook on the proposition because it had been attempted previously and could not materialise in an appropriate manner. Overemphasising the significance of political education among social workers is largely due to the premise that political education is of paramount importance among social work students in order for them to understand their rights in the workplace. This premise has been the primary justification for the emphasis that has been placed on the significance of political education among social workers. In this regard, one of the participants concurred that if the next generation of social workers could be made to comprehend the significance of belonging to a union, then perhaps they will be able to easily achieve their goals. This was in reference to the fact that the current generation of social workers does not understand the significance of belonging to a union.

In addition, it has become clear that educational institutions such as colleges have a responsibility to play a role in supporting students in understanding why it is essential to be a part of unions and in assisting them to appreciate the significance of being organised. The Department of Social Development, which is the main employer of social workers, has the ability to play a role in unifying social workers under a single umbrella organisation. In addition, participants' need for a coordinating body that will bring together social workers who are employed in a range of professions emerged as a central theme during the discussion. It was suggested that this was made

conceivable by the availability of a range of social media platforms that may be utilised to bring these people together. The primary argument that was presented by a significant number of participants was that if they are not united, they will not be able to maintain a unified stance on anything. As a result of this, it has been established that social workers want to form unions, and the topic of unionisation has been lingering about for a very long time. Nevertheless, it has been determined that the most significant obstacle is a lack of coordination. Therefore, it will be of great benefit if the union is better able to market itself in order to recruit new members. This would be the goal of the marketing effort. In order to accomplish this goal, it is vital to explain to individuals why the newly created union is superior to the other unions that social workers are already involved with. These unions include the National Association of Social Workers and the American Federation of Teachers. The findings also revealed that the coordinators need to explain to the members of the new union how the new union will assist them with issues that are linked to their work in order to gain members' support and buy-in. Because people are more likely to use a product or service if someone in their circle of friends or acquaintances recommends it to them, involving influential people in the process of recruiting new employees is going to be beneficial. This is because influential people have the ability to persuade others to use a product or service.

In addition, a number of participants voiced their opinion that the Department of Social Development ought to make sure that its staff members have access to the resources they need to perform their tasks effectively. Social workers have a responsibility to regularly engage in introspective activities such as contemplation and self-analysis over the career path they have selected for themselves. In essence, social workers need to ask themselves what initially drew them to the field of work, as well as why they have remained in the profession for as long as they have. In this regard, the younger generation of social workers is fundamentally separated from history; therefore, it is imperative that they make an effort to become more sensitive to the passage of time.

The accounts that were provided earlier were in response to a question about ways to bring together social workers. The participants revealed that inasmuch as there are certain measures already in place, efforts to unite social workers should begin by transforming the social work academic curriculum to incorporate political education. This is necessary in order to ensure that student social workers are in a position to engage with political figures who are in control of the working environment. Participants also verified that attempts are underway to form a union throughout all nine provinces of South Africa in order to mobilise social workers. This is happening despite the fact that the process has not yet delivered the results that were hoped to be reached by the process. As a consequence, many social workers have developed a healthy amount of scepticism regarding the efficacy of this endeavour. As a result, participants reiterated the importance of political education and its role in assisting student social workers in better comprehending the dynamic setting in which they will be practising their profession. Therefore, the argument is that if younger generations of social workers could be trained to understand the significance of belonging to a union, then perhaps those individuals will be able to accomplish what they set out to do.

The vast majority of participants emphasised the need for universities to play a significant role in aiding students to comprehend the significance of becoming part of unions and in assisting them to comprehend the significance of being organised. The Department of Social Development has the ability to play a role in the process of social worker unification because it is the largest employer of social workers. This is something that should be taken into account because it is necessary to have some sort of coordinating body in order to bring together social workers who are employed in a range of different professions. In addition, it has been found that the majority of social workers are interested in forming unions for their profession. The matter of unionisation has been hanging about for far too long and the issue here is lack of coordination, which is driving the difficulty. In terms of the findings, in order for the proposed union to be successful, the coordinators will need to explain to the members how the new union will aid them with difficulties that are linked to their work. This is necessary for the success of the proposed union.

In addition, a few of the participants emphasised how important it is for the Department of Social Development to supply its staff with the tools that are necessary for them to carry out their duties effectively. It was hoped that this would increase social workers' enthusiasm for their profession, which, in turn, would lead to the accomplishment of their goals, such as the formation of a union that is dedicated exclusively to social work. Social workers could benefit from engaging in this type of self-reflection by asking oneself what initially drew them to the field of social work and why they have remained in the field over the course of their careers.

8.2.4 Fragmentation in the social work profession

The findings of the study revealed that social workers are not united because of their background wherein they view themselves as unique and different from other professions. This perception among social workers has resulted in them failing to collaborate with other stakeholders. This is also attributed to what some participants referred to as a 'sense of pride' that they do not want to collaborate with others, in a way depriving them of the opportunity to learn from them. Some participants also concurred that lack of a coordinating structure that represents social workers in a positive way is another sign of the 'sense of pride' attributed by another participant. The interests of the existing unions that social workers are affiliated to are more generic and do not speak to the social work profession. The findings of the study revealed that these unions do not have the understanding of social work issues. Another participant ascertained that if a social worker affiliated to that kind of a union needs to raise an issue, it will take a long for the union to address the issue as they will first want to understand what it is about.

The narratives above are responses from a question relating to perceptions of fragmentation in the social work profession. The findings of the study established that social workers come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and each of us is likely to believe that we are special in our own way. The idea of working with other parties is considered to be repulsive to them. It has emerged that pride prevents them from

mingling with others, which limits their exposure to new ideas and perspectives. The findings of the study also ascertained that social workers are not unified in the sense that there is no central body that can speak effectively on behalf of the social work profession. This is of paramount importance because the existing unions that social workers belong to have broader interests whereas social workers would need a union that is specific to their line of work for them to receive a fair representation. The consequence of belonging to such unions has been identified through the time frame taken to address issues because these unions are overburdened by other professions.

8.2.5 The role of apartheid in the operations of social work

The results of the research were aimed at determining the extent to which the apartheid government played a role in the functioning of the social work industry. It has been proved that the apartheid government had a substantial impact on the social work curriculum in South Africa. This is due to the fact that social workers who graduate from social work programmes do not have any knowledge of what occurs in the political arena. Because of this, there will be no unity because people do not understand political concerns. Participants' narratives were founded on the idea that the Apartheid government played a significant role in moulding the character of the social work profession as it is known today in South Africa. This hypothesis served as the participant's starting point for the narrative. It has been demonstrated through the findings of the study that the government of Apartheid had an effect on social work education. This is due to the fact that graduates of social work programmes are frequently uninformed of the political dynamics that affect their profession. As a direct consequence of this, there will be no harmony because no one is aware of the political considerations at play.

8.2.6 The role of the white community in the efforts to unionise the profession

In terms of the results of the study, not only is there a deficiency in coordination when it comes to the establishment of a union, but there is also a racial issue that needs to be taken into consideration. One of the participants focused on the march that took place in 2016, noting that all provinces were represented there because it was a

nationwide movement by social workers from all different fields. The contention was that there were no people who identified as white who attended the march. One of the participants hypothesised that perhaps this is because they are unable to empathise with black social workers and the challenges they face. In essence, the conditions are not the same for people of different races and ethnicities, despite the fact that the job itself is the same. Because it is generally assumed that white social professionals have access to superior working conditions and resources, it is unlikely that they will fight as hard for a union as black social workers do. The legacy of apartheid is responsible for the inequities that have been uncovered, which is another point that must be emphasised. In terms of research conducted over the course of history, the majority of white social workers are employed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), where they also hold positions of administration. As a consequence of this, they are unable to empathise with the problems that black social workers express concern over because they are regarded as being in a better position than their black colleagues. In addition, the findings of the study have demonstrated that the reason for their quest and comfort in the status quo is the primary contributor to their lack of participation in an effort to enhance the social work profession.

This story was inspired by a question about the part played by the white community in the campaigns to unionise the profession, and it is structured around that subject. In terms of the results of the study, using race as an excuse for a lack of coordination in the process is a significant factor that contributes to the problem. It has come to light that white social workers have not been actively participating in efforts to unionise the social work field. It has also come to light that the lack of coordination that exists between social workers of all races is owing to the fact that their working conditions are significantly different from one another, and as a result, they are unable to fight for something that does not in any way concern them. In order to put this into perspective, the findings of the study showed that the majority of white social workers had typically occupied positions of leadership in non-profit organisations, where they were employed. This leads one to believe that they do not understand the problems that black social workers have with relation to the atmosphere of their place of employment. This has been attributed to the legacy of the apartheid government, in which not only was society separated into compartments based on race, but also the labour force and

other professions had different racial compartments to the extent that each had their own unique set of privileges and rights.

8.2.7 Religion versus politics

In addition to the racial card, the study discovered that religion and politics are two of the factors that need to be taken into consideration in an effort to ascertain the delay in the formation of a social work union. These are some of the factors that need to be taken into consideration in an effort to ascertain the cause of the delay. A participant has highlighted that student social workers need to realise that they need religious people who will assist them in the fight against the injustices that are faced by the people, and that this is something that they need to comprehend. If they are able to obtain that level of expertise, they will be willing to participate in the formation of the union.

A question concerning the relationship that exists between religion and politics served as an inspiration in the participants' account. It has come to light that aspiring social workers need to be aware that they require religious folks who will stand out for those who are oppressed in order to do their jobs effectively. This is significant because the procedure for requesting consideration should involve a number of different steps, and no one should be excluded from the process. The other reason for the participation of people from other religions is that religious leaders include a group of highly recognised members of society; as a result, the contributions of these individuals' voices will be essential to the process of lobbying. In addition, the participant emphasised how important it is for institutions of higher learning like colleges to make a commitment to providing their students with the knowledge that will inspire them to take the initiative.

8.2.8 Political and neo-liberal environment and the Social Work profession

Numerous social workers have been tested, and it was found that none of them have any understanding of the political climate in which they work. This can be regarded as

the primary factor in establishing why there has been a delay in the formation of a union that represents social workers. In terms of the findings of the study, newly graduated social workers appear to be unconcerned about the political climate in which they find themselves. This could be due to a lack of familiarity with the political dynamics of the environment in which they work. It would appear that the vast majority of social workers are completely ignorant of the political climate that exists inside their field. The explanation given for this was that they were never informed of the nature of the setting and the effects it could have on them. Participants also mentioned that the younger generation of social workers are involved in mobilisation, which is important in the process of recruiting and in making the unionisation of the field a reality. On the other hand, the older generation can teach the younger generation about the effect of politics in the workplace, which, in essence, means that the partnership of the two groups will make it possible for the formation of a social work union.

The participants' narratives were based on the question that related to the awareness of social workers of the political context that affects their profession. In terms of the findings of the study, a substantial amount of education is necessary in order to guarantee that social workers are aware of the political context that has a significant impact on the profession that they choose to pursue. In addition, it has been determined that the younger generation of social workers appear to be instrumental in terms of mobilisation, whereas the older generation possesses understanding of the political dynamics in the workplace. This is something that has been demonstrated. This should essentially be considered to be a significant combination that should be treasured throughout the process of the union's development because it will bring about significant benefits.

8.2.9 Failure of the social workers union

The results of the study demonstrated that the failure of the social workers union might be attributed to a number of different reasons simultaneously. The participants, in an effort to present the factors that resulted in the failure of the formation of the social work union, began by disclosing the support that they received in the province in order

to make this dream a reality. This was done in an effort to present factors that resulted in the failure of the formation of the social work union. In addition, attendees underlined how great the attendance was because there were social workers there from all over the country. Participants were able to successfully register the union with the Department of Labour and obtain a registration certificate as a consequence of the support that was provided. On the other hand, it has been documented that in an effort to satisfy their own avarice, a number of provinces began the process of withdrawing from the organisation in order to form their own union. This is due to the fact that they desired financial success and positions of authority. It is possible to demonstrate, in the broadest sense, that power dynamics and the desire to occupy positions of authority played a role in the establishment of the union. It has also come to light that the bulk of the founding members of the union were based in Limpopo, even though the union was launched in the Western Cape. On the other hand, some founding members called the Western Cape home. This leads one to believe that the provinces were not represented in a fair manner.

Furthermore, it has been found that following the launch, members from the Gauteng region began withdrawing from the structure in order to begin the process of organising their own union. This was discovered after the launch. This was done for the straightforward reason that they desired to be in leadership positions within the newly established union, as well as the desire to have control over its financial resources. In a nutshell, the aforementioned factors are some of the reasons why the union was successful rather than failing. In addition, it has been determined that the failure of the union can also be linked to a lack of coordination on the part of the parties involved. In order to ensure the process's overall success, it was necessary to have provincial coordinators who would be actively involved in the areas they served.

The question that related to the circumstances that contributed to the failure of the social workers union served as a basis for the participants' personal narratives. In terms of the conclusions of the study, the successful formation of the union was made possible through the cooperative efforts of the several provinces. It was discovered that initially there was a healthy turnout for the sessions, with social professionals

travelling from all corners of the country to participate. The registration of the union was ultimately successful as a direct consequence of this. The first significant obstacle that was found to exist was the secession of provinces, which occurred for a variety of reasons, including power disputes and avarice. This was significant since the ambition to pursue leadership roles came at too early of a stage, and as a result, it was never going to come to fruition. It has been seen that members from Gauteng began defecting shortly after the inauguration, allegedly with the intention of establishing their very own competing organisation. This was recorded. This was done on purpose because everyone engaged aimed to work their way up into more senior positions in the future. They were also anxious about having access to the financial resources that the union provided.

In terms of the results of the study, the dissidents organised themselves into a new union which they dubbed Social Service Professionals. Due to the fact that the primary function of a union is to represent its members' interests during negotiations at the Bargaining Council, it was always going to be challenging for the two unions to coexist in the same space. As a result, there was never going to be a satisfactory outcome as long as there were two opposing voices at the negotiating table.

In addition, the inability of the union's members to cooperate is being held responsible for their failure. Participants felt that provincial coordinators had an extremely significant role in the process. This is due, in part, to the fact that people who are already members of a union are famously difficult to convince to transfer allegiances; hence, this is another obstacle that needs to be overcome. Participants stated that individuals are sceptical of the new union and have worries about its ability to serve their interests. They are concerned about the new union's ability to serve their interests. As a result, it has been determined that one of the elements that contributed to the dissolution of the union was a reorganisation of the provincial office that resulted in the Minister of Economic and Community Development being moved to the position of Head of a Separate Ministry. A further impediment to the progress made by the union was the retirement of the secretary of the Limpopo committee.

8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

❖ Curriculum change

Curriculum change is considered essential in the motivation for the creation of a social work union. Institutions of higher learning play a crucial role in creating curricula to meet the needs of various industries. The field of social work would benefit by mandating political science courses for its students in order to better prepare them to interact with public officials. In order to prepare the next generation of social workers, colleges and universities must introduce courses on professional politics. This experience could be helpful for social work students who are still in training. Due in large part to the belief that it is crucial for social work students to understand their rights in the workplace, the value of political education among social workers has been overemphasised. Perhaps the next generation of social workers could do a better job if they were better educated on the advantages of union membership.

It has also become apparent that schools have a duty to help students see the importance of union membership. As the largest employer of social workers, the Department of Social Development may have a hand in the growing unionisation effort. One additional objective was to identify a central agency that could bring together social workers from other fields. It was speculated that the proliferation of social media platforms that might be used to enhance communication between them made this possible. Without mutual aid, they can achieve neither unity nor success. Since unionisation has been an open question for some time, it is not surprising that social workers desire to form groups to represent their interests.

- ❖ It is obvious that poor synchronisation is the main roadblock. Therefore, it would be quite beneficial if the union could boost its advertising efforts to attract new members. To do this, it will be necessary to persuade social workers that joining the newly formed union is preferable to remaining in their current union. The role of universities in preparing social work students for union representation in the workplace is equally critical. Involving influential people in the process of recruiting new workers will prove fruitful because people are more likely to test a new product or service if someone they know and trust promotes it.

Additionally, revival of student social work associations in different academic institutions could be explored. These associations can be utilised as vehicles to promote awareness campaigns on political and neo-liberal factors confronting the profession of social work.

❖ **The need for funding**

Funding is of paramount importance in the formation of a union. The government is considered as one of the major sources of funding, having sponsored many of the initiatives that will eventually result in the formation of the union. The government supports labour unions and believes they can improve working conditions. The results of this study lend credence to the argument that social workers were able to get government support because of their proven track record of success in the sector and the fact that they had problems conducting their jobs successfully without a union. Another reason this is a hurdle is that, despite attempts, it is tough to bring together social experts. It has also been found that there is no mediation offered to social workers by their superiors at the institutions where they work. Many social workers are still hesitant to bring up the idea of unionisation to their individual managers, despite the fact that the Department of Social Development's national administration does little to encourage the development of a social work union.

Despite the fact that the national government's department of social development is not doing enough, it has come to light that the Limpopo Department of Social Development is promoting and has given the green light for social workers to create a union. However, some social workers enter the field because they were offered bursaries to cover the cost of their studies, rather than because they have a genuine interest in helping people. The findings of this study, which show that older social workers highly support the proposal to form a union, emphasise the wide generational split that exists in this area. The findings indicate that social workers are subjected to unfavourable working conditions and frequent micromanagement.

❖ **The need for support from other organisations**

A social work union would benefit greatly from the insights of pre-existing trade unions. This study's results support the idea that social workers lack a shared sense of identity due to their education and training, which encourages them to view themselves as

exceptional. This prejudice makes it difficult for them to collaborate with other stakeholders. Some people are reluctant to collaborate because they have a "sense of pride" that inhibits them from learning from others. Some respondents also highlighted the lack of a cohesive organisation that presents social workers in a positive light as evidence that they do not have a "feeling of pride" about their profession. The current unions that social workers are a part of have vague, general objectives that have nothing to do with social work. The union would need time to learn more about the issue before attempting to remedy it if a social worker in that union has a problem that needs to be addressed.

In terms of the results of this study, social workers come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and each has their own distinct perception of their own value. It has become obvious that social workers seem reluctant to collaborate with other professionals, and that their pride prevents them from mixing with others, reducing their chances of being exposed to new ideas and perspectives. Since no single group has the influence to advocate on behalf of the social work industry, there is no coherent community. This is very important since the unions that social workers currently belong to reflect broader interests, but social workers would be better represented by a union that is exclusive to their field. It has been established that as the size of a union grows, so does the amount of time it takes to settle disputes brought up by its members. Perhaps numerous social work associations should consider lobbying for a union for social workers. However, the issue of different racial groups with different interests might still be a hindrance to this thought.

Nonetheless, support from other unions might be a challenge. It is common knowledge that strong unions poach members from not so strong independent unions. A number of social workers belong to NEHAWU, HORSPEA and SAPSA. Would these unions be content to realise that they may lose members to a new union exclusive for social workers? That is a matter that remains to be seen. However, there are social workers who are already in influential positions within some political circles and have the understanding of how these processes work. These are individuals who can assist with strategies of recruitment and retention of members.

❖ **The need for political education**

Political education is considered of paramount importance in the formation of a social work union. The results of this study indicate that due to a lack of exposure to politics, many prospective social workers are unaware of the necessity of forming a union and the potential benefits that will accrue to them if they do so. Therefore, political parties are crucial in delivering political education, and a coalition with one of the major political parties may be formed, as the ANC has COSATU. How does the union intend to assist social workers who are subjected to hostility or prejudice on the job? The time has come for social workers to organise into a union to ensure that their voices are heard. However, some respondents to the study emphasised the need for social workers to organise their own union to shield the profession from political interference. This is the reason these talks are necessary in a form of in-house and short course training on unionisation to figure out who can serve as a guiding force as they build this new union. The talks should also include workshops to conscientise social workers on political, economic and neo-liberal factors that confront the profession.

8.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- ❖ Much as permission was sought from gatekeepers, non-responses necessitated an alternative route to enable data collection. The researcher surmises that more social workers could have been available and accessed effortlessly at their places of employment. However, qualitative studies are generally not about population representativeness, but rich in-depth narratives from participants. The aims of the study were achieved regardless.
- ❖ The respondents of the study provided valuable information about unionisation and the social work profession. It would have been more interesting to receive views and opinions from those practicing in rural settings. The recruitment method that was used had its own short comings in the sense that, those who were not in the circles of the researcher's associations (previous colleagues, current & qualified students) are likely to have missed the invitation. Additionally, Covid 19 pandemic in a way, disrupted many processes and individuals were concerned with other pressing matters of that period. The

majority of respondents were stationed in urban and very few in peri-urban practice settings.

- ❖ There is still room for other researchers to conduct studies related to social work unionisation in other provinces that could not be reached by this study, and perhaps interrogate the role of professional social work associations as either possible vehicles or barriers to unionisation of the social work profession in South Africa. Fragmentation and disunity within the profession is still a thorny issue and measures to confront this aspect are required to drive the formation of a viable strong movement that can mobilise and form a successful operational union of social workers in South Africa. The suggested activities and strategies have the potential to contribute positively towards the realisation of a viable relevant union. However, the legacy of apartheid that consequently brought about the divisions, fragmentation and disunity within the profession are a reality and still a conundrum to date. It is impractical to expect all social workers from racial groups to support this move. However, when the majority of social workers from different regions join and support the union, that will be the most significant beginning of the sustainable process.

CHAPTER NINE

PROPOSED MODEL FOR SOCIAL WORK UNIONISATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the summary of the study findings. The major findings have already been discussed in the last chapter. The summary provides readers with the limitations and recommendations drawn from these major findings. The two groups of interviewees provided the necessary information and insight into reasons militating the unionisation of the social work profession in South Africa, thereby giving way to new additional research areas.

9.2 MODEL FOR SOCIAL WORK UNIONISATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

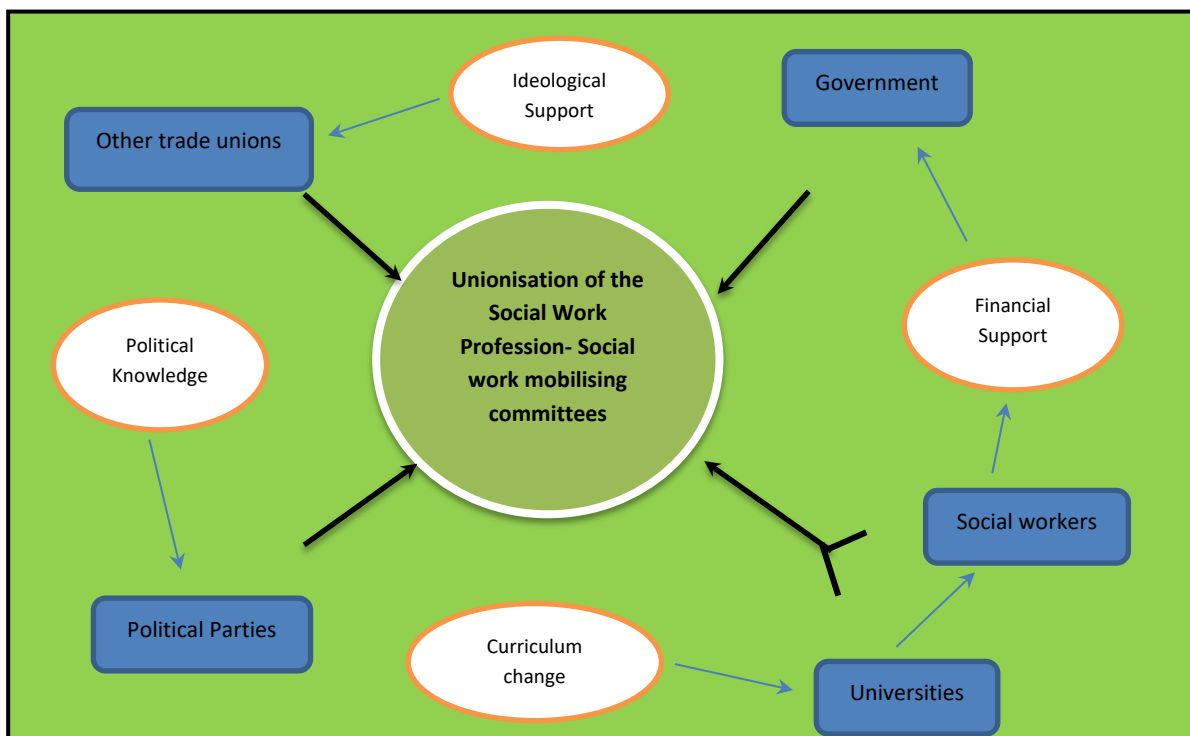


Figure 1: Model for social work unionisation

Source: Author

9.2.1 Overview of the proposed model

Figure 1 represents the author's proposed prototype model for the unionisation of the social work profession. The model is multilateral in nature and constitutes the following stakeholders: social workers including the mobilising committee at the focal point, government, universities, political parties, and other trade unions. These stakeholders are expected to work together in an effort to provide sufficient support for the establishment of the social work profession. Each stakeholder provides a unique support structure that is within its area of specialty. For instance, universities are anticipated to support the initiative by altering the current curriculum in order to equip social work students with knowledge pertaining to the need for a social work union. The government is anticipated to provide financial support for the initiative to be a success. Other trade unions, especially the ones where the majority of social workers are aligned, need to provide ideological support for the initiative to be a success. However, this may not be embraced as no union will be receptive of losing members to another, especially in the wake of many unions struggling to retain members due to the economic climate that resulted in job losses globally. This can only be achieved through cross fertilisation of ideas from social workers who are active in politics and already occupy certain influential positions in some of these existing unions. Political parties on the other hand, are expected to provide political education which is essential in the formation and existence of a social work union.

9.2.1.1 Social workers

The role of social workers as the main actors is to identify the leaders within the profession in different provinces to lead the mobilisation process. This does not mean that the task should be only be left to the team, but should be a collaborative effort involving the majority of social workers. The involvement of veteran social workers is of most importance in educating contemporary social workers on political, socio-economic and neo-liberal factors confronting the profession and also to guide the process, more so that they would have nothing to lose. Social workers would have to guard against fence sitting and commit to active participation and involvement. It would be beneficial to make efforts in recruiting and permeating most sectors or settings

where social workers practice. The role and inclusion of social workers in academic institutions (educators) cannot be underestimated to assist in driving the process and mobilising at the tertiary level focussing on students who are about to exit and enter the world of work. Strategies to involve and include social workers of no colour should be sought and the issue need to be treated with caution, patience and understanding.

9.2.1.2 Universities

The role of colleges and universities in shaping courses that fit the demands of specific sectors is vital. Students in the social work discipline should be required to take classes on politics so that they are better prepared to work with political leaders. Universities need to start educating future social workers on the politics of the profession. Students studying social work might benefit from this opportunity to apply what they are learning in the classroom. The value of political education among social workers has been overemphasised, in large part due to the notion that it is necessary for social work students to understand their rights in the workplace. Perhaps if the next generation of social workers were better informed about the benefits of union membership, they would be more effective in their profession.

It has also become clear that institutions of higher learning have a responsibility to educate students understand why it is beneficial to join a union and the value of being organised. The Department of Social Development, as the largest employer of social workers, could play a role in the movement towards unionisation. In addition, the participants' stated goal was to locate a coordinating body that would unite social professionals from different settings. It was stated that this was made feasible by the abundance of social media sites that could be utilised to facilitate interaction between them. They cannot be unified or effective in any way if they cannot support one another. Therefore, it is clear that social workers want to organise themselves into unions, and the issue of unionisation has been lingering for some time.

It is apparent that a lack of synchronisation is the biggest obstacle. Because of this, it is extremely helpful if the union can improve its marketing strategies in order to gain

new members. In order to achieve this objective, it will be required to convince social workers that the newly created union is a better option than the unions to which they presently belong. Universities also play a crucial role in educating social work students on how the union will help them with work-related concerns. This is because individuals are more inclined to try a new product or service if someone they know and trust endorses it. Involving influential people in the process of recruiting new staff will prove fruitful.

Colleges and universities have a critical role to play in educating students about the value of student unions and the benefits of getting students organised. The Department of Social Development, the largest single employer of social workers, may be able to facilitate unionisation efforts. Considering this is reasonable because it takes a central organisation to unite social professionals in different settings. Furthermore, it has been established that, social workers have a significant desire to unionise. The topic of unionisation has been unresolved for far too long, and the problem here is a lack of cooperation. The planned union would fail if coordinators do not inform members of the ways in which the union will help them with work-related concerns.

9.2.1.2 The Government

The government has been instrumental in sponsoring efforts that will ultimately lead to the formation of a union. The government encourages unionisation and hopes it will be successful in the workplace. These findings of the study corroborate this theory by showing that social workers were able to secure government funding, thanks to their demonstrated track record of success in the field and the knowledge that they had trouble doing their jobs effectively without a union. An additional reason this is a barrier is that it is difficult to gather social professionals together despite efforts to do so due to a lack of resources. It has also been determined that social workers do not encounter any type of mediation from higher-ups at the institutions where they work. Despite the national administration of the Department of Social Development doing little to promote the formation of a social work union, many social workers remain reticent to broach the topic of unionisation with their particular managers.

It has come to light that the Limpopo Department of Social Development is encouraging and has given the green light for social workers to create the union. This is in spite of the fact that the national government department of social development is not doing enough as noted earlier. However, there are some social workers who are not passionate about their work because they entered the industry because they were given bursaries to pay for their education. The results of this study reveal that older social workers were strongly supportive of the concept to form a union, highlighting the stark generational divide that exists in this field. In terms of the results, social workers face a hostile work environment and are regularly micromanaged.

9.2.1.3 Other trade unions

Knowledge from other existing trade unions is important in the formation of a social work union. The findings of this study show that social workers do not have a common identity since they were trained to think of themselves as special. This bias prevents them from working together with other interested parties. Some participants' unwillingness to work together is due to a "feeling of pride," which prevents them from gaining knowledge from others. A lack of a unified organisation that positively portrays social workers was also cited as evidence for the 'sense of pride' some respondents had about their profession. Existing unions that social workers belong to have broader, less specific goals that do not reflect the social work profession. If a social worker in that union has a problem that requires addressing, it would take a while since the union will want to know more about the problem before attempting to solve it.

Based on the findings of this study, it has emerged that social workers hail from a wide range of backgrounds, and that they each have their own unique sense of self-worth. It has emerged that social workers find the thought of collaboration with other sectors a challenge, and it has become clear that their pride keeps them from mixing with others, which means they are less likely to be exposed to fresh ideas and points of view. There is no cohesive social work community since no one organisation has the clout to speak on behalf of the field. This is important since the current unions that

social workers belong to serve broader interests, but social workers would benefit more from being represented by a union that is unique to their line of work. The length of time it takes to resolve problems as a result of union membership has been measured, and it has been found to increase as the number of members in a certain union increases.

9.2.1.4 Political Parties

The findings of this study reveal that some aspiring social workers are uninformed of the need for creating a union and the potential benefits that will accrue to them if they do so because of their little exposure to politics. Political parties are therefore essential in the provision of political education. There could also be a formation of an alliance with one of the major political parties just like the African National Congress (ANC) is in alliance with Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The question here is how the union plans to help social workers in the event that they face repression or discrimination on the job. It has become clear that social workers need to form a union so that their concerns may be represented. Nevertheless, some participants in this study stressed the importance of social workers forming the union that will solely focus on the issues pertaining to the social work profession. Thus, it has been determined that discussions are under way to identify persons who can lead them in the foundation of a new union who are not necessarily eyeing political positions.

9.3 CONCLUSION

The chapter developed a Model/Strategy for Social Work unionisation. Multilateral in scope, the model includes representation from the government, academic institutions, political parties and labour organisations. It is envisaged that these parties would collaborate to ensure that the social work profession has the backing it needs to flourish. In its own way, each stakeholder contributes an indispensable support system. To give one concrete example, universities are counted on to lend their support by adjusting curricula to better inform aspiring social workers of the importance of forming a union. It is expected that the government will contribute funding to make the project a reality. This campaign needs the ideological backing of other trade

unions, particularly those with whom the vast majority of social workers identify. The development and maintenance of a social work union depends on political parties' provision of political education.

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ANNEXURE A: LETTER TO REQUEST PERMISSION FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



University of Limpopo
Department of Social Work
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 2291, Fax: (015) 268 3636/2866, Motshidisi.kwakwa@ul.ac.za

**To : Office of the Acting Director General
National Department of Social Development**

**Attention : Mr. Linton Mchunu
Cc: HSDS
Private Bag X901
Pretoria
0001**

**Subject : Request for Permission to Conduct the Study by Mrs WMM
Kwakwa, PhD Student in Social Work**

Date : 13 April 2021


1. The above matter bears reference,
2. This serves to confirm that, I Professor Jabulani Makhubele, Department of Social Work at the University of Limpopo, am the Study Leader/Supervisor for the doctoral candidate: Mrs WMM Kwakwa,
3. Her study is titled: **“A nonunionised social work profession in the Republic of South Africa: Implications for policy and practice.”** and in terms of her envisaged methodology, the study is qualitative and will be approached from the interpretivist/constructivist angle as it is explorative in nature,
4. The population consists of Social Workers across the country – mainly in the public sector – Department of Social Development and sampling will/is purposive and convenience based on the inclusion criteria and their availability,

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5. The study aims not to generalise the findings to the entire population of Social Workers countrywide, however, getting their views will enable the candidate to make sound and scientific conclusions which might have implications for policy and practice in Social Work Service Delivery,
6. Both individual and focus groups interviews will be used to collect data, depending on the availability of participants pending your approval,
7. Attached herewith is the ethical clearance certificate for the candidate to proceed seeking permission from gatekeepers to collect data,
8. The study is of low risk and not invasive to the participants and I hope with this information, your office will enable her to get permission to contact Social Workers countrywide to collect data.

Kind regards,




Mrs WMM Kwakwa
PhD Student: Department of Social Work
University of Limpopo

ANNEXURE B: FACULTY APPROVAL LETTER



University of Limpopo
Faculty of Humanities
Executive Dean

Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 4895, Fax: (015) 268 3425, Email: Satsope.maoto@ul.ac.za

DATE: 8 January 2020

NAME OF STUDENT: KWAKWA, WMM
STUDENT NUMBER: [8501103]
DEPARTMENT: PhD – Social Work
SCHOOL: Social Sciences

Dear Student

FACULTY APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL (PROPOSAL NO. FHDC2019/10/15)

I have pleasure in informing you that your PhD proposal served at the Faculty Higher Degrees Meeting on 23 October 2019 and your title was approved as follows:

TITLE: A NON-UNIONISED SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Note the following:

Ethical Clearance	Tick One
In principle the study requires no ethical clearance, but will need a TREC permission letter before proceeding with the study	
Requires ethical clearance (Human) (TREC) (apply online) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	√
Requires ethical clearance (Animal) (AREC) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	

Yours faithfully

Prof RS Maoto,
Executive Dean: Faculty of Humanities

Director: Prof SL Sithole
Supervisor: Prof JC Makhubele

ANNEXURE C: TREC APPROVAL LETTER



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: anastasia.ngobe@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 05 March 2020

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/44/2020: PG

PROJECT:

Title: A non-unionised social work profession in the Republic of South Africa: Implications for policy and practice
Researcher: WMM Kwakwa
Supervisor: Prof JC Makhubele
Co-Supervisor/s: N/A
School: Social Sciences
Degree: PhD in Social Work

PROF P MASOKO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

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ANNEXURE D: INFORMED CONSENT

Title of research study: A non-unionised social work profession in the Republic of South Africa: Implications for policy and practice.

CONSENT OF THE SOCIAL WORK RESEARCHER

I Motshidisi Kwakwa, PhD student from the University of Limpopo, Social Work department, researching on: A non-unionised social work profession in the Republic of South Africa: Implications for policy and practice. My study leader is Prof JC Makhubele.

The following is information about the study so that you can make an informed decision.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

2. The primary purpose of the study is to explore and describe factors militating against the unionisation of the social work profession in South Africa through GR and PAR, with a view to mobilising towards the development of a practical model for social work union.

3. PROCEDURE

Participation in the study is voluntary: you have the choice to discontinue with the interview at any stage should you feel uncomfortable without providing any reason.

- With your permission, the interview will take 45-60 minutes.
- The interview will be audio-recorded.
- Notes will also be taken.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information, including your identity and responses in this interview will be kept confidential and only used for research. All audio-recorded materials, transcripts of the interview, hand-written notes and completed interview schedules will be safely stored in a locked cabinet in the researchers' office and computers that are password protected. All material will then be stored in a storeroom at the Department of Social Work at the University of Limpopo. The focus interviews will be held in a quiet place to

avoid interruptions. The researcher will maintain anonymity as far as possible during the research process.

5. DECEPTION OF RESPONDENTS

You as the participant has been briefed about the aim of the study and no information will be withheld from you in order to allow you to make an informed decision regarding your participation in the study so to avoid deception.

6. BENEFITS AND RISKS

- The information gained from this study can assist social workers from all sectors, and political leaders, including heads of Social development of various provinces in promotion of healthy communication channels and improved working relations.
- Participants' will gain an opportunity to reflect and analyse on socio-economic, political and neo-liberal factors confronting the profession in South Africa.
- Promote unity and motivate social workers towards formation of a viable strong association/union in order to change the professions' status quo.

7. COSTS

There will be no cost to you as a result of your participation in the study.

8. PAYMENT

You will receive no payment for participation.

You are welcome to ask the researcher any questions before you decide to give consent. You are also welcome to contact us if you have any further questions concerning your participation in the study.

VOLUNTEER STATEMENT

I agree that the procedure and process of the interview have been clearly explained to me; that my identity and responses will be kept private and confidential; and that I may choose to discontinue with the interview at any stage should I feel uncomfortable without providing any reason. I also consent that the interview be audio-recorded digitally and electronically so that data provided be analysed, and findings of the study reported for research purposes. This is the only place where your name will appear otherwise you can choose to remain anonymous.

Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

I Motshidisi Kwakwa, as the interviewer have explained all procedures to be followed in the interview, the risks and the benefits involved and my ethical obligations.

Signature of Interviewer _____

9. FEEDBACK OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study will be shared with you as soon as they are available if you are interested.

We thank you for taking part in the study.

.....

Mrs WMM Kwakwa
PhD Student in Social Work (cell): 0824377017

.....

Prof JC Makhubele
Study Leader (cell): 0847122613/015 2682291

ANNEXURE E: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE UL ALUMNI COMMITTEE (FORMER DEFUNCT SW UNION MEMBERS)

1. Do you believe social workers in South Africa are ready to unionise? Explain.....
.....
.....

2. There is a perception that social workers are not united. What is your view? (Probe).....
.....

3. If in agreement, which factors could be contributing to the disunity? Probe.
.....
.....

4. In your view, which measures are necessary to help unite social workers in all sectors (DSD, NGO sector, EAP practitioners and social work academics)? Probe.
.....
.....

5. Share with us factors that you believe contributed to the failure of social workers unions to survive.
.....
.....

6. Are you aware of any internal organisational factors that could be hampering action from social workers? Probe.

ANNEXURE F: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS IN DIFFERENT SETTINGS

1. Instructions: Cross (X) in the box below for appropriate answer
2. Demographic information

3. Table 1. Years in practice

How many years have you been in practice?

0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	Other

Table 2. Qualifications in social work

What is your highest qualification?

BSW/BA (SW)	Hons (SW)	MSW	PhD

4. Table 3: Context of practice

In which of these contexts are you stationed/working?

Urban	Rural	Peri-urban	Deep rural

5. Table 4: Level of position

Which post level are you holding currently?

Junior worker	S. Office supervisor	Cluster supervisor	Area manager	Other/specify	

6. The next questions require your elaboration and explanation

6.1 Perceptions towards the need for the unionisation of the social work profession.

6.2 Do you think a union would be relevant for the social work profession in SA? Please explain.

.....
.....
6.4 What do you believe would change if a union is established? Please elaborate.
.....
.....

6.5 In your view, what could be hampering the unionisation of South African social workers? Probe further.
.....
.....

6.6 Have you ever attended any forum/meeting/*imbizo* (not called by DSD management) where social work challenges were tabled and discussed? (Probe to establish reasons for not attending. If attended, what was the overall impression?)
.....
.....

7. Factors militating against the unionisation of the social work profession

7.1 Have you ever heard of SASWU or any other union for social workers in South Africa? Elaborate.
.....
.....

7.2 In your opinion, what do you think led to the unions' failure to survive/succeed? Probe.
.....
.....

7.3. If there was an initiation to form a union for social workers, will you support the move and why?
.....
.....

7.4 How would you show your support? Please explain.
.....
.....

8. Awareness of socio-economic, political and neo-liberal factors impacting on the social work profession.

8.1 Which socio-economic and political factors are you aware of that impact on the profession of social work in South Africa? Please explain.
.....
.....

8.2 Tell us about the first social workers of colour in South Africa that you know of, who challenged the social welfare apartheid laws that discriminated against the African clientele and them as practitioners.

.....
.....

8.3 In your view, are social workers treated the same way as other professionals by the government of South Africa? Please elaborate.

.....
.....

8.4 What does the concept 'radical/critical social work practice' mean to you?

.....
.....

8.4 In your view, what can be done to promote cohesion among social workers in South Africa? Probe.

.....
.....

8.5 Do you perceive social workers as well informed in political, socio-economic and neo-liberal factors affecting their profession? Elaborate.

Thank you for your time and participation in this study

ANNEXURE G: TURN-IT-IN REPORT

Submission date: 12-Jan-2024 11:25AM (UTC+0200)

Submission ID: 2269840476

File name: V2_JC_REVISD_EXTERNAL_THESIS_WMM_KWAKWA_52_2.docx (212.27K)

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