

Placement Factors that Influence the Well-Being of Social Work Interns Participating in a Graduate Internship Programme

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Abstract

This study is interested in the well-being of graduate social work interns who participated in the 12-month graduate internship programme initiated by the Department of Social Development for social work bursary holders as part of a retention strategy in South Africa. The article centres on the way in which the well-being of these social work interns was influenced by external and internal factors. The research was done by means of a qualitative descriptive design. Purposive sampling was used to select 22 participants with whom semi-structured interviews were conducted. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings indicated that the well-being of the social work interns was influenced by the workplace and at economic, emotional and psychological levels. Shortcomings in the workplace and a lack of resources influenced these interns' well-being at their workplace. Financial obligations and expenses had an impact on their economic well-being and caused stress. This financial stress was caused by unplanned expenditure and the costs of transport, accommodation and food. The interns' emotional and psychological well-being was influenced by their placements, their ability to adapt to new circumstances, and collegial relations. Mental health issues were experienced, which influenced their productivity. The findings of the project engender the recommendations that interns be more involved in their placements and provided with accommodation and appropriate workplaces. It is essential to orient new intakes and to increase their stipend.

Keywords: graduate internship programme, social work, social work intern, well-being



Introduction and Problem Statement

Well-being, that is being healthy or happy, is such an important part of a person's life, but what if it is threatened? Davis (2019) states that "well-being is the experience of health, happiness and prosperity". According to Schutte and Vainio (2010, 422), well-being is a person's health and satisfaction with work and life. These authors contend that well-being determines an individual's quality of working life and also the individual's productivity and relation to society. The building blocks of well-being are physical, economic, social, emotional, psychological, spiritual, workplace-related, environmental and family-related well-being (CDC 2018).

According to Gilboa et al. (2008), work plays a crucial part in the average person's life. It is important to understand the way in which to maintain and promote well-being in the workplace (Collins 2007, 15). People's attitude towards their work also plays a key role in this, as job satisfaction can affect absenteeism, staff turnover, overall well-being, work productivity, and work effort (Cabrita and Perista 2007, 2). Research on job satisfaction has shown that the more satisfied employees are in their jobs, the less likely they will contemplate leaving (Farmer 2011, 1).

Although the importance of the well-being of people is widely acknowledged, it is also known that certain factors may have an impact on this well-being. This was observed by the researcher, an employee health and wellness practitioner, in one of the districts of the Department of Social Development (DSD) in Limpopo, South Africa, where unemployed social workers were placed in a graduate internship programme. The researcher found that this graduate internship programme was influenced by various external and internal factors that affected its success. This is because the interns had to deal with various personal and workplace factors that had a direct impact on their experience of the programme (see also M. Hlope, personal interview on 15 May 2018). Hlope (personal interview on 15 May 2018) explains that these factors not only have an impact on the graduate internship programme, but also on the well-being of the graduate social work interns, given that the placement of many of them takes them far away from their family support systems.

Against the background of this problem, a study was conducted to explore and describe the way in which placement factors influenced the well-being of social work interns participating in a graduate internship programme. In this article, we present and discuss the findings of the study. We begin the article by providing an overview of the current state of the social work profession in South Africa and the initiative of the social work graduate internship programme at the Limpopo institute mentioned. This is followed by a section on the research methodology underpinning the study, the presentation of the data that were obtained, a discussion of the findings and limitations, and the recommendations.

Social Work in South Africa

During research on the nature of scarce skills in South Africa, Earle (2007) found that social work was regarded as a scarce skill. A scarce skill involves “an absolute or relative demand for skilled people to fill particular occupations as classified on the Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO)” (Fasset Research Department 2015, 10). It refers to those positions that remain vacant for prolonged periods; in other words, there are not enough qualified people to fill the positions (Fasset Research Department 2015, 10). This shortage was found to have been caused by various factors that prompted social workers to leave South Africa. These factors include poor working conditions and the increasing demand for the availability of social work services by the South African population (DSD 2006; Earle 2008, 72), disappointment about poor compensation for work, lack of resources and support, and the escalating need for social work services (Adlem 2007, 5). In 2009, Minister Zola Skweyiya, the then Minister of Social Development, acknowledged that social work was viewed as a scarce skill and emphasised that social workers played a significant role in service delivery in the country (Khumalo 2009). The minister furthermore appealed to social work professionals not to emigrate for better salary packages (Khumalo 2009). A strategy to recruit and retain social workers in the public sector and to improve the working conditions and levels of remuneration was implemented (Khumalo 2009).

Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers

A Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers was developed by the National DSD (Earle 2008). This strategy includes the allocation of bursaries to social work students, as managed by the then Department of Health and Social Development (now the DSD) (Earle 2008). An agreement between the DSD and the social work students who received bursaries stated that the students had to serve the organisation after graduation for the same number of years as the years for which they had received financial support from the DSD (Department of Health and Social Development 2015). Later, the agreement that the funded social work students needed to repay the bursaries was altered, and unemployed graduates had to participate in a 12-month graduate internship programme (DPSA 2006, 5). Unemployed social work interns were allocated to various districts in the Limpopo province for participation in the internship programme for social work graduates (DSD 2011, 4). Hlope (personal interview on 15 May 2018) confirms that an internship and learner policy existed and were embodied in a compulsory internship programme for social work interns. According to Barnwell (2016, 27), the aim of an internship programme is to create a link between training and work experience. The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) (2006, 2) describes an internship programme as a work-based experience programme that culminates in a testimonial letter indicating the work areas to which the intern was exposed. It is not regarded as a learnership.

The present project was conducted in three districts in the Limpopo province, namely, the Waterberg, Capricorn and Sekhukhune districts. Service points were available for the communities in all five districts where social work interns participate in the 12-month graduate internship programme. The researcher chose this population group, because many of the employees had been absorbed in the districts after completion of their internship programmes. The researcher found that some of the original interns of 2013 to 2015 were unable to visit their districts of origin and families because of their work placements in the districts concerned in this study. There were also several applications for transfers and complaints regarding absenteeism of the intern social workers. Discussions with the employee health and wellness practitioners from three other districts revealed that they had experienced various problems regarding absenteeism and a lack of productivity of the social work interns.

Research Methodology

A qualitative approach with a descriptive design was used in this research. Leedy and Ormrod (2013, 39) indicate that qualitative research has two main concerns: reality and “capturing and studying the complexity of the real-world phenomena”. In this study, the phenomena of concern were seen as placement factors that influence the well-being of the social work interns during their internships. Qualitative design, according to Sandelowski (2000, 334), allows a synopsis of events by using terms used by those involved in the events; this was important for the present study with a view to presenting the terms used by the participants in the study.

The inclusion criteria for research participants were that they had to be social work bursary holders who had been absorbed in the internship programme of the department during the period of 2013 to 2017. The participants had to be registered social workers with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) and appointed by the government in a permanent post at one of the three districts in the province. No exclusions were made on the grounds of gender, culture, ethnicity or language.

The participants were selected through purposive sampling based on a list of names obtained from the Human Resource Development (HRD) section at the provincial office of the government department. The list comprised the names of social work bursary holders who had been absorbed in the graduate internship programme of the DSD in Limpopo during the period of 2013 to 2017. The gatekeepers, namely social work managers, informed the social work supervisors of the study, where the supervisors acted as mediators. The mediators compiled a list of potential participants who met the inclusion criteria with the assistance of the deputy director of the HRD section. The mediators were provided with informed consent documents, which contained information related to the study, and the aim, objectives, selection criteria, and expectations applicable to the study participants. Information on the ethical aspects of the study was also provided. Originally, 33 participants were selected from the lists and they agreed to participate in the study. Of the 33 participants, only 22 participants could

participate in the interviews. Data saturation occurred at the 22nd interview and no new information was gathered. The composition of the participants who were interviewed was as follows: Capricorn district – 12 participants, Waterberg district – 5 participants, and Sekhukhune district – 5 participants. In total, 15 of the participants were female and 7 were male.

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, as these allowed sufficient flexibility to the researcher and the participants (Greeff 2011, 351). The researcher developed and used an interview guide as recommended by Greeff (2011, 352). The following research questions were engendered by the research objective and were covered by the semi-structured interviews as a method to collect the data:

- The participants were requested to elaborate on their experiences of the social work internship programme.
- The participants had to indicate the type of barriers that they had experienced with sociocultural differences, compared to their own culture.
- The participants had to indicate the way in which their daily work as social worker interns was influenced by these factors.
- The participants had to indicate the way in which they experienced the influence of these factors on their well-being.

The research interviews were conducted at the satellite offices in each district where the participants were based. The individual interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and were audio-recorded. Notes were taken during the interviews. An independent transcriber transcribed the audiotaped interviews verbatim immediately after the interviews to ensure the accuracy and quality of the transcribed audio files (Mooney-Somers 2018).

The data that were collected in this study were analysed through thematic analysis, using a six-phase guide (Clarke and Braun 2013). The six phases consisted of the following: familiarising oneself with the data (this was done through reading all the transcribed interviews several times), generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing the findings in a research report. These phases are reflected in the findings of the present article.

Ethics

Written legal authorisation to conduct the study was obtained from the DSD. Ethics clearance was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee at the North-West University. Confidentiality was ensured by using the data obtained only for the purpose of this study. The data were stored in accordance with the requirements of the university. Privacy was ensured as interviews were conducted in a private setting and data sets were anonymised. No ethical challenges arose from the researcher's engagement with the

participants. Assistance in the form of counselling was available for the participants. The counselling was arranged with the principal psychologist of the psychological services office of the Department of Health, based in each of the districts. None of the participants indicated a need for such services.

Trustworthiness

Credibility, as a criterion of trustworthiness, was ensured through purposive sampling. The participants in this study were sampled according to specific inclusion criteria with the aim of obtaining accurate information about the phenomenon being studied. In order to transfer or apply the findings to another setting, the researcher provided a thorough description of the research process. Confirmability was ensured through an audit trail of the research process and detailed field notes. An audit trail of all relevant documents applicable to the research was kept for validation and proof of evidence. In order to reduce bias in the study, a co-coder was appointed to assist with the analysis of the data.

Research Findings

Four main themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) workplace well-being; (b) emotional well-being; (c) economic well-being; and (d) psychological well-being. Of the 22 participants who participated in the study, 17 are quoted in this article. Quotes that best supported the findings were chosen from the transcribed interviews. A correlation was found in the information obtained from the interviews as shared by the participants, although the intensity of their experiences varied.

Theme 1: Workplace Well-being

One of the core aspects of well-being is workplace well-being, which relates to all aspects of working life. Several of the participants mentioned that there were certain shortcomings in their workplace environment that influenced their workplace well-being. These shortcomings included that the offices could not accommodate all the social workers and the social work interns. They had to share offices and when conducting interviews with clients there was no privacy during the interviews. This is supported by the following statements made by the participants:

It [the office] was big, but not spacious to accommodate five professionals, sharing desks and have consultations with the clients from the respective areas allocated to the social workers, in one room. (L01, Capricorn District)

... there is no privacy for the client because they have to share their information in an office with five people. (M01, Waterberg District)

While you were busy talking to a client, you will hear a voice from another corner, another social worker giving inputs regarding the client's problem in front of all the other social workers and other clients. (S05, Capricorn District)

The participants indicated that, owing to the lack of privacy, they were concerned about confidentiality and the way service delivery took place, as stated by this participant: "We can't render the best services to the clients" (S05, Capricorn District).

Not only did the participants experience shortcomings in the workplace, but there was also a lack of resources. There were not enough chairs for everybody, which meant that the participants had to stand when the social worker was also at the office, as reflected in this participant's comment:

There would be a time where I had to stand, yes. There was one chair, armchair for my mentor. If my mentor was there and then we've got clients in the office there was a time when I stand. (V06, Waterberg District)

The unavailability of resources in the workplace delayed service delivery in the community. The participants had to walk to the nearest schools in the village and use their equipment. The participants stated:

[There is a] lack of resources like printers, photocopy machines. I have to ask from schools. (CL02, Capricorn District)

So, we didn't really have enough resources. We didn't have transport. (L01, Capricorn District)

... you could not do your work, because there are not resources. (V05, Waterberg District)

It was evident that these shortcomings in their workplace and the lack of resources had a direct effect on their workplace well-being, as confirmed by these participants:

You see actually ... I felt disrespected. I felt as if these people are using you. (V09, Waterberg District)

It was horrible ... they just told us to go to the offices without any stationery. (S04, Capricorn District)

I don't have a proper chair or the computer doesn't work, it was just demotivating. (L01, Capricorn District)

It was evident from the participants' views that the shortcomings and lack of resources that they experienced in their workplace had a negative influence on their workplace well-being. This resulted in concerns about a lack of confidentiality, while delaying service delivery and engendering feelings of disappointment.

Theme 2: Emotional Well-Being

The participants in the study expressed that, although they felt that their personal circumstances were not taken into account and their needs were not considered during the placement process, they had to deal with their emotions in a positive way to survive, despite feelings of disappointment. Their personal circumstances include family relationships, life with partners or husbands and wives, the care of their children, separation from their toddlers, support and care of their parents and siblings, and a lack of finances. These feelings are evident from the statements of the following participants:

... [I] feel neglected, Provincial Office did not consider the feelings of the interns with the placements. (L03, Sekhukhune District)

So, the only thing which was keeping me going while I'm doing my internship was just my work and the commitment that I had during my placement. (A02, Sekhukhune District)

The experience I got from the job, it was fulfilling and satisfying. (S02, Capricorn District)

Even though the social work interns had obtained their social work qualifications and were registered with the SACSSP, some experienced that their colleagues did not support them. They felt disrespected and frustrated, as they expressed that they were being used for administrative tasks on behalf of the social workers. These aspects influenced the emotional well-being of the participants. This was voiced in the following statements:

But during our internship programme some of the attitude that we received was very bad because most of them did not even know our names, we were called interns. (B02, Waterberg District)

It was a frustration like sending clients from pillar to post about go back come back, go back come back. So it was not nice. (S02, Capricorn District)

I have to go look for a space. . . . to have to ask for an office and yes, it's so frustrating when you have a client waiting for you outside and when you are just up and down looking for a space to help a client. (V06, Waterberg District)

The participants furthermore felt overwhelmed and found it difficult to cope:

When I say I cannot cope, is that I have too much workload. And then some of the problems I don't understand them properly. (S02, Capricorn District)

It was not that good experience because working with the people itself, it's very challenging. (S05, Sekhukhune District)

Yeah, discomfort, because I have to be free. So and then we are congested in an office and I am still learning, so I'm afraid what if I, I interview that client? (L01, Capricorn District)

Feelings of being overwhelmed, not being supported, and being disrespected had a negative influence on the emotional well-being of the participants. Despite these feelings, the participants demonstrated resilience.

Theme 3: Economic Well-Being

Although the social work interns received a stipend of R5 000 per month, it was insufficient, because they typically had to provide for their families. The financial expenditure of interns placed in urban areas is different from that of interns placed in the deep rural areas. Transport costs were high, because some interns had to travel with up to three taxis to reach the town from where they would make use of another taxi to travel to their families in other districts. Furthermore, the interns had to pay "black tax" (financial support to their parents), buy groceries for the family, and pay rent for their own accommodation during the internship. They also had to pay for furniture because they had to furnish their rented rooms. This is how some of the interns explained the situation:

I have to support my family. Buy food, pay rent, then I have to send my family the money. (L03, Sekhukhune District)

After getting my income I realised it is not enough. You know when you get an income then you have expectations and even the family there is expectations. (L04, Sekhukhune District)

Most of the participants were parents who had to provide for their children's needs. This financial responsibility had a negative influence on their economic well-being, as they feared that they would not be able to provide for their children:

My biggest fear was not being able to provide for my child. (L02, Sekhukhune District)

I was having two children and was unemployed for a long time. My mother was unemployed, same with my stepfather . . . more dependants. I was left with nothing. (L01, Capricorn District)

According to the participants, they became dissatisfied with their insufficient income and their inability to meet all the needs of their dependants. Their lack of enough money prohibited them from visiting their families regularly, owing to high transport costs and long distances to their homes.

There's no transport. I couldn't travel home. We have to hike. (V07, Waterberg District)

There were times where there were functions at home, I could not go, because of financial crisis (L03, Sekhukhune District)

The data indicated that the low stipend of R5 000 had a negative influence on their economic well-being:

The stipend was too little, I could not even go to the doctor. (L02, Sekhukhune District)

Sometimes I will have challenges in managing my finances. (A01, Sekhukhune District)

When you go home they expect you to bring something, so it's another expense on top which I don't have. (L04, Sekhukhune District)

The economic well-being of the participants was negatively influenced by the fact that the stipend they received was insufficient for all their financial responsibilities and expenses. This resulted in feelings of fear and not being able to provide for themselves, their children and their family.

Theme 4: Psychological Well-Being (Mental Health)

Although it was evident that the placements had a negative influence on the participants, positive remarks regarding the internship were also made. During the interviews, several participants verbalised their satisfaction that they were able to complete the internship and also learned new skills such as budgeting and adjusting to their circumstances:

The experience I got from the job, it was fulfilling and satisfying. (S02, Capricorn District)

In fact, they relied on me that when they are not in office, they know that their clients would be taken care off. (L02, Sekhukhune District)

It broadened my horizon, opened my mind, it broadened my thinking, my network, because you work with different people for different cases. (S03, Capricorn District)

Some of the participants struggled with their mental health. Mental health is important and is related to the way people usually feel, which indicates their well-being and psychosocial adjustment. It was clear from the following statements how the internship affected their mental health:

I was so depressed because I did not know where my next meal will come from. (V05, Waterberg District)

It was not that good experience because working with people itself, it's very challenging. (S05, Capricorn District)

Sometimes you stay at home, you feel demotivated. You need to be emotionally stable to come to work. (S04, Capricorn District)

Like I said, it was horrible. (L03, Sekhukhune District)

The social work interns found it difficult to cope with disappointment and stress, and experienced concerns about their permanent job placements, the ability to provide financially for their family's needs when not absorbed in the department, and having to depend, emotionally and financially, on their families when unemployed.

The psychological well-being of the participants was influenced negatively by feelings of disappointment and stress. There were also positive experiences, as indicated, and the fact that they felt good about acquiring new skills.

Discussion

Workplace well-being comprises the quality and safety of the workplace, the physical environment, employees' attitude to their work, the work situation and the environment at work (ILO 2019). The results of the present project indicate that participants experienced shortcomings in their work environment. These shortcomings not only have a negative influence on their workplace well-being, but also on the social worker-client relationship in view of the lack of privacy and confidentiality, given that offices had to be shared.

A work environment policy at Umea University (2019) describes the work environment as all one's surroundings when working. The work environment includes the psychological aspects of the way in which the work is organised and a person's well-being at work (Umea University 2019). Although Bakker and Leiter (2010, 1-85) state that the availability of job resources is positively associated with work engagement, it was found in this study that the unavailability of resources in the workplace resulted in delayed service delivery to the community and participants feeling demotivated.

Duffield et al. (2010) state that the work environment is influenced by various factors, including the position of management and relationships among colleagues. The present data demonstrate that, although they were registered social workers, the participants did not feel respected and supported by their colleagues. This had a negative effect on the relationships between the social workers and the participants.

McDonald (2019) states that poor working conditions have a direct influence on employee productivity. With the relevant resources, employees would be able to reach their set goals and succeed in completing their tasks and, in the process, increase their well-being. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007), the required resources give employees the capacity to perform well. The importance of people's health and well-being and the effect of these on their productivity is widely recognised (DPSA 2013, 3). It is therefore embraced by the Wellness Management Policy, which aims to ensure that the physical, social, emotional, occupational, financial, and intellectual wellness of each employee is attended to (DPSA 2013, 4-15). It was evident from the participants'

feedback that inadequate resources and other shortcomings in the workplace had a direct influence on job satisfaction, causing frustration and a lack of productivity. The lack of essential technological resources, the means of communication and transport issues resulted in work-related stress and an inability to render quality services to communities.

Emotional well-being is a positive sense of happiness and prosperity that enables an individual to function in society and to meet the demands of daily life (CDC 2018). Although the participants experienced that their personal circumstances and needs were not considered during the placement process, they dealt with their emotions in a positive way so as to survive despite feelings of disappointment. Van Wyk (2019) confirms the relationship between emotional well-being and the performance of employees in the workplace. Shah and Marks (2004, 2) indicate that well-being consists of more than just happiness, life satisfaction or the development of a person: it includes a component of experiencing unpleasant affects, as was also evident in this study. The participants shared that they did not feel supported by their colleagues, which made them feel disrespected and frustrated. The participants furthermore felt overwhelmed and found it difficult to cope. Some of the participants mentioned feelings of depression.

The Council for Social Work Education (CSWE 2016) defines economic well-being as “having present and future financial security” and as the ability to take economic decisions, to experience a sense of security and satisfaction, and to be self-content with one’s personal finances and employment pursuits. Financial well-being is therefore about a sense of security and feeling that one has enough money to meet one’s needs. It is about being in control of one’s day-to-day finances and having the financial freedom to make choices that allow one to enjoy life (CABA 2016). The participants in this study signed a contractual agreement of 12 months with the government organisation, which entitled them to a stipend for temporary appointment (Hlope, personal interview on 15 May 2018). The data indicated that the stipend the participants received was insufficient, as they not only had their own expenses – such as high transport costs, food, and rent – but also had to provide for their families and their children’s needs. “Black tax” is an expectation among family members of professional young black South Africans to contribute to the financial support of their extended families (Magubane 2016, 4). The participants feared that they would not be able to provide for their children and family and had no financial freedom.

Psychological well-being indicates a person’s emotional health and their ability to function effectively (Huppert 2009). According to the World Health Organization (WHO 2018), the psychological well-being of a person is affected by their physical, mental, emotional, and social life. This includes feelings, thoughts, cultural values, and the attitudes and influences of family, church, and school. Maxwell (2015, 2–3) indicates that individual features of job satisfaction are important for well-being. Job satisfaction is linked to employee well-being and the productivity of employees in the work environment. Mental well-being, in general, is the state of prosperity in several areas of life, such as relationships and at work, despite ups and downs (Peterson 2018).

The participants found it difficult to cope as they experienced disappointment, stress, and other concerns. Mental well-being and all that it encompasses are, according to Peterson (2018), “vital life components in their own right. They’re not something that exists as solely the absence of problems. Happily, they’re also not something that occurs by luck or chance or that we either have or lack and can’t change.”

According to Tucker, Sinclair and Thomas (2005), when a person experiences stress in the work situation, their psychological well-being and work situation are influenced regardless of whether the stress is positive or negative. A person’s experience of their profession determines their attitude to the job and their psychological well-being (Adegoke 2014). Occupational stress and burnout play a role in high employee turnover and are caused by factors in the internal environment (that is, for the individual), by the external environment (work circumstances) or by the nature of the work (Van Wyk 2011). There is evidence that exposure to long-term work-related stressors will have a negative influence on psychological well-being, but short periods of experiencing difficulties may be helpful in building resilience (Chandola et al. 2008). A person’s reactions to stress can change, depending on the present and past intensity of stress experiences (Schlotz 2013). Although the participants in this study found the placement process challenging, there was also evidence that the experience built resilience. This may be beneficial to them, as the social work profession is challenging.

Limitations

This was a small-scale qualitative study conducted in three districts in one province only. There is always a risk of bias with respect to the backgrounds or experiences of those who chose to participate in studies such as this one.

Conclusion

In order to recruit and retain more social workers in the public sector, a Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers was developed by the national DSD. Part of this strategy was to allocate bursaries to social work students with the provision that they had to participate in a 12-month internship programme. The social work interns, specifically in the DSD in Limpopo, were placed outside their home districts. This study shed light on the way in which these placements influenced their well-being. Although there was positive feedback, which suggests that the experience contributed to their resilience, most of the participants’ comments suggest that they were regarding their internships as a negative experience and as having a negative influence on their well-being. This engendered further implications such as reduced productivity, a negative influence on service delivery to the community, and a negative effect on the emotional well-being of the social work interns. For the mentioned recruitment strategy to be successful, it is essential that feedback from the social work interns be integrated into future planning and that adjustments be made accordingly.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following is recommended:

- Involve interns in their placements: The appropriate service point placement of the social work interns is important. Involving the interns in their choice of placement in order to complete their internship programme will have a significant positive influence on their overall well-being.
- Provide orientation: Orientate all new intakes of social work interns before their internship placements. The need exists for information sharing in order for these interns to prepare themselves emotionally and physically.
- Provide accommodation: The DSD needs to liaise with the Department of Public Works to allocate available, cost-effective accommodation to the social work interns at their work placements during the internship programme.
- Provide an appropriate workplace: The DSD has to take responsibility for creating a physical workplace environment that is safe and sufficiently equipped with appropriate working tools and adequate resources. This will allow the intern social worker to deliver appropriate services and conduct effective counselling services.
- Increase the intern stipend: The interns received remuneration in the form of a stipend during their internship programme, as indicated. The budget for the remuneration of the interns needs to be increased, because they typically support their families and need to pay for accommodation, furniture, transport and other essential expenses.

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