



---

# **An Assessment of Employment and Challenges of Social Workers in Malawi**

*Blessings Nkhalo Nyasulu, Dr. S. Parameswari*

Master of Social Work in Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, DMI-St. Eugene University, Chibombo, Zambia

---

## **ABSTRACT**

Social Work in Malawi has been a profession that has been helping in different sectors. There has been a study increase in number of Social Workers, thanks to the various increase in institutions providing the course. There is little light on the burdens the profession is facing, nor is there a concrete information on employment aspect. There is a gap in the challenges that are practically affecting the social workers in Malawi. The researcher wanted to assess the employment and challenges affecting the Social Workers in Malawi. The study looked at the social workers that were employed, unemployed and private practitioners. And if they were either in social work-related field or not. The respondents were those from Blantyre and Lilongwe districts only, and took three months collecting data. The data was collected using a self-prepared questionnaire, and adopted both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Drawing on in-depth analysis with 53 social workers, the researcher highlighted 1) a third of the social workers are unemployed with no active private practitioners 2) a majority of them are in the social work-related field, 3) there is a huge challenge in finding jobs as social workers 4) job dissatisfaction rates were higher in Non-social work field compared to those in social work fields. Findings showed that the profession is burdened by challenges that make it hard for the social worker to function well, get exposure and provide the best services.

---

---

## **1.INTRODUCTION**

Social work in Malawi dates back to 1964. This was when a community development certificate was provided; later on, a certificate in social welfare was introduced in 1978. By 2006 Social work degree was firstly introduced in Malawi. As of 2022 more than three universities (private and public) provide a degree in social work in Malawi. Nonetheless just like any other profession it has had its challenges, and the social workers have had difficulties in implementing their services effectively Yeshiva University (2021), states that supporting the essential Social Work Workforce is a current challenge in the social work world. And it is feared that the demand for social workers is rising, despite the workforce being expected not to keep pace to meet the demand. According to NASW research, the demand cannot be met due to lack of policy changes and government's investment in the profession. This is similar to the issues raised during the Second National Social Work Conference in Malawi (held from 26th to 28th November 2019). These included analyzing the progress on the achievements and challenges of the implemented five- year action plan (2019-2023), the mobilization of stakeholders for social work change and validation of the Social Workers' Bill. Now just like any other profession, social workers are met with various employment impacts attributed to various reasons such as low economic activity, job scarcity and many more. As stated by Dr. Ravalier (2018), "social work continues to be incredibly challenging profession- with high stress levels in the workplace excessive caseloads, the challenges of hot-desking, covering for colleagues who are sick and onerous procedures and timescales". The social work profession in Malawi is faced with similar problems from in within and outside. The problems arise soon after students graduate from tertiary education in finding employment or setting up their own services. According to Copenhagen Consensus Center (2022) census report; in Malawi the lack of jobs is attributed to the limited structural transformation of the economy. This results to high numbers of unemployment and underemployment. Copenhagen Consensus Center states that "More than 40% of youth who are deemed highly-skilled only work in jobs that require low skill levels, typically self-employed, informal, micro-enterprises that have limited value addition".

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In the latest report by CEIC Data (2022), the Unemployment Rate of Malawi increased to 6.6 % in Dec 2013 and the Malawi labor force participation rate dropped to 75.2 % in Dec 2020. And finally, the 2013 MLFS show that 27 percent of the employed population in Malawi is underemployed. This has put social workers at a disadvantage. Employment of social workers is affected straight from its infancy when being taught to prospect social workers. For instance, the ever-changing environment has all types of demands being placed on social workers. In return it affects the employment of social workers, because they are to deal with diverse needs of the people and have to adapt to those needs (which strains them as providers (Yeshiva University, 2021)). Apart from the nature of social work posing as a problem, another is; no availability of jobs and it is a big issue in the East African countries. For instance, South Africa reported above 8 873 being the overall number of unemployed social work graduates as of 2021 (SANews, 2021). Challenges also face private practitioners due to expensiveness in setting them up and running them in various communities.

## ***SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY***

In 2011 the University of Connecticut brought together a group of Alumnus from the School of Social Work to solely discuss current issues and challenges in the field of social work. Patricia Wilcox explains that, “The work that social workers do is hard work because you interact with so much pain. Whatever realm the social worker is in, they end up connecting with a lot of difficult experiences. In order to keep people fresh and vibrant in this work, they need time to take care of themselves; they need time to talk to others about what they’re experiencing” (Uconn Communications,2011)Despite social work being named as one of the promising professions in terms of employment expansion, it is crucial to note that entry level social work positions are still scarce. It is hard for new social workers to find gainful employment after graduating. And even when setting up a private practice in Malawi, it is still hard since the social work body has been enacted recently and they are yet to cover all social work areas in terms of guidelines for private practice. As explained by Eric Nelson (2020) a barrier to employment is that many of the job postings on career websites are not specifically aimed at helping social workers find employment. They fail to understand social work’s scope of practice, and do not recognize the differences between the various licenses that social workers possess. Hence, it obstructs social workers ability to quickly find open positions that meet their qualifications. This is why the present study aims to find the difficulties of social work profession in the aspect of employment and about the challenges.

## ***RESEARCH GAP***

- There are many studies about social workers and their challenges and employment environment in the world. But most of them do not focus on the unemployed, privatepractitioners and employed social workers together.
- There is little study on the social workers that are working in non-social work related andeven their employment challenges.
- There is little to no study on problems social workers face in trying to be privatepractitioners.
- There are no recent Malawian studies on the employment and challenges social workersface in general in relation to their careers.

Therefore, the study will be beneficial for future researcher tackling this topic in their literaturereviews. And it will help social workers in tackling the discovered issues.

## ***OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY***

### ***AIM***

The main aim of the study is to assess the employment and challenges of social workers in Malawi.

### ***SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES***

- To find out the number of Employed, Private and Unemployed Social Workers
- To find out the number of Social Workers working, and Not-Working in SocialWork-related fields
- To find out the challenges of finding jobs in Social Work Fields
- To find out the challenges faced in setting up Private Social Work services
- To find out the challenges faced in the Employed Social & Non-social Work Field

## ***SCOPE OF THE STUDY***

Social workers have been gradually increasing in Malawi, this is evident with the recent creation of the social work governing body. People were practicing social work profession without a governing board and the employment of social workers wasn’t really focused on a lot. The study wants to look at the employment of social workers in Malawi by also understanding the challenges associated with that. Look at how many are either employed or not and their respective challenges in the industry and in finding jobs. It will also try to get more insight on social workers that are private practitioners, and the problems faced by social workers in setting up a private social work service. The study will comprise of social workers working in the central and southern parts of Malawi, precisely Lilongwe and Blantyre districts. It is expected to have a combined total of 53 respondents from both sample areas.

Hence the findings of this research will help in finding out the number of employed social workers against unemployed ones, and those that have ventured out to assist people on their own terms. It will help present the varying challenges social workers face when searching for jobs in social work-related fields. The research will present the hardships of how the Malawian social workers faces when trying to be a private practitioner. Lastly, it aims to discover the many challenges social workers face in their employed sectors; it’s to see what they go against on a daily basis. This will help authorities and organizations to understand the situation of social workers and suggest measures to mitigate them.

## ***RESEARCH QUESTIONS***

- I. What is the challenge facing social work profession in Employment aspect?
- II. What about the self-employed (private practitioners) in the field of social work?
- III. What are the challenges they face in finding jobs in social work field?
- IV. What are the challenges they face in setting up private social work services (privatepractitioners)?

V. What are the challenges they are facing in the social work field as employed socialworkers?

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature was carried out by the researcher in order to gain in depth assessment of the employment and challenges that social workers face. The review of books, journals and conference proceedings provided insight into the topic. It also helped the researcher to identify the research gap and the possible methodology to be adopted in the study.

### *STUDIES RELATED TO THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYED, PRIVATE AND UNEMPLOYED SOCIAL WORKERS*

Lewis (2022) defines Unemployment as a situation where the follows apply to a person; they are willing to work for a given wage or salary, they're trying to find someone willing to hire them to do so, but are unable to find anyone willing to hire them. In this study, these are social workers that are qualified but do not have a job. (Dollarhide, 2020). In social work, a private practice social worker is someone who either owns and manages their own practice, or works for someone else who does. The unemployment rate in Malawi and other countries is defined as the number of unemployed people as percent of the labor force. The labor force includes the people who are either employed or unemployed, i.e. who don't have a job but are actively looking for one. The labor force does not include people who are not looking for work, children, and the retired (theglobaleconomy.com, 2022. pg1)

The American Community Survey (ACS), conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2015 stated that individuals with at least a bachelor's degree, that were employed as social workers were estimated to be 650,000. Meanwhile, the number of licensed social workers was far less, and estimated to be in the range of 350,000. Social Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu spoke in 2021 that the department's records, showed the overall number of unemployed social work graduates currently stands at 8873. Mabetoa (2018) pointed out in his study that the South African Council for Social Services Professions (SACSSP) reported that the Council has registered 60,000 social service professionals in South Africa. There are 48,000 fully qualified social service professionals, about 31,000 social workers, and about 10,000 child and youth care workers. The number of students registered as social workers and child and youth care workers amounts to approximately 19,000. In Malawi as of current, the only board that has been created to govern social workers in the country is the "Association of Social Workers in Malawi (ASWIM)". As a new organization, they are still not fully established online, and made aware the nation on where to get some information about the organization.

### *STUDIES RELATED TO THE NUMBER OF SOCIAL WORKERS WORKING, AND NOT-WORKING IN SOCIAL WORK-RELATED FIELDS*

Social workers are some of the diverse working professionals in the world. The strict definition developed in this research about social workers working in social work-related field, looks at the number of social workers that are employed as social workers and use their knowledge and education to occupy the particular post and work efficiently as required. An article by Huang Peng and Yeun Wen (2014), about social work in Asia, showed the difference in numbers of certified social workers and those actually working in the social work profession in Taiwan through the years 2001-2008. Throughout the covered years, 2,799 people did obtain a social work certificate but less than one third of these actually undertook social work services in local areas or the region. The data shows that about 639 out of 1,036 people who took certificates in social work offered services in the country or cities that were social work related (fields). The exact number social working in social work-related fields is unknown in Malawi. Kauye and Mafuta (2018) talked of how there are no professional social workers and only one occupational therapist, at Zomba Mental Hospital (country's largest mental facility). This can paint a picture of how social workers are present in Malawi, but are somehow missing from the important facilities they are needed in the most. Ross et al. (2016) explained that by 2016 the social welfare offices had a total of 300 social workers on salary with the government, with 700 volunteers trying to assist a total population of 16 million plus. At district and town level, the numbers were too drastic and front-line workers were very minimal and insufficient. This can be due to the fact that most people prefer to work in urban areas and not in rural areas. According to Salsberg (2019), in their report from the Results of The Survey Of 2018 Social Work Graduates pointed out that an excess of three-quarters of MSW graduates entering social work jobs, not all such jobs required an MSW (see Table below). They found out that over 17% of MSW graduates go into positions that do not have social work titles but in which they are using their social work education and skills.

### *STUDIES RELATED TO THE CHALLENGES OF FINDING JOBS IN SOCIAL WORK FIELDS*

In an informative study by Abel, Deitz & Su (2014), they tackled and summarized the issue of finding jobs for graduates as difficulties that are not a new phenomenon: individuals just beginning their careers often need time to transition into the labor market. Still, the percentage that are unemployed or "underemployed" — working in a job that typically does not require a bachelor's degree — has risen, particularly since the 2001 recession. Malawian social workers have not been exempted either. The job market for new MSWs is mixed: There are opportunities, but many are not what the new graduates are looking for and the pay is lower than desired. Nearly 50% of MSWs indicate they had a difficult time finding a satisfactory position (see Figure below). The main reasons cited were inadequate compensation (33%), lack of jobs in desired settings (16%), and lack of jobs in desired locations (11%). Only 9% cited an overall lack of jobs. Similarly, when asked to assess the local and national job markets, only 11.7% and 5.4%, indicated "no," "very few," or "few jobs" were available in local and national job market, respectively; and 38.9% and 54.7% indicated there were "many jobs" in local and national job markets, respectively. The overall job market appears reasonable for MSWs, with only 11.7% reporting finding no, very few, or few jobs locally. A total of 82.6% of MSWs reported finding some or many jobs in their local areas (Salsberg et al., 2019, pp. 6). A study by Yadav (2015) aimed to look at challenges faced by social work trainees. The descriptive study found that one of the main reasons behind social work

employment challenges is Lack of recognition (70 per cent), and lack of social work knowledge (30 per cent). As a result, the jobs don't recognize their importance nor is there a large social work market.

### ***STUDIES RELATED TO THE CHALLENGES FACED IN SETTING UP PRIVATE SOCIAL WORK SERVICES***

The gap between students' developed skills and ability on campus and practical job requirements can be another reason for unemployment. Securing a job depends not only on their academic performances, but also on personal background. Race, gender, and socioeconomic also play a certain role in whether an applicant is hired (Morley, 2001). In addition, the skills and experiences gained through college curriculum are sometimes not sufficient for entry-level positions (Pauw, Bhorat, Goga, Mucube, Oosthuizen, & Van der Westhuizen, 2006). Sometimes education is limited to a general level, which does not provide the specific skills needed to be hired (Pawy, Oosthuizen, & Van Der Westhuizen, 2008). Traditional curricula that the school provides do not match the practical needs in society, and those differences contribute to unemployment (Sparber & Fan, 2012). In social work practice, for an individual to be a private practitioner they need a considerable amount of expertise. It is a dream for most student social workers to be self-employed and private practitioners in the field. However, it is allowed for a new graduate to be licensed as a private practitioner.

Another major problem is lack of a National Regulatory board for Malawian Private social work practitioners. Malawi has no current board that is solely dedicated to accrediting, supporting and guiding social workers that are private practitioners. South Africa has South African Association of Social Workers in Private practice (SAASWPP) & the South African Council for Social Services Professions (SACSSP). Meanwhile Malawi has none; this is all the reason why information on social work private practice in Malawi is unavailable. Without a board it is extremely hard to have an increase of private practitioners. For instance, the SACSSP 2018 survey on its growth in registrations from 2016 to 2018 for social work and CYCW practitioners, students and auxiliary workers increased from 52,814 to 78,281 (GSSWA, 2022). And the lack of documentation on this topic in Malawi is what makes this study vital.

### ***STUDIES RELATED TO THE CHALLENGES FACED IN THE EMPLOYED SOCIAL & NON-SOCIAL WORK FIELDS***

Social work profession is one of the challenge burdened professions in the world. This can be attributed to its human nature. There are many challenges, ranging from mental aspect, to institutional burdens, to delivery barriers, all the way to lack of resources. A study by Curtis, Moriarty and Netten (2009) reported that social work is now on the national occupational shortage list, so severe that it was declared as a national crisis. And the problem is that most social service organizations can not employ so many practitioners at once. Even the government, does not employ the largest number of social workers. Budget for social workers is another problem in most countries, Malawi included. In Ross et al. (2016) the budget has about 1% dedicated for social welfare services. This is very little when compared to the number of caseloads, people in need, and covering the expense of social workers to fully work in their respective regions. Another issue in regards to budget is the salary wages; few organizations are willing to get highly skilled social workers due to the high income demands. Thus, they either opt for fewer qualified ones or simply go for those with lower qualifications. This results in either a number of qualified social workers unemployed, or underemployed. A prominent noted challenge is disconnecting in social work conceptualization and practice. For social workers in non-social work setting, this is obvious that they deal with unlearned phenomena. However, the problem is also present in social workers in the social work field. Thus, it's safe to state that the problem affects both social workers. For instance, in report by Salsberg et al. (2019) some students, classroom training did not adequately prepare them for their placements abroad (Pawar et al., 2004).

### ***RESEARCH GAP FOUND IN THE EXISTING STUDIES***

- There are many studies about social workers challenges and employment, however they do not focus on the unemployed ones nor look at those in none social work fields. This is evident with how much little studies are available on such a topic.
- Studies done have shown findings from other countries such as South Africa all the way to Japan. However, Malawi as a country lacks huge amounts of data in almost all areas of focus. Hence more reasons what research gap the study will be filling in.
- Most of these studies are from countries that are developed and by far have transcended their social work profession. This study will bridge a gap on how social work is faring in a developing country that has just recognized the profession as beneficial to its growth.
- There is a research gap on challenges of social work private practice, and the relevant challenges associated with it. This evident by how there is no recent or almost a study on private social work practitioners in Malawi.
- There's information gap on unemployed, employed and private social workers in Malawi from recent studies.
- There is a research gap on social workers leaving the social work field and going into non-social work fields, plus relevant reasons why?

Hence the present study may be added in the literature review for future researchers on this topic

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter looks at the various research methodologies and research methods that are commonly used by researchers in the field of information systems. The research methodology and research method used in this research is acknowledged and discussed (Goundor, 2012).

Mainly the accuracy of research depends upon the well-planned research methodology. Hence it is fundamental for all social work research. The present study focuses on the Employment and Challenges of Social Workers in Malawi.

### ***UNIVERSE, SAMPLING AND SAMPLE***

As defined by Lammers and Badie (University of Central Kansas, 2022 pp.1-11) the term population or universe means all members that meet a set of specifications or a specified criterion. A sample is the selection of some elements from a population. Sampling is the procedure to select a sample from a large group of population for a research purpose (Bhardwaj, 2019).

The estimated number of the universe is well above 800 individuals. The researcher used a sample size calculator to find the appropriate sample size that can truly reflect the population, but can be achievable too. By having the confidence level at 90%, the error of margin at 10%, and population proportion at 60% and population size at 800. The researcher got a sample size of 53 individuals. Hence, the sample size will display a large population. (Calculator.net, 2022)

According to Dr. Sunil (n.d, pp.8), Cluster Area sampling is when geographical divisions of territory community or cities etc. are made on a map and a certain number of them is drawn at random and called sample. The interviewer proceeds to interview all elements of the randomly drawn areas or clusters that is the reason why this method of sampling is also known as cluster sampling. Thus, the researcher adopted this random sampling technique of Area or Clustersampling. This was because the sample size was to be selected from the two predetermined districts (Lilongwe & Blantyre).

The exclusion criteria involved all social workers that worked outside of Blantyre and Lilongwe. Whereas the inclusion criteria comprised of:

- Only graduated social workers with a minimum of bachelor's degree were allowed
- Both male and female social workers were included

### ***TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION***

The researcher will use a self-prepared semi-structured questionnaire. This will help look at the qualitative and quantitative aspect of the study purpose (Teddlie, 2014). It will collect the demographics information, and the employment status plus field of work of the social workers.

The questionnaire will comprise of 3 other sections that will aim in finding a qualitative response to the challenges met in finding jobs in Social Work Fields; faced in setting up Private Social Work services and faced in the Employed Social & Non-social Work Field. This was due to lack of available standardized scales that accurately addressed the study needs.

The researcher will provide the questionnaire via hardcopies, social media (WhatsApp), and google online survey. This encompasses traditional and modern methods of collecting data, keeping in mind with the technological advancements. The researcher will work in hand with other scholars in collecting data from other areas inaccessible to him. The data collection process will be from May to June 2022.

### ***PROPOSED DATA ANALYSIS TOOLS***

The researcher will use SPSS tool to analyze some of the quantitative data, and quantitative data coded. The researcher will also analyze the data manually, especially the quantitative aspect so as to keep the original views of the participants. Data derived from the sample will be treated statistically. Thus, sample data will help in calculating various statistics, such as the mean and standard deviation. The sample statistics when summarized, will elaborate the aspects of the sample data. The data, upon being treated with other statistical procedures, will allow the researcher to make certain inferences upon the population (Stiborova, 2020; Hair Jr., 2014)

### ***CONCLUSION***

During research, focus is on drawing some conclusions about a particular population of individuals that have some common characteristic. But often the populations are too immersing to allow observations on all individuals, thus opting to selecting a sample. Consequently, the manner in which the sample is drawn is critical. Appropriate sample size depends on various considerations, including population variability, statistical issues, economic factors, and availability of participants. Economic factors are likely to affect the study in terms of access to digital questionnaire copies; this is due to the economic plunge occurring in the country.

In general, with larger samples you will have a smaller margin of error and you can detect smaller differences. The larger the variability of scores in the population, the larger the sample must be in order to be representative. Sampling error includes systematic error and random error. The systematic errors have been thoroughly fixed, whereas random errors are expected to occur, but the obvious ones have been dealt with. Even with the best sampling techniques, some degree of random error is expected. The research design has been built to tailor fit the aim and objectives of the study.

### ***FURTHER RESEARCH PROGRESS***

- There is room to study on private social workers in Malawi
- Challenges faced in job hunting for social work can be dug into, so as to come up with strategies for all affected parties in reducing the problems.
- This study will be a stepping stone for researchers to uncover more about social workers in no social work fields in the country
- The study will lay ground for further studies on employment challenges for social workers on traineeship, to differentiate on the challenges.

## 4. ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter will look at the 53 respondents (sample size) of the study and the data collected from the questionnaires. The study is guided by the research questions and objectives to assess the employment and challenges social workers are facing. The chapter will also demonstrate the hypotheses formulated in the study and the inferential statistical tools used to assess the hypotheses.

### PILOT STUDY

The researcher was able to engage with participants via social media and some in person. This was due to the distance between the two districts. The social workers helped the researcher by referring him to their fellow social workers. It was noted that most social workers opted to fill the questionnaire via the google form, unlike the hardcopies e.g. those met in person. As indicated, the pilot study administered the study as it would have been in the main study. Through referrals participants were reached via social media/phone calls and in person to create rapport. The pilot study was a means to assess all the predefined methods of how the study was meant to be conducted but on a smaller sample.

### PRE-TEST

A pre-test was conducted so as to ascertain the sustainability of the data collection method and instruments. A total of 15 social workers were chosen. The pretest was a way to see if the questionnaire can collect all the needed information from the respondents. The pre-test was a way to see if the needed participants can be reached from the universe within a reasonable amount of time and at a reasonable cost.

During Pre-testing, among other notable developments the researcher discovered was:

The participants all opted to fill the online questionnaire because it gave them freedom to fill it at a convenient time and easier than writing down answers.

The Google form made it easier to analyze data and no need for the researcher to manually do it, thus wasting time.

### DATA COLLECTION

The researcher used a self-prepared questionnaire to collect the employment and challenges facing the social workers. The questionnaire comprised of 6 sections, namely; demographics, employment status, area of social work fields, barriers in job seeking & setting up private practices, and challenges in the employed industries.

The respondents used the Google Form to fill the questionnaire. Each participant was sent a VN via WhatsApp as to explain the whole questionnaire and its purpose, and they were told to forward the VN to any participants they referred the link. Through Google forms the data entry task was shortened for it was easy to compile the data into excel sheet, and can be used in NVivo too. The process was carried out from month end June to early July as indicated in the time stamp.

### HYPOTHESIS FRAMED

Hypothesis is a tentative statement. This is an idea of the researcher, which is tested to see if true or false through the data analysis. Three hypotheses have been developed for this research.

1. There is a significant relationship between the independent variables like age, gender plus residence of respondents and their level of challenges in the social work field.
2. There is a significant difference among the marital status and place of graduation of the respondents and their level of challenge in this social work field.
3. There is a significant relationship between the year of graduate and their employment challenges.

### FINALIZING THE STATISTICAL TOOLS

After coding, the collected quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed. Test's such as *Pearson's co-efficient of correlation* to test the relationships between the variables and *T-test* to assess the difference between the variables. Through Google forms, NVivo and EXCEL the graphs, tables, and charts, will help in interpretation, visualization and analysis of the data.

### INTERPRETATION

The research was guided by the specific objectives and aimed to answer the research questions. Through the above tables and graph the data from the respondents was summed up, and presented for visualization. For further interpretation, the data will be explained in references to the objectives and research questions.

### ***TO FIND OUT THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYED, PRIVATE AND UNEMPLOYED SOCIAL WORKERS***

The study had a total of 53 participants; and 37 were employed whilst only 16 were unemployed (See table Graph 4). Out of the 37 employed respondents, only 3 attested to being private practitioners (see Table 6). However, they were ruled out to be private practitioners due to their total period of working as social work private practitioners (to be discussed more under private social work service objective).

The study also discovered that 75% of the unemployed respondents have been unemployed for 1 to 3 years. Whereas, the remaining 25% of the respondents; have been unemployed for less than 12 months. As of the employed respondents, a majority (23) of them have been at the job for 1 to 10 years. With the remaining 14 respondents evenly spread between less than 11 months of employment, and over 11 years of employment.

All the 3 private practitioners have less than 11 months of active practice in the field.

As the objective aimed to find the number of employed, unemployed and private practice social workers; it was discovered that most of the respondents are actually working and there are very few that are private practitioners. This can be rectified or acknowledged if a larger cohort study is studied.

### **TO FIND OUT THE NUMBER OF SOCIAL WORKERS WORKING, AND NOT- WORKING IN SOCIAL WORK-RELATED FIELDS**

As stated earlier the study had 37 respondents that are working. Out of these, 26 stated they work in Social Work-Related Fields and the remaining 11 respondents work in Non-Social Work-Related Fields (See Table 10). So, the study discovered that half of the Social Workers do work in Social Work-Related Fields. However, upon asking if the respondents work as Social Workers in their respective posts; it was noted that only 15 of them do work as Social Workers. Thus, it was found out that out of the 26 in Social Work-Related Fields, only 15 of these do work as Social Workers. Hence, it can be putatively put that nearly half of all social workers working, do work as social workers (See Table 12).

Tables 11 and 13 show the different Non-Social Work fields that the social workers are in, and the different position they are working in respectively.

### **TO FIND OUT THE CHALLENGES OF FINDING JOBS IN SOCIAL WORK FIELDS**

In relation to the research question "What are the challenges they face in finding jobs in social work field?", the study found out that more than half (52.8%) stated no. Meanwhile 47.2% pointed out to have problems in finding a job as a Social Worker (See Graph 8).

The study also discovered that the highest number (39.62%) of respondents stated that had stayed for 0 to 12 months without finding a job (total unemployed period). Meanwhile closely trailing behind were the respondents (37.74%) that had stayed for 1 to 5 years without finding a job and unemployed. And lastly 22.64% of the remaining respondents highlighted that they had never been unemployed. Thus, it can be concluded that is why most of the respondents indicated finding a social work job was not a problem (See Table 14). However, above 30 of the respondents seemed affected by the failure to find a social work job. Some of these were somewhat affected, affected and very much affected by their inability to land a social work job. But the remaining 20 respondents explained that they were not at all affected by this (See Graph 7). 23 of the respondents

The research question was to find the challenges respondents face when trying to find a job in social work field, similar to the study's third objective. The question requested the respondents to mention their 5 challenges that posed as barriers to them finding work in social work-related field. The top 5 challenges that were accumulated from their explanations were: Job scarcity, Lack of experience, Job Competition, Profession Unpopularity and Recruitment Corruption. Job scarcity looked at how few employers are employing social workers, whilst job completion was how these few employment chances are met with stifling competition amongst the qualified social workers. Lack of experience was the second most voted challenge; the respondents indicated that most entry level jobs required hilarious amounts of experience. The practitioners lacked experience to execute some roles due to lack of proper exposure such as internships and reluctance of organizations to recruit new social workers even on voluntary purposes to boost their experience. Profession unpopularity reflected how most organization and people are unaware of the profession, thus do not demand for their services. And last recruitment corruption is a vice that's common in all sectors. This looks at the unfair job selection of prospects based on connections, bribes or relations (See Figure 5).

### **TO FIND OUT THE CHALLENGES FACED IN SETTING UP PRIVATE SOCIALWORK SERVICES**

The objective aimed to find some of the reasons affecting social worker to fail set up private social work practice services, and was similar to the study's fourth research question. The themes found from the coded data were: Lack of Capital, not enough people know the benefits of social workers, Job Insecurity, Never Attempted, Lack of Experience, Lack of resources, Fear of processes plus responsibility and lastly Unavailability of clients.

Setting up a private practice agency demands sufficient capital, plus it is useless if the people are unaware of the service. Hence, setting it up and running a private practice agency is difficult. One respondent stated how there is lack of security around social work private practice thus job insecurity is a huge disadvantage to get engaged in such a sector. Some respondents pointed out their lack of knowledge of such a service and practice, and others indicated they were unaware of how to register as one. This shows the lack of knowledge that goes around on private social work amongst the social workers themselves. Experience is a requirement for everyone to practice a particular discipline, and it's no different here. Thus, lack of experience is another barrier that makes social workers not become private practitioners, and it's hard to get the experience especially when you have no one to be mentored from. Lack of human and material resources was also chosen a barrier; hence an agency cannot run without resources (See Table 18)

### **TO FIND OUT THE CHALLENGES FACED IN THE EMPLOYED SOCIAL & NON- SOCIAL WORK FIELDS**

The respondents were advised to mention 5 challenges they face as social workers (See Table 21) in their field of employment. This question combined challenges from both social and non- social work fields. Lack of resources was the highly acclaimed challenge; this was in materials/human work force. There were complaints of non-social work duties being a challenge. This was for mostly the respondents in the non-social work fields

that complained of having tasks that are not social work related. Low wages are a challenge to workers especially when the workload is massive and when cost of living keeps changing. These two problems were referenced as big challenges faced in both the two social work fields. Summing it up was the fact that the role is quite demanding, especially the working hours. Some respondents referred to it as being too stressful on their everyday lives, and were emotionally draining to them. This was backed by long working hours and even the complexity of working with clients that were desperate and hopeless. Nonetheless, these weren't the only problems, but the most common 5 amongst the respondents.

The study did also look at the satisfaction levels of the respondents in both the Social and Non- social Work Fields. Those in Social Work Field were more satisfied than those in Non-Social Work fields. With the latter having a positive satisfaction rate of 54.5%, compared to the first's 92.3%.

While trying to find the challenges facing social work profession in employment aspect the respondent discovered that 43.2% of the employed respondents are not permanently employed. So nearly half of the respondents are not permanently employed by their employees, thus job security and permanent employment of social workers is not on a good end. Another employment aspect discovered was that 60.37% of the respondents feel their education trained them well for the position they are in as social workers. Meanwhile, 22.64% stated No, and 16.98% stated they felt somewhat. And so, the dissatisfaction rates were higher in Non-social work field 36.4% compared to the 0% amongst those in social work fields. Non-social work field registered 9.1% for those that chose somewhat, and 7.7% for those in social work fields (See Table 16 & 17).

### **WHAT ABOUT THE SELF-EMPLOYED (PRIVATE PRACTITIONERS) IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL WORK**

The researcher took an interest in finding out if most of the respondents were aware of the registration process, plus if it was maybe the reason why there are few private practitioners in Malawi. The findings showed that a majority (25%) actually do not know how to become social work private practitioners. This was followed by those that confirmed to the registering process being problematic due to their long processes (12.5%), lacked sensitization and knowledge on how the process goes about (12.5%) and those that said the process was not difficult at all. The remaining respondents (8.3%) approved to the process being problematic though giving different reasons such as; high registration costs, school never encouraging them to be, and the unfamiliarity of the service amongst people. Lastly, the process was deemed difficult because the offices to register were far (4.2%), no funders trusted the social workers to set up such agencies (4.2%) and the very fact that there are few private practitioners (4.2%) around was solid evidence of the registration problematic state (See Table 19).

Hence it concludes that the process of becoming a social work private practitioner is not well known to most people and there is little action in place to share how the process works. The social workers are also discouraged to undergo the process because of no ready clients demanding their services and even worse due to the fact that the service is not common with the people around.

### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The chapter dwelled on the data collection process from the pilot study to the actual study and the analysis process too. The process was a success without hiccups; the chapter presents all the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative analysis. The next chapter will present some major findings, suggestions and further areas that the current study did not bring out

---

## **5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The data collected are processed and systematically analyzed. A brief summary of the important findings of the present study are presented in this chapter. Moreover, the Implications of the present study, Suggestions, Social Work Intervention and future exploration in this area of research are also discussed.

### **5.2 FINDINGS RELATED TO RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

#### **HYPOTHESIS FOR RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS-1**

There is a significant relationship between the independent variables like age, gender plus residence of respondents and their level of challenges in the social work field. Karl Pearson's co-efficient of correlation was applied to test the above hypothesis and it was inferred that there was a significant relationship between the independent variables like age, gender plus residence of respondents and their level of challenges in the social work field. Hence the research hypothesis was accepted (See Table 24).

#### **HYPOTHESIS FOR RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS-2**

There is a significant difference among the marital status and place of graduation of the respondents and their level of challenge in the social work field. Student T. Test is applied to test the above hypothesis. It is interfered that there was a significant difference among the marital status and place of graduation of the respondents and their level of challenge in the social work field. Hence the research hypothesis is accepted (Table 25)

#### **HYPOTHESIS FOR RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS-3**

There is a significant relationship between the year of graduation and their employment challenges.

Karl Pearson's co-efficient of correlation was applied to test the above hypothesis and it was inferred that there was a significant relationship between the year of graduation and their employment challenges. Hence the research hypothesis was accepted (See Table 26)



## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **MAJOR FINDINGS RELATED TO SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS**

The majority (64.2%) of Social Workers is women. Nearly three quarters (73.58%) of the respondents are in the age group of 20 to 29 Years old. A majority of the respondents (88.7%) have a Bachelor's Degree. More than half (58.5%) of the respondents graduated between 2020 and 2029. A majority (71.7%) of the respondents are Single. About 50% of the respondents graduated from DMI St. John the Baptist University. A majority of the respondents (90.5%) graduated from Malawian tertiary institutions

### **MAJOR FINDINGS RELATED TO NUMBER OF EMPLOYED, PRIVATE AND UNEMPLOYED SOCIAL WORKERS**

A large number (69.8%) of respondents are employed. A majority (94%) are not private practitioners. Nearly half (43.75%) of the respondents have been unemployed for 1-2 years in total. More than half (51.4%) have been employed for a total of 1 to 5 years. All (3) Social Work private practitioners have been in practice for less than a year.

### **MAJOR FINDINGS RELATED TO NUMBER OF SOCIAL WORKERS WORKING, AND NOT-WORKING IN SOCIAL WORK-RELATED FIELDS**

**A majority (70%) of the employed respondents work in Social Work-related field. More than half (59.5%) of the employed respondents do not work as Social Workers.**

### **MAJOR FINDINGS RELATED TO CHALLENGES OF FINDING JOBS IN SOCIAL WORK FIELDS**

Nearly half (47.2%) of the respondents are failing to find a job as a Social Worker. More than half (62.3%) of the respondents failed to find a job after graduating for more than 3 to 6 months. About a third of respondents (39.62%) have stayed a total period of 0 to 12 months without a job. Slightly more than a third (37.74%) of the respondents stayed for 1 to 5 years without finding employment. Nearly half (43.4%) have not been mentally affected due to failure in finding work as a social worker.

### **MAJOR FINDINGS RELATED TO CHALLENGES FACED IN SETTING UP PRIVATE SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**

A majority (81.1%) of the respondents did not reply to the question.

### **MAJOR FINDINGS RELATED TO CHALLENGES FACED IN THE EMPLOYED SOCIAL & NON-SOCIAL WORK FIELD**

Above half (56.76%) of the employed respondents are permanently employed. Nearly half (43.8%) of those not permanently employed are under internship programs. Of those employed in non-social work-related field more than half (54.5%) are satisfied working there. Majority (92.3%) of employed respondents are satisfied working in social work-related field.

## **5.3 SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.3.6 SUGGESTIONS TO SOCIAL WORKERS**

- The social workers should lean to enter other sector and not just social work-related fields. This is because social work has a lot of fields it can be applied in, but few are being ventured in.
- Social workers should not be reluctant to venture into businesses and entrepreneurship. Due to the current economy and unemployment challenges, it's best they do so to make a living on a daily basis.
- Social work is a qualification that helps people help themselves. Hence, they are equipped with skills to improve people's lives with the little they already have. Social workers should use that as an opportunity to indulge with communities with limited funds and develop new way forward. This act should be promoted at individual level and within residence premises of the practitioner.

### **5.3.7 SUGGESTIONS TO ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN MALAWI**

- Make it mandatory for all Social Workers in Malawi to be registered for them to practice in Malawi.
- To work hand in hand with academic institutions offering Social Work course to help them create curriculums that will reflect the Malawian lives
- Make more awareness campaigns to prospect social workers and to Malawians on the services they provide.

### 5.3.8 SUGGESTIONS TO ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS'

- Create curriculums that are reflective on African methodologies not highly based on western or eastern teaching.
- Need to talk more on the private practice of social workers, how to be one and processes.

### 5.3.9 SUGGESTIONS TO MALAWIAN GOVERNMENT

- The government should set up a proper department and government system that overlooks the social workers by qualified social workers. This is to avoid the current authority vacuum that renders social workers powerless in reporting their activities to the ministry in charge.
- The government can indulge practicing social workers in creating legislative laws for the profession. In regards to the versatility of the profession, the government can invest enough funds or materials. For their investments will be proportional to how many lives and communities social workers reach and help.
- They should put a stern warning on the rising job recruitment corruption happening in the private and public sector.

### 5.3.10 SUGGESTIONS TO THE SOCIETY

- The society should work hand in hand with social workers in spreading the benefits of Social Work services.
- The society should learn to seek social work assistance as early as possible so as to receive aid on time. They should also stop seeing the process of doing so as an embarrassment.

## 5.4 AREAS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

- A. The current study did not dwell much on unemployed social workers. Hence, further insight is needed so as to develop strategies they can be productive without active employment.
- B. Greatly need for research on private practitioners in Malawi. A purposive study to find the most active and collect data from them.
- C. The study lacks much information on the social workers from other districts, thus a national wide study can help to validate the current findings and uncover new unknowns affecting social workers.
- D. There is need to conduct a study on how social workers think they can benefit the country, and brainstorm ways on how they can do so with little to limited resources. This study can help think outside the box and make the profession more proactive.
- E. There is a need to look at how social workers are faring in taking care of their health in compared to the huge caseloads they handle.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the present study it is found that Social Work is facing a number of employment challenges. Social work is still a profession that is not well known to the public. The employment aspect of social workers in the study has shown that even though employed a lot of them do not work as social workers. There is preference of working in social work related fields, but very few numbers of private practitioners' available. Social work private practice is not well known, and advocated for in Malawi. Hence, there is a need for unity amongst social workers, academic institutions to promote the discipline and current practitioners to help in awareness. The number of unemployed social workers can be larger than found in the current study; nonetheless there is need for action to curb unemployment amongst social workers. There are many issues surrounding social workers, be it in private practice, social work related field and non-social work related fields. Social workers need to strongly work hand in hand with the stakeholders they engage with the most, to curb some of these issues and pave a way forward for the service delivery. Social workers in non-social work-related field and social work-related fields do have similar challenges; hence the solutions are also similar to both cases.

## REFERENCES

- 1) Bhardwaj, P. (2019) Types of Sampling in Research. *Journal of the Practice of Cardiovascular Sciences*. Vol 5(3): pp. 157
- 2) Breakwell, G. M., & Rowett, C. (1982). *Social Work: The Social Psychological Approach*. Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- 3) Clarity Mangena; Ajwang Warria. (2017). *The challenges experienced by Zimbabwean social workers practicing in Gauteng townships*. Available at: [http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0037-80542017000200006](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0037-80542017000200006) accessed on 22 January 2022.
- 4) Calculator.net (2022) *Sample Size Calculator*. Available at: <https://www.calculator.net/sample-size-calculator.html?type=1&cl=95&ci=5&pp=50&ps=800&x=108&y=19> accessed on 21 April 2022
- 5) Department of Social Development (2020) *Statement by Minister Lindiwe Zulu with regards to Social Development Response to Covid 19 for Level 4 Risk Adjusted Approach*. Available at: <https://www.dsd.gov.za/index.php/21-latest-news/145-statement-by-minister->

- [lindiwe-zulu-with-regards-to-social-development-response-to-covid-19-for-level-4-risk-adjusted-approach](#) Accessed on 22 January 2022
- 6) Department of Social Development, (2022) *Minister Lindiwe Zulu: Socioeconomic interventions to mitigate impact of Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic 30 Jul 2020...* Available at: <https://www.dsd.gov.za/index.php/21-latest-news/268-minister-lindiwe-zulu-socioeconomic-interventions-to-mitigate-impact-of-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-30-jul-2020> Accessed on 24 January 2022 Wednesday
  - 7) Dr Namso Umoren. *Social Work Development in Africa: Encouraging Best Practice*. International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research, Volume 7, Issue 1, January-2016
  - 8) Dr. Sunil (n.d) Universe, Nature & Types of Sampling. Available at: <https://bujhansi.ac.in/econtent/pages/shortcodes/EDUCATION/DR%20Sunil2.pdf> Accessed on 20 April 2022
  - 9) Employment of Social Work graduates; Foster Care court order progress & application for extension of deadline. Available at <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/31253/> accessed on 22 January 2022.
  - 10) Eric Nelson (2020). *My story of Challenges for social work employment*. Available at <https://nasw-michiganblog.weebly.com/blog---the-social-worker-perspective/my-story-of-challenges-for-social-work-employment> accessed on 22 January 2022.
  - 11) Goundor, B. (2012) Research Methodology and Research Methods. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333015026\\_Chapter\\_3\\_-\\_Research\\_Methodology\\_and\\_Research\\_Method](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333015026_Chapter_3_-_Research_Methodology_and_Research_Method) Accessed 20 April 2022
  - 12) Helmut Spitzer (2017) *Social work in East Africa: A mzungu perspective*. Available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0020872817742696> accessed on 22 January 2022
  - 13) Iman, L.; Wizi, A.; Nkhata, D.; Tumbulasi, V.; Magola, D. and Mswoya, B. (2022) Evolution of Social Welfare and Social Work in Malawi. In Noyoo, N. (Ed) *Social Work and Social Welfare in Southern Africa* (p99-108) South Africa: SUN Press Imprint.
  - 14) Joseph F. Hair Jr.; William C. Black; Barry J. Babin, and Rolph E. Anderson (2014) *Multivariate Data Analysis 7th edition*. Pearson Education Limited; England
  - 15) Livanos, I, Ç Yalkin, and I. Nuñez. 2009. "Gender Employment Discrimination: Greece and the United Kingdom." International Journal of Manpower 30 (8): 815–34.
  - 16) Mabetoa, M. (2018). Social Development Committee Meeting.
  - 17) Mupedziswa, Rodreck (2020) Building a Successful Career in Social Work: Issues, Prospects, and Challenges. *African Journal of Social Work*, Volume 10 Number 2 2020
  - 18) Paul W. Collier (2014) Social Worker and Teacher Perceptions of the Achievement Gap in Minnesota. [https://sophia.stkate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1302&context=msw\\_papers](https://sophia.stkate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1302&context=msw_papers) accessed on 22 January 2022.
  - 19) Simon Murote Kang'ethe (2014) Exploring Social Work Gaps in Africa with Examples from South Africa and Botswana. *Journal of Social Sciences* 41(3):423-431
  - 20) Stiborova, E. (2020) *Social workers ToolBox: The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire*. Available at: <http://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/strengths-and-difficulties-questionnaire/> Accessed on 22 April 2022.
  - 21) Teddlie C, Yu F. (2007) Mixed methods sampling: A typology with examples. *J MixMethods Res*. Vol. 1. pp.77-100
  - 22) University of Central Kansas (2022) Fundamentals of Behavioral Research Textbook. Available at: <https://uca.edu/psychology/fundamentals-of-behavioral-research-textbook/> Accessed on 19 April 2022